

CANADIAN MENNONITE

October 20, 2023 Volume 27 Number 21



Memories of a brother gone to war

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God have mercy on the Middle East

BY WILL BRAUN
 editor@canadianmennonite.org

As we prepare to send this peace-themed issue of the magazine to press, all eyes are on Gaza. Israeli tanks sit poised at its northern border, ready to invade. Long lines of transport trucks laden with aid sit at its southern border, as a humanitarian catastrophe unfolds. The people of Gaza, mostly civilians, sit in between—cut off, trapped, at the mercy of outside forces.

Though the situation may have changed by the time you read this, we hope you find relevance in the Palestinian voices we have assembled (pages 16, back cover), as well as in the other material related to Gaza (pages 4, 10, 12) and to peace more generally (pages 7, 18-21).

For context, we note the decades-old asymmetry of the situation in and around Gaza. While Palestinian groups, such as Hamas, have visited violence, fear and terror on Israelis over the years, in nearly every material and political way, Israel holds a staggering power advantage.

The fact that the Israeli government has perpetrated oppression, humiliation and disproportionate violence toward Palestinians for generations provides context to understand why Hamas fighters were enraged, but in no way does it justify or excuse what they did.

Nor does what they did justify or excuse the Israeli response.

The role of the West, including Canada, in allowing the volatile asymmetry to persist and worsen must be named and scrutinized.



Amid this asymmetry, we give preference to the voices of peace-minded Palestinian in this issue of *Canadian Mennonite*. We give preference to people on the side that does not get billions of dollars or world-class weapons from the West; the side whose leader is not embraced, literally and figuratively, by the so-called leader of the free world; the side that will never see Western landmarks lit up in the colours of their flag to show solidarity with them; the side that does not have at its unofficial disposal advocacy organizations that may critique us forcefully if we do not take their side (see below).

Part of the intentional preference in our reporting is due to the relationships that Mennonites have developed over many years in the region. In my observation, those relationships are largely, though certainly not exclusively, with Palestinians working for peace—people who speak fondly of their Jewish friends and seek to cross the lines that divide.

Some readers will disagree with our approach. If all this sounds too tilted to one side (especially coming from someone who likes to talk about nuance and complexity), see my 2017 interview with a representative of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, an organization that had “condemn[ed]” Mennonite Church Canada, saying that a resolution the church passed in relation to Israel spoke to “the moral blindness and increasing marginalization of a denomination in decline.”

These days, I find myself dissecting

every headline I read about the Middle East, trying to decipher bias. It's exhausting. Even prayers are often loaded with political bias. The exception, perhaps, is the most basic prayer: “Lord, have mercy.”

Indeed, may God have mercy on the hostages and the hostage-takers, the bereaved and those whose hands are stained with blood, those trapped inside borders and those trapped in the soul-consuming need for revenge, those who fear and those who console, those who hunger for food and those who thirst for peace.

Lord, have mercy.

Also in this issue . . .

A.S. Compton tells a story that explores the humanity of a soldier, the tension in a family and the judgement of a pacifist church (page 7).

Cathrin van Sintern-Dick explains how intercultural mediation can help address and prevent family conflicts that come with the complications of aging, care homes, inheritance and the like (page 14).

Madalene Arias, our Spanish-speaking correspondent, reports on how Ecuadorian Mennonites are addressing the deteriorating state of the society they live in (page 18).

James Barber talks about the white Christian nationalism lurking at our border (page 22).

In a book excerpt, Sarah Augustine and Sheri Hostetler argue that green technology is just another form of exploitative over-consumption, and that Jesus shows us how to deal with the temptations found in the wilderness of excess (page 24).

Finally, a reminder of *CM's* online event discussing medical assistance in dying. For those who receive this in time, join us on October 25 at 8:00 p.m. EST. See canadianmennonite.org/events. ❧



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PHOTO BY A.S. COMPTON

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Worship amid war
 Palestinian Christians gather for worship on October 16 in St. Porphyrios Orthodox Church in Gaza. At the time of writing, hundreds of Christians were sheltering in this church, built in the 1100s.

Photo from Facebook/Saint Porphyrios Orthodox Church-Gaza



PHOTO BY ANTON ZELENNOV

St. Basil's Cathedral, Red Square, Moscow.

God Bless Russia

The Russian Orthodox Church has assigned a close ally of President Vladimir Putin to head the church in Crimea, an area of Ukraine annexed by Russia in 2014. Metropolitan Tikhon, a vocal supporter of Putin, says God has given Putin the "cross" of president to bear.

At the time of writing, the Ukrainian government was set to consider a bill that would prohibit the Russian Orthodox Church from operating in Ukraine.

Source: Religion News Service

Priest offers to be taken hostage

The highest ranking Catholic in the Holy Land offered his "absolute availability" to be exchanged for children held as hostages by Hamas. Speaking to reporters in Jerusalem on Oct. 16, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa also spoke of the Palestinian Christians sheltering in churches.

Source: The Catholic Register
 Facebook Photo/Friends of Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa



**50 YEARS
AGO**

Letters

There were a few disturbing things that happened during the anniversary celebrations in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., on Sunday afternoon, September 30 (see October 1, page 1).

The first speaker praised the material development of the Mennonite colonies in Russia even in their use of coercive methods. But then the sword was a judgment on this materialism.

Yet when he came to the Canadian scene, there was no judgment on materialism. Again coercion was advocated as a means to bring the counter culture, represented by long-haired youth, into line.

The audience reacted with spontaneous applause to this non-Mennonite suggestion of coercion.

Mennonite Reporter, October 15, 1973

Pope calls out Western excess

In a recent "Apostolic Exhortation" on the climate crisis, Pope Francis said that "a broad change in the irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model would have a significant long-term impact."

Source: vatican.va



Flickr photo by LornaWatt



A moment from yesterday



This photograph shows Wanner Mennonite Church at worship in July 1950. In the mid-20th century, it was a new pattern for many Ontario Mennonite congregations to have men and women sitting together in a worship service rather than men on one side and women on the other. What is your congregation's "social geography?" Who sits where? Why do you think this is?

Text: Lauren Harder-Gissing
Photo: David L. Hunsberger/
Mennonite Archives of Ontario

OPINION

/// Readers write

✉ Pay attention to artists

Thanks for your willingness to address tough issues facing the church and other institutions in our society. I appreciate your attempt at enlarging the tent by listening to voices that have been marginalized.

It is hard work to really listen to a voice that is different from the majority, and much easier to be defensive, vilify and shut out opinions. Artists—whether novelists, poets, painters or performers—often come with a prophetic message we do well to pay attention to. As Will Braun points out (“The institution of messiness,” September 22), they may have something valuable to offer and we are the losers if we shut them out. Thanks for bringing to our attention the hurt that Di Brandt has experienced over the years (“Poetic justice,” September 22). I trust that your efforts will help us hear her message more clearly. Perhaps her voice has already brought about change over the years with respect to the issues she’s addressed, but we still have a long way to go.

ABE BERGEN, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA (BETHEL MENNONITE CHURCH)

✉ A day for disappointment

On September 30, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, many activities took place that brought meaning to the day. The following Monday, the federal government gave its branches a paid holiday. Instead of dedicating a working day to making reparations to Indigenous peoples, the members of our government rewarded themselves with a day off. I am surprised there is no major blowback to this. I just don’t get it.

JOHN PRIES, ST. JACOBS, ONTARIO (FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH, KITCHENER)

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Neufeld—Micah (b. Sept. 29, 2023) to Josh and Alyssa Neufeld. Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Weddings

Neufeld/Gabrielle—Craig Neufeld (Altona Bergthaler Church), and Courtney Gabrielle, Sept. 29, 2023, Altona, Man.

Jeong/Yang—Angelina Jeong and Caleb Yang (Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Vancouver), Oct. 1, 2023, at Chinatown Peace Church, Vancouver, B.C.

Deaths

Dyck—Anne (nee Warkentine), 97, (b. Aug. 26, 1925; d. May 12, 2023) Trinity Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta.

Epp—Henry, 83, (b. Feb. 18, 1939; d. Feb. 17, 2023), Trinity Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta.

Gugenheimer—Helene (nee Klein), 94, (b. March 7, 1929; d. Sept. 30, 2023) North Kildonan Mennonite Church

Janzen—Elnora (Nora) (nee Dyck), 86, (b. July 4, 1936; d. Nov. 8, 2022), Trinity Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta.

Kroeger—Irene (nee Peters), 95, (b. July 26, 1928; d. June 11, 2023), Trinity Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta.

Lobe—Gene, 82, (b. Aug. 21, 1940; d. July 8, 2023). Trinity Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta.

Warkentin—Sigrid (nee Martynes), 81, (b. Jan. 25, 1942; d. Aug. 13, 2023), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Be in Touch

Send letters to letters@canadianmennonite.org.

Send milestones to milestones@canadianmennonite.org.

