

CANADIAN MENNONITE

June 13, 2022 Volume 26 Number 12



Unsettling stories of darkness, healing and hope

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EDITORIAL

Responding, faithfully

BY TOBI THIESSEN
Publisher



What is a faithful response to the news in the world around us?

Canadian Mennonite posed this question in our annual spring fundraising appeal. Each year *CM* needs to raise \$150,000 on top of advertising and subscription revenue to ensure that people across the church, and newcomers online, have access to the important church stories of today.

Thank you for your positive response. One supporter wrote, "Issue after issue, the *CM* consistently poses relevant questions and challenging topics that relate to our faith. There's a wide range of viewpoints and plenty of encouragement to listen and respond with respect. . . . [T]hank you. I don't need to feel safe and snug in my own little world. I need to hear the myriad Mennonite voices from across Canada."

The spring appeal letter mentioned climate change and Indigenous-settler reconciliation as two major issues facing Canadians. For Mennonites in this country, is there a faith-based response that differs from a secular approach? How do we learn from, challenge and support one another on these issues?

Canadian Mennonite addresses important topics through news articles and opinion pieces in the magazine and on our website. We want to do more to foster healthy conversation across the church.

On May 25, *CM* launched the first in a series of online events to discuss current issues in the church and the world. Moderated by Aaron Epp, the event

featured three guests discussing their efforts to reduce harmful climate impacts and how the broader church can be involved. The next two events will take place in the autumn. Each online event will be supported by magazine articles to lay the groundwork for a healthy conversation. See Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe's report on our first event on page 23.

Indigenous-settler reconciliation is another topic of ongoing concern; the October 5 online event will focus on it. On pages 15 and 16 of this issue, Scott Morton Ninomiya writes about the Indigenous-Mennonite Encounters conference that recently took place at Conrad Grebel University College. He reports that the conference included Indigenous perspectives about Mennonite history in Canada. While it can be discomfiting to hear such stories, Morton Ninomiya observes that they help Mennonites find new, collaborative ways to work towards reconciliation today.

Also in this issue, we face head-on the Anabaptist principle of nonviolence, a position that can be difficult to hold as we witness Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Mennonites renounce violence and war in any country. Canada, generally, responds to global violence by offering humanitarian aid and welcoming refugees displaced by conflict. Mennonites, generally, agree with government efforts in this regard and support international aid programs and the settlement of refugees here. Canada has also sent military aid to Ukraine. We do not want Ukrainians to suffer, but how does the Canadian government's military

response fit with Mennonites who follow Jesus' call to be peacemakers?

U.S. author Robert C. Johansen provided the feature article for this issue. As co-founder of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, Johansen says that Anabaptist peacebuilders need to advocate for the rule of international law instead of military might. On page 20, Will Braun offers a Canadian perspective, putting the spotlight on Canadian military spending. Braun asks what it means to be a peace church today.

We thank you for reading and supporting *Canadian Mennonite* as we respond to the news from a faith-based perspective.

CMPS annual general meeting

On May 7, Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service held its fifty-first AGM, once again via video conference.

Henry Krause of Langley, B.C., was elected chairperson for his sixth and final year. Also elected to the executive committee are Kathryn Lymburner of Stouffville, Ont., as vice-chair; Aaron Penner of Winnipeg as treasurer; and Annika Krause, pastor of Montreal Mennonite Fellowship, as secretary.

Alex Tiessen of Rosthern, Sask., was appointed to the board to represent Mennonite Church Saskatchewan. He replaced Larry Epp, also of Rosthern, who had served for six years. Mennonite Church Eastern Canada re-affirmed Karen Heese (Stouffville, Ont.) to serve on the board.

Several directors continue their terms: Eun Young Kwon (Surrey, B.C.), Lois Epp (Calgary), Arthur Koop (Edson, Alta.), Carl DeGurse (Winnipeg), Ken Reddig (Pinawa, Man.) and Kathryn Lymburner.

With regret, we acknowledge the loss of Rod Wiens (Herschel, Sask.) who passed away on March 26, 2022. The vacancy he leaves on the 12-member board has not yet been filled. ❧



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Composer-cellist Cris Derksen and hoop dancer Myranda Spence perform at the “ka-nîmihitocik: They Who Are Dancing” concert that was part of the Indigenous-Mennonite Encounters conference, held at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., from May 12 to 15. See story and more photos on pages 15-16.

PHOTO BY JEN KONKLE / CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

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The co-founder of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies weighs in on the question, “How might an Anabaptist respond to the Russian invasion of Ukraine?”



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FEATURE

What is a Christlike response to overwhelming military might?

Or, how might an Anabaptist respond to the Russian invasion of Ukraine?

By Robert C. Johansen

As Christians rooted in the Anabaptist tradition, we care deeply about every human being on Earth. We no doubt have felt solidarity with Ukrainians as they struggle against violence and injustice from military invasion. Engaging in constant prayer and giving abundant contributions of spiritual and material aid to victims are very important. Still, we long for doing more to confront the daily monstrosities of military aggression and to support the human beings who face deadly violence.

What else can we do?

We can more deeply explore how following Jesus might contribute, not to unrealistic hopes of melting the hardened hearts of today's pharaohs, but to realistic possibilities for changing our way of living in today's international system, because that system made Russian President Vladimir Putin possible, it made the war in Ukraine likely, and now it makes the prompt achievement of an equitable peace difficult and unlikely.

If this war could have been prevented through non-military means, as is certainly plausible, we have a duty to God and to Ukrainians and Russians, whose blood is being shed, to re-examine our way of doing international relations. If we view complicated military, political and economic relations among nations primarily through the lens of military logic, we will be inclined to believe conventional wisdom that the only way to stop aggressive military power is with defensive military power.

On the other hand, if we view international relations through an Anabaptist lens of following Jesus in responding to imperial military power, we discover some other, more promising measures for addressing overwhelming military might.

If implemented, these would enable peacebuilders to be both ethically faithful and politically responsible, rather than to be content, as many citizens feel they are forced to be, with emphasizing only one approach.

This "following Jesus approach" can be summarized in five statements:

- **First, Anabaptists believe** that it is more important to follow Jesus than to follow the government, any government, if their paths diverge.

The basis for this is Jesus' explanation: "*My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here*" (John 18:36).

Yet, he also said we are to live out his kingdom here and now, in this world. This may be one reason our parents taught us: "Be in the world (acting now), but not of the world (not imitating our society)."

Jesus apparently came to this position during his 40 days in the wilderness while facing serious temptations to assume political power, as described in Luke 4:1-13 and Matthew 4:1-11. Jesus responded with a clear "no" to the devil's tempting offer to put magnificent political power in Jesus' hands if only he would scale back the



PIXABAY PHOTO BY PDBVERLAG

As an example, Anabaptists can aid interested Ukrainians (and Russians) to develop effective measures of civil resistance to discourage and possibly reverse Russian occupation.

reign of God as the highest authority in his life.

If you and I follow Jesus in resisting this devilish temptation to become attached to political power, we would give up our attachment to today's militarized balance-of-power system, an international system that is far more prone to war than necessary.

- **Second, Jesus** never favoured killing anyone, so neither should we. We should love our neighbours as ourselves, and also love our enemies. This means, at the least, not killing them.

- **Third, loving** and not killing others does not mean that we simply allow violent, evil conduct to occur, or that we become a doormat for ruthless people like Putin to walk all over us.

On the contrary, we should strongly

resist misconduct and injustice by supporting an expanded rule of law and overcoming evil with good (Romans 12:21). In a nutshell, Anabaptists oppose the violence of war as strongly as they can without using violence to counter it, because that seems in accord with what Jesus did.

As an example, Anabaptists can aid interested Ukrainians (and Russians) to develop effective measures of civil resistance to discourage and possibly reverse Russian occupation. Ukrainians might adapt some measures from the experience in neighbouring Poland, where Lech Walesa and the Solidarity movement ousted a communist government and authoritarian military in 1989.

As Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan have shown, in *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*, research comparing

all extensive violent and nonviolent resistance campaigns in the 20th century, civil resistance—although no panacea—actually has worked better than military resistance in ousting oppressive rulers, especially when a large percentage of citizens agree on the goal.

- **Fourth, in** trying to follow Jesus consistently, Anabaptists oppose all military aggression by anyone, including by the American government, if and when it occurs, as it did when the United States attacked Iraq in 2003. That, too, was a “war of choice,” illegal and ill-advised. The two wars are not equivalent, but they are both acts of military aggression, brought on by our international system, and deaf to scriptural warnings against becoming attached to political and military power.

• **Fifth, Anabaptists** reject killing because they understand that use of violence tends to generate a cycle of further hatred and violence, sometimes erupting years later. Previous wars and political violence in Eastern Europe surely made the current war more likely.

Jesus also seemed intent on preventing violent acts from leading to a cycle of more violence: “Those who take the sword will perish by the sword.”

When Jesus faced betrayal and the prospect of being killed, he and his disciples did not fight or kill anyone to try to help Jesus escape or to save his life, even though he was innocent of wrongdoing and did not deserve to die. So, the familiar argument that we should be willing to kill others in order to protect the innocent seems not to have been a compelling argument for Jesus.

In sum, Anabaptists follow Jesus by resisting the temptation to become attached to worldly power and by not killing to oppose adversaries or to express compassion for friends. Let us now look briefly at two concerns that arise from following Jesus in not killing others:

• **First, would this** approach allow ruthless people like Putin simply to take over, using violence to do so? This would not be likely, because contemporary Anabaptist peacebuilders support efforts to replace the order-maintaining role of military force with the rule of international law and global institutions designed to prevent war and gross violation of human rights.

Once these could be established, there should be far less danger for people who would live in a system of enhanced global governance than for those who now live in the existing international system, which has enabled the destruction of Ukraine and risks even worse destruction with the possibility of nuclear war and the current certainty of melting polar ice caps.

There are not enough peacebuilders in the world today, including Anabaptists and others, to assert sufficient



PIXABAY PHOTO BY DANGRAFART

Sadly, it is too late for either a nonviolent approach or a more violent approach with a no-fly zone to quickly restore Ukrainian rights. It is impossible for any approach to take away damage to a house after it has been burning for some time.

political pressure on foot-dragging governments to establish the global governance necessary for dependable peacekeeping but, if and when there are enough, global governance probably could be realized.

• **Second, critics often** test Anabaptists by asking: If a less violence-prone, global governance approach really could work, can you show how it would solve problems right now in Ukraine?

Sadly, it is too late for either a nonviolent approach or a more violent approach with a no-fly zone to quickly restore Ukrainian rights. It is impossible for any approach to take away damage to a house after it has been burning for some time.

If one really wants to prevent a house from burning, then one should build a fireproof structure that might use concrete to construct unburnable walls and clay tiles on the roof. Similarly, if one really wants to prevent war and

invasions like the Ukrainians have suffered, then plans for dependably maintaining peace need to be built before fire begins.

These would include peacebuilding initiatives, such as strengthened international law and multilateral law-enforcing institutions, verifiable and enforceable arms control and disarmament measures, international economic integration and preplanned sanctions to constrain outlier governments, and detailed worldwide arrangements to resist any illegal usurpation of power and stop initiatives toward military aggression.

Humanity has not yet done these things because many decision-makers, especially in the great powers and the highly dissatisfied states, are too focused on military preparedness as the main instrument to maintain their national security, rather than building human security for all. Yet the preparations for war, with which we are familiar, do not

produce nearly the same fireproofing results as would preparations to maintain peace, with which we are not familiar.

Within countries, we keep peace through a legal system with help from representative government, checks and balances, and carefully overseen institutions for law enforcement. We could keep peace internationally in analogous ways, but we do not. Not because it would be impossible, but because we have lacked willingness to put such a peaceful legal system in place. We see a tiny part of what could be done by observing the influence of economic sanctions and international law in resisting aggression in Ukraine now.

How effective these may turn out to be will be determined by how seriously and strictly the United States and other allies implement them, maintain them, and relate their squeeze to bringing conduct into conformity with existing laws against committing aggression, killing civilians and changing national boundaries through the use of force.

