

CANADIAN MENNONITE

March 7, 2022 Volume 26 Number 5

MC Canada issues call to eco-mission

Members and congregations of regional churches
urged to heed the call

pg. 14

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INSIDE

- 'Who are we as the church now?' 4
- How do churches practise creation care? 16
- Heeding the call to ministry 25

EDITORIAL

Two years in

By Virginia A. Hostetler
Executive Editor



Since March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic came into the lives of Canadians,

this magazine has published many accounts of life in pandemic times. There have been reports on how Mennonite churches and organizations have adapted to health restrictions, found new ways to care for others, and even managed to have fun, despite the challenges. We've published letters about the vaccine and longer opinion pieces about how Christians should behave in response to this reality. There have been pictures of pastors in masks and congregants distantly seated in church sanctuaries and parking lots.

Recently *Canadian Mennonite* asked sociologist Randy Haluza-DeLay to interview church leaders about life two years into the pandemic. Some of his findings appear in the feature, "Who are we as the church now?" starting on page 4. I invite you to read and reflect on the feature and its accompanying discussion questions. This could be a time for conversation in your own church circles, to consider what you have gone through together and what might lie ahead.

Beyond the Sunday morning Zoom screen, key areas of church life still need our thoughtful attention.

For example, what has happened to the ministries congregations had in their neighbourhoods, contributions to their communities that have been limited or discontinued during pandemic times? It's been harder to build connections with our neighbours and church siblings through informal

times like coffee times, sports leagues, parents' groups and community meals.

There has been a toll on the mental health of many people in the virtual pews and at the pulpit. With no foyer check-ins, we've missed face-to-face opportunities for expressing care for each other: "How was your week? I've been thinking of you." It's been hard not to be together to share in the grief of funerals and the joys of other life milestones.

Church leaders identify serious challenges in our congregations' formal venues for faith formation. We've adapted, but at times, our faith has been challenged. What have we learned about ourselves and our God?

More uncertainty lies ahead, as provincial and local guidelines change concerning vaccinations, masking, gathering and distancing. We've already experienced polarization around the risks and precautions individuals want to take; difficult conversations lie ahead for congregations as well.

What will our life together look like tomorrow and beyond? On page 9, Kathy Giesbrecht suggests that the church expand its vocabulary to include words like "experimentation" and "collaboration," and she invites us to "dream and scheme" together. The Holy Spirit will be present there.

Watching Ukraine

As this issue of *CM* was in production, news came of Russian military forces invading Ukraine. The reports emerging from that region are troubling, and the worldwide reaction is one of

shock and concern for the safety of the Ukrainian people. For one branch of the Mennonite family, interest is especially high, given its historical connections to Ukraine. Although they now live primarily in the Americas and Europe, the people known as "Russian Mennonites," tie their family histories to that land, and they too tell stories of suffering and displacement from decades ago.

Today, the Mennonite presence continues through the work of organizations like Mennonite Central Committee, MEDA, the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine and others. These organizations collaborate with local partners on projects that create sustainable livelihoods, provide health and educational support, and foster peacebuilding. According to Mennonite World Conference, there are approximately 500 Anabaptist Christians in the region who connect with the global church. They too are giving and receiving help.

It's too soon to know the direction this conflict will take. But we can heed the invitations to pray for safety for all and for a peaceful outcome. And, through our trusted organizations, we can support those who help Ukrainians in need.

In the coming weeks, you will see reports in the pages of this magazine, but in the meantime, watch for updates on the *Canadian Mennonite* website and in our social media platforms.

Correction

With more than 660,000 members spread over 1,135 local churches and 1,112 church-planting centres, Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia is the largest Anabaptist denomination that is part of Mennonite World Conference. Incorrect information appeared in "Ethiopian Mennonites killed, churches burned," Jan. 10, page 18. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error. ❧



Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Canada

ISSN 1480-042X

CONTENTS

MARCH 7, 2022 / VOL. 26, No. 5

ABOUT THE COVER:

A small, clogged and polluted creek in an urban section of the Haldimand Tract in southwestern Ontario. Read "MC Canada issues call to eco-mission" on page 14.

MENNOPIX PHOTO BY ROSS W. MUIR

Faith and public life: Back to basics 12

'Careful use of public theology means that God is never simply assumed to be on our side,' writes **Anthony Siegrist**.

Defending peace, defending the climate 15

Leaders from 18 North American Anabaptist organizations met to address what many consider to be a moral emergency.

Food waste a resource for change 18

Will Braun examines the troubling issue of food waste and reports on some creative ways to make better use of food.

In praise of small churches 24

Three Saskatchewan pastors spoke with correspondent **Emily Summach** about the gifts and graces of small-church life.

'Who are we as the church now?' 4

Two years into the pandemic, **Randolph Haluza-DeLay** takes a look at congregational life across the nationwide church. What will the church look like after this?



18 Regular features:

For discussion 6 Readers write 7 Milestones 8
A moment from yesterday 9 Online NOW! 26
Schools Directory 28-29 Calendar 30 Classifieds 30

24 Joining the office of fun 9

Kathy Giesbrecht

Civil disobedience 10

Arli Klassen

Reta-coloured lenses 11

Troy Watson

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Please send all material to be considered for publication to

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO: Canadian Mennonite,
490 Dutton Drive, Unit C5, Waterloo, ON, N2L 6H7

Mission statement: To educate, inspire, inform, and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada as it shares the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. We do this through an independent publication and other media, working with our church partners.

Published by Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service. Regional churches and MC Canada appoint directors to the board and support 38 percent of *Canadian Mennonite's* budget.

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One-Year Subscription Rates

Canada: \$48 + tax (depends on province where subscriber lives)

U.S.: \$70 International (outside U.S.): \$93.10

Subscriptions/address changes

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FEATURE

‘Who are we as the church now?’

Congregational life two years into the pandemic

By Randolph Haluza-DeLay
Special to Canadian Mennonite

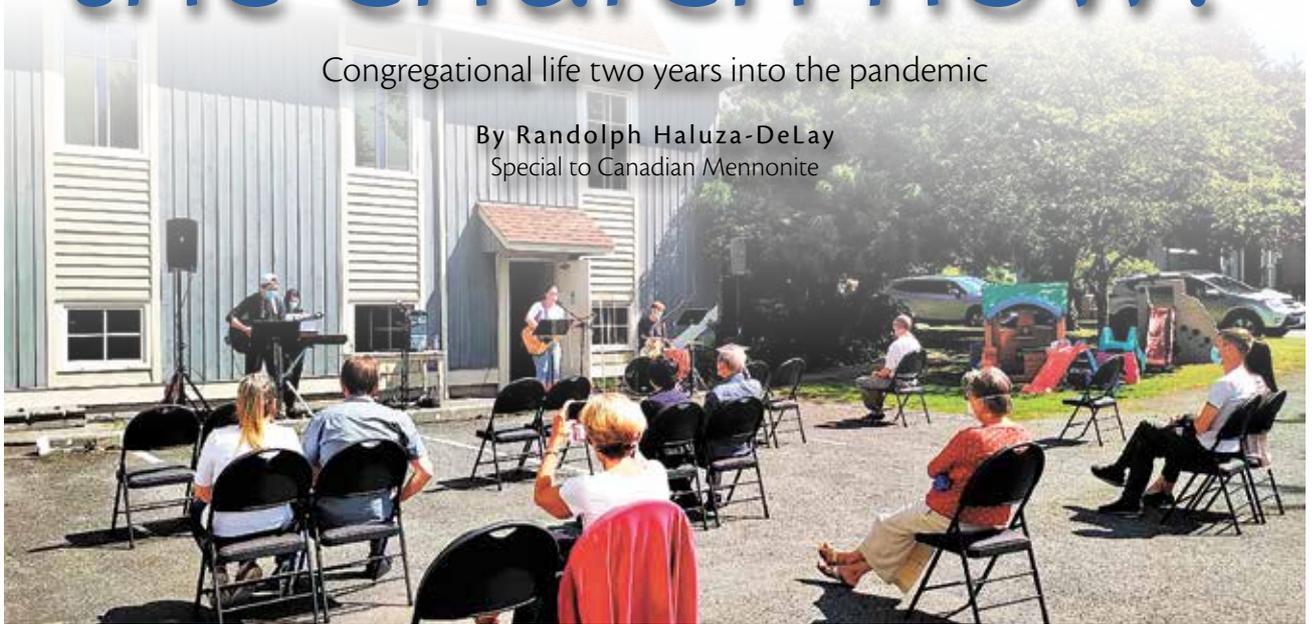


PHOTO BY GARRY JANZEN

Following provincial protocols for meetings during the pandemic, members of Sherbrooke Mennonite Church in Vancouver gather for an outdoor service, in the summer of 2020.

Justin Sun has never known pastoring other than during a pandemic. A year-and-a-half into his first pastorate, he says, “It’s been rough. How do I even do this job? I didn’t even attend a real in-person service until June.” That was nine months after he started in his job as a youth pastor in Richmond, B.C.

“It’s [been] two years now and we keep talking about ‘When we’re through this.’ This is what it is now,” says Marilyn Rudy-Froese, church leadership minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. “We have to think that this is what the church will be like. Why are we waiting?”

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted faith formation, congregational life, church finances, pastoral care, youth ministries and community outreach. It has raised questions like “Who are we as a church now?”

The leaders of MC Canada and the five regional churches interact regularly with many congregations. In interviews and emails shared with *Canadian Mennonite* they made observations on how congregations have responded over two years of the pandemic.

Adjusting and settling in

The first wave of COVID-19 hit Canada in March 2020, and provinces quickly initiated a variety of lockdown measures. Like the rest of the country, the approximately 200 congregations in MC Canada had to respond. Some quickly went online, using Zoom, livestreaming or pre-recorded services for Sunday worship.

But using these technologies has not been universal; rural churches and congregations where English is not the primary language seem to have developed less of an online practice. They also tend to be smaller. The pivot was easier for larger congregations that were more likely to have technologically skilled people handy.

Referring to specific examples, Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, executive minister of MC Alberta, says, “Both see getting together in person as the way to connect.” They might normally gather more frequently than urban congregations.

Some churches have still not met regularly.

Many churches relied on the recorded services sponsored by MC Canada during the summer of 2020. “We were all a little bewildered [at the beginning], but

we have noticed an incredible resiliency among people,” says Doug Klassen, MC Canada’s executive minister.

Months of frequent adjusting to changing public health orders went by. When they could, some congregations met in person as soon as possible. Others were more cautious. Many churches have done a hybrid of online and in-person Sunday services, a practice that most expect to continue after the pandemic.

Online technology allowed people to reconnect with congregations across a distance, but across all congregations there were declines in the number of participants. Some barriers included the reliability of internet (sometimes a problem in rural regions) and data plans that were not large enough.

At first, seniors worried more about their vulnerability to the coronavirus. Later, families with children who could not be vaccinated were more hesitant. While programs outside the Sunday service declined in 2020, some of these returned in 2021, although often held online or in new forms. Church finances appeared to remain strong in 2020 because so much programming did not happen, and the donations remained robust. The executive ministers say that congregations have told them 2021 has been more financially difficult.

By now, two years in, a sort of long-suffering settling has become normal for many congregations and pastors.

Kevin Derksen, an MC Eastern Canada regional minister, says in an email: “When the omicron wave hit, I heard a lot of resignation from pastors: it wasn’t the crisis of 2020, because, for the most part, they knew how to manage the situation. But certainly [there is] a sense of low energy, capacity, inspiration.”

Beyond Sunday morning

At the beginning of the pandemic, “There was a real focus on Sunday morning” says Wiebe-Neufeld.