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Memory carrier

The story of a brother gone to war
Creative non-fiction by A.S. Compton



PHOTOS BY A.S. COMPTON

Nelson Groh was a Mennonite killed in the Second World War.

“S

ir,” said the man, “you and your family can be very proud of your son.”

I could tell the man at the door was important by the way his brass buttons shone, and the way Father stood stiffly and Mother wrung her hands. They turned their backs, and I knew I wasn’t supposed to hear. But I crept closer, partly hidden in the kitchen. My sister, Olive, almost 10 years older than me, had been patching a shirt in the sitting room. As I peered around the corner, I saw she was on her feet behind Father and Mother, her mending discarded.

The brass button man stood with compassion in his face as he said those words: “You and your family can be very proud of your son...”

I watched him hand Father a telegram. I didn’t know why Mother began to weep.

“No,” Father said hoarsely, “we’re not.”

Olive straightened.

“Speak for yourself,” she said.

The man held his hat in his hands and offered his condolences. Confused by Father’s response, he was gracious and quietly took leave of them.

My young mind raced, trying to understand what I had witnessed. Father. Mother. Olive.

The man at the door... was bringing news of Nelson, our brother.

“But,” I whispered, unable to contain my questions.

Father turned to see me peering around the corner. That moment should have been private; his face, I’ll never forget.

Two years earlier, when Nelson enlisted, Olive told me he left for our sake. He would not charge his own sisters’ future to the lives and deaths of other men. Olive was a schoolteacher and a wonderful person; she must have been worthy of his sacrifice, I thought. She made Canada a better place because of the future he gave her. But I didn’t want to be someone worthy of sacrifice; I only wanted my brother back. Was I a bad, ungrateful sister?

I remember how he would play the

French horn for us on winter evenings. I thought its sound as cheery as its gleaming exterior. But now I know it to play the melody of missing someone.

He used to sing in his strong tenor for me on days I came home from school feeling glum. He would spin me around until I was dizzy, bouncing with his voice, to make me laugh as the world tipped. I had looked forward to hearing that voice again when he returned.

The minister preached on pacifism for weeks after he left. Couldn’t he have volunteered with the other Mennonite boys? Because our people do not go to war, our family’s neighbours and cousins were sent away to build and mine and farm while soldiers fought and died. The other Mennonite boys came home, having been cold and hungry, but alive. Why did Nelson think he needed to die so I could live? I feared I must become something great so his death would not be in vain.

For months after Nelson left, I had overheard Father repeatedly telling Mother they must make a decision. Mother would keep her back to Father, busying herself with cooking or washing while he spoke; she was terribly quiet. Until one day when she wasn’t.

“No!” She turned on Father. “Nelson is our son. I’ll not shun him. He has not turned his back on us!”

“Everything that we believe...!” Father roared.

Mother ignored him. “He writes to us regularly.”

“He has nothing to say to us!” cried Father.

“He attends church when he can,” she continued. “He is his own man and must be allowed to make his own choices. I will not cut him off. When he returns home, I will welcome him. I expect you to do the same.”

Mother turned to leave the kitchen.

“Writing letters and attending church do not make up for his betrayal of our ways. *Love thy neighbour. Thou shalt not murder.*”

She turned back to face him. “And what would you do?” she said evenly. “Could you shun your own son? And

what if he does not return from this god-forsaken war?”

Never had I felt so alone, listening from the sitting room. Olive was boarding near her teaching post and Nelson was away. Something within me, in my chest near the base of my throat, shattered. The idea that he might not come home overwhelmed me; breathing felt like a weight.

“Our people do not go to war. He has betrayed our family and our faith.”

“Is that all you see? A traitor, instead of a son?”

Our family had rarely been much for chatter, but since the news of Nelson’s death, the house had been tomb-silent. I did not know how to break the silence, to ask the questions that had been accumulating since that day.

His personal effects arrived much later to a still silent house, addressed to Olive, not Mother or Father. A few photographs and medals, a flight logbook, his uniform, the letters Olive had sent him regularly, and a teddy bear. So little to be the sum of his life. Olive whispered to me that the bear had been his flying mascot, a gift from a ladies’ sewing circle near where he had been stationed, to welcome Canadian pilots. It had fur like a real animal, a warm brown colour, and beady eyes, but I dared not touch it.

Soon after, I found Olive searching the library, looking up what each of his medals meant, muttering to herself about our people’s self-imposed ignorance. But when she saw me, she shut the book.

She had not accepted his uniform, telling the solemn boy delivering it that surely it could be of more use to someone else.

“Those who live by the sword die by the sword.”

Mrs. Martin said so to Mother in the grocery store, standing by bags of flour, near where there should have been sugar.

I watched Mother. Her back became rigid; her hands clutched the grocery basket. She lifted her chin, almost imperceptibly.

“My son,” she said quietly, “was a

good man,” and turned on her heel. I scuttled after.

But once we were home, I saw her hands shake, her shoulders droop. Our community was small; everyone knew when Nelson had enlisted, while their own sons were sent away to volunteer as Conscientious Objectors. And everyone knew when he was killed in action, piloting a machine of war, a sacrilege, a betrayal of our people; words I learned from neighbours’ whispers.

I sat on the back porch of our house, where I had spent summer evenings watching fireflies with Nelson and Olive, now wishing desperately to run, hide somewhere, but knowing that if I ruined my dress Father would not be forgiving. The small memorial was over. No one had mentioned his service nor cause of death, only reinforcing our shame.

I was afraid he would be forgotten; no one would speak his name, no one would see his face. His picture would stay hidden in Mother’s dresser, and his memory would disappear. Afraid that they wanted him forgotten. I cried alone, knowing I could never remember everything he was, and I could never be enough to be worthy of his death.

“Millie,” Olive said softly, sitting down next to me. “Perhaps you would like to keep his bear.”

She held it out in careful, steady hands.

I swallowed and took the bear gingerly, afraid somehow that if I dropped it, the memory of my brother would shatter.

“I’ll take good care of you,” I whispered.

I hid the bear in the wardrobe behind my Sunday dress. I sewed an Air Force blue hat and pinned it over his ear. Some days I whispered to him: stories of my day, thoughts, memories and reasons I missed my brother.

As I grew older, I argued with the bear; why it was wrong to go to war; why it was right. Other days, ashamed, I distinctly avoided his hiding place. But I remember the man at the door, hat in hands, telling us to be proud of my brother.

And while the minister damned him and neighbours shunned him, Olive and I held onto him silently. Though all of us, his family, still loved him, we never again spoke his name. ❧

A.S. Compton lives in Waterloo, Ontario, and is part of the Canadian Mennonite team. This work of creative non-fiction is rooted in the life of her great uncle, Nelson Groh, and was written after many visits with her great-aunt, Mildred Nigh (Nelson’s youngest sister). Though creative liberties were taken, some of the dialogue and most of the general facts are from Nigh’s retelling and family lore.



This bear was among Nelson Groh’s personal effects, returned to his family after his death.

/// For discussion

1. For readers with deep roots in Canada, how did your family and/or community respond in the 1940s when Canada conscripted citizens into the army?
2. If we were faced with conscription today, how many young people do you think would choose conscientious objection?
3. What would make that choice difficult?
4. If someone from your congregation joined the police or the army, how would the congregation react?
5. What are the best ways to teach peace to the next generation?

—By Barb Draper

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FROM OUR LEADERS

Whose side are you on?

Michael Pahl

In Joshua 5, we come across one of those wonderfully strange biblical stories that shakes our preconceptions and leaves us with more questions than answers.

Israel is encamped at Gilgal, preparing to besiege Jericho at God's command—so they firmly believe. Suddenly Joshua sees a man whom he does not recognize standing in front of him, sword drawn.

"Whose side are you on?" Joshua asks. A reasonable question in the circumstances.

"Neither," the man replies. "I have come as commander of God's armies."

Wait a second. Isn't God on Israel's side? God has delivered them from slavery in Egypt, covenanted with them at Sinai and led them to the Promised Land. If God is not on Israel's side, who is?

As I write this, modern-day Israel's armies are besieging and bombing Gaza, preparing to root out the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. This is a response to Hamas' horrific rampage of violence, slaughtering and kidnapping Israeli civilians. To this point, over 1,300

Israelis have been killed by Hamas. In response, over 1,500 Palestinians, nearly half of them children, have been killed by Israel.

Here in Canada we as Christians are asked, "Whose side are you on?" A reasonable question in the circumstances. How should we respond?

The way of Jesus helps guide us to an answer. In a world of complex and thorny questions, an increasingly polarized world where we are urged to take sides for and against, Jesus' way provides the nuance we need and the moral clarity we require.

Jesus, I'm convinced, would give the same answer as the commander of God's armies gave to Joshua—but still with a strong sense of standing with particular people. For Jesus does take a side. It's just that the side he takes doesn't necessarily match up with the binary choices we create.