For peacebuilding to succeed, more people need to understand, build faith in, and implement peacebuilding initiatives that can effectively enforce international law. Also, citizens need to redirect the priorities of many decision-makers who, as Luke indicated that the devil understands, are enamoured with their own political power.

Skeptics of Jesus' way of love including law have long felt certain that it would not be practical or politically responsible. The Zealots, for example, hoped that the Messiah would be a great military leader who would free the Jewish homeland from Roman occupation. As the military aggressors in Jesus' neighbourhood, the Romans played a role analogous to that now being attempted by the Russian army in Ukraine. Yet Jesus did not endorse the Zealots' violent insurrection against the Roman military aggressors.

We can learn from understanding that, throughout most of nearly 3,000 years of human history, people habitually asked, "Who shall be our king?" Humanity struggled for some years

before an answer to that question became clear, and democratic institutions were very widely established to replace monarchs. But eventually, most people have come to believe that powerful kings are no longer a good idea, even though there were a few relatively good ones.

Early Anabaptists also thought about the appropriate role for a king. Their position was: "God is our only king. We recognize no other final authority over us." That conclusion was a secondary reason for opposition to infant baptism: It was a marker of citizenship and of loyalty to the prince.

As long wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Vietnam and elsewhere have demonstrated, war has lost much of its ability to produce good political outcomes, even against weaker military opponents. This may yet be demonstrated in Ukraine, because, win or lose, Russian officials have surely undermined their goal of bringing the Ukrainians willingly or joyfully into a positive relationship with Russia.

Peacebuilders of diverse theological

persuasions and faith traditions are coming to believe that, if enough people choose, they can model a way of living that shows how to loosen human attachment to the power of armies, how to transform the existing militarized international system, and how to build a rule of law to prevent war and to serve the "least of these." For us to make a deeper commitment to live as such a transformative people could be one part of our calling to respond to the violence in Ukraine. ❧



Robert C. Johansen is professor emeritus of political science and peace studies at the University of Notre Dame and co-founder of the Kroc Institute for

International Peace Studies. His most recent book is Where the Evidence Leads: A Realistic Strategy for Peace and Human Security (Oxford University Press, 2021). A version of this article was published in the May 2022 issue of Messenger, a publication of the Church of the Brethren. Reprinted with permission.

❧ For discussion

1. What emotions has the war in Ukraine evoked in you? What are the images or stories that you will remember? What actions have you taken in response to the war? What is the appropriate action for Canada and other western countries?
2. Robert Johansen says it is plausible that the war in Ukraine "could have been prevented through non-military means." Do you agree? What does he mean by his phrase that we could "view international relations through an Anabaptist lens"?
3. Johansen suggests that "the rule of international law and global institutions designed to prevent war and gross violation of human rights" could replace military force to maintain order in the world. Do you agree? What would need to happen to make military violence obsolete?
4. Where have you seen peacebuilding at work in the world? How should peacebuilders measure whether or not they have been effective? What can Mennonites in Canada do to "loosen human attachment to the power of armies"?

—By Barb Draper

See related Peace Theology resources at
www.commonword.ca/go/1351

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OPINION

/// Readers write

✉ **Point: When words don't make sense, conversation is at risk**

Re: "God didn't create you wrong" feature, Feb. 21, page 4.

The only challenge I have with the gender-identity conversation is the use of pronouns that, for most people, are plural, but are intended as singular by others. They/them/their, for me, doesn't make sense in a conversation.

As an affirming person, I am sure I can learn to use plural pronouns for single individuals; however, I wonder if we can't come up with a new pronoun that would refer to individuals who fall outside of the cisgender world?

I understand that the world is a harsh place for many people who fall outside the cisgender world, and I want to do as much as I can to make this world a kinder, gentler place for all people.

The easier we can make it for cisgender people to understand and communicate with non-cisgender people, the sooner they will be able to fully engage with all people in a meaningful way. Understanding or accepting people who fall outside of the mainstream are two very different things. One may accept unconditionally, yet not understand.

Words matter. When words or terms are used that our brains have difficulty synthesizing, our ability to understand is diminished. It would be best to make this as easy as possible for all stakeholders.

As a cisgender person, it is difficult/awkward to refer to one person as more than one person.

CHARLIE SMITH, ALLAN, SASK.

I want to do as much as I can to make this world a kinder, gentler place for all people.

✉ **Counterpoint: Allyship requires work**

I'm grateful to hear allies asking questions about being more inclusive of LGBTQ+ persons.

This issue isn't as easy as finding new pronouns or being grammatically correct. Other gender-neutral pronouns, like xe/xem/xyr or ze/hir/hirs, do exist, and many people who use these experience hostility or the refusal of others to learn them.

In contrast, there is the singular they, which has been in use longer than the singular you, and was used in Shakespeare's works. Language continues to change like it has always done. While singular they can be confusing, it is already commonly used—even among non-LGBTQ+ persons. Try this example: "Someone forgot their jacket." "Oh, I hope they find it." Many people find it hard to use the singular they in reference to LGBTQ+ people but already use it in similar conversations. This question often becomes a way to undermine or derail conversations of LGBTQ+ welcome.

Allyship has always been about learning new things, respecting others, and being willing to examine biases and habits. The use of the singular they is another place where allies are asked to similarly push themselves.

Many people who use the singular they hear this question as implying that rigid language rules and unwillingness to learn new things are more important than LGBTQ+ mental health and dignity.

Thank you for being willing to push yourself, in order to stop giving the message that arbitrary language rules are more important than trans persons' well-being.

STEPH CHANDLER BURNS, KITCHENER, ONT.

The writer is a queer pastor and theologian with a master of theological studies degree from Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.

✉ **Couple share their pain of losing a son to suicide**

Re: "My cousin couldn't manage the pain" reflection, May 16, page 30.

Amy Rinner Waddell's cousin got it right. Pain clinics are a waste of time and money.

Our son, whose middle name is also Richard, went through all the sessions recommended by Work Safe B.C. after being injured in a logging accident. He battled nine years with Work Safe B.C to get the

appropriate help and compensation.

He had a wonderful wife, who cared for him and tried to keep up a normal household as much as possible. He loved his family but chose to end his pain by ending his life, believing that they would have a better life.

He didn't live to see his daughter become a very successful woman and marry a wonderful man. He didn't live to see his special-needs son become a Special Olympics athlete in powerlifting. He missed these memorable family experiences.

Living with non-stop pain and no hope for getting better or improving your condition can only really be understood by a person in similar circumstances.

DICK AND MARGARET HILDEBRANDT,
CAMPBELL RIVER, B.C.

The Hildebrandts are members of United Mennonite Church of Black Creek, B.C.

✉ **What is the real ‘division between us and God’?**

Re: “Christ in you” column, May 2, page 10.

I am writing about Pastor Troy Watson’s statements regarding our oneness with God and what he considers is the only division between us and God.

Isaiah 59:2 tells us that sin separates us from God. We are separated from God until we repent and believe in Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross to pay for our sins. As II Corinthians 5:21 puts it: *“He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.”*

Watson also expressed, according to Ephesians 3: “The mystery of the Gospel is that we are all one with God and humanity.”

I think it’s important to note that, in the Book of Ephesians, Paul was talking to a body of believers who received Jesus as their Saviour by placing their faith and trust in him. Paul says: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9). In light of that, Paul was able to tell the Ephesian church that “we are all one” because they were a body of believers who were united in Christ.

I can’t think of a more concise passage of the Bible than Romans 8: 9-17, where Paul lets us know what is required for oneness with God. In verse 9, he writes: *“[Y]ou are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.”*

ELAINE FEHR (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ **Loss of Steve Heinrichs ‘so very upsetting’**

Re: “Indigenous relations work revamped, reduced,” May 30, page 14.

This is so very upsetting. Steve Heinrichs is an amazing ambassador for Mennonites and for Christians. His passion, intellect and ability to gather and change others’ thoughts and actions regarding

Indigenous-justice issues cannot be replaced. The relationships he has cultivated with Indigenous Peoples are invaluable. This is a huge loss and a major setback to Indigenous-Settler relations.

It looks bad for Mennonites of all stripes. I am greatly saddened by this massive step backwards in reconciliation efforts by the church.

RHONDA CARRIERE (ONLINE COMMENT)

Devolving national leadership to regional churches was a mistake that I feared would lead to bad decisions like this.

Regional churches will not take up the slack, except for possibly B.C., because the half-timing, devolving of responsibility—the kind way of gradually terminating programs—functions regionally as it does nationally. Half-time often means full-time work with half pay, or it serves to augment income for someone whose “real job” is elsewhere. This is no recipe for success. Perhaps I’m wrong on this, but starving a program to balance budgets is cyclical. The skinnier the program, the less the interest in investing in it.

If the consortium of regional churches felt unable to live with Steve Heinrichs’s courageous but unique engagement with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s effort and the climate change agenda so closely linked to it, I’d remind them that the Apostle Paul wrote a number of epistles from prison, and Jesus was crucified. I’m sorry, but a decision tainted by a resistance to change and an insistence on “niceness” makes me very angry and ashamed.

GEORGE EPP (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ **‘God loves the person but hates the virus’**

Re: “Congregant feels unwelcome because she’s ‘not jabbed or masked’” letter, May 16, page 9.

It’s not the letter writer who is unwelcome in her church. It’s the danger she embodies by being unvaccinated and not wearing a mask, that isn’t welcome.

Likewise, when someone has been drinking, it’s not the person who is unwelcome on the highways;

(Continued on page 10)

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.

(Continued from page 9)

it's the danger they represent to others. As soon as that person is sober, they can go back on the highway.

As soon as the letter writer gets vaccinated, I suspect she can go back to her church. God loves the person but hates the virus.

MARK MORTON (ONLINE COMMENT)

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Cressman Roth—Monáe Nell (b. May 10, 2022), to Chanel Cressman and Jeremy Roth, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Kropf—Marynn Elizabeth Anne (b. April 23, 2022), to Alyssa and Brett Kropf, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Schellenberg—Jude Randall Vitt (b. April 18, 2022), to Kathleen Vitt and Clare Schellenberg, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Baptisms

Wayne Bridge—St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, Ont., May 1, 2022.

Deaths

Daniels—Edith (Grams), 84 (b. March 28, 1937; d. Feb. 13,

2022), Pleasant Point Mennonite, Clavet, Sask.

Epp—Archie, 89 (b. May 1, 1933; d. May 22, 2022), First Mennonite, Saskatoon

Doell—Peter, 97 (b. March 12, 1925; d. March 19, 2022), Warman Mennonite, Sask.

Friesen—Abe, 93 (d. May 12, 2022), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Froese—Gary Robert, 71 (b. July 27, 1950; d. May 13, 2022), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Heidebrecht—George, 89 (b. June 11, 1932; d. April 14, 2022), Berghthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

Letkemann—Tina (Loewen), 96 (b. Dec. 22, 1925; d. May 11, 2022), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Ropp—Daniel W., 86 (b. Nov. 10, 1935; d. March 24, 2022), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Roth—Betty Mae (Wagler), 90 (b. May 16, 1931; d. March 25, 2022), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Rudy—Norma, 92 (b. Sept. 8, 1929; d. May 25, 2022), Rockway Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Schulz—Waldo Heinrich, 90 (b. April 26, 1932; d. April 26, 2022), Altona Berghthal Mennonite, Man.

Stoesz—Ed. C., 92 (b. July 23, 1929; d. March 6, 2022), Altona Berghthal Mennonite, Man.

Thiessen—Henry, 88 (b. April 13, 1934; d. May 8, 2022), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Wagler—Alice Mae (Roth), 90 (b. Oct. 16, 1931; d. March 29, 2022), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Wall—Jack, 97 (b. Oct. 6, 1924; d. May 16, 2022), Rockway Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

White—Andrea, 79 (b. May 3, 1943; d. May 3, 2022), Hanover Mennonite, Ont.