Derksen echoes that. “Huge amounts of energy have been spent in this pandemic figuring out how to do worship,” he says. “But in many cases, there’s not much energy or capacity left

for other parts of congregational life and ministry.”

This led to other concerns according to several church leaders.

“COVID-19 has highlighted the energy we put into Sunday services. But is that all we are? So, it raises questions about identity and purpose,” says Rudy-Froese.

The extensive focus on Sunday mornings, especially in congregations where the pastor remained responsible for operating the technology, meant that less time and attention could be given to other ministries. Children’s and youth ministries have been hardest hit during the past two years, along with community outreach.

Garry Janzen, MC B.C.’s executive minister, says, “I am impressed by the hard work to make life interesting for youth, but they really struggled.” He thinks that youth pastors probably had high fatigue levels because it has been hard to develop regular creative alternatives to in-person events.

Keeping youth engaged online is difficult because so many are not part of Sunday services, and because other youth programs are also not happening. Several church leaders say it is unclear if those families are engaged or will return to church activities.

Rudy-Froese reports, however, that one church said its youth-group numbers have never been higher—because other churches in their community were not doing any youth programming.

Pastoral care has been difficult, too. “Pastors felt disconnected from their people,” says Rudy-Froese. Hospital visits and other in-person practices were also constrained. And pastors also found themselves navigating ever-changing pandemic guidelines and different risk tolerances among congregations.

Sun says that this required constant second-guessing:

“Should I or should I not do this?”

He serves as youth pastor for both Peace Mennonite and Peace Chinese Mennonite in Richmond B.C. Adding more complications is that the two congregations have slightly different approaches to pandemic guidelines. “It’s a bit different messaging from each church,” he says.

Eventually “the infrastructure for online services stabilized, even for the smaller congregations, so now pastors can attend to other things like congregational care,” says Michael Pahl, MC



PHOTO BY JOSH WALLACE

In the spring 2020, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan launched an online Sunday school for children.

Manitoba’s executive minister. The extra effort is especially crucial for trying to reconnect with congregants who used to be involved but now don’t seem to be participating in online worship. “There is a percentage that had been involved and don’t seem to be present,” he says. “And you just don’t know where they are at.”

Fatigue and mental health

It is already known that pastors have some of the highest chronic-stress levels of all occupation types, but the pandemic added more stress to their work. Stephen Reist, an MC Eastern Canada regional minister, writes in an email: “One contributor to pastor fatigue might be having been put in a position to discern and speak and lead in the midst of such widespread uncertainty and anxiety at

every level of our lives.”

Overall, pastors have had extra tasks made more complex because of public-health orders, technology and a lack of clarity about recommended practices. They expend emotional energy responding to the heightened distress of congregants.

Constant worry about the safety of their congregations was also a burden. Josh Wallace, who serves as interim executive minister for MC Saskatchewan, explains the demands on pastors with the constant adjustment to health rules: “There’s the extra decision fatigue: ‘Is this safe for me to do? Is it safe for the person I’m visiting to do?’”

Most respondents thought that mental health will be a more significant part of post-pandemic congregational life than it was pre-pandemic. There may be pent-up aspects that surface later.

Klassen notes a potential problem arising from the smaller attendance for events like funerals. “I think there will be pretty significant arrested grief,” he predicts. “There were no big gatherings to remember people, and no potlucks.”

Wallace also suggests that even youth “are carrying extra worry and trauma. There’s climate change and other things. The pandemic has forefronted some of this.”

Who will we be after this?

Based on what they have heard during interaction with pastors, each of the church leaders mentions the question of how the pandemic will shape the church. Wiebe-Neufeld says, “At first it felt like a waiting process, but now, we can’t just wait. So how do we be church this way?”

Noting the extensive energy devoted to maintaining Sunday services, Derksen says: “At the very least, I think the experience [of moving online] has shown many congregations that their identity and purpose is not/cannot be housed in the people who show up for worship on a Sunday morning. This may be a gift, as we are reminded that the purpose of the church never was contained in the people who show up on a Sunday morning.”

Still, pastors are less certain about who is participating in congregational life



PHOTO BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

Many churches held online worship services in response to pandemic restrictions.

now. “The move online has opened doors for some and distanced others,” says Rudy-Froese.

Wallace echoes others in thinking that volunteer and pastor fatigue, the decline in youth programs, and former congregants who no longer participate online, may leave “a scar we wear for a long time.” The pandemic has amplified trends in church closings and people leaving churches, phenomena that may have existed before the pandemic but are more noticeable now and will affect the church in coming years.

Lastly, all church leaders expect online and hybrid worship to continue, especially for church meetings. Several

wonder about the implications of some participants being physically afar. It is possible that connecting online might lead to even further detaching a congregation from its geographical location and neighbourhood. Online services have the potential to be more inclusive, but they can also be exclusive, Wiebe-Neufeld observes.

Pahl hopes that congregations will put careful thought into the new practices that came about because of an emergency pivot and ongoing adjustment, so as to “strengthen who you are as a church and [not] diminish it.”

Getting specific, Wallace hopes that “we have grown in our awareness of vulnerabilities in our midst.” For example, a possible long-term cultural shift would be to protect others by masking when a person has a cold, or even staying home.

“We’ve developed habits and patterns over these two years,” says Rudy-Froese. They should be carefully examined. ❧



Randolph Haluza-DeLay is a regular Canadian Mennonite columnist and a former sociology professor.

For discussion

1. What adjustments have your pastor, church staff and congregation made during the COVID-19 pandemic? What things do you anticipate will change in the coming year?
2. Randolph Haluza-DeLay writes, “Many churches have done a hybrid of online and in-person Sunday services, a practice that most expect to continue after the pandemic.” What are the advantages and disadvantages of having worship available both online and in person? What are the privacy and copyright challenges with online worship?
3. The concentration on Sunday morning worship has resulted in less energy for children’s and youth ministries, say pastors. Is that true for your congregation? What are the things you worry about for the future of the church?
4. How do you think the pandemic will change the church? What are some potential positive outcomes from this major upheaval that has now lasted two years?

—By Barb Draper

See related Post-Pandemic Preparedness resources at www.commonword.ca/go/2832

CommonWord
Bookstore and Resource Centre

/// Readers write

✉ Thank you for sharing Janzen tribute

Re: “Simple wonder, peculiar generosity,” Jan. 24, page 4.

I recall meeting Annie Janzen for the first time at an event hosted at/by Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg in the late '60s or early '70s.

She struck me immediately as someone who was at once dedicated to simplicity, and complexly direct with a responsive smile (or was that a smirk?) in response to a “stranger” before her.

She seemed to be focused on serving the best food and offering the most relaxed yet purpose-driven space for guests at the cafeteria, that one felt her hand in the ambience as well.

She was humble to a fault and vigorous in her response to life, and I gained an appreciation for her persona over the coming years. When time came for her to retire, I felt a personal sense of significant change, having been foisted on community life where she was an icon.

What a life to have lived, to honour, and by which to have been touched.

CLARE NEUFELD (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ Non-vaccinated Mennonite loves her neighbours in her own ways

Re: “No religious exemptions from COVID-19 vaccines: MC Canada,” Oct. 25, 2021, page 25, and John Konrad’s “Reader thankful for MC Canada leaders’ stand against vaccine exemptions” letter, Jan. 10, page 7.

As an unvaccinated COVID-19 Mennonite, I am, according to Mennonite Church Canada’s executive ministers, not following God’s command to love my neighbour. Also, according to Konrad’s letter, I am apparently an embarrassment to my fellow Christians, as he writes: “the prevalence of strident ‘anti-vaxxers’ in Christian communities is embarrassing, to say the least, and harmful to Christian witness.”

Certainly, the seriousness of COVID-19 cannot be taken lightly. It has been horrific for many Canadians and folks worldwide.

I am not anti-vax at all, and I wear a mask, social distance and hand sanitize. But I am against the “you must or else” measures.

As a follower of Jesus, I cannot agree with the MC Canada ministers’ statement, but I will continue to love my neighbours by loving my family, friends and community in these ways and more:

- **Shopping for neighbours** so frightened by media spin that they dare not leave their homes for fear of catching COVID-19 and certain death.
- **Listening to and supporting** folks depressed by isolation, and those whose family members die alone and are not allowed a proper funeral.
- **Paying attention to** school kids traumatized about catching and bringing COVID-19 home that may kill their grandparents.
- **Supporting folks who**, because of medical mandates, lost jobs and fear losing their homes and pensions.
- **Praying for three** friends who followed the government vaccine guidelines and are now dealing with side effects of myocarditis.*

Jesus loved his neighbours, instead of following Roman rule.

DIANNE KRUIHOF, LARDER LAKE, ONT.

The writer attends Hunta (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

** To learn more about myocarditis/pericarditis and COVID-19 from the Government of Canada’s National Advisory Committee on Immunization, visit <https://bit.ly/3oP5IXV>.*

✉ Seniors care home praised for its pandemic parameters

Re: “Pandemic parameters during the fifth wave,” Feb. 7, page 24,

Thank you so much for this story. When COVID-19 restrictions permitted, I’ve had the opportunity to visit friends from my church who live at Vineland United Mennonite Home.

The care is amazing. Simply amazing. Staff are so respectful. The chaplain is very kind. There are many activities. The home is cheery and clean. Thank you all very much.

JAN CARRIE STEVEN, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

The writer is the volunteer community chaplain of Grace Mennonite Church in St. Catharines.

✉ Letter writer ‘shouldn’t define all men as perpetrators’

Re: Hedio L. Epp letter, Feb. 7, page 7, in response to “A survivor of sexual abuse speaks out,” Jan. 10, page 13.

I read this comment with great interest. The principal theme of this comment points to a very

troubling crisis within society, including the faith community. I agree that anyone who abuses another person should be held accountable, and that support must be available to all victims.

I personally know several victims of abuse, and the damage is horrible and life altering.

The generalization of this comment is what concerned me, though, because I am a man. I agree that a high percentage of perpetrators are men, but that shouldn't define all men as perpetrators. In fact, many men work tirelessly to prevent perpetrators from striking again and are as angry as you might be with abuse of women.

Yes, let's work together to prevent abuse in the future!

ED SIDER (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ Reader says his Bible has no feminine references to God or Holy Spirit

Re: "She'll be coming 'round the mountain when she comes" column, Jan. 10, 2022.

I would like to have Troy Watson give Scripture references where the Holy Spirit or God are ever referred to in the feminine gender. My Bible has no such references.

DICK HILDEBRANDT, CAMPBELL RIVER, B.C.

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to letters@canadianmennonite.org and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Baergen—Isabelle (b. Jan. 5, 2022), to Josh and Marnie Baergen, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Reiger—Edison William (b. Dec. 31, 2021), to Jonathan and Celia Reiger, Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Baptisms

Hayden Epp—North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., Jan. 9, 2022.

Deaths

Bartel—Hedwig (Hedy) Theodora (nee Harms), 86 (b. Nov. 30, 1935; d. Jan. 28, 2022), First Mennonite, Calgary.

Buckner—Margaret, 96 (b. Feb. 20, 1935; d. Dec. 28, 2021), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Derksen—Lydia, 84 (b. Jan. 26, 1937; d. Dec. 30, 2021), Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

Dyck—John, 86 (b. Dec. 27, 1935; d. Feb. 3, 2022), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Fehr—Henry, 81 (b. June 24, 1940; d. Feb. 13, 2022), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Funk—Katherine (Klippenstein), 96 (b. June 12, 1925; d. Jan. 28, 2022), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Friesen—Helene (nee Pauls), 95 (b. May 27, 1926; d. Jan. 30, 2022), First Mennonite, Calgary.