In the Gospels, we never see Jesus taking the side of a political faction or a nation-state, certainly not one armed and ready for slaughter. Rather, Jesus is consistently on the side of people—real, living, flesh-and-blood people, especially those considered by the world to be "last" or "least" or "lost" (Jesus' words).

Jesus stands on the side of the broken sinner, ready to repent, and offers forgiveness. Jesus stands on the side of the indebted poor, exploited by wealthy landowners, and offers good news.

Jesus stands on the side of the oppressed, occupied by a foreign power, and offers the earth. Jesus stands on the side of the sick and disabled, physically and financially dependent, and offers healing.

Jesus stands on the side of the widow in her economic distress, the children ignored and powerless, the foreigner in an unfamiliar land, the leper outcast and feared by society, the humble faithful

under the thumb of powerful religious leaders, the woman easily divorced by her husband to be left in shame and poverty, the insurgent hanging on a Roman cross, crying out for mercy.

In other words, Jesus consistently stands with the vulnerable-to-harm and the impoverished-in-power, those cast out and pressed down, those too easily and too often crushed and broken.

But for Jesus this does not create categories of people whom he supports (or opposes) as a block, blindly and without question. Again, Jesus stands on the side of real, living, flesh-and-blood people.

While standing with his fellow Jews under Rome's occupation, he shows grace to a Roman centurion, healing his servant, and calls his compatriots to love their Roman enemies. While standing with the humble faithful under the thumb of some powerful religious leaders, he meets with one of these leaders by night, urging this seeker to be born again to see God's reign of justice and peace and life.

This is the nuance we need to navigate a complex world. This is the moral clarity we require to enable us to know when, and with whom, and how to take a stand—and with whom to sit and share a meal.

We find Jesus in the "least of these"—the naked, the hungry, the stranger, the imprisoned, Israelis slaughtered by Hamas and Palestinians displaced and occupied and bombed by Israel—and there we stand, with Jesus. We see God's image in the person right in front of us, regardless of their affiliation or allegiance, and there we sit with them, in grace. ☿

Michael Pahl is executive minister of Mennonite Church Manitoba. He blogs at michaelpahl.com and can be reached at mpahl@mennochurch.mb.ca.



PHOTO BY JOANNA HIEBERT BERGEN
(MCM PALESTINE-ISRAEL NETWORK)

Bombed building in Gaza, 2014.

IN THE IMAGE

The guy with the toothpick

Ed Olfert

A good friend, Wes Neepin, died this past week. I've written columns about Wes in the past but used a pseudonym, because I never got around to asking permission to tell his stories. Anonymity seems less important now.

Wes was in his nineties. He was born in a tent in northern Manitoba. He was kicked out of school after attending only three days. It was something about being non-status in a school where only "status Indian" kids could be taught, or the other way around. He taught himself to read and write many years later, when his career on the railroad was hampered by his illiteracy. Along with his determination to work hard came addictions and the resulting chaos in his personal life, including broken relationships and hard deaths of loved ones. Alcoholics Anonymous eventually helped him to achieve sobriety.

About 25 years ago, Wes appeared in Grace Mennonite Church in Prince Albert, sitting at the back, glowering, chewing on a toothpick. He escaped after the service, but the following Sunday, I raced to cut him off. We arranged to meet. That was when Wes told me that he had left his last church because he was upset, and I should not be surprised if he walked out on us as well. I assured him that would be okay, but insisted that if that happened, he tell me what had caused his annoyance.

It never happened.

I can't say that Wes never chafed in our midst. When the church talked much about peace, justice and compassion, "the guy with the toothpick," as Wes was known, occasionally grew impatient because he wanted action. He lived action. Matthew 25, the sheep and the goats . . . Wes lived those "least of these" ministries, all of them. Years ago, he was featured in a *CM* story, planting a food box outside the church, and then

personally committing to stocking that box, in aid of street people. He visited in prison, he volunteered with our Circle of Support and Accountability (COSA), he supported the local Salvation Army outreach ministries. Wherever there was need, Wes was close by, offering a response.

Through those years, Wes settled his spirit. He found a partner who supported him with matching passion to live a compassionate gospel. His ethnic sense of humour and sense of story defined much of him.

The COSA group of which we were both a part would meet in homes, supporting a person released from prison. When the gathering was at my acreage, I put the guys to work cutting and bending iron for a welding project. Wes ran my chop saw, cutting heavy pipe. I pointed out to him that when the blade became worn and small, a few more cuts were possible if the pipe was turned a little in the vise. Wes responded: "Oh yeah, I forgot I was working for the Mennonites!"

Wes worked to the end in support of addiction recovery. He referred people to me for Fifth Step counselling, and I'm aware of folks who literally owe their lives to Wes.

A few weeks before he died, I visited Wes in hospital, not realizing that the end was so near. He talked of the good people in his life, folks stopping by to visit, the strong support of his wife's



CM FILE PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

family. The staff at the hospital had been gentle and good to him; even the food was pretty good, just a little short in quantity. There was not a single word of complaint; only peace was offered. I left that visit energized, feeling blessed that Wes was my friend. Shortly after, his body started shutting down. The next visit was near the end. The sense of acceptance, peace and dignity was still present. The twinkle had not yet dimmed.

I'm convinced that twinkle continues, in many other eyes. ❧



Ed Olfert lives in Laird, Saskatchewan, and can be reached at p2peho@gmail.com.

MIND AND SOUL

To remember is to work for peace

Randy Haluza-DeLay

At this time of year, I begin to rummage through the various drawers of miscellany in search of those red Mennonite Central Committee buttons that say, “To remember is to work for peace.” Maybe you wear such a button too in the run-up to Remembrance Day.

One year I offered an extra button to a friend who I knew had the same values around peacemaking. After one day, the friend returned it to me. With the button on their lapel, an aggressive confrontation had occurred on the subway. This told them the red button was too much of a risk to wear as a racialized person.

any colour by an Act of Parliament in 1948. A storekeeper who used to distribute white poppies told me he was hit by a cease-and-desist order.

In fact, the Legion website claims “the Legion’s lapel Poppy is a sacred symbol of Remembrance” (capitalization included). I hope wearing this button is not all you do for peace. But even if it is, you are contributing to a counter-narrative about the meaning of the day, and a different sort of sacredness.

This became clear in my early experience after 9/11. The profusion of comments on a professional listserv led me to try to say something that I

convictions. “I have already decided to preach holy war,” he told me.

We must promote a different worldview.

So too with the recent eruption of violence involving Israel and Hamas. Right as I sat down to write, all hell exploded in Israel and Gaza. International law has been broken by both sides.

I will never support Hamas’ horrific actions. Nor will I align with the Israeli prime minister’s vow for retaliation that will “reverberate for generations.” The United States announced it will send military supplies, so Israel does not run out of “critical assets” to “defend” its people. Asymmetrically, the people of Gaza may run out of critical items like food, water, medical supplies, or even electricity because of the total siege (at the time of writing), on top of the 16-year Israeli blockade of Gaza.

I encourage you to read the statement and prayer requests from Jack Sara, president of Bethlehem Bible College and partner of Mennonite Church Canada (see the back cover).

War is too brutal a tool to bring “peace.” Whatever your thoughts about the altercations in Israel-Palestine, situations of violence and response should *never* be the vehicle for the reduction of human rights, abuse of authority, or demonizing of the antagonists.

It should be a time to promote our highest gospel values, in which following God is linked with specific efforts at creating peace, security, justice and well-being for everyone, regardless of whether they are neighbour or enemy. After all, Jesus calls us to love both. ✎



PHOTO BY MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE CANADA

That incident shows we are all socially situated. From our different positions, we all need to humbly but actively figure out how to work for the full and whole inclusion and well-being of all peoples. That means addressing any and everything that operates against what we call shalom, that is, the peaceful kingdom of God.

Peacemaking is inherently contentious. The Royal Canadian Legion was given trademark for poppies of

thought was carefully worded. I said we should be careful to consider all the dimensions of the issue and what the grievances may be, and not just focus on the shocking incidents of violence. I was resoundingly rebuked, and temporarily ejected from professional company.

Then, guessing at the direction the pastor of the church I attended at the time would probably go with in his Sunday sermon, I went to talk with him about my pacifist



Randy Haluza-DeLay lives in Toronto and can be reached at haluzadelay@gmail.com.

TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

An Open Letter to the Psalmists

Joshua Penfold

Dear Psalmists,

Sometimes I delight in your comforting words of God's grace and compassion.
You paint an alluring and alleviating picture of a loving, caring and ever-present shepherding God who loves us and knows us.

Sometimes I am assured by your confident words of God's power, protection and steadfastness.
You've built a strong case for a mighty and capable King whose kingdom offers security and shelter.

Sometimes I'm confused by your peculiar words of a God that I don't understand.
You proclaim notions of a harsh, petty and aloof God that to me seem inconsistent and unreliable.