Wiens—Katherine (Thiessen), 99 (b. Feb. 19, 1923; d. May 8, 2022), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Zacharias—Henry, 98 (b. Aug. 2, 1923; d. March 6, 2022), Pleasant Point Mennonite, Clavet, Sask.

Zehr—Nelson John, 89 (b. Sept. 7, 1932; d. April 2, 2022), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.



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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

At work with God on climate change

Claire Ewert Fisher

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it” (Psalm 24:1).

It all begins here.

We have four grandchildren at various stages of life. The eldest is in university and thinks about non-renewable fossil fuels and their impact on the Earth. The next is in high school and has, for years, been concerned about the destruction of coral reefs. The other two are still toddlers and just like to explore outdoors.

Their grandparents’ lives are already impacted by climate change. One set makes a living by guiding hunters and fishers in northern Saskatchewan. But, with the rampant forest fires and contamination of the rivers, it’s not clear how long they will be able to survive on their traditional skills.

On a Mennonite Central Committee trip to Vietnam in 2019, where another part of our grandchildren’s extended family live, we experienced some climate changes firsthand. We were surprised to eat, instead of fish caught in the South Sea, lots and lots of squid and octopus. We were told that rising water temperatures no longer support fish life, but octopus and squid fare

much better. And what will happen to coastlands as the polar snow caps melt?

We had planned to return to Vietnam in response to the Vietnamese Mennonite churches’ invitation. We wonder, will the transpacific flight or the lower-level in-country flights be the one that releases enough CO₂ to irreparably damage the Earth’s ozone layer?

While not with our grandchildren or travelling, we also like to garden. But the list of woes here continues to grow: unpredictable growing season, water shortages, pest infestations, higher seasonal temperatures demanding different garden produce. How long before all garden produce is grown in greenhouses?

The Mennonite Church Saskatchewan Council and Ministries Commission are keenly aware of the climate crisis we face. The newly formed Climate Emergency Response Team (CERT) will work together with church communities. CERT will encourage prayer for the Earth; provide educational opportunities about the needs of our planet;

act where possible (plant trees, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, ride a bike to work); when necessary, advocate on behalf of the world by petitioning governments and big business to modify destructive policies and practices; and offer support for those experiencing distress associated with the climate crisis.

Youth perspectives will inform each project undertaken and decision taken. CERT will also seek advice from Indigenous consultants. Other MC Canada regions and international partners will be conferred with throughout the group’s mandate.

In moments of stillness, I sometimes listen to the pulsating sounds of life and labour around me and wonder, “Is this the sound of the earth groaning in anticipation of redemption?” ❧



Claire Ewert Fisher is chair of the MC Saskatchewan Ministries Commission.

A moment from yesterday



The Ontario Mennonite businessman Jacob Y. Shantz established rough housing for newcomers and promoted immigration to a place he called Didsbury, N.W.T., in 1893. In the following two years, Mennonites from Ontario and Manitoba arrived to what became known as Didsbury, Alta. The Bergthol Church was established there in 1903 and became part of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada in 1910. The church building was moved in 1918, had a basement added in 1929, and was enlarged to house Menno Bible Institute in 1934 and 1936. A new building (pictured) was built and dedicated on Dec. 19, 1948.

Text: Conrad Stoesz
Photo: Conference of Mennonites in Canada Photo Collection



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IN THE IMAGE

'The George and Helens'

Ed Olfert

A busy weekend at the end of May resulted in some reflections on family. In this case, the family referenced is "the George and Helens" (the Olferts that include my siblings and me, and all those attached).

The weekend began with a family wedding, where a nephew was the groom. After the ceremony, we gathered on a Saskatoon sidewalk near an ice-cream vendor. The bride's stepmother stared at me for a while, then asked if I was a brother to the groom's father. I, of course, used the line that, yes, I was a little older but certainly better looking. I assume it's funny every time, but she simply blinked, then asked, "Are there more of you?"

I informed her that we were a family of seven, and that six were in attendance. I sensed that those numbers were astronomical to my listener. It became a reminder that everyone does not have the same experience of family that I assume is the norm.

My sister had previously let it be known that, as this was the last wedding in the niece/nephew generation, she was done. When chided, she announced that attending weddings has always been a chore, and she was through. I giggled for several hours.

The next day, I delivered the message in our little country congregation. Then we raced back to Saskatoon, where our youngest granddaughter was part of a roller-derby competition. It was my first experience, and as I sat with my face in a mask of confusion, I at least convinced myself that our girl had the largest cheering section, which included a wide swath of family, school friends and teachers.

Then we gathered again with "the George and Helens" to celebrate a number of birthdays and a 50th anniversary. Again, three generations jeered and laughed, ate and delighted. My six-year-old grandson asked me to record his arm-wrestling match with a great uncle.

As a family, we are opinionated and often contrary. We tease mercilessly. And yet there is a trust to lower protective walls and go to harder places.

"The George and Helens" live with the reality of Huntington's disease, as well as post-polio syndrome. A circle forms and gently explores those realities.

Different expressions of sexual being have also become part of "the George and Helens," and that is embraced warmly.

A nephew talks about planning a

motorcycle trip of several days' duration for my generation. Only a few can still ride, but his determination doesn't see that as a deterrent. Two motorcycles are offered to me.

This is a family with complications, as is every family. This is a family with loud passion. Sometimes, impatience defines us.

Yet, when I picture that circle, with adored little ones, gentle parents and proud grandparents, there's no place to which I would rather belong. It is a circle that includes, embraces and finds creative ways to say yes.

The struggle I have is with my natural assumption that this definition of family is biblical by definition, that every family orders themselves in a similar fashion, that every family has numerous siblings, scores of cousins on every side, and every generation is equally blessed and a source of delight.

And yet I am faced with the reality of my naiveté. My Sunday sermon that weekend was on the topic of restorative justice. In that world, as I read out a list of offenders who have received support, I am again confronted by the brokenness that is done within families.

May God give me the wisdom to find holiness in my reality, and also in the realities of others whose story is very different. ☿



Ed Olfert (p2peho@gmail.com) gives thanks for trust in every community that surrounds us.

Et cetera

Journalist's killer must be brought to justice: WCC

"The World Council of Churches (WCC) calls for an independent international investigation of the killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh on May 11, given the grave implications of this event," said Ioan Sauca, the WCC's acting general secretary. "Those responsible for Abu Akleh's death must be held accountable to the full extent of the law." Sauca also urged U.S. President Joe Biden to address this issue with Israeli officials during his forthcoming visit to Israel, in order to promote accountability and to prevent such violations from occurring in the future. "No fewer than 86 Palestinian journalists have been killed since 1967, the year in which Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza—with 50 of them having been killed since 2000. . . Ms Abu Akleh had reported on events in Palestine and Israel since 1997, and had earned respect among viewers worldwide."

Source: World Council of Churches



WCC PHOTO BY ALBIN HILLERT

Recent events in Palestine and Israel have, tragically, once again underscored the critical need for a just peace in the region, for both Palestinians and Israelis, says the WCC's acting general secretary.

MIND AND SOUL

Faithfulness in the face of facts

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

Even if Gandhi is reputed to have said, “Be the change you want to see in the world,” it is clear he did not mean to stop at personal change! Read most histories of this quote, and personal change is the interpretive emphasis. But we all know that Gandhi aimed to change the social and political environment of India, even as he became a spiritual leader who transcended his Hindu foundation.

Last month, I wrote on the biodiversity crisis (“Lonely without insects,” May 16, page 11). It’s Genesis in reverse: a startling die-off in the numbers of our fellow creatures on the planet. If you are only concerned about humans, consider that insects pollinate around a third of our food crops. As fundamental parts of the ecological web, the loss of insect biodiversity, and astounding declines of wild mammals, birds, fish and others, are threats to the very integrity of creation. Those facts are a loss to our spirits.

Later, I was challenged by some very active and concerned youth in our denomination, who said I didn’t offer a clear sense of what to do, and that we should treat some things as the crises the facts show they are. I agree.

Here’s the rub: If I were to offer individualistic solutions, I could say, “Everyone plant pollinator gardens, don’t rake leaves while ladybugs are hibernating, protect the soil from chemical killing agents.” Maybe even, “Buy seeds from Carrick Seeds, sow heirloom tomatoes and other ‘non-standard’ plants, get involved with Bees for Peace.” All good advice. But such recommendations alone avoid dealing with the actual problems. Such “solutions” would not alter the effects of widespread habitat loss, human expansionism and resource extractivism.

Not long ago, I had a terrible exchange with a Mennonite environmental leader who mostly blamed

individual consumers as solely responsible for all environmental problems. After all, “Isn’t environmental degradation caused by consumer wants?” No! We live in societies that have cumulative effects that transcend the simple logic of 1+1+1. Production decisions, collective infrastructure, how cities are built and cultural values all transcend the individual.

The same holds for other issues. Why are the minority of humans in what is called the Global North so wealthy compared to the majority world (the so-called Global South)? It has to do with economic systems and ideologies that developed over time—including from colonialism—and continue to most benefit particular countries. According to Oxfam, since the pandemic began, at least 64 countries have spent more paying back debts to rich countries and financial institutions than on health care. No amount of “fair trade” purchasing is going to change those rules.

So what are my real items of advice?

Advocate fiercely for the world you want to see. Join with others to do so. Advocate in workplaces and other institutions. Get politically active. Build alternative institutions. Magnify collective impact. Support others in that work, even to the level of financial sacrifice. Stand with those who battle the status

quo. Their road is already hard and lonely. Be disgusted by lukewarm responses from those who don’t see—or willfully ignore—the magnitude or urgency that you understand. Love them.

As Wendell Berry writes in the magnificent poem called “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front”: “Be joyful though you have considered all the facts.” Even when the facts look dire. Trust in God, but don’t let that be an excuse for less than hearty action. ☿



Randolph Haluza-DeLay works as the ecological justice coordinator for the ecumenical Christian organization Kairos.



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 TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

Solomon's splendour

Joshua Penfold

History really is unfair to the common people. In a previous column (“Becoming the enemy you hate,” April 18, page 13), I noted that Solomon essentially enslaved 153,600 men in order to build God’s temple, emulating the oppressor Israel had once longed to be liberated from.

One chapter later, in II Chronicles 3, the text credits Solomon for the construction of the building, almost as though he single-handedly did all the work.

- “**Then Solomon** began to build the temple of the Lord” (3:1).
- “**The foundation** Solomon laid for building the temple” (3:3).
- “**He overlaid** the inside with pure gold” (3:4).
- “**He built** the Most Holy Place” (3:8).
- “**In the front** of the temple he made two pillars” (3:15).

Sorry, Solomon, but I’m pretty sure you didn’t do all that work yourself. It’s like saying Jeff Bezos packaged my Amazon order or Elon Musk assembled my Tesla (if I could afford one).

I realize this is not unique to the Scriptures. History tends to focus on, and credit, kings and lords and those in

power, while the powerless commoners, the blue-collar workers, the masses, are not acknowledged but are ignored and forgotten. And I get it, it’s a literary device, for it’s usually the powerful, the privileged and the well-positioned who are orchestrating and overseeing things, taking the risks and reaping the rewards.

Although this particular part of Israel’s story is typical, there are numerous other ways that make the Bible, and specifically the people of Israel, not so typical and, therefore, interesting. They are often an unexpected and seemingly insignificant people who didn’t begin with inherited power but enter the story and monumentally influence history.

Some of Israel’s prophets are eccentric outsiders from insignificant family lines. The twelve disciples were a ragtag group of nobodies: local fishermen, a hated tax collector, and an extremist zealot, to name a few.

The story of Christ is the best example of humble beginnings: The King of Kings born to an ostracized couple so lowly they couldn’t find adequate shelter and had to bring their baby into the world amid the stench and filth of a stable and its animals, a

marked difference from the gold-laden temple that Solomon built.