Funk—Wilbert, 92 (b. Nov. 22, 1929; d. Jan. 18, 2022), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Goerzen—Erna, 93 (b. Jan. 11, 1928; d. Dec. 10, 2021), Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

Janzen—Jacob, 92 (b. Oct. 26, 1929; d. Jan. 31, 2022), First Mennonite, Calgary.

Martin-Carman—Sherri Lynn, 51 (b. May 21, 1970; d. Oct. 30, 2021), Hawkesville Mennonite, Ont.

Pauls—Nancy, 93 (d. Jan. 13, 2022), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Peters—Justina, 91 (b. June 13, 1930; d. Dec. 25, 2021), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Sawatzky—Robert (Bob), 81 (b. April 7, 1940; d. Feb. 7, 2022), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Scheerer—Esther (nee Wagler), 89 (b. March 1, 1932; d. Feb. 6, 2022), Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Teigrob—Helen (Reimer), 92 (b. Dec. 30, 1929; d. Jan. 16, 2022), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Wiens—Siegfried, 96 (b. Nov. 24, 1933; d. Jan. 14, 2022), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to milestones@canadianmennonite.org, including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please also include birth date and last name at birth if available.



FROM OUR LEADERS

Joining the Office of Fun

Kathy Giesbrecht

After four decades of ministry primarily focused on youth, young adults and young leaders, I welcomed the invitation to become the director of congregational ministries within Mennonite Church Manitoba.

As congregations walk into the future, they know that the work of reconnecting and reimagining awaits them. What I also want them to know is that this work can be a lot of fun. I suspect this will not be their first thought.

But exercising our creativity and curiosity muscles, and challenging ourselves to stretch our imagination, can be fun. Expanding our vocabulary to include words like experimentation, hibernation, collaboration, dream and scheme, can be fun. Growing into who the Spirit is calling us to be can be fun.

Before I continue building a case for seeing the future of the church as potentially being a lot of fun, let me offer a few words about fun. Although I have always been a fan of fun, my attention was caught by the book *Power of Fun: How to Feel Alive Again* by Catherine Price. Rather than seeing fun as frivolous, she argues that fun helps us thrive, writing that it can be “playful

rebellion or euphoric connection . . . true fun makes us feel alive.” It was in reading this that I began to connect the dots between following Jesus and fun.

I hold volumes of memories of engaging in radical acts of faithfulness with young people: serving vulnerable people, showing up for occasions of solidarity, offering lengthy prayers for global suffering and calling our congregations to join with us.

This is serious Spirit work, but almost always the youth walked away saying, “That was fun.” Why would they call that fun? Because they were feeling alive, their heart was pulsing with purpose and they understood that we were embodying the way of Jesus. In my theological language, I would say they were coming alive in the Spirit.

Walking into our future, our congregational ministries—worship, formation, congregational care and community life—will continue to be guided by our embrace of the call to “love God with all we have and to love our neighbors as ourselves.” Post-pandemic, paying attention to and giving energy to our relationships within (and beyond) our congregation will

be priority No. 1. This will be our good work and, yes, this will be fun!

When I became director of congregational ministries, I received a new sign on my door, signalling that the ministry that flowed from my office was now taking a new direction.

Tempting me now is the urge to make a colourful handmade sign declaring my office the “Office of Fun” because truly that is what I anticipate having.

I am holding a strong hope that reimagining our congregational ministries will include drafting experiments, lively conversations around bonfires, prayer walks in the forest and curiosity about why we do the things we do. And is it time to have some fun together? ☼



Known as “Kathy” within MC Manitoba, the writer has spent the last four decades in a variety of ministry settings,

including neighborhood centres, youth institutions and drop-ins, congregational youth ministry, and the last decade serving the regional church as associate director of leadership ministries.

A moment from yesterday



At the 1970 Conference of Mennonites in Canada annual sessions in Winkler, Man., Waldemar Janzen, a Canadian Mennonite Bible College professor, gave a report on young people, stating: “Not everything is wrong with young people today. There is a great openness and honesty among youth today. There is a remarkable depth of insight into self and society. There is a real hunger and readiness for trust in people, including older people.” Janzen asked: “How might the church communicate more effectively with its young people. [We need to] recognize that they do not grow up in predominantly Christian communities. . . . [We] must recognize that they are people first and young second.” This photo of Waldemar Janzen was taken at the college in 1972.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Mennonite Heritage Archives /

Photo by Rudy Regehr, Canadian Mennonite Bible College Photo Collection



archives.mhsc.ca

 THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

Civil disobedience

Arli Klassen

I smiled seeing a friend post on Facebook, tongue firmly in cheek, that civil disobedience is fine as long as he agrees with the issue.

I've participated in my share of protest marches: anti-nuclear weapons, anti-war, anti-racism, anti-colonialism and anti-fossil-fuel pipelines. My first adult act of defiance was in the mid-1980s, when the South Africa Council of Churches supported the global boycott of South African products. It felt significant to me that this boycott was being called for by the church, by lots of churches together, in spite of the impact it would have on their own members. I remember a long conversation with a friend who did not agree that this was an appropriate action for a Christian. We disagreed, but it did not change our relationship.

I assisted in policy writing around staff and civil disobedience in both Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Mennonite Church Canada settings, making space for individual staff who feel called to civil disobedience to live out their convictions as individuals without representing their employer.

Questions arose about when might a church agency, or church, endorse civil disobedience? Discussions included those who were against civil

disobedience in principle, as well as those who believe that civil disobedience must always be an option for Anabaptist Christians. The boards found a way to agree on policy, and respected the debate. The consensus standards are very high for an MC Canada stance on civil disobedience, which makes me admire even more the South African Council of Churches' stance 40 years ago.

I became quite involved in MCC's complicated relationship with Iranian clerics in the early 2000s, in both MCC Ontario and MCC Binational. There were many people who could not accept that MCC staff were in dialogue with Iranian clerics or the president of Iran, which, in their minds, made MCC complicit with evil. And yet MCC understood that an unusual door was open, and that it should be used for dialogue instead of condemnation. This was not civil disobedience, but it certainly challenged western governments and public opinion on Iran.

The CEO of the Canadian Centre for Christian Charities posted a blog in February, outlining four different public-action tactics to use when in disagreement with legal authorities, moving from comply, to consult, to challenge, to disobey. He expressed

no opinion on current affairs and gave an explicit message that Christians are called in different times and places to all four actions.

I learn from our culturally conservative Anabaptists (Amish, Old Order) that their bishops use several defining questions as they make decisions on church life. One of them is: How might this technology strengthen or weaken our family and congregational life?

I think one of our defining questions is: How does this activity help us to better love God and love our neighbour, especially those who are marginalized and vulnerable? This is clear in the signs many of us still have: "No matter where you're from we're glad you are our neighbour." This was well articulated in the MC Canada statement on "White nationalist symbols at 'Freedom Rallies.'"

My hope remains multi-faceted. I hope that the church at its various levels will make space for individuals with prophetic voices. I hope that the church itself will have the courage to consult, challenge and disobey at appropriate times, whether this be around land defenders or freedom advocates. I also hope that our congregations will be healthiest when they are full of members who respect each other, even and especially when we disagree. ☿



Arli Klassen is a member of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., and can be reached at klassenarli@gmail.com.

Et cetera

Caribbean churches make clarion call for reconciliation

As World Council of Churches (WCC) member churches from the Caribbean met last month, the group issued a clear call for reconciliation as a set of actions, not just an abstract idea. "Most important to us is to remind the WCC 11th Assembly that the current embargo on Cuba and Haiti must cease if we are sincere in our call for reconciliation," said Reverend Karl Johnson of the Jamaica Baptist Union, a member of the WCC central committee and moderator of the discussion. "As Christians, reconciliation that is rooted in Christ must include work to repair the breeches: those that were inflicted emotionally, socially, geopolitically and economically," said Johnson. The group also called for providing resources to address issues of deep-rooted violence and self-hate; and for revisiting the matter of reparations.

Source: World Council of Churches



UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA PHOTO
An image of Haiti taken in 2017.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Reta-coloured lenses

Troy Watson

I'm not sure what happened over the past two years. Maybe I finally accepted that it's over. We've passed the point of no return. Climate change; democracy collapse; and the death of common sense, dialogue and civility. This is our reality and it seems beyond repair.

Perhaps it's only my illusions about such things that are fading like a sunset in the rearview mirror of reflection and nostalgia. Regardless, I apologize to the next generations for the future they will be inheriting from us. In our defence, I'm not sure we could have prevented this. We did our best. I mean, we stopped

using plastic straws and posted our outrage on social media non-stop. What else could we have done? Who could have predicted this wouldn't be enough?

Am I being sarcastic? Not at all.

Maybe that's what happened. My sarcastic inner cynic won the battle of my mind to make sense of the times we live in. Or maybe I'm realizing that we've been duped by the relentless bombardment of doom and gloom headlines, brainwashing us into seeing only what's wrong with the world.

Perhaps there is another way of looking at the world and the "other," that transcends the clickbait noise pollution we are drowning in. Maybe the truth is that our world is constantly exploding with grace and light, overflowing with goodness each and every moment. Maybe this goodness even includes my jaded, sarcastic sense of humour.

Maybe it's all of the above. Who knows? I don't know much anymore, but there's one thing I'm sure of: "Today is the day the Divine has given us, and I can choose to rejoice and be glad in it."

"Why are you so sure of that?" you ask.

It's a choice. When I began my sabbatical last October, I discovered I was as close to burnout, empathy fatigue and indifference as I've ever

been. After years of perpetual rumination on one heavy subject after another, diligently focusing on how unfair and corrupt the world is, and how I've contributed to all the injustice, evil

Some of you might be thinking, "It must be nice to enjoy such privilege to take a break from the fight for justice and equality." That's fair.

My only response is, "Thank God

Perhaps there is another way of looking at the world and the 'other,' that transcends the clickbait noise pollution we are drowning in. Maybe the truth is that our world is constantly exploding with grace and light, overflowing with goodness each and every moment.

and suffering in the cosmos, I realized I needed a time out. I needed to come up for air and breathe. Smile. Laugh.

I needed a break from all the despair and self-flagellation. I needed to switch out the lenses of my glasses to see something other than what's wrong with the world. I needed Sabbath rest from the Sisyphean rotation of endless issues and causes demanding my attention. I needed to spend more time with people who can help me walk in the collective awareness that there is a staggering amount of divine goodness and light in the world and every person on this planet. I needed people like Reta.

Reta is a wise elder in our church who turned 100 years old last year. She is arguably the most positive, grateful and delightful person I know. I recently asked Reta how she cultivated such a gracious, compassionate and joyful attitude.

She said: "Every morning I wake up, thank God and say, 'This is the day the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it.' And that's what I do for the rest of the day."

I've decided to try a "Reta retina experiment," to see the world through Reta-coloured lenses. To let light fill my vision as I tenaciously look for things in the world to rejoice in and be glad about.

we have you to continue solving all the world's problems."

If you're wondering if I'm being sarcastic again, I can honestly say I'm being both facetious and sincere in equal measures. You see, I'm also learning to rejoice in the paradoxical nature of reality, which includes my own contradictions.

I hope to join you in fighting the good fight again soon enough, and I encourage you to continue righting all the world's wrongs. For now, I need to focus on what is good, excellent and praiseworthy in the world and in other people. I'm convinced that, if I don't do this, I may become permanently cynical and indifferent, and I don't want that to happen.

I want to care about all people; about justice, equality and the environment. But I need to adjust to these Reta-coloured lenses first, so I can see how to do this in a healthy and sustainable way. ✎



Troy Watson is a pastor of Avon Church in Stratford, Ont.

VIEWPOINT

Faith and public life: Back to basics

Anthony G. Siegrist

As I write this, protests continue in our nation's capital, there are many things I would like to see less of—intimidation and hate symbols, for instance—but there are also a few things I would like to see more of.