Sometimes I resist your troubling words of a wrathful God I don't recognize.
You crave and call for a vindictive, judgmental, violent and vengeful God, who looks nothing like the God you speak of elsewhere.

Sometimes, I'm scared of your gory God.
You condemn, curse and call for bloodshed against your enemies, even desiring unimaginably heinous acts done to innocent children.

Sometimes I'm overwhelmed by the challenge of holding all of your pictures, praises, curses, proclamations, declarations, laments, moans, groans, pleas, shouts, songs, prayers and gut-wrenching emotions.
You've exposed your deepest selves, both beauty and blemish. You've showed me that it is all holy, it all has a place, it all reveals God to us in some way.

Sometimes it's too much.
Sometimes I can't get enough.
Sometimes it is exactly what I need. ☸



Joshua Penfold lives in New Hamburg, Ontario, and can be reached at penfoldjoshua@gmail.com.

Strengthening family ties through intergenerational mediation

Part I

By Cathrin van Sintern-Dick

Why cut what can be untied? This wise, old saying can apply to family conflicts. Some of our family ties are threadbare and frail; there is strain, and there is underlying conflict that we are aware of but too timid and, dare I say, too peace-loving to address.

During my years as a pastor and chaplain, both in Canada and Germany, I witnessed many families in conflict. I heard the pain of parents and adult children no longer talking with each other. I heard the pain of people nearing the golden years of their life weighed down by relationships in need of healing: “I just want to sit with my family in church again,” one person said.

Conflict can involve inheritance, succession, moving to care homes, forced separation of couples due to differing needs, kids “knowing best,” caregiver burnout and more. Factors like dementia, financial strain, health crises and geographical distance can compound matters.

In all these cases, how can we go about untangling the knots without ripping the ties that bind us together?

Intergenerational mediation, sometimes known as elder mediation, can provide a place for these conversations.

In the mediation process, participants are asked: What are your hopes? What are your core values? How can you create a legacy of peace in your family? Might you become a guiding light in approaching your family conflict?

I try to avoid labelling these conversations as “difficult” because most of us tend to shy away from difficult conversations; who wants to enter a process with the prospect of potential failure?

What we seek instead are open and relatable conversations, conversations that deepen our understanding of the other’s

fears and threats, giving us insight into their actions and opening pathways of ongoing communication.

Intergenerational mediation provides a space to work through problems between older adults and their families with the guidance of a neutral, trained third party. Intergenerational mediation can be initiated by an older person or the adult child of such a person. Such mediations are often a mix of legal and non-legal matters.

Mediation can address past conflict and/or help prevent future conflict by addressing issues, such as inheritance or succession planning, before they arise. Families can come together to plan their future. Voices are heard and different viewpoints understood within a private, confidential process that could unfold around a kitchen table, virtually, or at a conference table in a mediator’s office. Families can set the place and the pace.

Some conflicts in families are so great and so entrenched that it can feel as if the legal route is the only way forward. Mediation can provide an alternative for people of faith who seek peace and understanding.

While court is necessary in some cases, it is not an ideal place for families. An adversarial approach will not bring the family together for Christmas. Rarely do people walk away from court saying, “this improved our family relations.”

Despite the benefits of mediation, many families shy away from planning a future in which everyone has a voice. There are varied reasons for this. People worry about the cost. Often mediators work with the family in finding a financially

viable option. If the cost of one mediator can be divided between participating family members, it can be more doable.

Sometimes people hesitate to engage in mediation because they do not want to make trouble. “Why rock the boat?” they say. “Our relationships are not perfect; addressing them might make it better, or maybe not.”

On the flip side, not addressing underlying issues can lead to caregiver burnout, a widening rift in the family and further buildup of resentment. The boat is rocking one way or the other.

The fear of a failed mediation process must be addressed. There are families who are not able to settle their disagreements. Not surprisingly, sometimes it takes a long time to untangle issues that have developed over decades. Generally, as people hear and learn more, deepening understanding of others’ viewpoints, the dynamics shift over time.

The greatest benefit is that it helps families work together. They can sit down and find solutions that everyone agrees to, creating stronger ties, leaving a legacy of building peace in our own families.

A thread that is no longer threadbare becomes stronger over time. It brings transformational power. It brings peace back into the family. Instead of pulling at the thread, we strengthen it and become witnesses in the process. ❧



Cathrin van Sintern-Dick is a former pastor and chaplain who now serves as regional ministry associate for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. She is also a trained and experienced mediator.

GOD'S STORY, OUR STORY

Part II: Telling and re-telling who we are

By Kara Carter

How does your faith community answer these questions: Who are we? Who are we becoming? Who does God say we are?

These questions can serve to guide a process to uncover and/or challenge a congregation's primary identity. This is vital work as we journey through uncharted territory. As I conducted research among Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) pastors for my PhD, I found that different congregations face this in different ways.

One 70-year-old MCEC congregation is facing a "gap in terms of identity" after a formally structured relationship with a community ministry ended. As they await a new calling and potential new partnership, they are asking, "who are we now in the community?"

An urban pastor said unconventional and flexible worship times can be communal identity markers. Meeting on Friday evenings or Sunday afternoons can be an expression of how a group lives out faith. This pastor's church expresses their foundational belief uniquely: "There is no us and them . . . it's always us!"

This congregation's identity in radical welcome stands in contrast to that of another pastor. This pastor talked about pressures to conform at a previous church he worked at. There, his colleague said that when new people moved to town, the stance of the congregational leadership was to say: "if they want to be like us, we'd love them to come." While most churches would not state this as directly, the pastor noted that sometimes a congregation's "actions push in that direction."

identity as "porous and mutually negotiated . . . never a finished product." When a congregation's identity is incongruent with its current context, the congregation experiences an identity crisis. Resilient and intuitive leaders recognize when the congregation is living out an old identity and on the cusp of needing to claim a new identity.

Identity is both challenged and transformed during wilderness seasons, such as in the wake of a global pandemic. As God led the Israelites to the Promised Land, the law was given, leadership structures created and communal identity transformed from enslaved to free, and eventually from wilderness wanderers to settlers. The Exodus story concludes as a "to be continued" storyline.

As we lead and live beyond the bound-

In times of change, like the present, identities shift and evolve.

In another MCEC faith community, a painful historical experience which emerged out of the #metoo movement has led to an identity crisis. "We thought we knew who we were . . . gracious, forgiving . . . Who are we now?" they ask.

First-generation congregational identity is often deeply rooted in the refugee and immigrant experience. One congregation, which began as Lao-speaking, has evolved to now include many languages, as people from diverse backgrounds have joined the congregation. New Canadian congregations experience a shift from common cultural identity as they become more diverse and second and third generations incorporate Western culture. Identity is challenging to name when one foot is in the Global South and the other in Western culture.

He said, "we don't realize the demand we are making on others to fit into our space."

When I met with MCEC pastors for focus group discussions, "identity" emerged as a common theme. It is talked about in terms of stories of congregations' origins or their mission or community engagement. It can be linked to values of hospitality, risk-taking, flexibility, shame ("what will people think"), traditional Mennonite DNA, etc. For newcomer congregations, culture, ethnicity and language also shape identity. Naming primary identity markers as well as potential limitations of holding onto an old identity is vital congregational work.

In times of change, like the present, identities shift and evolve. Anabaptist scholar Safwat Marzouk describes

aries of what is known, can we be open to the Spirit of God, whose transforming power shapes our identity?

To clarify identity can ground a community amidst chaos, reminding God's people who we are as God's beloved. Attentiveness to the stories that make meaning of our experience can bring burning-bush moments that reveal God's presence. They also bring to light the barriers that can keep a missional church stuck.

Who are we now? Who are we becoming? Who does God say we are? ❧

Kara Carter is pastor of Wellesley Mennonite Church.

Palestinian voices



Yousef Alkhouri

Yousef Alkhouri is a Palestinian Christian from Gaza. He is a lecturer at Bethlehem Bible College, though is currently studying in Europe. He visited Canada last year, along with Jack Sara, at the invitation of Mennonite Church Canada. The following is part of a note he sent to *Canadian Mennonite* on October 14.

My family is in Gaza and has been displaced since the beginning of the Israeli war on Gaza. About 400 Palestinian Christians are sheltering at the Greek Orthodox Church, with almost no water, food and electricity. The Israeli airstrikes are targeting civilians and residential neighborhoods. At least 25 houses that belong to Christian families are destroyed. . . . Israel is also displacing 1.1 million Gazans from the north part of the Strip and has instructed them to move south. While many followed the instruction, the Israeli air force targeted them. Israel is deliberately committing war-crimes and ethnic cleansing, for the lack of a stronger word.

People, including my family, are posting their wills and good-byes on social media.

Seeing the Canadian government's endorsement and support of the Israeli war crimes in Gaza is shameful. I also have seen the Canadian media spreading Israeli disinformation and propaganda, which have been dehumanizing and demonizing the Palestinians in order to justify the Israeli crimes.