The account of the building of the Temple is unfair to the underprivileged people, but maybe that’s just another way of contrasting the way that an earthly king and kingdom function, even a God-fearing holiness-seeking one, compared to God’s true upside-down kingdom way.

I can’t help but think of Jesus’ comparison: “*Why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these*” (Matthew 6:28-29).

Solomon forced 153,600 men to build a magnificent and glorious temple to the Lord, overlaid with pure gold and exquisite decor, and Jesus, the King of Kings, says, “Thanks, but no thanks. I think I’ll just admire this lily in the field; it’s more beautiful.”

So don’t be dazzled by the spectacular displays of unjust wealth, just go for a walk and be awed by the incomparable beauty of the natural world, God’s cathedral. You probably won’t make the history books or disrupt the Twitter-sphere, but such a perspective could drastically change you. ☺



Joshua Penfold (penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) loves to marvel at the flowers blooming in his garden and the birds eating at his feeder.

Et cetera

New award recognizes global peacemakers

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has established the Michael J. Sharp Global Peacemaker Award to recognize and encourage courageous peacebuilders across the world. The annual award is open to a person or organization that is an MCC partner involved in peacebuilding. The award is named in honor of Sharp, who served in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with MCC and later with the United Nations. Sharp and UN colleague Zaida Catalán of Sweden were ambushed and murdered by unknown assailants on March 12, 2017, in DRC.

Source: Mennonite Central Committee

PHOTO: TIM LIND/MCC



Michael J. Sharp, center, in a meeting at a camp for internally displaced people in DRC.

VIEWPOINT

Unsettling stories of darkness, healing and hope

Indigenous-Mennonite Encounters conference only the beginning of a long relationship

Scott Morton Ninomiya
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

I didn't realize what I was signing up for when I agreed to write about Indigenous-Mennonite Encounters in Time and Place, a conference held at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., from May 12 to 15.

It was an intense weekend of learning, emotion, sharing, dancing and stories. The conference started with a mix of relief and excitement as the organizers described the long road to the opening of the conference, three years in the making and delayed by the pandemic.

shape who we are and how we interact with others.

So many stories were shared, honoured, brought to light and deconstructed during our time together on Haudenosaunee, Anishnaabe and Chonnontong territory. I am only one voice of many who attended and I have but a thousand words to share my perspectives of some of the rich, uplifting and deeply unsettling stories of this landmark conference.

Mennonite stories that have rolled over Indigenous stories on this land.

It was co-created by Rebecca Seiling, a non-Indigenous person, and Indigenous artists, and it was rolled on site on the first day of the conference. The black buggy is emblazoned with the Anishnaabe creation story of Turtle Island portrayed by August Swinson, and a visual teaching on the Two Row Wampum Treaty, created by Chief Arnold Jacobs.

Cherished stories unsettled

Mennonites carry many cherished stories with us of our "origin story" on this land. (I didn't grow up Mennonite but became a re-baptized member in 2000, and I married into a long lineage).

Part of the purpose of this conference was to unsettle some of the stories near and dear to Mennonite hearts. Campbell undertook this process respectfully but unequivocally.

She told the plenary session, "While Mennonites were becoming settlers [in Saskatchewan] our people were becoming squatters, and my *kookum* (grandmother's) homeland was being erased."

She called for more research so that Indigenous place names can be brought into public memory, including here on the Grand River watershed where the conference was hosted.

Part of the effort to reclaim Indigenous place names begins with questioning existing settler narratives about place. "The Landed Buggy" is a thought-provoking art installation created as a vehicle to facilitate the work of respectfully unsettling some

Stories of darkness

In addition to unsettling Mennonite narratives of our place on the land, the conference also shone a light on stories of darkness, when Mennonites benefited from, and even participated in, colonial projects that displaced or caused deep harm to Indigenous people.

Conference organizer Lauren Harder-Gissing curated an exhibit called "Against the Grain," featuring documents from Mennonite archives that shed light on the Mennonite participation in colonial legacies.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario created an exhibit called "Sitting with the Truth" that illuminates stories of Mennonite involvement in residential schools in Northern Ontario.

Adrian Jacobs, a member of the conference listening team and a Haudenosaunee man who has worked closely with Mennonites for decades, issued a powerful call to Mennonites: "Own your darkness." With a mix of pastoral warmth, humour and cutting candour, he reflected on how "the quiet in the land" manage to get in so many fights with each other, and he warned

(Continued on page 16)



GREBEL PHOTOS BY JEN KONKLE

Group dancing was led by the Haudenosaunee Voices and leader Kelly Fran Davis.

Despite challenges, the conference was remarkably well organized and ran with a smoothness that testified to deep thoughtfulness and a great deal of hard work behind the scenes.

We are our stories

Mim Harder of the conference listening team evoked the wisdom of Ojibwe author Richard Wagamese: "We are our stories," and keynote speaker Lori Campbell reminded us that stories



Solo dancer Jade Davis-Smoke performed at the Indigenous Mennonite Encounters conference, held at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., from May 12 to 15.

(Continued from page 15)

that until Mennonites own our darkness we will keep perpetuating it.

Stories of friendship and healing

The weekend was intense but, make no mistake, this conference was far from a sombre guilt trip.

Campbell and her esteemed Auntie Marie shared heart-warming stories of Lori's great *kookum*, who became lifelong friend of a Mennonite midwife. The two women somehow shared a deep bond despite not speaking the same language.

All of us enjoyed an evening of dancing performed by a Haudenosaunee group led by conference organizer Kelly Fran Davis. Everyone was invited to join in several of the dances and some joined the circle of musicians for a song honouring women.

Davis later provided one of the most poignant moments of the conference for me, when she said that colonialism is a disease that has impacted all of us.

Clarence Cachagee, founder of the land-based healing space at Crow Shield

Lodge, shared the podium with Seth Ratzlaff, his non-Indigenous friend and collaborator, as they recounted their co-creation of a book about the story of Cachagee's remarkable journey of healing. Cachagee said of his work at the lodge, "We don't call people out, we call people in to talk about the truth."

Writing new stories together: taking action

In addition to reflecting on and deconstructing complicated and sometimes troubled histories, there was a strong emphasis on taking collaborative action now to write new stories of hope together.

Presenter Melanie Kampen reminded fellow settlers that we must build the stamina required for the long-haul work ahead, and not race to reconciliation, which can undermine the truth telling that still needs to happen.

Rick Cober Bauman of MCC Canada lamented missed opportunities, but urged us all to be alert to opportunities for reconciliation that are sometimes hidden in plain sight.

At a lunchtime session, Haudenosaunee Landback Camp activist Amy Smoke called on all of us to take courageous action and to stand with Indigenous people, even when they are not in the room with us.

David Alton, a non-Indigenous person and Smoke's co-presenter, challenged Mennonites to fearlessly mobilize our formidable resources (including land), and to respond swiftly and effectively to calls to action from Indigenous people.

Fire keeper Al McDonald closed the conference beautifully by echoing this call to action, and honouring the bonds created in this time and place: "I can't tell you what your work is; there is much to do. We will leave this place, but we are all connected now. We are all family." ❧



Scott Morton Ninomiya is a Mennonite settler who lives on the Grand River watershed. He is coordinator of MCC Ontario's Indigenous Neighbours program.

'I am a Christian. I am a Mennonite'

By Jessica Evans
Alberta Correspondent

“Where did I come from, where am I and where am I going?”

Paul Plett, a Mennonite filmmaker from Winnipeg explores his roots and who the Mennonites were in history and are today. The Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta hosted its spring conference virtually on May 14, highlighting a showing of his film *I am a Mennonite* and a Q & A session afterwards with Plett. There were more than 50 people in attendance via Zoom for the afternoon event.

Katie Harder, vice-chair of the historical society, opened the conference with the writings of Menno Simons' "True Evangelical Faith." It was through these beginnings that there are now more than 200,000 Mennonites in Canada and more than two million Mennonites in 86 countries around the world.

Henry Wiebe recently joined the society's board, but he has a long Mennonite history.

"As we look back to the faith and culture of our Mennonite background, we can be thankful for a great heritage," he said. "Our background has strong work ethics, cleanliness, and a great way of creating and serving many delicious and nutritional meals!"

Wiebe thoroughly enjoyed Plett's film and had recollections of his own trip to Ukraine. Wiebe and his wife Agnes joined the bicentennial of the *Kleine Gemeinde* (now the Evangelical Mennonite Conference) tour to Ukraine in 2012.

"As I personally reflect again on the teaching of Menno Simons," Wiebe said, "I think that he would want us to go back to the Scripture and that he would say with the Apostle Paul, 'Follow me as I follow

Christ, . . . follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.' If we get this one right, many of the other differences in the Mennonite circles will grow strangely dim in the light of [Christ's] glory and grace!"

I am a Mennonite follows the journey of one Mennonite, Plett, and his mission to uncover his roots. Who were the Mennonites? Where did they live? How did they live? Plett first got interested in his past

"Where are we going spiritually? What is the unifying thing that makes us all Mennonites? Is it our faith, our shared heritage or our love of pie? Is that idea in jeopardy in the future? Looking back and studying our history helps us to answer these questions."

Naturally he started by asking his father, who gave him family names and hints about where to look once he arrived in Ukraine. His journey took him through the country and on to the Netherlands, to dig deeper into Mennonite history in the time of Menno Simons. Along the way, Plett interviewed several Mennonites from all walks of life.

Mennonite pastors, congregants, mothers, fathers and historians all gave him insight on what it meant to be Mennonite for them personally.

"A real Mennonite not only knows the Bible but lives the Bible," one interviewee told him.

"I look at the world through the lens of my Mennonite faith," Plett said in the film. "It's who I am. Being part of a global community, a global family, is what brings us together." On returning to Canada and to his family, Plett said: "I want them to know how important this is, how important it is to remember where we came from and what makes us who we are today. I am a Christian; I am a Mennonite."

Accolades following release of the film in 2021 include Best

Documentary and Best Educational Film at the Christian Film Festival, winner at the Great Lakes Christian Film Festival, and Best Picture and Best Documentary Feature at the Winnipeg Real to Reel Film Festival. ☞

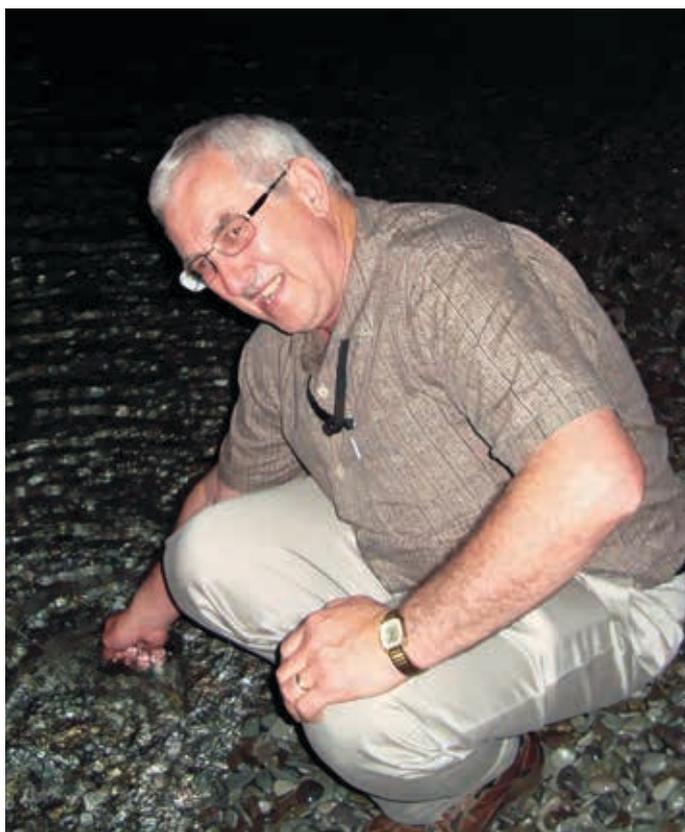


PHOTO BY AGNES WIEBE

Henry Wiebe, board member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta, dips his hands in the Black Sea in Yalta, Ukraine, during a trip in 2012.

from a desire to understand his faith upbringing. Is being Mennonite a religion or a people? He wanted to find out, so he decided to go back to where it all started for his family: Molotschna, Ukraine.