One thing I would like to see more of is the use of that very Canadian phrase, “peace, order and good government.” The phrase comes from the Constitution Act of 1867, and it has long been held as one of the articulations of Canadian political values that distinguishes this country from others.

I do think there is a legitimate discussion to be had about the ongoing cost and value of various public-health mandates. However, the way current sloganeers are boiling everything down to “freedom” is not helpful. We exist at all times and in all places in a network of relationships where our freedom and the freedom of others have relative limits. The freedom of one to go without a mask affects the freedom of another to remain healthy while participating in public.

Freedom is precious, but sometimes a cry for freedom is cover for one group wanting its interests to supersede those of another. Government's role is to help us all negotiate the ways our interests align or intersect. That task is, in my opinion, captured nicely in the phrase “peace, order and good government.”

Another thing I would like to see more of is the careful use of public theology. A debate about freedom, or about the appropriateness of a government regulating what individuals do with their bodies, is a debate about fundamental matters, matters that cannot be settled by observational science or the endless repetition of slogans.

To be clear, governments are always and everywhere regulating what individuals do with their bodies; that



PIXABAY IMAGE BY ANA KRACH

Trucks gather for protests in Ottawa during the 'Freedom convoy' protest.

is not new, and it is because what individuals do with their bodies affects others. There must be limits to this regulation, but where those limits lie is a philosophical (or theological) question that requires reasoned discourse and judicious appeals to beliefs and convictions.

Careful use of public theology means that God is never simply assumed to be on our side. It means that God's will is not something we can slap onto our politics to relieve us of lurking doubts. People of genuine faith, who genuinely seek God's vision for the world, will disagree, but they will also regularly be disturbed and reoriented. In a Christian context, this is because we believe God's presence, the Holy Spirit, is alive and active, disturbing as well as comforting.

Christian political convictions are not derived once and for all, but are constantly given new life as we encounter new situations. Some convictions, like the basic posture of service taken by the church to the wider world,

do not change. However, what it means to enact such a conviction does look different in different circumstances.

What this means, at least in part, is that a Christian commitment to any political party or agenda is always provisional. When we cease to consider other possibilities, and especially when we cease to be able to see others as beloved of God, then we know it's time for a change in our course. This is what we have long called repentance. It is an essential part of the Christian way of life. It is how we find freedom from assumptions and habits that would otherwise march us steadily on toward death and division. ✎

*Until recently, Anthony Siegrist served as pastor of Ottawa (Ont.) Mennonite Church. He is now director of A Rocha Ontario. This reflection was originally posted on his blog (anthonysiegrist.com). He is the author of *Speaking of God: An Essential Guide to Christian Thought* (Herald Press).*

ECUMENICAL REFLECTION

A prayerful reflection on the protests of February 2022

The executive committee of the Canadian Council of Churches

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. When tensions grow, positions harden, and hearts grow cold, we call for Canadians to pause, step back and reflect.

We see that (on Feb. 3) Ontario declared a state of emergency because of protests in cities, towns and border crossings. Across the country, leaders at all levels of government are struggling to respond to protests.

With leaders of Mennonite Church Canada, we unequivocally denounce the symbols, words, and actions of white nationalism being expressed in Ottawa and across the country at ‘freedom’ rallies.

When we are weary, longing for renewed human connections, impatient to return to the way things used to be, struggling with what is becoming, let us not allow fear or suspicion to erode our hearts, hearths and communities, pulling us into isolation and distrust.

As our political leaders struggle with how to respond to changing health-care realities and social tensions, may the health and well-being of all Canadians continue to be at the forefront of their considerations. May justice that safeguards lives and livelihoods be their guide, and may we together build a peaceful, loving society for all.

Canada is a country of many peoples. All people in Canada cherish the values of peace, order and good government. Let us together pause, consider our histories and soften our hearts.

We are deeply concerned that perceived freedom for some will have a negative effect on the freedom, health

and livelihoods of others, especially those who are vulnerable. Any society is best measured by how it prioritizes the health and well-being of vulnerable citizens and marginalized communities.

When longing for freedom from pandemic restrictions, may we remember the intimate connection between rights and responsibilities, and begin first with the ultimate commandments: The first is: *“You shall love the Lord your God*

with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is: *“You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”* *There is no other commandment greater than these* (Mark 12:29-31, NRSV).

At the same time, we must also speak out against the inappropriate and offensive presence of flags, slogans, and imagery that has appeared at the protests.

When Christian and other religious imagery, words and organizations are associated with violence, a call to overthrow government, and vulgar reproach for elected officials and citizens alike, we call on those who are Christians to stop and remember the witness and sacrificial love of Jesus. His life reminds us that worthwhile change comes through humble love of God and neighbour rather than force and coercion.

With leaders of Mennonite Church Canada, we unequivocally denounce the symbols, words and actions of white

nationalism being expressed in Ottawa and across the country at “freedom” rallies. *(MC Canada is a member denomination of the Canadian Council of Churches [CCC].)*

Without reservation or hesitation, we join the Manitoba Multifaith Council in standing up to oppose the return of Nazi symbols, which have been seen at the truck convoy protest in Ottawa. We deplore any suggested equivalence or comparison of the effects of public-health guidelines put in place by our democratically elected governments with Holocaust victims or the victims of totalitarian governments. We call on protesters who have drawn on these symbols to stop, step back, and reconsider how their actions hurt their fellow citizens, past and present.

Rather, let us boldly reach out to one another and, in confidence, work to care for the needs of all. After all, our very humanity is inextricably bound up with one another.

May we be inspired by the words of beloved Canadian Ursula Franklin, who wrote that “Peace is not an absence of war, but an absence of fear of not having what is needed to be fully human.”

Listening is more than hearing. When we hear the voice of God, may we listen and follow. When we hear the voice of those whose experience is different than our own, may we be receptive and together discern the path ahead for the good of everyone.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Signed on behalf of the CCC’s executive committee by:

DAS SYDNEY
CCC president

PETER NOTEBOOM
CCC general secretary

✠

MC Canada issues call to eco-mission

Members and congregations of regional churches urged to heed the call

By Mennonite Church Canada

Leaders of Mennonite Church Canada are calling on the members, congregations and regional churches of the nationwide church to respond to the climate emergency.

“We must act, we must act together, and we must act urgently,” write the executive ministers of Mennonite Church Canada, in a four-page document published on Feb. 7.

The document, entitled “Taking Action on Climate Change: The Eco-Mission of the Church in a Critical Time,” was prepared after MC Canada’s Joint Council, which includes the executive ministers and moderators from each regional church, affirmed climate-action as a nationwide ministry emphasis in a meeting on Jan. 30.

The document begins by acknowledging that the climate emergency requires immediate action, but it emphasizes that there is still “good news”: “For us as Christians, the good news always starts with this: ‘God so loved the world’ (John 3:16). *God our Creator, the Creator of the earth and all that is in it, has crafted all things in love and deemed them ‘very good’*” (Genesis 1:31).”

The executive ministers stress that action must be rooted in God’s call for the church to “*enter into the groaning of God’s suffering creation, to walk in solidarity with all that suffers because of human greed and violence, walking toward newness and fullness of life*” (Romans 8:18-27).

They then list six initiatives that “reflect our working commitments as a nationwide church.” These initiatives come out of consultation with working groups and regional church boards across MC Canada:

- **Broaden the mandate** of MC Canada’s Sustainability Leadership Group.
- **Create space** for our youth to engage on the climate crisis.
- **Open discernment** about “simple living”

and encourage our congregations and members towards this path.

- **Explore divestment/investment** options related to mitigating climate change.
- **Set up** a central webpage to provide creation-care and climate-action resources for congregations and working groups.
- **Commit funds** to support MC Canada’s climate actions.
- **Ask members** and congregations for ideas for more initiatives to take “as part of our church’s eco-mission.”

were lost as a result of the heat dome in July. We have experienced three atmospheric rivers from November 2021 to January 2022, causing extensive flooding, massive destruction of property and shorelines, and catastrophic loss of animal life and crops on farms in the Fraser Valley.”

“This is the most significant existential crisis facing us as humanity right now,” adds Michael Pahl, executive minister of MC Manitoba. “The church needs to respond in real, practical ways, and we, as a Mennonite church, have important gifts we can share toward this global, ecumenical effort.” ❧



MENNOPIX PHOTO BY ROSS W. MUIR

A small, clogged and polluted creek in an urban section of the Haldimand Tract in southwestern Ontario.

“In 2021, in B.C., we learned two new terms: ‘heat dome’ and ‘atmospheric river,’” says Garry Janzen, executive minister for MC British Columbia. “Almost 600 lives

The full document can be found at [CommonWord](https://www.commonword.ca) and on Mennonite Church Canada’s website at mennonitechurch.ca/climate-action.



Defending peace, defending the climate

Anabaptist organizations collaborate on climate change

By Sierra Ross Richer

Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions

Leadership from 18 Anabaptist organizations in the United States and Canada convened at the Anabaptist Collaboration on Climate Change (ACCC) on Jan. 26 and 27 to address what many consider a moral emergency.

Those gathered drafted a statement that was later signed by the majority of the participating organizations: “As organizations founded on Christian faith in the Anabaptist tradition, we recognize the significant threat to global communities, economic justice and the next generations from climate change. We are committed to explore our work and mission in support of sustainable and just climate solutions.”

The 24-hour meeting at the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Welcoming Place in Akron, Pa., was the largest gathering of Anabaptist leaders on climate change in North America to date. It was organized by the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions (CSCS).

“Having so many organizations willing to come together and talk about climate change clearly reflects that this issue is important to Anabaptist communities,” said Doug Graber Neufeld, the director of CSCS.

Since its founding five years ago, CSCS has functioned as a joint initiative between three core partners: Eastern Mennonite

University, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Goshen College. In order to broaden its reach, CSCS is in the process of deepening its relationships with a wider range of partners in programming, governance and financial support.

The event was meant to provide a place for a focused conversation on the Anabaptist response to climate change as well as lay groundwork for future collaborations between the organizations.

Jennifer Halteman Schrock, director of Mennonite Creation Care Network that works closely with CSCS on congregational outreach, appreciated the questions posed at the gathering. “How might we leverage our unique identity in practical ways? What assets do our organizations have that we could mobilize? What could we do together? It will take time for answers to emerge, but I believe they are the right ones to ask,” she said.

“With climate change accelerating, it is clear that individual organizations will find it more and more difficult to make a difference,” said Mark Lancaster, advancement director for CSCS. “There is a growing need for building collaborations among Anabaptist organizations to create broader impact, and CSCS would like to embrace this role to coordinate work and catalyze actions.”

CSCS plans to organize more gatherings on climate change in the future, and include a broader range of participants. In the meantime, CSCS facilitators encouraged participants to consider how Anabaptist organizations working in diverse areas can incorporate climate justice into their operations and missions:

- **For Mennonite Men**, this looks like developing the JoinTrees campaign with the goal of planting a million trees by 2030.
- **For Goshen College**, climate action looks like developing young leaders and conducting research that will inform the sustainability work of others.
- **For MennoMedia**, it looks like incorporating Anabaptist perspectives of climate issues into the publications that reach beyond Anabaptist audiences.

The gathering left many participants with new questions, but also with newfound hope.

Mennonite Church Canada and MCC Canada were represented at the ACCC event. ❧

To access the consensus statement and signatories, visit <https://bit.ly/3uZIB1H>.



CSCS PHOTO BY JOSEPH HARDER

Participants after gathering for morning devotions on Jan. 27, outside the Meeting Place.

How do churches practise creation care?