As a Palestinian Christian, also as Gazan, I believe that the Church has a prophetic mandate to speak up against injustice and war crimes, and to confront those who support and endorse the war crimes legally and hold them accountable.

Please keep praying for Gaza.

Samia Khoury

Samia Khoury, 89, is co-founder, along with Naim Ateek, of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem. The following is excerpted from a letter she sent to family and friends, including Mennonite Central Committee personnel, on October 16. Used with permission.

Neither Israel nor the international community should have been surprised at the recent events which hurt not only the Israelis, but also the Palestinians, who are under Israeli siege in the Gaza Strip. It has been 75 years of dispossession for the Palestinians, and 56 years of a military occupation, 16 of them in an open-air prison for the people of Gaza

Those 2.2 million oppressed [Palestinians] under siege [in Gaza] are not "human animals" as they were called by Israel.

They are actually humans who have been dehumanized, as if they were children of a lesser God. They have reached a tipping point and could not take the oppression and the deprivation of freedom anymore.

Had the U.S. and the European countries implemented the United Nations Resolutions and stood up against all the violations of Israel ever since its creation in 1948, things would not have deteriorated to that extent. [Western nations] watched [Israelis] kill Palestinian children, raid homes in the middle of the night, demolish homes and evacuate complete Palestinian areas for the establishment of Israeli settlements, with the maximum comment that those actions were not conducive to peace.

But nobody had the guts to take action, not even when Israel demolished a school funded by the European Union.

When the Israeli prime minister showed a map recently at the United Nations that had no Palestine in it, nobody even protested.

But now when the surprise news hit the world that Israelis were attacked and hurt, the U.S. and the European countries who have been at the root cause of the Palestinian dispossession in the first place, came rushing to the region in support of Israel an occupying force in the region.

Ironically, they are the same countries that rushed to salvage Ukraine from the Russian occupation. Is one occupation permissible, while another is not? Enough is enough of double standards.

And please do salvage the trapped Palestinians of Gaza who have been ordered by Israel to move out. Out to where? All the borders are closed.

We know many of you have been praying, but we need action. According to St. James, prayer without action is futile.

Maha Mahenna

Based on an interview with Will Braun

"I have lost contact with my family," said Maha Mahenna, a Palestinian PhD student currently studying in Winnipeg. Mahenna follows the news and social media "day and night," monitoring developments and searching for clues about the well-being of family members, some of whom have evacuated from northern Gaza to avoid the expected Israeli invasion.

She has heard very little from her father, six siblings in Gaza (another lives with her family in Egypt) and extended family since the current round of violence began on October 7. Though internet access and electricity have been limited in Gaza, Mahenna found images posted of destroyed buildings near her family's home which has also sustained severe damage.

She also found several posts of killed extended family members, friends and neighbours.

During an hour-and-a-half phone interview on October 18, Mahenna's anguish and passion poured out—the anguish of a people misrepresented and often vilified in the global spotlight, and the passion of people who love their land and long for peace.

Mahenna said she gets tired of trying to prove Palestinians are human beings to a world that seems not to care. She emphasized that the brunt of suffering in Gaza is borne by civilians, including children.

She wants Canadians to know that “Palestinians are Indigenous people facing colonization. . . . Ask any Indigenous person about their connection to their land; they would say they would rather die in their land than get displaced by force.”

She emphasized that Palestinians love their land and cannot be asked to move again.

Mahenna has lived her whole life in Gaza, aside from five years of study abroad. After earning graduate degrees in conflict transformation and organizational leadership at Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia—and building close ties to the Mennonite community there—she moved to the University of Manitoba to pursue a PhD in peace and conflict studies.

Mahenna first had contact with Mennonite Central Committee personnel in Israel-Palestine in 2015, though she had been aware of their work earlier. When she gave the keynote address at a JStreet conference in Washington D.C. that year, someone brought her attention to Eastern Mennonite University's Summer Peacebuilding Institute. It took some time but she later attended the school.

She said she has been working for peace all her life—including speaking engagements in Europe and North America—but wanted to gain additional skills and “tools” for the work. Thus, her studies abroad. Explaining her original motivation, she said: “I am against violence of any kind. I believe in civil society. I want to make a change; I want the next generation of Palestinians to live a life like others in the rest of the world.”

Mahenna is critical of Western mainstream media coverage that often dehumanizes Palestinians, narrows the focus and accepts the Israeli narrative.

“You have to understand this conflict in context,” she said, “this [current crisis] did not happen in a vacuum.” Tightening restrictions and dehumanizing treatment—including detention of young children—have created conditions she said no one would accept. She offered a string of examples of the accumulating mistreatment: 56 years of military occupation, 17 years of military blockade, settler violence, illegal settlements, land confiscations, restricted access to medical care, etc.

Mahenna's father and his family were forcibly displaced from their home village in southern Israel during the Nakba in 1948. He recalls walking to Gaza as a 12-year-old, bombs falling just behind them to ensure they would not turn back. He became



SUPPLIED PHOTO

This photo comes from the friend of a member of the Mennonite Church Manitoba Palestine-Israel Network. It shows the remains of the house next to that of the sender in Gaza, which was recently bombed, killing 17 people.

a refugee in Gaza. Technically, Mahenna has been a refugee her whole life. She has the card from the UN. “You inherit the refugee status from your parents and grandparents,” she said. According to Mahenna, 80 percent of the 2.3 million people in Gaza are refugees like her.

Mahenna has lived through five wars. This one is the worst. “I’ve never felt safe back home,” she said.

Mahenna does not want “another generation of Palestinians and Israelis to think either side can win by the use of force. Israel has proved it can’t win, and Palestinians have proved we can’t lose, so where do we go from here? There is no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

She said the way forward is a political solution to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, a lifting of the siege of Gaza and work toward a two-state solution.

For Maha Mahenna's suggestions of background reading, see canadianmennonite.org/gaza. ❧

Mennonites in Ecuador reach out as their country struggles

By Madalene Arias
Eastern Canada Correspondent

In August, Iglesia Cristiana Anabautista Menonita de Ecuador (ICAME) published a statement calling for prayers amid escalating violence in the country.

Alexandra Meneses, who coordinates the Women's Group and the Discipleship and Liturgy Group at ICAME, explained that the call for prayers and peace followed the assassination of Ecuador's former leading presidential candidate, Fernando Villavicencio, on August 9.

Speaking by video call from the capital city of Quito, Meneses said that after all the turmoil in the country in recent years, news of the assassination which happened just 11 blocks from their building, pushed the people in her church "overboard."

"We didn't know what to do," she said.

Around the time of Villavicencio's murder, Reuters reported that Ecuador's homicide rate had increased by almost 500 percent over the past seven years.

The country saw a sharp increase in gang-related violence at the start of the pandemic, within and outside of its prisons, but Meneses pointed to underlying issues rooted in Ecuador's adoption of the U.S. dollar as its official currency in 2000. The move created an economic and political crisis.

"The population feels impoverished and abandoned in a state that is not meeting the most basic needs of people," Meneses said.

She said hospitals and

medical facilities are failing to provide adequate care, and an increasing number of children have stopped attending school regularly.

Unemployment rates are also high. All these factors contribute to instability and violence.

Meneses describes a troubling "phenomenon" that has seen the struggles of dollarization compounded by the influx of refugees fleeing troubles in neighbouring Colombia. As Ecuadorians left their disintegrating homeland for the U.S. or Europe, Colombians poured in.

In response to this influx of Colombians, ICAME launched its own refugee assistance program. Mennonite Central Committee has supported this work since

2009. For the past six years, Meneses has served as one of two coordinators of the program. They take in an average of 500 to 600 refugee cases annually, providing psychological counselling, maternity kits, food and other basics, assistance with enrolment in university, and other settlement supports.

It's a large undertaking for the small congregation. More than half of the members are migrants, many of whom attend for an average of two years before moving on to other countries.

"Sometimes we call ourselves a church in mobility," said Meneses.

Peter Wigginton serves as a missionary in Ecuador with Mennonite Mission Network. He has lived in the country



PHOTO COURTESY OF ICAME/MWC

She said hospitals and *ICAME's refugee support program in Quito, Ecuador.*



MCC PHOTO BY ANNALEE GIESBRECHT

Alexandra Meneses (right) records distribution of food aid to Carmen Maria Garcia, a recent immigrant to Ecuador.

for over eight years. He attends ICAME regularly and works with other Mennonite churches in other parts of the country. (There are two small evangelical Mennonite conferences in Ecuador, though ICAME functions independently of them.)

Wigginton expresses suspicions about what led to Villavicencio's murder. The former presidential candidate was once a prominent journalist who exposed organized crime groups. He was vocal about targeting these groups during his presidential campaign.

The six people alleged to have been involved in Villavicencio's murder were from Colombia. All six were murdered in prison on October 6, before court proceedings had been completed.