Plett began by asking the question:

WAR STORIES: FROM UKRAINE TO CANADA

Loss that cannot be counted

MCC partner in Ukraine supports people destabilized by war

By Jason Dueck

Mennonite Central Committee

As millions of civilians continue to flee the devastation of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, organizations like MCC partner UMAN (Charitable Foundation Uman Help Center) are working to support those who have left everything they know behind.

UMAN operates in the Ukrainian city of Uman, about 200 kilometres from the capital of Kyiv. Due to its centrality within the country, it has been a major hub for the mass movement of displaced people. Hundreds of thousands of people pass through, some stopping for a night or two on their way to the west, and many others choosing to stay.

Dima Krotik, founder and director of UMAN, says that around 100,000 displaced people have resettled in the Cherkasy *oblast* (province) surrounding Uman, itself a city of only 80,000 before the invasion. He says the needs are great and the supply is limited.

“Since the first week [of the war], we’ve been organizing distribution events for these people, where we distribute food and other basic items,” he says. “The supply chain for food has been inconsistent, but it’s improving. We still had a container with comforters and hygiene kits left in

it, so we’ve been distributing those as well. MCC responded very quickly by providing some funds, so we were able to be effective very quickly.”

Before the war, UMAN primarily worked with people with very little or no income, but Krotik says that now he hears countless testimonies of people who have lost their otherwise comfortable lives in a flash.

“People are sharing with me that just a couple of days ago, they had everything—a house, a car, jobs,” he says. “Or they might get into the city in a very nice car but have nothing else but the clothes on their backs, and now they are coming to us for food and second-hand clothes. They’re not fleeing poverty, they’re fleeing war.”

He says he has heard a lot of very difficult stories over the last few months, but one family in particular has not left his thoughts: “There was a family from Poposna, which has been completely destroyed. They have nothing to go back to. The family has many children. They asked us if we could house them because they have nowhere to go back to. The mother, she was pregnant and quite long-term, seven or eight months. And



PHOTOS COURTESY OF UMAN

More than 100,000 people have fled to the area around the city of Uman in Ukraine as Russian military forces continue to advance. MCC partner Charitable Foundation UMAN Help Center distributes food; MCC hygiene kits, including toothpaste; and comforters to hundreds of people each month.

because of the stressful situation, the child died in her womb. We were able to find a house for them in a village near Uman, but we don’t know if they’ll stay here once the war is over.”

For those trying to survive under such taxing conditions, hope can feel like an exhausted resource.

But Krotik, who also pastors a local church, says a very important part of the work UMAN is doing is offering counselling and spiritual care. “We talk and listen and pray with people, we invite them to our church and into our small groups,” he says. UMAN also offers Scripture verses about anxiety and living in fearful times. “Encouragement is very helpful, so people don’t fall into despair.” ❧

MCC’s response to the crisis in Ukraine is ongoing and includes supplying food, cash, shelter, medicine and hygiene supplies through its partners. Since the beginning of the invasion, MCC has allocated \$1.8 million for its initial humanitarian response.



MCC partner Charitable Foundation UMAN Help Center provides food and other essential basics for people fleeing to, or through, the city of Uman, Ukraine.

WAR STORIES: FROM UKRAINE TO CANADA

Small town, big heart

Black Creek church raises \$11,000 for Ukraine relief

By Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent

The small town of Black Creek, British Columbia, showed its generosity with a sale for Ukraine relief, organized by United Mennonite Church, on May 29. The town has a population of just over 9,000 and is located on Vancouver Island, far from all of Mennonite Church B.C.'s other congregations.

The Black Creek congregation has been hosting a fundraising sale for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for about 20 years. With the war in Ukraine much in the news this year, organizers decided to designate proceeds for MCC's relief efforts in that country.

In previous years, the event has been mostly a rummage and plant sale. This year, more events were added. The day's offerings included henna hand drawings, a bake sale, a sale of a handmade quilt and a painting, a Kids' Zone with pony rides and

face painting. Food offerings of hot dogs and perogies sold out, and 90 kilograms of farmers sausage were also sold.

"We have a great little community; they volunteer," said Judy McCulloch, one of the organizers. McCulloch says that this year's sale grew as people heard that proceeds were helping people in Ukraine, and many in the community volunteered to help, even if not affiliated with United Mennonite or the Mennonite Brethren church in town.

McCulloch says that a smaller sale event has some

advantages not possible at larger MCC fundraising sales: "We try to go green and serve our food on [china] dishes, not paper plates. We sold coffee for \$2 in thrift store cups that people could either take home or re-donate."

After expenses were covered, it is estimated that \$11,000 will be sent to MCC for Ukraine relief. ☘



PHOTO BY MARIAN PECKFORD

Participants at the Black Creek United Mennonite Church fundraiser in B.C. survey the goods for sale on May 29. Around \$11,000 will be sent to MCC for Ukraine relief.

☘ News brief

Relief, hygiene kits depleted after shipment to Ukraine

An urgent need for aid for Ukraine has prompted Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to send five containers of relief and hygiene kits to that country—depleting the organization's stock of those items. Now Canadians are being invited to help MCC fill its warehouse back up again. Until recently, MCC was unable to send relief and hygiene kits to Ukraine since Ukrainian ports were closed due to the fighting, says Laura Kalmar, MCC's director of marketing and communications. The organization is shipping the containers, four from the United States and one from Canada, overland through Poland, she says, noting, "This is a new process for us." The kits will be distributed by MCC's local partners in Ukraine to vulnerable people, such as the

elderly, people with special needs, families and others. Canadians can buy items for the kits and bring them to MCC offices, or donate cash so the organization can purchase the items. "We are asking people to help us restock our warehouses," Kalmar says, noting the kits can be sent to a number of countries, including Ukraine. Relief kits contain items such as soap, shampoo, bars of laundry soap, toothbrushes, bath towels, combs, a nail clipper, a box of bandages and sanitary pads. Hygiene kits contain one toothbrush, one bar of soap, a nail clipper, a hand towel and a comb. In addition to providing much-needed items for daily life, Kalmar says the kits are "a tangible expression to people in need that they have not been forgotten. It's like a virtual hug from



PHOTO COURTESY OF UMAN

Two people receive food, MCC hygiene kits and other basic essentials from a distribution held by MCC partner Charitable Foundation Uman Help Center in Uman, Ukraine.

someone in Canada to someone in Ukraine." For more information about providing or donating for a relief or hygiene kit, visit mcccanada.ca/get-involved/kits.

—BY JOHN LONGHURST



WAR STORIES: FROM UKRAINE TO CANADA

COMMENTARY

Is violence the best response to Putin?

The current state of pacifism in Canada

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

Given Vladimir Putin's ruthless aggression, and the obvious limits of sanctions, and the brutal suffering of Ukrainians, is there room to question military response to Russia? What is the role of a peace church in this scenario?

Are we still, effectively, a peace church?

Much of the talk and action in Canadian church circles has involved humanitarian relief, refugee resettlement, and general "pray for peace" expressions. All valuable and critical.

There is less talk about the fact that our government is using our tax dollars to buy weapons. The governing Liberals have spent about \$150 million on military aid to Ukraine, as of mid-May, with another \$500 million allocated for the 2022-23 fiscal year. Canada's contributions have included bullet-proof vests, meal kits, machine guns, up to 7,500 hand grenades, about 1.5 million rounds of ammunition, four M777 155mm Howitzers, eight armoured vehicles, and up to 4,500 M72 rocket launchers.

These weapons will kill people. And, some would argue, ultimately prevent deaths of more people.

What does the church have to say? Not a lot. But Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada has spoken up and seen an increase in interest around peace among constituents. In an April 6 letter to the federal minister of foreign affairs and minister of international development, MCC Canada executive director Rick Cober Bauman urged "caution around both the selling and providing of arms [to Ukraine] and the direct participation with or training of those involved in military missions."

He urged the government to instead "play a leading role in advocating for the use of nonviolent tools, such as diplomacy,

disarmament, conflict resolution, international courts and support for grassroots peacebuilding and nonviolent resistance."

Quakers in Canada have also spoken up. In an open letter to the Canadian Government, the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) writes: "War is a futile problem-solving strategy. It does

military intervention?" He points to Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq, saying there is "precious little" evidence to support any assumption that military involvement will lead to positive outcomes.

He insists that war is never inevitable or the only option, saying there were steps that various parties could have taken to



THE U.S. ARMY ON FLICKR.COM / CREATIVE COMMONS 2.0

Canada has provided four M777 155mm Howitzers—like the one pictured—to Ukraine.

not lead to peace, democracy or security. Its predictable failure comes at tremendous cost to human lives, development and well-being." The letter also expresses heartache over the suffering in Ukraine.

Matthew Legge, the CFSC's communications coordinator, asks a simple question: "What good do we expect from Canadian

avoid the invasion. He insists the money Canada is spending on military aid would be much better spent supporting peacebuilding initiatives.

Retired Manitoba farmer Ernie Wiens agrees that Canada's military spending—both for Ukraine and generally—could do great good in the world if redirected. "Can

WAR STORIES: FROM UKRAINE TO CANADA

we begin to imagine what those billions would do,” he asks, if they were used to address human need?

Wiens and his wife Charlotte have been active with Conscience Canada since 2007. The organization advocates for a change in Canadian law that would allow citizens to conscientiously object to their tax dollars going toward military uses. They encourage Canadians to redirect the military portion of their taxes (4.4 percent of net federal income tax) toward the organization’s Peace Tax Fund, where the money is held in trust. Alternatively, people can simply send a form with their tax return, saying they “support the creation of a government-controlled Peace Fund,” to which the military portion of taxes could be diverted.

Part of why the Wienses got involved with the organization was an article in this publication in which Janet Plenert asked what would happen if a thousand Mennonites would take the Conscience Canada challenge. Wiens says that, in his “naivety,” he thought surely there would be a thousand Mennonites willing to do

so. He wanted to be one of them.

The number of Mennonites and others actually willing to redirect military taxes—which is an act of civil disobedience—is a small fraction of Plenert’s vision. In fact, the organization contemplated folding altogether this year, although ultimately decided not to.

Wiens traces his pacifist passion to his Mennonite upbringing, some formative Bible passages (Micah 4, Ephesians 2, and the Sermon on the Mount, among them); and the visit of MCC’er Dan Zehr, who had been in Vietnam, to his home congregation of Glenlea Mennonite Church in Manitoba when Wiens was a young man. Zehr imagined an American youth and a Vietnamese youth enlisting in their armies for similar reasons, then coming up over opposite sides of a hill in battle to face each other. “Who should shoot first?” Wiens recalls Zehr asking.

With respect to Ukraine and the brutality of Putin, Wiens says it can seem like a military response is the only option, but he feels Canada would do better to step back from NATO, take a neutral

stance, and redirect military spending. He notes that, for the cost of one soldier, Community Peacemaker Teams could deploy many peacemakers.

Wiens would like to see the church be more vocal. “In a sense, we become silenced because we don’t want to offend,” he says. “Meanwhile the carnage goes on.”

And even though this is in some ways a most inopportune time to suggest alternatives to military intervention, Wiens notes a recent article on the topic, in which *Sojourners* editor Jim Rice writes: “Moral analysis does not wait for the correct, acceptable, poll-tested moment. History is replete with examples of movements that insisted and persisted in their efforts, even when the time was not ‘right’ and the cause was ‘impossible.’”

And so, while many Christians continue the good work of addressing humanitarian needs arising from the Russian invasion, Conscience Canada also carries on, and organizations like MCC continue to support peacebuilding efforts that might just help to avert the next invasion somewhere else in the world. ☸



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'Running out of rabbits, running out of hats'

UMEI Christian High School launches renewal campaign

By Charleen Jongejan Harder
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
LEAMINGTON, ONT.