Mennonite World Conference

A global survey conducted by Mennonite World Conference (MWC) shows that Mennonite-Anabaptist congregations around the world are being impacted by environmental issues such as climate change in diverse ways, are feeling anxious and sad due to those impacts, and are talking some about creation care in their churches.

To find out how churches are responding, the MWC's Creation Care Task Force asked two sets of questions, one giving a list of possible responses to creation in general, and the other identifying any responses their church has had to climate change specifically. (See below.)

Churches commonly engage creation care through teaching, reflection and worship

Karen Flores Vindel of Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña, volunteers with a sustainable agriculture training initiative in a rural area in Honduras.

"Church youth usually take advantage of evangelism sessions to make people aware about the consequences of climate change and how to stop its effects," she says.

Thioro Bananzoro, Église Évangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso, says that, "when responding to creation-care needs, churches naturally engage through traditional church activities such as sermons, worship, prayer, Bible studies and awareness-raising activities such as workshops. These are spiritual, intellectual or emotional responses that often do not directly reduce environmental impacts in the same way as other direct actions."

Sometimes perceived as "just talking," these actions are, in fact, an important step in "doing" creation care, the task force says, adding that churches clearly value these actions, and they should be acknowledged as critical aspects of encouraging church engagement.

Common actions centre on waste, plants and energy

"With our limited resources, every year at least 150 to 200 households are being supported for tree plantation in their yards," says Shemlal Hembron of the Brethren In Christ Church in Nepal.

Several categories of more "direct" action were commonly reported:

- **Many congregations**, especially in Latin America, reported actions that addressed the impacts of waste, by having neighbourhood cleanups, promoting recycling or producing less waste.

- **Planting trees** or gardens is another common action seen in all areas and mirrors general worldwide interest in plant- and food-based solutions.

- **Reducing energy** through increased efficiency, or by solar-energy installations, were common responses in North America, but these were rarely mentioned in other areas.

All of these actions are socially acceptable and are relatively easy for church groups to do together, with co-benefits, such as better health from cleaner surroundings, or cost savings from reduced energy use. Churches that engage in these actions can begin having a positive impact on the environment in their communities, according to the task force.

Some important actions receive less attention by churches

Jürg Bräker of the Mennoniten Gemeinde Bern in Switzerland, says, "Our church has engaged with the topic of creation care through preaching, political activities, membership in organizations that promote awareness for environmental care [and] ecumenical celebrations such as vespers on creation day."

While these activities represent how many congregations are engaged with creation care on several levels, "political activities" are somewhat unusual, according to the task force. In fact, the survey found that public actions of advocacy are an area that was consistently low on the list of activities at churches, and the majority of churches involved at this level are in North America and Africa.

Similarly, few people mentioned changing modes of transportation, and there were very few responses that said they were working directly with

What creation care actions has your church carried out in the past 5 years?

(closed-ended question, choosing one or more of the following options)

Praying	73%
Teaching on biblical basis for creation care	63%
Advocating a simple lifestyle / living in a way that cares for the planet	46%
Greening the neighbourhood (planting trees, gardens, etc.)	45%
Cleaning the neighbourhood	43%
Integrating creation care into worships and ministries	38%
Reducing the amount of energy the church uses	36%
Getting involved in creation care initiatives in the community or more broadly	31%
Advocating for government response to climate change and/or environmental problems	21%
Reducing the church's water usage	20%
Changing forms of transportation	10%
No action reported	8%

How, if at all, has your church engaged with the topic of climate change?

(open-ended question, with answers put in the following categories)

Forms of awareness and reflection (sermons, worship, studies, workshops)	44%
No or little engagement	17%
Actions in waste reduction, recycling and/or cleaning	15%
Tree planting	9%
Energy conservation through solar or improving building energy efficiency	9%
Changing practices with food and agriculture	6%
Forming a creation care committee or group	5%
Public actions through advocacy or protest	2%
Changing transportation habits	2%

changing consumption patterns.

All of these represent actions that involve more risk, are more difficult to implement, or are not applicable to all contexts (for example, consumption varies tremendously by region).

Nevertheless, these are all areas that have an impact on environmental issues, and churches should consider the value of actions in these areas if they wish to have

a real impact on how societies address environmental problems, the task force says. ☼



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN FLORES VINDEL

Karen Flores Vindel of Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña, volunteers with a sustainable agriculture training initiative in a rural area in Honduras.

Together across oceans

MWC speakers bring the world closer together on Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday

Story and Photo by Mennonite World Conference

“Sometimes our faith community seems small and insular. [Celebrating Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday] helped open eyes to the global family,” says Chani Wiens, the math teacher and chapel coordinator at UMEI Christian High School in Leamington, Ont. She used the Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday worship resource in a chapel service.

“Most of our students from Mennonite congregations have Russian Mennonite heritage, so it’s great to show them how prevalent Anabaptism is around the world and that they are part of a large family,” she says.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) leaders preached in many congregations on Jan. 23, offering now-familiar online

sermons in locations far from their homes on Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday.

It was a gift for Summit Mennonite Church in Ohio to host an MWC speaker, Europe regional representative José Arrais, on Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday,



Mennonite Church India in Durg celebrates Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday.

says Pastor Christine Nafziger. “I felt especially blessed to have a connection with a brother in Christ from across the ocean—such a richness in hearing from his experience,” she says.

“When a part of the global church invites me to share about MWC, it energizes me knowing that we are connecting,” says Cynthia Peacock, MWC regional representative for Southern Asia, who spoke at several events over the weekend. “We grow stronger as a family by learning, sharing and walking together to bless and be blessed, extending God’s kingdom on earth.

This year’s Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday theme was “Following Jesus together,” part of the Assembly

2022 theme. The resource materials were prepared by the host churches in Indonesia: Gereja Injil Tanah Jawa (GITJ), Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI), Jemaat

Kristen Indonesia (JKI). Additionally, 33 videos of Scripture readings in 16 languages and greetings from 11 congregations or groups around the world brought global

visitors into local congregations across oceans and borders. ✎

Food waste a resource for change

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

Humanity wastes 931 million tonnes of food each year. This figure—from the 2021 United Nations Environment Programme Food Waste Index Report—is an estimate with an admittedly wide margin of error, but it is probably the best of the wildly varying estimates of food waste in the media.

The energy it takes to produce, process, store and transport this wasted food accounts for up to 10 percent of global greenhouse-gas emissions.

Much can be gained by cutting waste, according to the UN report: “Food waste reduction offers multi-faceted wins for people and planet, improving food security, addressing climate change, saving money, and reducing pressures on land, water, biodiversity and waste management systems.”

Wasted food is a potential resource

Tapping this resource takes various forms. Loop Resource is a Canadian initiative that diverts food from 60 grocery-store dumpsters to food banks and livestock farms. Started by a farm family in Dawson Creek, B.C., it has spread over Western Canada. The initiative reduces feed costs for farmers and disposal costs for stores. It reduces landfill usage and increases availability of food to those in need.

According to the Loop website, the average store they work with produces 270 to 450 kilograms of organic waste daily.

On another continent and at a different point in the food system, improved storage methods reduce food waste in low-income countries. Mike Salomons is a technical



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE PHOTO / CREATIVE COMMONS 2.0

Women carefully close one of the inner layers of a PICS bag, which is designed to protect contents against insect damage.

advisor with Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB). He says that, in the past decade or so, the organization’s focus has broadened from simply increasing agricultural production, because increased production does not help if, for instance, the grain spoils or cannot be sold for a worthwhile price. The focus now is on “food systems.”

In order to improve food security and livelihoods, it is important to look at post-harvest storage, Salomons says. The most notable advance in this area is the Purdue Improved Crop Storage (PICS) bag, developed at Purdue University in Indiana. A PICS bag is a simple, triple layer bag that can hold roughly 50 kilograms of dry grain. When each of the three bags are individually twisted closed and tied with a string, they form an airtight seal, depriving insects of the oxygen they would need to live.

The bags are available in at least 34

countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Since 2007, more than 20 million PICS bags had been sold.

Salomons says the bags have been a “game changer” within the last five years for CFGB and its partners.

Another big focus related to food waste in CFGB’s work has been marketing. In simple terms, CFGB partners help farmers team up so they can market collectively. Better marketing can mean less food goes bad due to lengthy storage periods, and sometimes it prevents scenarios in which produce rots in the field because there is no buyer.

On Canadian farms, waste reduction looks different

Doug Dyck grows grain near Plum Coulee, Man. He notes the

potential for grain to rot in storage if it goes into the bin too hot and moist. This is managed very effectively by ensuring grain is sufficiently dry, and aerating it once temperatures cool outside. Unlike when Dyck started farming, aeration capacity is standard in new grain bins in his area, allowing air to be blown up through the grain.

In the Manitoba climate, winters take care of insect threats in storage.

“Waste is virtually nonexistent on our farm,” Dyck says.

Marg Rempel also farms in southern Manitoba, although her operation includes hogs, goats and chickens, in addition to grain. In terms of livestock, she cites numerous examples of Manitoba farmers using byproducts from food-processing plants:

- **Potato peels** and other byproducts

from processing potato chips, soups and dehydrated potato products.

- **Byproducts** from the production of ethanol.
- **Leftovers** from turning canola into canola oil.
- **Milk permeate**, which is similar to whey, from a protein extraction facility.

Rempel says some of these diverted products make up almost 50 percent of some of the 13 different rations she uses for pigs at different stages.

Individual and household efforts

Nathaniel De Avila diverts food on a smaller scale. The 32-year-old Winnipeg building contractor is a veteran dumpster diver. And a deep thinker. When asked about the origins of his interest in waste, he talks about noticing dumpsters at a Frito Lay distributor on his daily commute to Iowa Mennonite School in Kalona, Iowa, as a teenager. After putting two and two together, he and his friends had a virtually unlimited supply of Flamin' Hot Cheetos.

Now he generally passes up the non-nutritious foods in favour of produce, meat, dry goods and other higher-quality items. While stats about millions of tonnes of waste are hard to comprehend, De Avila sees first hand the “unconscionable” quantities of highly “rescuable” food tossed in dumpsters.

Far from just looking for free snacks, he thinks about the profit motives that create unnecessary waste. The system calculates how to make the most money per item, driven in part by consumers who might act differently if they spent a bit of time draped over the edges of dumpsters.

This still leaves the largest portion of food waste: household waste. The internet abounds with tips for reducing household waste. In many cases, reducing waste involves revisiting some of the old impulses and practices that “progress” has hammered out of our cultures.

De Avila's challenge is to think carefully, and collectively, about the food system. To ask big questions. This could lead us to a dumpster, a Bible, the CFGB website or, if we follow the stats, to the nether regions of our fridges. ❧

News brief

MCC Ontario cancels meat canning efforts for 2022



MCC PHOTO

A volunteer washes cans during a Mennonite Central Committee meat-canning event in the United States.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario has cancelled its meat-canning events in Leamington and Elmira for the third year in a row. The April events were nixed due to staffing shortages and an inability to get the meat canner across the border from the United States due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “We are very disappointed,” says Sheryl Bruggeling, a spokesperson for MCC Ontario. “We thought we could move forward this year, but the hurdles proved to be overwhelming.” MCC's mobile meat canner typically travels across the United States and Canada each year, meeting volunteers who prepare cans of turkey, beef, chicken and pork to be sent around the world. More than 30,000 people volunteer annually to fill, weigh, wash and label every can. The finished cans are shipped to MCC partners in parts of the world where purchasing meat is difficult. More than 750 Ontarians participated in MCC's meat canning effort in 2019, producing more than 45,700 cans of meat. A silver lining to 2022's difficulties, Bruggeling says, is that MCC locations in the United States will make up for the canning that would have occurred in Leamington and Elmira. “We are very hopeful that we will not be in this situation again, and that next year we'll be able to move forward with meat canning in Ontario,” she says.