Villavicencio was murdered about 10 blocks from Wigginton's house, and 11 blocks from the church, on a sidewalk where Wigginton jogs.

He says that although churches like ICAME in Quito and the northern highlands have not experienced as much violence as those in cities like Guayaquil on the coast, knowledge of violent incidents feels like a weight in his community.

Additionally, the nationality of the men accused of murdering Villavicencio has aggravated xenophobia toward Colombian

immigrants, causing concern for ICAME's refugee program.

Mennonite churches in coastal areas report higher rates of violence. Wigginton learned of friends who were holding a prayer meeting in one of their homes when the sound of gunshots burst out.

Another friend living in a community just outside Guayaquil said he and other members of the local church do not leave their homes unless they absolutely must.

"That just gives you this sense of dread," said Wigginton.

Both Meneses and Wigginton have an awareness of how current trends in homicide clash with the country's traditional pacifist identity.

Meneses said that up until the last five or six years, Ecuador was still among the safest Latin American countries. Wigginton explained that pacifism was written into Ecuador's constitution, so it was relatively simple for ICAME to call itself a peace church.

"But now, responding as a peace church could imply something else," he said. "Churches have to actually embody that and know deep down what that means."

Wigginton and his wife and children recently returned to Quito after a three-month trip to the United States to share

about their work. They asked the churches they visited to pray that faith communities in Ecuador may find ways to be a Christ-like presence amid violence.

"Do we need a process of realizing where we are situated before we can even respond," he asked, "or can we just dive into being a Christ-like presence before even knowing what's going on?"

"Merienda Menonita," the podcast Wigginton co-hosts, and Mennonite Mission Network have invited leaders from Colombia and experts from Ecuador to an event in November where they will gather in prayer and work toward a faith-based response to increasing violence.

For her part, Meneses expressed her deep desire that every Mennonite be a seed of peace, referencing Psalm 85:10, which states that "justice and peace have kissed." ❧

Read the August statement from ICAME at canadianmennonite.org/ICAME.



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 **Anabaptist Mennonite
Biblical Seminary**

Making Wars Cease: Charting the evolution of MCC peace work

By Urbane Peachey

In 1841, Ontario Mennonite bishop Benjamin Eby wrote that the time would come “when all Christians, and indeed all governmental authorities, will acknowledge that the waging of war is evil and does not belong in the kingdom of God.”

Eby’s words echoed Psalm 46, which says, “Come, behold the works of the Lord. . . . God makes wars cease to the end of the earth; God breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the chariots with fire.”

It took two world wars and 100 years after Eby’s statement before Mennonites launched a vigorous witness for peace. Building on previous work on peace and conscientious objection, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) established its Peace Section in 1942. The U.S.-based Peace Section’s mandate was to address “all matters that concerned witness to the nonresistant way of life.”

This was a key development in Mennonite peace witness. The Peace Section worked cooperatively with Mennonite conference peace committees, Mennonite academic institutions and mission agencies. There were occasional bursts of cooperation with Quakers and Brethren churches.

Military conscription was a central issue in the early years. Feeling chastened by the lack of preparation in the churches before World War I, Canadian and American peace church leaders appealed to their governments for exemption from military service. President Roosevelt signed Conscientious Objector (CO) provisions into law in September of 1940. The Canadian government passed an Order in Council in 1940 that required alternate service for COs, building on previous CO provisions.

For decades, distinguished church leaders in Canada and the U.S. had brought the full denominational weight to bear in opposition to the authority of the state to conscript its citizens into military service.

In her 2013 history of MCC in Canada, Esther Epp-Tiessen reported that 10,851 men spent time in alternative service in Canada during World War II. Of those, 7,500 were Mennonite. In the U.S., 4,665 Mennonites were among the 12,600 COs.

While the MCC Peace Section was based in the U.S., Canadians were involved with it from the beginning. Forms of MCC work on peace in Canada evolved over time. In 1973, MCC Canada strengthened its peace education and advocacy work by establishing a Canadian Peace and Social Concerns Committee with a broad set of “Guiding Principles.” Approved in 1975, these principles referred to “1) war and revolution, 2) industrial relations, 3) church and state relations, 4) race relations, 5) international affairs, 6) capital punishment and penal reform, 7) problems of urbanization, 8) poverty and affluence, 9) role of women. . . .”

In 1974–75, a bi-national Peace Section was formed, with Canadian and American membership, to focus on a shared international peace and justice agenda. This entity worked together congenially with the U.S. Peace Section and the Canadian Peace and Social Concerns Committee.

Peace Section work carried out by Canadians over the years included work related to Vietnam, apartheid in South Africa, Palestine-Israel, and various publications.

A document titled “The Progressions of Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section, 1984”

speaks of the evolution of MCC peace work:

“Over four decades ago, the overriding concern was to prevent Mennonite boys from going to war; today the agenda is to prevent the whole world from going to war. . . . Thus, the history of the Peace Section can be viewed as a series of progressions, that reflect the expanding circles of peace, pointing toward the new Jerusalem where nations will not learn to make war anymore, and toward the new earth and the new heaven in which righteousness dwells.”

After a half century, much of the Peace Section’s work was absorbed into other MCC programs. ❧

Urbane Peachey is the author of Making Wars Cease: A Survey of MCC Peace Section, 1949–1990 (Pandora Press, 2022). He worked with MCC for 26 years, including as director in Jordan for five years and executive secretary of the bi-national Peace Section from 1975–86. He lives in Lititz, Pennsylvania.



MENNONITE HERITAGE ARCHIVES PHOTO BY TINA MAST BURNETT

Urbane Peachey and Florence Driedger at an MCC Peace Section gathering in 1985.

Making peace with policing

Nonviolence and daily compromise

By Howard Boldt

Mennonite teachings tend to promote complete nonviolence, stating or implying that all else is wrong. Officially, we live by nonviolence alone, but in reality, we live about the same as others. The more dangerous or violent circumstances become, the more pragmatic we become.

Most of us think practical steps should be taken to protect people from theft, rape, murder, etc., and policing is our society's primary direct response to such situations. We understand that it's indispensable and we appreciate it. We call 911 if required. We blend our nonviolent ideals with pragmatism as we strive for balanced and effective solutions.

We compromise, and thus live in contradiction to "proper" Mennonitism. We each

deal with this fact in our own way, but we don't work to resolve it as a church. In my experience, Mennonites avoid discussing policing. Perhaps this is due to a fear of disunity, but if we take on the issues in a positive manner, I think it can be done in a constructive way.

Policing usually needs many improvements and often major ones, but we can't do without it, so we should want the best type possible. The main solution to bad policing is good policing, not no policing, which would be disastrous.

As Mennonites, we make many contributions to society, but church-attending Mennonite cops are rare. We leave this dirty, dangerous work to others.

If, instead, we supported good policing

as a church and became more involved in it as individuals, we could help improve it. We could promote less violent methods. Plus, peaceful people can make good cops; they're eager to minimize uses of force and bring calmness to bad situations.

Support for and participation in policing would make our criticisms of bad policing and our promotion of alternatives more credible. It would make our position more responsible and more comprehensive. Our ideas about peace and security should be holistic and realistic. ☘

Howard Boldt lives near Osler, Saskatchewan.

News shorts

Joanne Moyer receives award

Joanne Moyer, a founding member of Mennonite Creation Care Network (MCCN), is the 2023 recipient of MCCN's Art and Jocele Meyer Award. The award recognizes Moyer's longstanding service to MCCN and her commitment to "greening" Mennonite Church Canada.

Dave Hockman-Wert of MCCN says Moyer "is passionate without being absolutist, energized without being strident, and committed without being crabby."

Moyer teaches environmental studies and geography at The King's University in Edmonton.

The former MCCN is now administered by Mennonite Church USA.

SOURCE: MENNONITE CHURCH USA

MCC extends Malawi cyclone relief

After an initial emergency food distribution in response to Cyclone Freddy's destruction in Malawi, Mennonite Central Committee has committed to providing food assistance for an additional eight

months in the Mulanje District.

Local Brethren in Christ churches are providing assistance to approximately 2,500 people who lost their homes, with more than half seeing their crops or livestock entirely wiped out. This response is supported through MCC's account at Canadian Foodgrains Bank and Mennonite World Conference.

SOURCE: MCC

Red Lake Nation thanks MDS

On September 22, the Red Lake Nation in northern Minnesota held a ceremony to thank Mennonite Disaster Service for its work in the community following a 2021 tornado and hailstorm. From May to September, 240 short- and long-term volunteers repaired siding and windows, painted and did other general repairs.

MDS plans to return in the spring. Red Lake Nation members and MDS volunteers appreciated the chance to get to know one another and build relationships, noting that many of the volunteers had never been to an Indigenous community before.

SOURCE: MDS

MHC Gallery marks 25th anniversary

The MHC Gallery's annual fundraiser, held on October 5, doubled as an opportunity to celebrate the institution's 25th anniversary.