The sanctuary of North Leamington United Mennonite Church was packed on March 9 as supporters of UMEI Christian High School gathered for a special meeting.

The UMEI board had been facing difficult numbers for several years, and it was time to face the question: "When is it time to say that it's no longer sustainable to keep the school open?"

Enrolment for the whole school is 35 students this year, slightly more than half the target for sustainable enrolment of 60 students, a target that has only been met for three of the past 10 years.

Creative solutions have been sought: Two grants from Mennonite Church Eastern Canada between 2015 and 2020 paid for an advancement director, but that did not turn around the enrolment. In 2020 and 2021, the federal government's COVID-19 wage subsidy gave a significant boost to the school, and in 2022 the school severed land and sold a rental house from the property.

However, board chair Steve Enns told those in attendance that these are one-off solutions. "We've been pulling rabbits out of hats for a few years, but we're running out of rabbits, we're running out of hats," he said.

Conversation was robust, and the community's desire to save the school came through clearly. But barriers to increasing enrolment were also named.

David Dyck, pastor of Leamington United Mennonite Church, opened the meeting by recalling March 7, 2020, when the community gathered at the Bank Theatre for a robust and joyous celebration of UMEI's 75th anniversary.

"We laughed, sang, reminisced and celebrated," he said. "Little did we know



PHOTO BY MEGAN SNIPPE

Pictured with UMEI's Project Renew sign are, from left to right: principal Sonya Bedal, board chair Steve Enns, and board secretary Carolyn Warkentin.

what was coming. I wonder if we took a few things for granted. Pandemics, world wars; these were things of the past. The unity of our nation, the viability of our churches; they would always be here. Did we take for granted our school, that it would always be here?"

The community context is changing. Enrolment from MC Eastern Canada churches is not as strong as previously, in part because the churches are shrinking, leaving fewer families to enrol their children at UMEI.

If the school is to survive, there needs to be creative and widespread change.

Fast forward a couple of months to May 4, when the board launched its ReNew

campaign, an ambitious four-part strategy aimed at increasing the community exposure to the school and raising enrolment.

The first pillar involves re-organizing the leadership structure of the school, engaging teacher Darcy Bults as vice-principal to tend to day-to-day affairs, while freeing principal Sonya Bedal to work with the board at larger projects of vision and mission.

Chani Wiens was named director of enrolment and community engagement. She will direct her passion for the mission of the school in connecting with the larger community, getting people in the door, and bridging barriers to enrolment. Together,

these new positions will collaborate on maintaining the academic excellence of the school, while communicating the strengths of the school community to potential students and their families.

“I am so passionate about leading and guiding young people, and I believe the high school years are so crucial,” said Wiens. “I never want [what we have at UMEI] to stop. While we honour the 77 years of the past, we will focus on being what the school students need in 2022, 2025, 2030 and beyond.”

Community support has come in with dollars behind it. The second and third pillars of the campaign involve a 50 percent reduction in tuition and free transportation for those who have a need for it, for the next two years. UMEI is outside of Leamington, with no public transit options to the school.

Finally, there will be some facelifts to the school building, including repairs to the library and some work on the exterior of the building.

The total campaign goal is to raise \$800,000 over two years. A quarter of that had already been raised as the campaign launched.

The key metric of the campaign’s success will be enrolment, but other metrics will be watched closely, including student and parent satisfaction.

Response from community members at the meeting was warm. Mary Krueger said she was impressed by the factual support brought by the board to the campaign, and she said that the positive vote shows there has been support for the school from the local community, including the support of two local MC Eastern Canada congregations.

Abby Krueger, a recent UMEI grad, said she sees a lot of potential in the plan, and is especially excited about the new roles for Bults and Wiens.

Simon Enns said he was particularly excited about the reduced tuition, hoping that UMEI can reach more students for whom money is a barrier.

Time will tell if this campaign will mark a turning point in the school. What is clear is that the community is rallying to ensure that the school does not disappear without a fight. ❧

Walking, learning, sharing

Mennos, others journey on Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Whether going on their own or together with friends, B.C. Mennonites took part in the seventh annual Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation the weekend of May 27 to 29. This year’s walk was self-guided and in several locations. The official walk began at Fort Langley, symbolic of the colonization of British Columbia, and ended at the former St. Mary’s Indian Residential School in Mission, (currently Pekk’w’xeyles Reserve), location of trauma for many Indigenous children.

Mennonite Central Committee B.C., one of the sponsoring groups, stated on its information page: “We walk as individuals or in our family groups in lament and solidarity of our First Nations brothers and sisters, remembering the traumatic harm done by residential schools for so many generations. As any one of our human family have been affected, we are all affected.”

The weekend’s events included a sharing circle at the Derek Doubleday Arboretum in Langley on Friday. One year ago, 215 crosses were put up at that site to honour the memory of the children whose remains were discovered at a Kamloops former Indian Residential School.

Self-guided family-friendly walks were available on May 27 and 28 in Chilliwack and Abbotsford. The event concluded on May 29 with a learning event at the site of the former St. Mary’s Residential School.

The Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation originated with a group of Langley churches that wanted to remember and give thought to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action announced on May 30, 2015. Mennonite Church B.C. joined in 2017 and MCC B.C. also became a partner. Annual walks have been taking place ever since.

“It’s been good to bring together all these

denominations with a common goal to work at healing broken relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, walking together in support,” said Bridget Findlay, Indigenous Neighbours coordinator at MCC B.C. ❧



PHOTO BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

Stó:lō historian Sonny McHalsie, left, and Chris Silver, Semá:th First Nation Council member, share with those attending the Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation event in Mission, B.C., on May 29. They stand by the house post, representing children who lived at St. Mary’s Residential School. The figure of the woman in the red dress represents the murdered and missing Indigenous women. This post represents the recent history and current reality for many Indigenous people. A house post is a storytelling pole that is more common to Stó:lō culture, in contrast to totems, which are more common to coastal Indigenous people.

Sharing the land

Mennonite farmer offers land access to Indigenous neighbours through the Treaty Land Sharing Network

Story and Photo by Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent
NEAR LANGHAM, SASK.

Many Canadians are familiar with the saying, “We are all treaty people.”

It is a slogan created to remind all people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, that treaties offer them rights and call them to responsibilities. A new grassroots organization in Saskatchewan is trying to help landowners live up to their responsibilities.

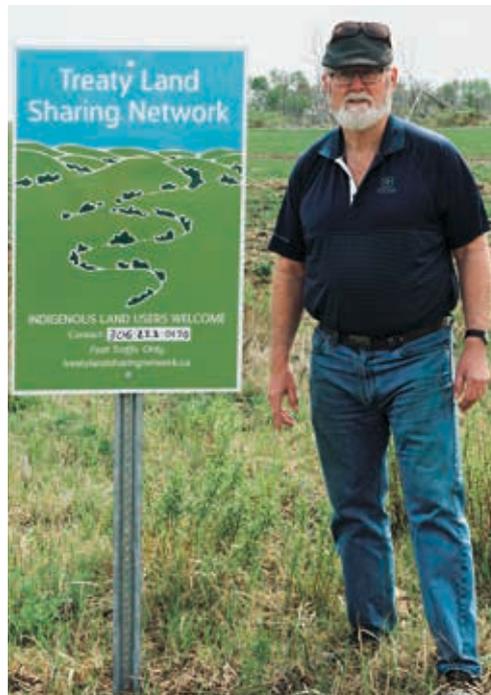
The Treaty Land Sharing Network is a group of farmers, ranchers and landowners who offer access to their land to Indigenous people to connect with the land, gather plants, hunt, and, in some instances, perform ceremonies.

Mary Smillie, a member of the network’s coordinating committee, sees the work of the network as a way to honour the treaties in very real way.

“First Nations entered into treaty with the settlers to the ‘depth of a plow,’ meaning farmers could farm, but the First Nations people could hunt and be on the land to live their lives, and, of course, it didn’t play out that way,” says Smillie. “We’re all treaty people, and we all need to take some time to understand what that means. Because what a gift having access to the land is for economic benefit and spiritual benefit. Land access is an opportunity, privilege, responsibility.”

The cofounders of the network, Valerie Zink and Philip Brass, were moved to action following the death of Colton Boushie, a young Cree Red Pheasant First Nation man who was shot and killed after trespassing on a farmyard in rural Saskatchewan. The landholder, Gerald Stanley, was found not guilty in Boushie’s death.

“You could feel the earth shake when the verdict came in,” and the network was founded “in an effort to be a counterpoint



Doyle Wiebe stands next to the Treaty Land Sharing Network sign on his property, located near Langham, Sask.

to the horror” of Boushie’s death, Smillie says. The group aims to help bridge the divide between landowners and Indigenous people in rural Saskatchewan.

Landholders who are interested in participating in the network must fill out an application form. Once approved, they receive a sign to put on their property, indicating they are network members and that this land is accessible to Indigenous people.

The network’s website (treatylandsharingnetwork.ca) allows Indigenous land-users to search for accessible land in the network based on location or other features, such as plant life. The network has 37 landowners sharing access to

nearly 7,300 hectares across the province. Locations stretch as far north as North Battleford to the United States border in the south.

One of the network land-sharers is Doyle Wiebe. Wiebe, a member of Langham Mennonite Fellowship, is a fourth-generation farmer. He joined the network in April and now shares 65 hectares through the program.

For Wiebe, it was a growing understanding of the story of Indigenous Peoples in Saskatchewan that convicted him about how he could live up to his treaty responsibilities.

“There was an event last summer at Fort Carlton, Sask., where we heard the history of the treaties, and I was learning more about the relationship between settlers and Indigenous people,” he says. “That event, and other education like it, helped me to form a whole new set of opinions and beliefs of how our relationship should be fostered going forward. It reinforced the aspect that the treaties are perpetual, not one-off; treaties are about sharing, not apportioning land. My understanding is that the historic view of Indigenous people couldn’t even conceive of owning land. God owns the land just like the sky [and] trees; God gives to us to utilize for our benefit. The concept of owning land wasn’t seen in the language of the treaties.”

After joining the network, Wiebe contacted his neighbours to let them know about the sign and the program. Reactions were mixed, he says. And as of yet, he has had no land-users contact him to access his land, but he remains hopeful that the work of the network will continue to build relationships.

The decision to be a part of the network is deeply tied to Wiebe’s Anabaptist faith.

“We are all God’s creatures,” he says. “I have an admiration of the Indigenous view of the world and creation. We’ve done them a profound disservice, a negative impact, by taking away their dignity. And if there’s anything I can do to show them respect as a people, as with any other people I run into, anything I can do to improve relationship and show respect, and to help to reclaim some dignity, well, I want be on that side of history.” ❧

CM hosts first discussion of new online series

Panelists address climate change and the church

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

On May 25, *Canadian Mennonite* hosted its first-ever discussion event. But the magazine didn't shy away from immediately diving into a tough topic: the climate crisis and the church.

Three panellists shared reflections and responded to the 50 or so people who attended the online event, which was hosted by Aaron Epp, *CM*'s online media manager. Throughout the 90 minutes, they addressed the question, "How can we, as Mennonites in Canada, best respond to the climate crisis?"

"Thank you to all of you who have joined. I think your presence here is a sign of hope," said panellist Anthony Siegrist, the director of A Rocha Ontario, a Christian environmental stewardship organization. at the beginning of his remarks. He has graduate degrees in theology and science, and he has worked as a professor, pastor, farm hand and adventure guide.

The other panellists had their own reasons for being passionate about creation care. Ian Funk is pastor of Langley Mennonite Fellowship in British Columbia, and is part of the Mennonite Church B.C. Creation Care Task Group and MC Canada's Sustainability Leadership Group. Joanne Moyer is associate professor of environmental studies and geography at The King's University in Edmonton. She has been a member of the Mennonite Creation Care Network for almost 20 years and serves on MC Canada's Sustainability Leadership Group.