—BY AARON EPP

News brief

The Canada Coat novel launched in B.C.

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—In *The Canada Coat*, author Louise Bergen Price tells the story of Rena, a young Mennonite girl in Stalinist Ukraine who experiences discrimination, hunger and her father's disappearance. In a virtual book launch on Jan. 29 through the Mennonite Heritage Museum of B.C., Price read from her new book for adolescents, a fictionalized account of her mother's childhood experiences during the Holodomor, a deadly Ukraine famine in the 1930s. “All they ever talked about was something to eat,” she said. By the time her mother Irene turned 11, two grandparents and two uncles had starved to death. Price's mother had told snippets of her childhood in the Soviet Union, but never in detail until much later in life. “I knew it was a story I'd never forget,” said Price as she talked about the challenge of relating a true story, but in a fictional way, and creating imagined versions of real people. “Truth and fact are not necessarily the same.” Price, a retired teacher and librarian, is a member of the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. publications committee and a former board member of the society. This is her first novel, and the first book published by the museum. Profits from the sale of *The Canada Coat* will be shared by the museum and the historical society. The book is available at the museum's bookstore in Abbotsford.

—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL



MENNONITE HERITAGE MUSEUM PHOTO

Louise Bergen Price holds a copy of her new novel for young people, *The Canada Coat*.

Single Moms Camp turns 40

By Amanda Pot
Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp

As I reflect on the 40th anniversary of Hidden Acres' Single Moms Camp, a few vivid thoughts come to mind. How many families have stepped foot on the property over those 40 years, how many flailing legs and arms have done actions to crazy camp songs, how many cups of coffee have been made and enjoyed over good conversation, how many thrift store trips with vans full of moms, how many tears were shed, how many belly laughs, how many hugs and how many goodbyes have happened over this time?

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) have been held very close to my being these past couple years, for many reasons. We all live in the same big world, one that is so deeply broken, yet at the same time can be a place of deep joy and hope. I've always interpreted the "blessed" at the beginning of each promise as the deep presence of God.

The Beatitudes have the power to remind us that, regardless of who we are and what we endure, we are seen and not forgotten, that we are not "less than" because of our existence.

I have witnessed time and time again the effect this can have on the beautiful single-mother families that come to camp.

Single Moms Camp reminds me that not one of us is better than the other. It reminds me of the importance of safe spaces, and that God is in all things. It reminds me of the power of listening and hearing the story of another person. It reminds me of the power of belonging, and that joy and pain can, in fact, co-exist, just like Jesus expresses within the Beatitudes.

We don't have to look very hard as a camp day passes by to see moments of joy. A mom last year said her biggest take-home of the week was just this truth, that joy can happen in her life without her feeling guilty. Life is messy and so much needs healing and hope, but moments of joy can live alongside it. Joy and pain can co-exist.

My encouragement as we all continue to move forward in unsettling times is to ask yourself where you fit within the Beatitudes. Where can you be the presence of God to someone? ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF HIDDEN ACRES MENNONITE CAMP

Mom Jerriann and son Landon enjoy a paddle on Lake Laverne at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp.

News brief

House of Friendship gets provincial funds for new treatment beds



HOF PHOTO

House of Friendship's Men's Residential Addiction Treatment Centre in Cambridge, Ont.

House of Friendship's Men's Residential Addiction Treatment Centre in Cambridge, Ont., played host on Feb. 11 to Michael Tibollo, the associate minister of mental health and addictions, who announced a \$90-million investment in addiction treatment throughout the province of Ontario. As part of that \$90 million, House of Friendship (HoF) will receive \$584,000 over the next three years, allowing it to add four new treatment beds at its Cambridge location. "Today's funding announcement is about so much more than additional beds for residential addiction treatment in Waterloo Region," said Tara Groves-Taylor, HoF's addiction services director. "It's about lives that are going to be made better as a result. Knowing that the support we're receiving today is also part of a larger plan to provide more addiction-treatment options throughout the province is even better. ... With this funding, we also know there will be help—and that is incredible news." Tibollo said, "Both before and during the pandemic, we've seen a surge in demand for high-quality addictions care that addresses the unique needs of vulnerable populations across Ontario." He added, "This historic investment is an important step forward to protect our progress in our fight against COVID-19, and ensuring that individuals and families in every corner of the province have reliable access to the help they expect and deserve."

—FROM HOF, MINISTRY OF HEALTH
RELEASES

MDS provides blankets for street residents

Langley church assists with ministry

By Cathy Wall with Walter Paetkau
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

With storage rooms empty of blankets and the cold winter season around the corner for street residents in Langley, B.C., two Mennonite organizations stepped in to help fill the void. Mennonite Disaster Service, (MDS) through its grants program, supplied Langley Mennonite Fellowship, a partner in 5 and 2 Ministries, with \$3,800 to replenish the blanket supply at the Vineyard Church. The grant money purchased 500 cotton-blend blankets.

5 and 2 is a church organization that ministers to the most vulnerable and impoverished members of society, including those without permanent shelter.

The inner-city Vineyard Church and its



PHOTOS BY DAVID WALL

Alex is one of the street residents happy to receive a blanket through the efforts of Mennonite Disaster Service and Langley Mennonite Fellowship.

pastor, Leith White, interact daily with people experiencing homelessness. The pastor has developed relationships with both street people as well as those who provide services to them. As a result of this, when street residents need something, they often access the Vineyard or services in the area; 5 and 2 has worked closely for the past 10 years with the Vineyard Church on a weekly basis. Each Sunday they provide a hot meal and coffee, with Langley Mennonite taking responsibility for one Sunday a month.

The stories are becoming familiar and the complexities of them recognized. It is not easy for people to stay warm and dry, and to keep all belongings intact, when they are constantly being moved along, having their possessions stolen or confiscated and then starting all over again the next day. This was the case with Alex (no last name for privacy reasons) when he came out one Sunday, shivering and cold. He was very thankful for a warm cup of coffee, a hot meal, some gloves and a dry blanket that he could easily carry around. Alex is not one of the regular visitors; however, he now knows where he can get food and more warm, dry clothing or blankets the next time he needs them.

Volunteers from 5 and 2 were also pleased to provide blankets for those they have come to know well over time. Albert (no last name for privacy reasons) is one of those whose home has been Langley for many years, although he does not have a place to live inside. Albert is a resourceful, young guy who often has a positive attitude and collects bottles to help him survive.

For the past six months or so, he has had a camp in one spot that has been a stable place for him to stay. Recently, his camp was broken up, and he is now being



Albert lives outside and travels lightly. He welcomes a warm blanket and a meal.

pushed around regularly from place to place, as one cannot stay in one spot for very long when homeless. Albert now looks for a different place to stay nightly. In this scenario, he has to travel very lightly and easily loses his belongings or they get wet. On Sunday he came for a meal and asked for a blanket, as his things were wet and cold or gone.

Volunteers at 5 and 2 were glad to give Albert one of the blankets that had been purchased. Albert was very thankful for a dry, warm blanket. He also expressed appreciation to the volunteers for listening respectfully to him and not judging him.

Those experiencing homelessness and 5 and 2 are very thankful to MDS for the grant through Langley Mennonite. Now the storage rooms are no longer empty and those in need can be met with a warm blanket.

Leith White writes: "We were fortunate to receive the blankets in time for the extreme weather we experienced at the end of December into the beginning of January. We thank our Heavenly Father for the loving kindness and generosity and compassion your community continues to show towards the least, lost and lonely in Langley."%

‘It will be great to have us all under the same roof’

Mennonites and Catholics work together to reunite a family in Ontario

By John Longhurst
Mennonite Disaster Service
BARRY’S BAY, ONT.

A family separated by illness is being reunited through the joint efforts of the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) Ontario Unit and the Roman Catholic Knights of Columbus.

Through the project, Marc and Carole Jobin and their nine children will be able to live together in the same house after the family was separated three years ago when their youngest child, Marie-Ange, suffered a brain injury at birth.

Until that time they lived together in a century-old farmhouse near Barry’s Bay, where the family raises livestock and bees, and grows vegetables.

Due to the injury, Marie-Ange requires a sterile and temperature-controlled living space—something not possible in their house that uses a wood stove for heating.

“With a house that old, you get all the charms and the flaws,” said Marc, who works as a paramedic.

Since her birth, Marie-Ange—who requires around-the-clock care from her mother and health-care workers—has



PHOTOS BY OSIAH HORST

Marc, Carole, Marie-Ange and Jean-Dominique Jobin are pictured in Carole and Marie-Ange’s temporary quarters while MDS partners with the Knights of Columbus to build a medically sterile and temperature-controlled addition to their home.



MDS volunteers work on the siding of the addition to the Jobin family’s farmhouse in Barry’s Bay, Ont.

been living with her mother in a rented house in town, about a 15-minute drive from the farm. The situation causes stress, since the children can’t see their mother or sister on a regular basis. It’s also an added expense for the one-salary family.

“We considered moving into town, but we don’t want to have to sell the farm,” says Marc. “We like living close to the land. It suits our lifestyle and helps

us feel closer to God. Selling it would be heartbreaking.”

But moving seemed the only option until their situation came to the attention of Myles Dear, a parent of a medically fragile child and an advocate for families with medically fragile children.

Dear, a Roman Catholic from Ottawa, who is also a member of the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal service organization, was moved to help.

“During a prayer time last year, God told me now is the right time to bring this family together,” he says.

He contacted various levels of government and non-profit organizations looking

for assistance, but he came up empty.

Then he remembered how MDS Canada had worked with Roman Catholics in 2019 in Westmeath, about an hour from Barry's Bay, to help repair homes damaged by flooding. That included volunteers staying at the rectory belonging to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Parish.

"I thought, 'Why not ask the Mennonites if they can help?'" he says, adding that he believes "God led me in that direction."

He called a local Mennonite pastor, who suggested he call MDS Canada. MDS Canada contacted Nick Hamm of the Ontario unit, who asked Osiah Horst to visit the Jobins.

"When I met the family and saw their circumstances, there was no question about what we had to do," says Horst.

After considering the situation, the MDS Ontario Unit agreed to provide the labour to build an addition to the farmhouse where Marie-Ange could live.

Donald MacDonald, Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus of the Saint Patrick Basilica Ottawa Council 485, is leading the \$150,000 fundraising campaign for materials and subcontracts.

What makes fundraising easier is knowing MDS is involved in the project, MacDonald says.

"Due to the flood response project in 2019, there is a high level of trust between Mennonites and Catholics in the Ottawa Valley," he says, adding that about a third of the needed funds have come in to date.

As for Marc, he is amazed by what is happening for his family. "I don't know where we'd be without this light at the end of the tunnel," he says, noting that the plan calls for the addition to be ready by March or April. "It will be great to have us all under the same roof."

The project has also strengthened the Roman Catholic family's faith. "We really sense God's hand in this," he says.

Dear agrees. "This is a divine orchestration, bringing together MDS and the Knights of Columbus," he says. "God is a big God. He wanted us to work together. Together, we can make the world more beautiful for this family." ❧

UpComing

'We Declare' study guide now available for congregations

Mennonite Church Canada has published a study guide on the theme for Gathering 2022, happening in Edmonton from July 31 to Aug. 1. "We encourage congregations and individuals to work through this guide as part of collective discernment as a nationwide church," writes co-author Michael Pahl, executive minister of MC Manitoba, in the introduction. "It can be used in adult/youth education settings, small groups or even as a worship series." The guide is centred on the Gathering 2022 theme, "We Declare: what we have seen and heard," from 1 John 1:1, and explores what it means to share the good news in today's context. The study includes six sessions on being a missional church, when the good news becomes bad news, biblical perspectives and bearing witness in a secular age. Each session is accompanied by Scripture readings, reflection questions and links to reading lists curated by CommonWord for further reading. Congregations are invited to participate, either before or after Gathering 2022, and to share their reflections with their respective regional church offices. "The regional churches will collate these reflections and bring what their region has discerned for contribution to our nationwide understanding," writes Pahl.