People gathered at the Winnipeg gallery for the event, which centred around "Entangled," an exhibition that explores perspectives on colonization in the Chaco region of Paraguay. The evening included a keynote address by artist Miriam Rudolph.

"This gallery is one of the most beautiful exhibition spaces in all of Winnipeg," Rudolph said, "with a very unique agenda to showcase artists from around the world."

Ray Dirks founded the MHC Gallery in 1998 under Mennonite Church Canada. Canadian Mennonite University assumed ownership of the gallery in 2017.

"Art is needed now more than ever," said Sarah Hodges-Kolisnyk, gallery director. "In our turbulent times of social unrest, climate crisis, digital revolution and a global pandemic, art provides a grounding in relationship, dialogue and the curious spirit to imagine a world beyond."

White Christian nationalism

White U.S. evangelicals broadly support it. Will Canadian Mennonites follow suit?

By James Barber

During three decades of travel to the U.S. for work, I've enjoyed many conversations about faith and politics. These discussions have become more polarized in recent years, with my conversation partners often repeating odd, sometimes contradictory views.

In 2015, I was seated at the bar at an upscale restaurant in West Bend, Wisconsin, chatting with the middle-aged businessman next to me. When our conversation veered into politics, he was negative about Obama, framing him as a weak president. That was fine. However, I was surprised when he said that Obama wasn't Christian. After all, I had heard the president pray and speak of his Christian faith.

When I asked him about this, the man explained that Obama's middle name is Hussein and was clearly not Christian. I asked what Obama had done or said that was so clearly un-Christian. In response, he simply reiterated his first answer.

Looking back, I realize that while I was ready to talk about how well his presidency reflected Christian values, my

dinner companion wasn't concerned about Obama's faithfulness to scripture. To him, Christianity wasn't a question of words or deeds. In his eyes, being Black and having the middle name Hussein disqualified Obama from belonging.

As a lay leader in a diverse church where more than half the members are Black or Asian, the reality of our society's racism has become clearer to me.

As I reflect on my numerous experiences in the U.S. talking about faith and politics, I have become troubled by the overt mixing of Christianity and racism. So, I took a course about white Christian nationalism from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. These are my key take-aways.

What is white Christian nationalism?

WCN is a way of thinking that advocates for a fusion of a specific racial view of Christianity with politics and civil life.

There are a few notable characteristics:

A strong sense of traditional morality based on social hierarchy. (An example

could be excluding women from any church leadership.)

A comfort with social control, such as using threats or actual violence. (An example of this is poor refugee treatment at the U.S. border, like separating refugee parents and their children.)

A desire for strict boundaries around civil rights and national identity, often linked to race. (Examples of limiting participation in civil society include making it harder for Black people to vote and denying health care for gay people.)

Close friends of mine have fallen into this sort of thinking, and I've had long, difficult and mostly fruitless conversations with them about these matters.

My experience is that once you've started to buy into these ideas, you can find yourself pulled down an internet rabbit hole while you lose friends. You can go from cable news to social media to conspiracy theory sites in just a few short months, all while strangers on the internet egg you on and drag you down with them.

After a grim conversation with a U.S. friend who had become susceptible to white Christian nationalist thinking, I asked how his new views had affected his relationships. His tone changed immediately.

While talking about politics he was aggressive and unstable, but when he reflected on the effect this had on his relationships, he became vulnerable and was clearly hurt. Nonetheless, he was determined to stay on the path he was on.

Recent research has found that nearly three-quarters of U.S. white evangelicals showed mild to moderate support for white Christian nationalism, and 36 percent were "strong advocates"—to the point that it dominated their life, as in my friend's case.

What is wrong with white Christian nationalism?

This is not a problem with conservative



UNSPLASH PHOTO BY NATILYN PHOTOGRAPHY

religion or politics, it's a problem with a very specific part of conservative religion—something that I, as a conservative, never want to be a part of. In my mind, there are three main reasons why white Christian nationalism does not mix with Christianity:

1. All people are God's children. When white Christian nationalism discriminates against BIPOC, newcomers and Jews, it is not being Christian. In Jesus' day he welcomed all: women, tax collectors, prostitutes, soldiers, Samaritans, Greeks, Romans. Jesus did not judge people by the colour of their skin. He lifted the lowly and rebuked those who needed it.

2. It makes it hard for the fruit of the spirit to blossom. How do we live out Galatians 5:22 or the Beatitudes after we commit to white Christian nationalism? Jesus calls us to peacemaking, not fomenting division by imposing hierarchy.

3. Our faith tradition does not support the convergence of faith and politics. Jesus refused the devil's temptation of worldly kingdoms. God did not want Israel to have

a king. While our faith can inform our politics, as it did for Tommy Douglas and Martin Luther King, Jr., politics should not capture faith as it has for the Taliban and Ku Klux Klan.

What might a Canadian Christian response to white Christian nationalism look like?

1. Think about your own mindset. We want to bring people into God's light. Rather than judging, we can lament the pain that often comes with white Christian nationalism. A good starting point is to look for common interests, where we all want good things for everyone involved.

2. Talk about white Christian nationalism with loved ones you think might be susceptible to it. Having these conversations isn't easy, but it's less complicated to have 10 light-hearted and gentle conversations ahead of time than it is to try and help a person who has been drawn into white Christian nationalism.

3. When you find white Christian nationalist views, respond with grace,

humour, and emphasize what is true, not what you disagree with.

4. Keep cool. When people are fearful or angry, they make an easy target to be persuaded into more radical views and actions that politicians harness to get votes and companies use to sell you stuff. Consuming a wide variety of media perspectives, including some that get under your skin, help keeps you balanced.

White Christian nationalism is a harmful ideology—both for minorities, whom it turns into second-class citizens, and its own supporters, who suffer isolation and poor mental health. It is already creeping into Canada.

As it makes its way into Canada, Canadian Mennonites have a choice to make about whether we welcome white Christian nationalism here. ☿

James Barber is a lay leader in Hagerman Mennonite Church in Markham, Ontario, and serves on Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's executive council.



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Green growth repeats a bad story

A book excerpt in two parts

By Sarah Augustine and Sheri Hostetler

Green growth, or green capitalism, is hailed as a novel, inventive solution to the climate crisis. But green growth assumes business as usual—a continuation of our current system based on continuous economic growth—except replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy. We fear that green growth will also mean business as usual and continued enclosure, exploitation, imperialism and colonization.

Solar panels, batteries, electric cars and wind turbines require enormous amounts of minerals and metals. Manufacturing electric vehicles requires six times more minerals than cars with combustion engines. A 2022 International Energy Agency report said that to get to net zero emissions globally by 2050, we will need to find and extract six times more minerals by 2040 than we do today. Some figures put the total much higher.

In addition to increasing extraction exponentially, we need to do this as quickly as possible. What environmental and human rights safeguards will be scrapped in the rush to meet this ambitious timeline?

Already, economic development projects rarely obtain the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples, a right required under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This is a huge concern: over half of the world's energy transition minerals are located on or near land where Indigenous people live. Eighty-five percent of the world's lithium, a key mineral for green growth technologies, is found on or near Indigenous lands.

If history is a guide and industry giants are successful, transition minerals will come from places like Chi'chil Bildagoteel. They will come from places like the Atacama Desert in northern Chile, the world's oldest desert, a place of exceptional biodiversity, and home to Indigenous communities that have lived there for millennia—and also home to vast amounts



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HERALD PRESS

Sarah Augustine



Sheri Hostetler

of lithium and copper. They will come from Colombia, which hopes to become a primary global supplier of copper. Violence remains tied to capitalism. In 2020, Colombia had the world's highest murder rate of land and environmental

defenders, many of whom were Indigenous people.

In all these places and many more, business as usual means that lands and homes will be appropriated from Indigenous and other marginalized communities, people will lose access to their lifeways, food and water sources, and the people resisting this enclosure and economic imperialism will be the targets of extrajudicial killings. For these reasons, ecological economist William Rees claims that if you factor in all the problems involved in mining, refining, and manufacturing minerals for an average, large electric vehicle, electric vehicles are a worse option, both ecologically and ethically, than combustion engine cars.

Already, global elites are racing for the newest versions of nutmeg, mace and cloves. Billionaires like Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates have invested millions of dollars into KoBold Metals, which is scouring the globe for lithium, copper, nickel and cobalt. In 2022, the *Washington Post* ran an editorial opposing Chile's new progressive constitution because it would make it more difficult for the United States to source cheap lithium from Chile. Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla and X (formerly Twitter), stands to make huge profits from the green energy transition. Like the Dutch governor-general of the seventeenth century, Musk explicitly links green energy mineral extraction to imperialism. In a now-deleted tweet about access to Bolivian lithium, he said, "We will coup whoever we want! Deal with it."