Glaciers melting, species going extinct, people losing their homes to floods and dying in heat waves—it's clear, even without scientists' repeated warnings, that the planet is in a state of emergency. So how might Canadian Mennonites respond to the climate crisis?

It turns out they have already been



CM SCREENSHOT

Panellist Ian Funk holds up a *Canadian Mennonite* cover showing the massive flooding in British Columbia last fall.

thinking about it for decades, Moyer said, mentioning a document from the 1970s that contained Mennonites' environmental concerns. She said Christians are also some of the first people to have talked about climate change as a justice issue: the idea that those people who create the most waste won't feel the worst impacts. "It seems to be that more holistic understanding of environmental issues is commonly something that faith-based approaches bring to environmental concerns," she said.

Mennonites, especially, understand the theology and practice of simple living, and they have a practised willingness to get their hands dirty, trying things out and finding solutions, Siegrist said.

All three panellists suggested that Mennonites can contribute hope to the climate conversation.

"There's a lot of despair out there, and faith perspectives can offer a less apocalyptic approach, or at least some comfort, a sense of working with these issues with a higher power behind us and with us," Moyer said.

Siegrist said, "I do think there is reason to be hopeful, as long as we don't think

we're being hopeful that we can avoid climate change." The reality is that we are going to see the effects of climate change get worse in the years to come, he noted.

This is where response meets action. Moyer reflected on whether personal lifestyle changes or political advocacy are more important. In short, both are needed. Many people argue that focus must be on big systemic change, but this ignores what individual action can accomplish, and it tells those who aren't comfortable protesting that they have nothing to contribute. Purchasing power can change the market, individual action is a highly effective way to influence others to change, and taking action helps them feel hopeful.

Yet fighting for policy change and accountability from people in power is essential, too. "The church can be a really powerful middle ground between the big-scale societal change and the individual actions," Moyer said.

Funk suggested working with partners and following their lead, because there are often things the church does not get right. He pointed to greening theology, discipleship and churches—whether that is encouraging each other to make personal changes, connecting with the land, listening to Indigenous peoples or lobbying government. Finally, we need to look to children.

"I'm thinking that we join them, listen to them, lend them our power and wealth . . . and we take the burden before it becomes too much for them," he said. "The good news is, we're a community, so we're never stuck doing this on our own."

This conversation marks the launch of *CM*'s new online discussion series, which will explore current events that are impacting the church and wider world.

The magazine publishes articles written on hundreds of different topics, but it will "continue this discussion in a different form, a form that allows us to gather together to hear from people who are invested in this work and to discuss with one another possible ways forward," Epp said in his opening comments. Upcoming topics include Indigenous-Settler reconciliation on Oct. 5 and "Why am I Mennonite?" on Nov. 2. ❧

CM honoured with 10 CCCA awards

Canadian Christian Communicators ceremony held virtually for third year in a row

Canadian Mennonite
WATERLOO, ONT.

The Canadian Christian Communications Association awards were handed out online on May 11 to Canadian magazines, newspapers and communications organizations that entered material published or posted online in 2021. *Canadian Mennonite* won six awards for writing, two for layout and design, and one each for online content and for general excellence for a magazine.

First-place entries

• **A.C. Forrest Memorial Award for excellence in religious journalism** (under 10,000 circulation).

Jeremy Bergen, author (“Tending the cairn,” Oct. 25, page 4.)

Judge’s comments: “A practical approach to the issue of when, how and even if a church should issue a formal apology. Very helpful information!”

Opinion Piece

Marlene Epp, author (“Victim or perpetrator: What am I?” Nov. 12, page 12.)

Judge’s comments: “This is a courageous and eloquent examination of a difficult and complex subject based on personal experience and family history that applies

specifically to the Mennonite church, but also applies generally to all denominations called to deal with allegations of sexual misconduct/abuse within its reach and embrace. . . . Although a deeply emotional matter, equal parts pain, sorrow, humiliation and frustration, the writer demonstrates extraordinary restraint and compassion in expressing her point of view logically and reasonably. I can think of no better window through which to begin an exploration of this overlooked, neglected or otherwise ignored topic, especially in the #MeToo era.”

Second-place entries

Features

Aaron Epp, author (“Defund the police” and “Four police views,” Sept. 27, pages 4-7.)

Judge’s comments: “Very current/topical. But given the times we live in, likely also evergreen. Well written and organized. Good selection of quotes, voices. . . . Overall, I think it was a good story and did what it was supposed to do: open the reader’s eyes to an important issue and likely changed their views on an important issue.”

Best Headline

Ross W. Muir, author (“Everyone wanted

Mennonite girls,” Aug. 16, page 21.)

Judge’s comments: “The intriguing quote as a headline was a very choice call-in to (frankly) a rather boring topic—the installation of a plaque. The reporter did well to get the plaque story told before cutting to the human-interest element implied in the headline. Well done. . . . Putting the title quote into the last lines of the article was a good finishing touch.”

• **Front Cover** (magazine, under 10,000 circulation)

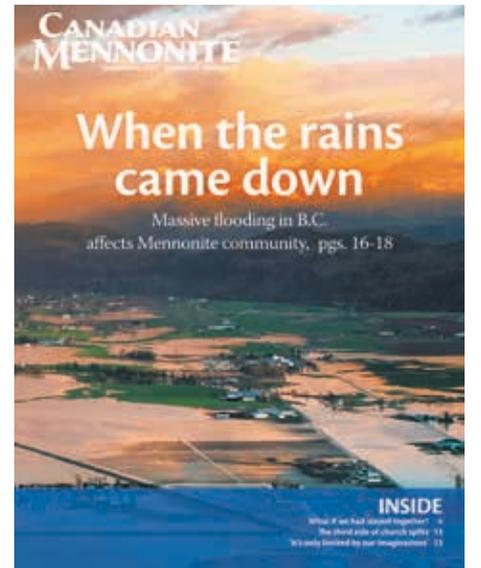
Ross W. Muir, designer, and **Elaine Binnema**, photographer (“When the rains came down,” Dec. 6, front and back covers.)

Judge’s comments: “A very powerful, and ironically beautiful photo, given the destruction it implies, and a photo with a lot of emotional heft. The front/back cover arrangement is an excellent idea, and gives the image maximum space to do its work.”

• **Feature Layout and Design** (magazine, under 10,000 circulation)

Betty Avery, designer, and **Virginia A. Hostetler**, editor (“Learning fluency step by step,” July 19, pages 4-7.)

Judge’s comments: Colourful and



intelligent opener, well-set and solidly designed secondary pages. Callouts handled imaginatively.”

• **Best E-newsletter**

Betty Avery, designer, and **Aaron Epp**, editor (*CM Now*, Sept. 2, Sept. 30, Nov. 25.)

Judge’s comments: “You have strong, clear images that tell the story and engage the reader even before the article is started. The design is clear, easy to navigate. You get into the stories quickly and limit the scrolling necessary. . . . You have a good template and do not deviate. Would be interested to see what it could become with a bit of play or design energy.”

Third-place entries

• **Editorial**

Virginia A. Hostetler, author (“The gifts of all,” March 15, page 2.)

Judge’s comments: “Well argued and timely piece about the importance of intentionality in creating diversity. Speaks to the audience about their history and a path forward.”

• **Media Review**

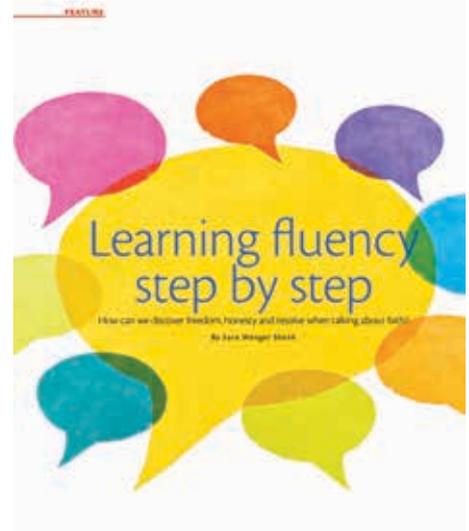
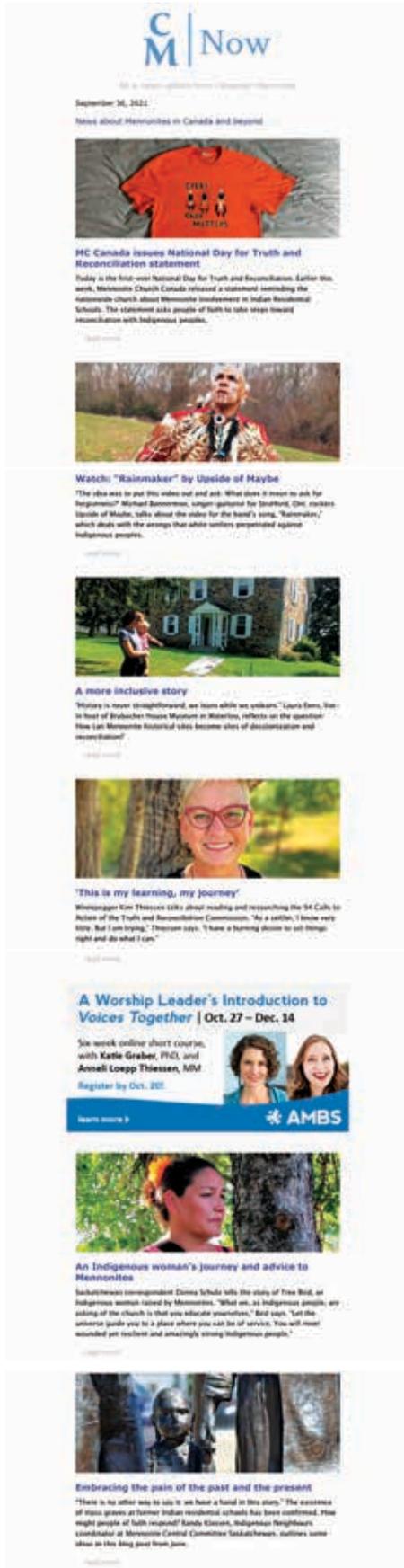
David Driedger, author (“Liberating and recovering Anabaptist theology,” Feb. 4, page 12).

Judge’s comments: “This article is a brilliantly written summary and evaluation of the books *Recovering from the Anabaptist Vision . . .* and *Renewing Peace Theology through the Wisdom of Women*. The compelling review provides a good introduction and helpful commentary, and made me want to read both these books.”

• **General Excellence** (print magazine)

Tobi Thiessen, publisher; **Virginia A. Hostetler**, executive editor; **Ross W. Muir**, managing editor; **Betty Avery**, designer (March 15, Sept. 13, Dec. 6 issues).

Judge’s comments: Packed with diverse content, columns and features, all to serve, inform and challenge the identified audience. Design is clean, readable and easy to navigate. . . . This magazine has so much text that it relies on the motivation of the reader to pursue and engage. . . . Overall, an impressive editorial package, issue after issue.”



Bring the world to your congregation this July

Mennonite World Conference

“Do I participate alone at my computer, or will groups emerge to share what is typically a communal event?”

Ray Brubacher, a former event planner for Mennonite World Conference (MWC), didn't wait until July to decide. Unable to attend the event in person, he is organizing watch parties for Anabaptist Mennonites in his region to attend the hybrid Assembly 2022 together.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MWC

Churches around the world are encouraged by Mennonite World Conference to organize watch parties as a way to attend the hybrid Assembly 2022 together.

Assembly 2022 will take place in Indonesia from July 5 to 10 both onsite and online. The event features 10 worship services across six days, with inspiring speakers from the global Anabaptist Mennonite family.

Onsite attendance is limited due to the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the hybrid event enables everyone to participate from wherever they are. Plenary sessions, workshops and the Global Church Village stage will be livestreamed and recorded.

Online registrants enter the Assembly hub (<https://bit.ly/3t7IDSa>) to join conversation spaces with other participants from

around the world, attend workshops, and view photos and videos from the live event.