To view the guide, visit <https://bit.ly/3l6077e>.

For event information, visit mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022.

—MC CANADA



News brief

More refugees to be settled in the GTA over the next five years



PHOTO BY ANDREW REESOR-MCDOWELL

A newcomer family and Welcome the Stranger-GTA volunteers enjoy outings to Willowgrove.

Since its inception seven years ago, Welcome the Stranger (WtS)—Greater Toronto Area (GTA) has welcomed 43 refugees to Canada, consisting of five families and one individual. WtS is made possible by the collaborative efforts of eight Mennonite congregations and one Be in Christ (BIC) congregation in the areas around Markham, Stouffville, Gormley and East Toronto. WtS chair Andrew Reesor-McDowell, who represents Hagerman Mennonite Church on the committee, announces that the organization is expecting another 14 people in the next five years, resulting in a total of 57 refugees resettled in the GTA. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) provides guidance and support to groups of seven to eight volunteers who are matched with each newcomer family or individual. Lys Laurence, a WtS volunteer, describes how each volunteer welcome team provides logistical and emotional support, including "preparing homes, helping register children in schools, orienting them to local amenities and inviting them into their community." What is unique about this welcome model is the direct mentorship and intentional relationship building that is integrated into the resettlement process, says Reesor-McDowell. With the support of MCC Toronto, he foresees many more families being welcomed by community members.

—BY CHRISTEN KONG

PEOPLE

In praise of small churches

Three Saskatchewan pastors reflect on the gifts and graces of small-church life

By Emily Summach

Saskatchewan Correspondent

PRINCE ALBERT, SASK.

Throughout the pandemic, many Mennonite church congregations have faced the challenges of lower attendance, shrinking budgets and uneasy questions about the future.

Denominations across Canada report lower attendance and engagement in church than in the past. Although the headlines about the future of the church seem to be filled with doom and gloom, for three Saskatchewan pastors, the good news about small churches is very evident.

Eyebrow Mennonite

Sharon Schultz has served as the pastor of Eyebrow Mennonite Church in Eyebrow for nearly 18 years. Her congregation has 30 people, ranging from infants to people in their 70s.

“For me, there’s always life, energy and hope in our church, no matter how many people are there on Sundays,” she says. “Eyebrow Mennonite is really seen as the community church in Eyebrow. There used to be three churches in town, but

right now we’re the only active church. We host a community baseball game and campfire in the spring to connect with our neighbours. People who don’t even go to our church call me pastor, which is such a blessing.

“The thing about a small church is that everyone feels like family,” she continues. “Everyone is important. The church certainly has been our family over the past 17 years. Our biological families are all far away, and so the love of our church family has been so important.”

Aberdeen Mennonite

Curtis Wiens is pastor of Aberdeen Mennonite Church, a congregation of 40 people. He knows well the family-like atmosphere of small churches, having grown up attending another small church in rural Saskatchewan.

“One of the really good things about growing up in a small church is the amount of intergenerational relationships that take place,” Wiens says. “I was friendly with people of all ages in my home church and, looking back on it, everyone at the church was involved in some way in my life. We all worshipped together in the same room. We didn’t have any segmentation of age groups that often has to happen in larger churches. That intergenerational integration is so valuable.”

Many of the things that can make small-church life daunting

can also be some of its greatest strengths. “For better or worse, there is no anonymity in small churches,” he says. “People can’t really be inconspicuous, even when they’re absent. If someone isn’t there on Sunday mornings, people notice that. Our culture is very much about independence and being an island unto ourselves, but community requires integration. It can be a lot harder for someone to just ‘dip a toe’ into church life with a smaller congregation.”

“Small churches also have the best potlucks,” he says with a smile. “You might think bigger would be better, because there would be more variety at potlucks, but at small churches people really take ownership of the food. Just top notch.”

Warman and Pleasant Point Mennonite

For Len Rempel, who is the pastor of Warman Mennonite Church and Pleasant Point Mennonite Church, located near Clavet, the space that is created by fewer people can make room for new spiritual possibilities.

“In smaller churches, there’s often less formality, which can open things up for the Spirit to work,” Rempel says. It’s harder to be a spectator in a small church, and there’s often more opportunities to be a participant. It’s important for our churches to celebrate their smallness. We don’t need to get lost in thoughts of who we used to be, but we can embrace who we are now and watch what God can do.”

While a downturn in numbers may sometimes be viewed as the beginning of the end, he sees it differently. “A small congregation is not the precursor to no congregation. The church is not going to disappear, although it may look different in the future. This is God’s church, and God can do what God wants.” ❧



Eyebrow Mennonite Church members participate in a sunrise Easter morning service.

Heading the call to ministry

By Jennifer Konkle
Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO, ONT.

The master of theological studies (MTS) program at Conrad Grebel University College draws students from a variety of backgrounds and faith traditions. Two current students, Kathryn Cressman and Laurel Rounds Fretz, joined Mennonite churches as adults and both felt a gradual pull toward ministry within their home churches.

“Through volunteer work at my church and reflecting on the energy I felt after leading in various capacities, I decided to consider ministry,” says Cressman, who originally trained as a teacher. “My spiritual director helped with this discernment, and I felt affirmation from many in my church family.”

“I have been drawn to ministry since I was a teenager active in my United Church,” says Rounds Fretz, “but high school guidance counsellors don’t push you in that direction.” As she became more active in her Bloomingdale Mennonite Church congregation, she learned that all three pastors there had attended Grebel.

Both students found joy and purpose serving in progressively larger leadership roles at their churches.

“For the past 10 years I have been involved on various committees at Nith Valley Mennonite Church, predominately chairing our worship ministry team,” says Cressman. “I truly enjoy leading.”

She regularly leads worship on Sunday mornings, has led women’s Bible studies,



**Kathryn
Cressman**



**Laurel Rounds
Fretz**

and was part of her church team that worked with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada in the ReLearning Community initiative.

“Since starting my MTS degree, my confidence has grown in my biblical knowledge and excitement to share what I’m learning,” she says. She also completed a Supervised Experience in Ministry placement at her church, which, she says, allowed her to “test the waters of ministry in a safe and familiar place.”

“I was very active in church as a youth sponsor and song leader,” Rounds Fretz says. “Then I took on worship-leader duties and offered some meditations at Christmas and other times.”

Both women have started writing sermons in various capacities and continue to participate in worship planning.

“It was actually working on a sermon on . . . Philemon that pushed me to apply to the MTS program,” says Rounds Fretz. “I knew nothing about Paul’s letter to Philemon, so had to do some research, and I really enjoyed the process.” She currently serves on the elder team at her church.

“I have learned a lot about myself and felt affirmed in a call to some sort of ministry,” says Cressman, who only has a few courses left to finish her degree. “I have felt encouraged to be creative in what that could look like. It has been very valuable to study the Old and New testaments, as well as taking an exegesis course,

to have a stronger biblical foundation. It has also been valuable for me to study in a Mennonite institution. I was not raised Mennonite but now claim that identity, and studying at Grebel has made it feel more personal.”

“I see a formal ministry role in my future at some point,” she says, “but for now I feel content keeping this degree in my back pocket while continuing to be a stay-at-home mom on our family’s dairy farm. While the MTS degree may not be put to use career-wise right away, it will be helpful for my lay-leadership and my own personal faith growth.”

With plans to become a pastor or work with seniors in a chaplaincy position, Rounds Fretz is at the beginning of her degree and she especially looks forward to learning pastoral-care skills. “It is not a skill that is easily learned in a lay capacity. We all learn to care for each other as members of a faith community, but the pastoral role that is specific to the pastor of a church is something I look forward to learning.” ✎



!Explore: A Theological Program for Youth

In July 2022, participants (grades 10 to 12) can attend Mennonite World Conference in Indonesia with other Indonesian youth, explore theological questions and lived faith together, and visit parts of beautiful Java Island.

Sign up by Dec. 31!

Learn more: ambbs.ca/explore

**‘I have been drawn to ministry since I was a teenager active in my United Church, but high school guidance counsellors don’t push you in that direction.’
(Laurel Rounds Fretz)**



ONLINE NOW!

at canadianmennonite.org



MCC pulls staff from Ukraine

Mennonite Central Committee evacuated its North American staff from Ukraine more than a week before Russia began military operations against the country.

canadianmennonite.org/shalay



Prayer for the war in Ukraine

"God... we pray to you when hope is scarce as our world convulses with the horror of war," Carol Penner writes. "Help us believe that justice will prevail..."

canadianmennonite.org/ukraineprayer



Communitas wins non-profit of the year award

The Communitas Supportive Care Society in Abbotsford, B.C., was named Non-Profit Organization of the Year at the Business Excellence Awards last month.

canadianmennonite.org/cscsaward



Winter lectures address global social concerns

Conrad Grebel University College is hosting two lectures this month focused on addressing global social concerns and raising awareness about oppression.

canadianmennonite.org/grebellectures

Staff change

Pastoral transition in B.C.



Rod Suderman began Feb. 1 as lead pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C. He earned a bachelor of theology degree at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, a bachelor of arts degree in religious studies at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, and a master of divinity degree in the faculty of theology at the University of Winnipeg. He has pastored at Aberdeen (Sask.) Mennonite Church and, most recently, at First Mennonite Church of Saskatoon. He and his wife Kathi also served in Beijing, China, for 16 years as regional representatives with Mennonite Central Committee, managing programs in China and in both North and South Korea. They are the parents of three adult children.

—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

NOTICE

51st Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service Annual Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the members of the Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service (CMPS) for the year ending December 31, 2021, is scheduled for **May 7, 4:00 p.m. PT by Zoom**.

CMPS is the non-profit corporation that publishes *Canadian Mennonite*. The agenda includes receiving reports from the board of directors, the 2021 financial statements, and election of new directors. The meeting is public. Voting is limited to CMPS members (individuals who donated at least \$25 in 2021 and who register in advance), and board members who represent the regional and nationwide Mennonite Church.

The board of directors as appointed by Mennonite Church Canada and the regional churches includes:

- **MC Canada:** Henry Krause (British Columbia), Annika Krause (Quebec), Aaron Penner (Manitoba), Rod Wiens (Saskatchewan)
- **MC British Columbia:** Eun Young Kwon
- **MC Alberta:** Arthur Koop
- **MC Saskatchewan:** Larry Epp
- **MC Manitoba:** Ken Reddig
- **MC Eastern Canada:** Karen Heese
- **Elected by CMPS:** Carl DeGurse (Manitoba), Lois Epp (Alberta), Kathryn Lymburner (Ontario)

To register as a member for the annual meeting, please email office@canadianmennonite.org by **April 30, 2022**, noting "*CMPS annual meeting*" in the subject line.

The annual report and audited financial statements will be posted at www.canadianmennonite.org, after the meeting.

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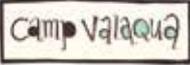
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giving voice to what we've seen & heard



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For youth ages 12-18. Visit the website below for the latest information and updates as the Youth Gathering takes shape. Contact youth@mennonitechurch.ca for more details.

mennonitechurch.ca/amplify




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Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg

What makes graduate studies programs unique at Canadian Mennonite University?

Valerie Smith, associate registrar for graduate studies, says that “being rooted in the Anabaptist tradition, we specialize in peacebuilding and reconciliation-oriented programs, even in the ways we teach business. There is plenty of space for diversity within the programs, creating conversations that cross disciplinary boundaries. Dialogue is one of our greatest strengths.”

Studying in the Master of Arts in Peacebuilding and Collaborative Development (MA-PCD) program, Evy Klassen explains that the flexibility of the program, especially during pandemic times, has enabled her to study from British Columbia. For Klassen, courses such as “Reconciling Stories: Indigenous Laws and Lands” and “Models for Conflict Transformation” have inspired her to develop a possible practicum project in her province.

Regarding the MA-PCD program, Smith explains: “The school of peacebuilding draws

in an incredibly diverse group of people, many of whom have travelled halfway across the world. The range of the people in the program is astonishing. With skilled instructors, this makes for a unique and powerful classroom experience.”

Building on well over 25 years of experience in delivering undergraduate programs in conflict resolution, peace and international development studies, the MA-PCD degree blends these core themes, designed both for practitioners and for those pursuing academic studies. While it bridges the fields of peacebuilding/conflict resolution studies and development/transformational justice studies, it gives close attention to religious dimensions, theological foundations and interfaith relations.

The program offers a flexible curriculum to best meet the varied needs, goals and interests of students, and allows entry points at three times during the year (May-June, September, January).

For more information, visit cmu.ca/mapcd.



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Schools Directory featuring the Collaborative MBA and CMU's MA-PCD programs

'Do their values align with yours?'

CMU business alumna protects data of millions at innovative tech company

Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) alumna Tomisin Bolorunduro moved to Vancouver, a city where she knew no one, during the pandemic. But what she moved for was worth it: a job at Trulioo, an innovative tech start-up and global leader in online identity verification and data privacy.

In today's digital world, one can do almost everything online, from opening a bank account and buying cryptocurrency to renting a house. All of these transactions require identity verification and data protection to ensure they're safe and legitimate.

As a compliance analyst in data privacy for Trulioo, Bolorunduro reviews ISO certifications, researches global data privacy regulations, and leads employee training to ensure compliance with the highest and most current information-security standards.

Bolorunduro graduated from CMU's Master of Business Administration program in 2020 after attaining master's degrees in banking finance and corporate law.

The information-security world was new to her, but she wanted to expand her skills and work at the cutting edge of business and law. The course "Information and Data Analytics" at CMU turned out to be essential preparation for her current work. "That course exposed me to how important data is in the life we're living right now," she says.

CMU's Redekop School of Business taught her to ask questions like, "Who am I? What do I stand for?"

Craig Martin, assistant professor of business at CMU, was one of her references for



Tomisin Bolorunduro

the job.

"One of the first questions he asked was, 'Do their values align with yours?'" she says. "That was something the CMU culture particularly imbues . . . that was really important."

It led Bolorunduro to a job with an amazing work culture, where each day brings new challenges and growth.

For more information about the CMU MBA program, visit cmu.ca/mba.

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/// Calendar

Nationwide

July 29-Aug. 1: MC Canada Gathering 2022, in Edmonton. Theme: "We declare what we have seen and heard." Information about Gathering 2022 will be regularly updated at mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022.

July 31-Aug. 4: MC Canada National Youth Gathering at Camp Valaqua, Water Valley, Alta. Theme: "Amplify! Giving voice to what we have seen and heard." Information will be regularly updated at mennonitechurch.ca/amplify.

British Columbia

April 2,3: Lenten Vespers with the Abendmusik Choir: (2) at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (3) St. Philip's Anglican Church, Vancouver. Both services at 7:30 p.m. Donations go to the Menno Hall project at the University of British Columbia.

Alberta

March 19: MC Alberta annual delegate sessions, to be held virtually on Zoom. Theme: "Encountering, embracing, embodying Christ in the world."
March 20: All MC Alberta worship, to be held virtually on Zoom. Hosted by First Mennonite Church, Calgary.

Manitoba

Until April 2: Artist Jane Gateson presents "Daily diaries by the Assiniboine River and Lake Winnipeg" exhibit, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg. Opening reception on March 4, at 7:30 p.m. Artist talks/tours on March 12 and 15, at 1:30 p.m.
Ongoing: Join an MC Manitoba gratitude group every second week for six weeks on Zoom, for 40 minutes of gathering with others in encouragement and sharing gratitude. Leader: Laura Funk, MC Manitoba's spiritual director-in-residence. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2YbxzRf>.

Ontario

March 14-May 6: "Voices Together: A Celebration of Art and Music," the Grebel Gallery, Waterloo. Featuring more than a dozen works of art found in Voices Together, the exhibition offers visitors a more intimate view of the art found in the new Mennonite hymnal. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3GZ2aJE>.
March 19: Conrad Grebel University College and UWaterloo host a virtual open house for future students, at 9 a.m. For more information, or to register, visit <https://bit.ly/3sfl33K>.
March 24: Conrad Grebel University College presents its 2022 Sawatsky Visiting Scholar lecture, at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Regina Shands Stoltzfus, director of Goshen (Ind.) College's peace, justice and conflict studies program. Theme: "Resistance strategies: Equipping ourselves and our communities for long-term justice work." For more information and to register, visit grebel.ca/sawatsky.
April 29-30: MC Eastern Canada hybrid annual church gathering (on Zoom and in person at Redeemer University, Ancaster). Reflection on the parable of the mustard seed in Luke 13. (29) worship celebration from 7 to 9 p.m. (30) church business including the regional church's updated identity and mission statements, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Registration will

/// Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



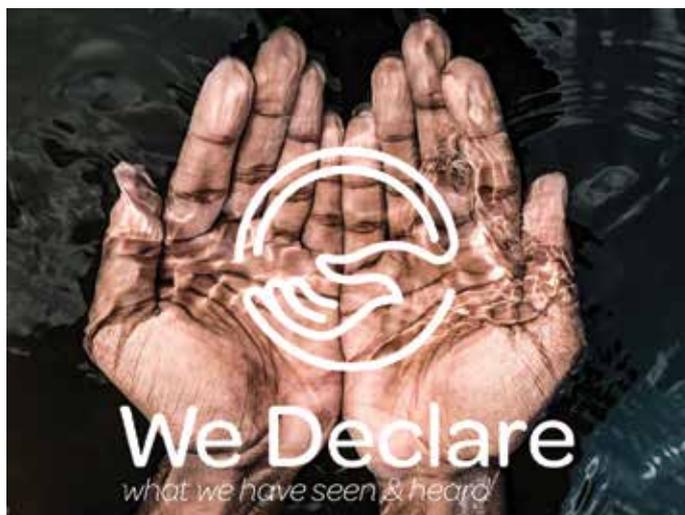
Employment Opportunity Vice-Principal

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate is seeking a **Vice-Principal** to join our dynamic and dedicated team to lead our Mennonite faith-based independent school.

The Vice-Principal works closely with the Principal to lead and shape WMC school culture, and gives leadership to addressing the day-to-day needs of teaching staff and the student body. It is the responsibility of the Vice-Principal to keep the educational program of the school running smoothly to facilitate the Principal's primary focus on the strategic direction of the school and strategic relationships within its supporting constituency. The Vice-Principal directly supervises the administrative assistants working in the school's front office, and serves as the Acting Principal when the Principal is away from the school for business or personal reasons.

See the full job description on the school website at westgatemennonite.ca.

Applications must be submitted by **March 21, 2022** to the Westgate office care of Lori Hildebrandt Penner at lh@westgatemennonite.org.



Gathering 2022 Edmonton, Alberta July 29 – August 1, 2022

Join us on Treaty 6 territory as we re-examine what it means to tell the Good News and bear witness to the Gospel of peace.

mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022



Mennonite Church Canada
Our nationwide community of faith

begin sometime in March.

May 12-15: "Indigenous-Mennonite encounters in time and place" academic conference and community education event, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. The event will include academic presentations, community storytelling, artistic offerings, and both Indigenous and Mennonite ceremonies. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2UhmHu>.

May 27, 28: New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale, in person at the New Hamburg (Ont.) Fairgrounds. For updates sign up at nhmrs.com/subscribe.

International

July 1-4: Mennonite World Conference's Global Youth Summit, in Salatiga, Indonesia. Theme: "Life in the Spirit: Learn. Serve. Worship." To learn more, visit mwc-cmm.org/gys.

July 5-10: Mennonite World Conference's global assembly, in Semarang, Indonesia. Theme: "Following Jesus together across barriers." For more information, visit mwc-cmm.org/assembly/indonesia-2022.

To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by email to calendar@canadianmennonite.org. For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.





**Employment Opportunity
Facilities Manager
Camp Assiniboia**

Camps with Meaning
Assiniboia • Koinonia

Camps with Meaning invites applications for the full-time permanent position of **Facilities Manager** at Camp Assiniboia, just west of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The Facilities Manager is responsible for keeping Camp Assiniboia's site and facilities in good working condition in order to provide excellent hospitality to guests and the summer camp program. The Facilities Manager oversees the Maintenance Volunteer program, provides supervision to maintenance staff, performs routine maintenance of facilities and equipment, and participates in planning both small and large development projects.

For the full job description, visit: www.campswithmeaning.org/news

Send inquiries to David Hogue, Resident Manager, at 204-864-2159. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Applicants should send a resume along with the names of three references, in confidence to: assiniboia@campswithmeaning.org.



Bethel Mennonite Church

**Employment Opportunities
Associate Pastor
Lead Pastor**

Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, MB is an urban, multigenerational congregation inviting applications for two positions:

- 1. One-year term, half-time Associate Pastor** focusing on the senior (>65 years) members of the congregation starting April 1, 2022. Candidates should send a cover letter and CV to **Waldy Ens** at enswal@mymts.net. Processing of applications starts March 21, 2022.
- 2. Full-time Lead Pastor** with a strong Anabaptist theology as well as ability to engage the congregation through worship and preaching starting end of 2022. This person will have strong administrative skills and the ability to work with and lead a multi-member pastoral team. Pastoral experience, along with an MDiv or equivalent is preferred. Candidates should send a cover letter and CV to **Michael Dyck** at michael.dyck@mymts.net. Applications will be processed until the position is filled.

Information on BMC may be found at www.bethelmennonite.ca.

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Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
April 4	March 21
April 18 <i>Focus on Books & Resources</i>	April 4
May 2	April 18
May 16 <i>Focus on Mental Health</i>	May 2
May 30	May 16
June 13	May 30
June 27	June 13
July 11 <i>Digital Issue</i>	June 27
July 25	July 11
Aug. 8 <i>Digital Issue</i>	July 25

Saskatoon cyclist encourages year-round active transit

By Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

Winter BYXE Week, an event designed to promote winter cycling in Saskatoon, was held from Feb. 14 to 21. Saskatoon residents were encouraged to try cycling for winter transportation, exercise and leisure.

For Stephanie Siemens, two-wheeled transit in the city is a year-round passion.

“I participated in BYXE Week but, for me, it was about adding some fun to what I already do every day,” says Siemens, who attends Osler Mennonite Church.

“Cycling is my main mode of transportation. I do own a car, but I haven’t plated it in years.”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEPHANIE SIEMENS

Stephanie Siemens snaps a selfie while cycling along the South Saskatchewan River.

(Left) Stephanie Siemens takes in the prairie scenery on one of her cycling adventures.



She first became interested in cycling when she lived in the Netherlands as part of the InterMenno program.

“In the Netherlands, cycling is seen as such a valid, viable option for getting around, and when I moved back to Saskatchewan, I wanted to try doing it more.”

Currently, Siemens cycles her way around Saskatoon to get to her two jobs and her university classes. Her longest one-way commute takes 15 to 18 minutes in the summer, and a bit longer in the winter.

“I would encourage people to give it a try,” she says. “Start small, set some easy goals, or go out with an experienced cyclist at first. Try starting in the summer, not winter. My hope would be that we can see year-round cycling as an accessible thing to do. It’s not some big feat.” ❧