“We encourage local congregations to register for the assembly,” says Jardely Martínez, assembly communications coordinator. “You can view the live stream in real time with Indonesia or host a watch party at a time of your convenience.”

The Anabaptist-Mennonite pastors and leaders group in Waterloo Region, Ont., is planning two viewing sessions from July 6 to 9.

“I learned in Zimbabwe to keep it simple,” says Brubacher.

Likely hosted at a Mennonite Church Canada congregation, these watch parties will be open to all Anabaptist Mennonites from the region. Brubacher is especially keen to see newer Anabaptist Mennonite congregations attend, especially those on the margins of the dominant culture in Canada.

Assembly videos will be available for one month after the event ends.

“You can relieve your pastor of sermon duties this summer by screening one or several of the assembly plenary speakers,” says Martínez. “Your worship band can learn new songs from the international ensemble or take a break by airing the assembly worship singing video.

Experts from the global Anabaptist-Mennonite family will share their knowledge in workshops. Some will be livestreamed from onsite, while others will be held in a webinar format.

“Workshops may be used in Sunday school classes or provide material for discussion in weekday studies or youth

groups,” says Rianna Isaak-Krauß, assembly assistant. ☞

☞ News brief

Assembly 2022 on-site participants more than doubled



MWC PHOTO

Participants at Assembly 2015 in Pennsylvania laugh together in one of the exhibit halls.

Assembly 2022 in Indonesia just got a little bit larger. The National Advisory Committee for Assembly 17 and the executive committee of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) have decided to raise attendance numbers for the gathering in Indonesia to 1,250, from 500. COVID-19 cases in Indonesia remain low, so the Indonesian government has lifted quarantine restrictions for travellers. “We would love to see you in Indonesia. Please register now! It is not yet too late to make travel plans,” says Liesa Unger, chief international events officer. “Anyone can register until we reach the limit.” The expanded number of participants allows for MWC's General Council meeting to take place on site instead of online. “Mennonite World Conference is a communion,” says César García, MWC's general secretary. “That means we are in a deep, spiritual, unifying relationship with one another. The discernment work of the General Council is best done where we can spend time with each other, fellowshiping not only in sessions but also over meals and in leisure outside of meetings.” The MWC commissions will also attend Assembly 2022 and hold face-to-face meetings.

—MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

News brief

Church disability assessment survey now available

A congregational assessment survey is being offered by the Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADN), based in Elkhart, Ind., to help congregations, including those in Canada, assess their levels of accessibility to persons with various disabilities, including mental illness. The online survey automatically registers and keeps track of results, so that the network may use the survey to generate an ADN accessibility seal for use on congregational websites. The seal (pictured below) has five emblems for each area of accessibility. Congregations can apply for emblems in as many of the five categories as desired:

- **Mobility:** Congregations meet the criteria outlined for parking, entrance, interior, restrooms and worship area.
- **Hearing:** Assistive listening devices and other aids are provided for people who are hard of hearing.
- **Sign language:** Adequate sign-language interpretation is provided.
- **Vision:** Aids are provided for persons who have difficulty seeing. These aids can be in the form of large print, digital materials for personal devices or projection.
- **Support:** The congregation supports inclusion of persons with disabilities and mental illness.

This emblem will be awarded to churches meeting the criteria. To take the survey or learn more about it, visit <https://bit.ly/3L2UjvO>.

—ANABAPTIST DISABILITIES NETWORK



News brief

MC Canada sets up carbon levy for travel to Gathering 2022

Gathering 2022 registrants can offset greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions from their travel to Edmonton by donating to a new fund established by Mennonite Church Canada. This carbon levy contributes to MC Canada's creation-care fund, the creation of which was approved by Joint Council on April 9 and 10. Initially, the creation-care fund will provide emission-reduction grants to congregations that undertake projects to lower greenhouse-gas emissions from their buildings and operations. The grant application process, which will open this fall, will encourage congregations to look at all aspects of their sustainability within their communities. MC Canada's Sustainability Leadership Group will evaluate grant applications, and the new nationwide climate-action staff person will be responsible for implementation. Revenue for the fund will come from a GHG carbon levy related to MC Canada's operations, including travel by staff, executive ministers and Joint Council; donations by individuals, congregations and regional churches; and interest earned by the fund. The levy amount (\$/tonne of CO₂e) is set by Joint Council, and is currently \$50. Contributions to the carbon levy for travel to Gathering 2022 in Edmonton can be made at mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022.

—MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA



IMAGE BY ŠÁRKA JONÁŠOV FROM PIXABAY

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Indigenous leader critical of MC Canada decision

Idle No More co-founder Sylvia McAdam says changes to MC Canada's Indigenous-Settler Relations program have left her "disappointed," "sad" and "betrayed."

canadianmennonite.org/mcadam



Pride Month: Resources for worship

"Every person in God's image, every person God's delight..." Check out these songs and resources you can use in worship during Pride Month.

canadianmennonite.org/prideresources



Watch: Doug Klassen invites you to Gathering 2022

MC Canada's executive minister promotes "We Declare," the nationwide church's upcoming gathering, in this new video.

canadianmennonite.org/wdinvite



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CANADIAN MENNONITE

Employment Opportunity
Executive Editor

Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service (CMPS) invites applications for the position of **Executive Editor**.

The Executive Editor guides the publishing of *Canadian Mennonite* in print and online. Available **October 1, 2022**, the successful candidate has a strong vision for what *Canadian Mennonite* can contribute to the church as a source of information, inspiration and interconnectedness.

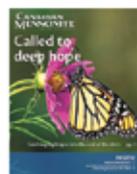
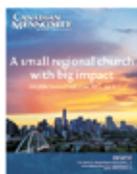
Qualifications: The ideal candidate holds a degree in communications or other related field, in combination with experience working in journalism, and will be a member of a Mennonite church.

Location: Previous editors worked at the head office in Waterloo, but remote work arrangements are possible.

CMPS is an independent, non-profit corporation, established in 1971 in Waterloo, Ontario. Our mission is to educate, inspire, inform and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada.

See www.canadianmennonite.org/employment for full details.

Application deadline: August 5, 2022



UpComing

A day for spiritual leaders

Mennonite Church Canada welcomes spiritual leaders across its nationwide community of faith to a special one-day event at Edmonton First Mennonite Church on July 29. "A Day for Spiritual Leaders" is a day of worship and sharing, intended for pastors, lay leaders, spiritual directors, parish nurses and deacons. It takes place before the opening evening of Gathering 2022. Planned by MC Canada's Community of Spiritual Leaders, the day will be an opportunity for leaders to lament and grieve over losses their congregations may have experienced during the pandemic. It will also be a chance to turn toward praise. "We need space to support each other, grieve our losses, to build one another up in the spirit of Christ, and maybe even share some of the glimmers of hope that have come amidst it all," says Doug Klassen, MC Canada's executive minister. Worship will be led by Sarah Kathleen Johnson and Anneli Loepp Thiessen in the morning with interactive time for sharing and reflection. In the afternoon, Glen Guyton, MC U.S.A.'s executive director, will speak on themes related to his recent book, *Reawakened: How Your Congregation Can Spark Lasting Change*. Those who plan on attending "A Day for Spiritual Leaders" as part of their Gathering 2022 experience, are encouraged to register for the event when they register for Gathering 2022, at mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022. Those who plan to attend "A Day for Spiritual Leaders" only can register for the event at <https://bit.ly/3LY9JSA>.



Glen Guyton

—MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

Calendar

Nationwide

July 29-Aug. 1: MC Canada Gathering 2022, in Edmonton. Theme: "We declare what we have seen and heard." Registration is now available for the in-person and virtual event 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." For more information, or to register online, visit mennonitechurch.ca/amplify.

British Columbia

Until June 29: The Mennonite Heritage Museum, in Abbotsford, presents historical and documentary

films every Wednesday at 1 p.m. For more information, visit mennonitemuseum.org. To book seats, call 604-758-5667.

Saskatchewan

June 23: RJC holds an open house for prospective students and youth, who are also invited to stay for dinner and the premiere of the musical "Anastasia" afterwards. For more information, email admissions@rjc.sk.ca.

June 23-25: RJC presents the musical "Anastasia." An alumni and friends barbecue is planned for June 25 prior to the musical. To register for the meal, email office@rjc.sk.ca.

Manitoba

Until June 18: The MHC Gallery: A Gallery of Canadian Mennonite

University, Winnipeg, hosts "Who am I? A retrospective," an exhibition by Milos Milidrag, who came to Canada in 1997 as a war refugee from Yugoslavia having served as a professor in the faculty of fine arts at the University of Pristina.

Ontario

Aug. 14-26: Ontario Mennonite Music Camp, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. Open to students who have finished grades 6 to 12, with a leadership-training program available for students who have finished grades 11 or 12. For more information, or to register, visit <https://bit.ly/34Hb3ch>.

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.

Sept. 29-Oct. 2: Mennonite/s Writing 2022, at Goshen College, Ind. Theme: "Thirty years of Mennonite/s Writing: Responding to the past, creating the future." Keynote speakers include Casey Plett, Julia Spicher Kasdorf and Steven Rubin, and Beth Piatote. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3yGxQ4Y>.

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.



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



**First Mennonite Church
Edmonton**

**Employment Opportunities
Pastoral Team**

Inviting applications for two pastoral positions for a combined FTE of 1.5 - 2.0.

First Mennonite Church is excited to build a new pastoral team that works along with our church community to help us grow as a community of grace, joy, and peace. We are a multi-generational, urban church of approximately 180, with Anabaptist theology and principles guiding us. God has called us to be an inclusive, affirming, Christian community. Congregants are actively involved in church ministries and programs. The new pastoral team will share pastoral responsibilities in a manner that fits with their skills and gifts.

For information or to apply, please contact: Ruth Friesen, Search Committee Chair (ruthdavisfriesen@gmail.com, 780-910-2573) or Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, Mennonite Church Alberta Executive Minister (execmin@mcab.ca, 780 994-1021).

More information about First Mennonite Church is available at: edmontonfirst.mcab.ca.



**Mennonite Church
British Columbia**

**Employment Opportunity
Executive Minister (MC B.C.)**

Mennonite Church British Columbia (MC B.C.) is looking for an **Executive Minister** (EM) to work with the MC B.C. Leadership Board to shape and implement the mission and vision of MC B.C.

The EM will help foster and sustain spiritually vibrant congregations and develop and mentor leaders. The chosen candidate will be someone who assists in shaping, defining, and cultivating MC B.C.'s Anabaptist vision of faith for today. The EM will build healthy connections, grow community, and meaningfully engage with our culture and God's world in transformative ways.

Ideal start date is Fall 2022, for handover with current EM.

Find the job description here:
mcbc.ca/resources/employment

The application deadline is **August 30, 2022**.

Please send cover letter and resume to emstg@mcbc.ca.

All interested are encouraged to apply, and only the applicants that meet the expectations of the role will be contacted.



PHOTO BY RACHEL HOLDERMAN

Hannah Leaman, left, a senior at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), is presented with a rainbow stole by Professor Kathy Evans at the university's first 'lavender graduation.' The celebration honoured the accomplishments and experiences of the LGBTQ+ community past and present at EMU. The graduation ceremony was the first such ceremony among the Mennonite colleges and universities in the United States and Canada, according to Jackie Font-Guzmán, EMU's vice-president for diversity, equity and inclusion. The May 6 event, which was also open to alumni, preceded EMU's main commencement.



PHOTO BY TINA DOELL / TEXT BY EMILY SUMMACH

Brad Leitch, left, the director of Custodians: A Story of Ancient Echoes, poses on May 21 with Harry and Germaine Lafond, Sue and David Neufeld, and Leonard Doell, in the Roxy Theatre lobby in Saskatoon for the film's premiere. Harry Lafond and David Neufeld served as Indigenous and Mennonite elders and consultants on the film. The film was commissioned by Walking the Path, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's Indigenous-Settler Reconciliation Committee. More than 300 guests were in attendance at the event. Further information about future showings and distribution of the film can be found at www.ancientechoes.ca.