Like the proposed copper mine at Chi'chil Bildagoteel, many mines will ruin land, water, wildlife, and people. A coalition of Native Americans, environmentalists, and ranchers is opposing a project to mine lithium in rural Nevada (which would be the largest in the United States) because it will use billions of gallons of precious groundwater, potentially contaminating

some of it for three hundred years and leaving behind vast amounts of waste. Mining requires enormous amounts of water; for instance, a ton of mined lithium requires almost 500,000 gallons of water. Water extracted for mining draws down the water table and limits farmers' ability to irrigate fields. Mining also produces enormous amounts of toxic waste: leaks from mines have poisoned rivers and other waters, sometimes killing off whole freshwater ecosystems. As we have described earlier, current mining practices require sacrifice zones, places that can be devastated by the ecological impacts of the mining, and people and wildlife deemed "sacrifice-able." In short: colonies.

We do need to transition to renewable energies and end the use of fossil fuels. But this transition must happen while honoring the self-determination and human rights of Indigenous Peoples and other communities. Many "green new deals" proposed by Indigenous and Global South communities meld the goals of an energy transition with ecological and social justice. None of these alternative Green New Deals, however, purport that we can reach these goals and maintain the goal of continual economic growth. Doing so will likely re-create a brutal history, even as we say we want to do justice and right our past wrongs.

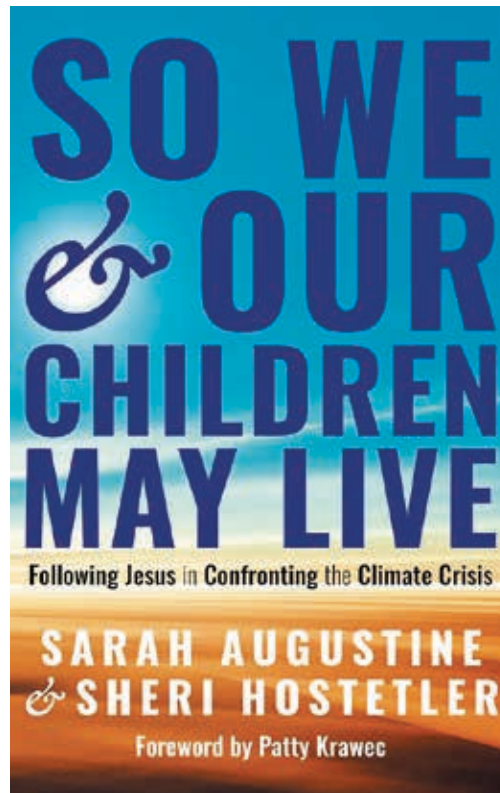
The spirit of life became flesh

After he was baptized, Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and led into the wilderness. Luke 4:2 says he was tempted for forty days. He lived in a state of prayer and fasting for forty days and nights.

The tempter offered him three things: food, sustenance and fulfilment of his immediate needs and desires, when he was offered bread from the stones (Luke 4:3); power, privilege and opulence, when he was offered the authority and splendor of all the kingdoms (Luke 4:6-7); and legitimacy and relevance, when he was taunted to prove who he said he was (Luke 4:9-11).

I (Sarah) think that the church may be in the wilderness now, enduring temptation. We comfort ourselves by saying that we deserve the things that are offered to us.

We want to protect and comfort our bodies by storing up our wealth and attempting to ensure our security. We tell ourselves this is responsible and sensible. We want power and luxury, and we tell ourselves we should have these things because we are good and responsible—we are the best ones to wield such things so that we can use them for good.



We want legitimacy; we want to be relevant. We believe that what we say and think matters, and we can prove it by befriending the powerful, growing our own power by filling stadiums with the faithful, building important institutions, and collectively owning wealth and property. (The church owns more property than any other private entity on earth.)

I believe that Jesus, being human, wanted these things too. He knew hunger. He had an ego, like we all do. He felt humiliated sometimes and wanted to prove what he could do. But he showed us it is possible to turn away from these temptations.

From my point of view, a central misunderstanding of Jesus' ministry is expressed in our denial that he was like us. We set

him apart; we attribute his actions to his perfect nature. We tell ourselves that while he is the perfect example, we can't approximate his vision; only God is perfect and capable of carrying out what Jesus did in his ministry.

But I want to challenge that notion. God became flesh to be with us. Jesus was a man, in the flesh. He felt fear and doubt, exhaustion and disappointment, just like we do. But he pursued his mandate every single day of his ministry. He demonstrated that we can do the same. The voice of God made flesh—that Glory on the mountaintop, providing commandments from on high, that tongue of fire leading through the wilderness—now embodied in one of us. How can we dismiss the example of a mortal man? The Spirit of life made flesh: vulnerable, finite. A person who risked all to show us, tangibly, how to live.

After he was tempted, Jesus immediately went back to Nazareth and began his ministry (see Luke 4:14–21). He began by stating his mandate, from the prophet Isaiah, which he called "good news for the poor": release for prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, freedom for the oppressed, and the year of our Lord's favor, or the year of Jubilee.

Jesus showed us with his life how to face temptation, how to turn away from what we think we need, what we covet or desire, what we believe we deserve. He walked away from all those things in favor of freedom for the oppressed. He announced, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

It is time for us to claim this same authority with our lives. We can choose to endure and exit the wilderness with our integrity intact. We can choose to speak, as he did, with authority. Can you say that with me, out loud? Today this scripture is fulfilled in our hearing. ✎

Excerpted and adapted from So We and Our Children May Live: Following Jesus in Confronting the Climate Crisis by Sarah Augustine and Sheri Hostetler (Herald Press, 2023). All rights reserved. Used with permission.

REVIEW

Theatre group tackles abuse

By Barb Draper

Interactive theatre requires audience participation, explained Cedric Martin as he introduced “I Love You and It Hurts,” a Theatre of the Beat performance held at the Kitchener Public Library on September 30. “Don’t panic,” he added quickly, promising that no one would be coerced or shamed into participating.

“But, if you are uncomfortable, hold on to that,” he said. “There will be an opportunity to discuss it.”

“I Love You and It Hurts” consists of three short plays that explore themes of abuse within families and friendships. At the end of the first short play, “The Walkover,” set in a hockey dressing room, Martin asked the audience for reaction words to the play. Responses included “anxious” and “disrespect.”

Martin then asked the actors to go to the beginning of the scene while the audience, whom he referred to as “spect-actors,” were instructed to yell “stop” when they felt uncomfortable. It wasn’t long before someone from the audience called out and Martin persuaded that person to come on stage and ad lib the coach’s role. It was interesting to discover later that it was Mike Morrice, the local Member of Parliament, who had agreed to jump up on stage.

As the scene played out, the coach, Morrice, took more authority and tried to get the players to take responsibility for their actions. After several minutes, Martin stopped the action, asking each of the actors to express their feelings about the new scenario. Responding from the point of view of their characters, they admitted to some concern that if the most strident hockey player was smacked down too hard, he might overreact. But they felt the new coach was fair; he got everyone to express themselves without blaming each other for losing the game. Martin had the play pick up at a later



PHOTO BY CEDRIC MARTIN

Theatre of the Beat performs ‘I Love You and it Hurts.’

point in the script until someone else was uncomfortable enough to stop the action. Again, there was opportunity for discussion.

The second play, “Mother,” involved a daughter who takes advantage of her elderly mother. The first time through, the daughter’s abuse was very apparent, but having the scene replayed made it easier to see that the daughter had her own financial worries.

Following suggestions from the audience, the scene replay highlighted the mother’s dilemma. She depended on her daughter but feared alienating her by being confrontational. But neither could the mother allow funds to be transferred from her bank account without permission. Abuse is complicated.

The third play, “Be a Friend,” illustrated how young people can be trapped and torn as Rowan’s plans to be with her long-time best friend directly conflict with the intentions of her on-again boyfriend. Rowan’s discussion with her boyfriend the previous evening is played as a flashback scene, interspersed with the girls’ conversation as they justify their anger at each other. Meanwhile, Rowan suggests that a third friend move

away from them, presumably so they can quarrel in private.

After someone from the audience was brave enough to play the role of the bystander and refused to move away, one of the actors commented that, as a result, they skipped some of the passive-aggressive conversations.

An audience member noted that, “when you see a friend in trouble, you need to be there and say something.”

With energetic actors and engaged “spect-actors,” a clear message emerged. “I Love You and It Hurts” has now gone on the road and is travelling to Manitoba, Saskatchewan and B.C. before returning to Ontario in November.

Since its beginning in 2011, Theatre of the Beat has been working at ways to encourage conversations about social justice. The theatre company began developing these three plays in 2021, choosing the topics with advice from the Assaulted Women’s Helpline and Women’s Crisis Services of Waterloo Region. Community workshops allowed the writing team to gain insights and flesh out the themes. ▮

The melody of belonging

Children find their voice in Sargent Junior Choir

By Aaron Epp
Associate Editor

It's a Wednesday evening and the two dozen children gathered in a room at the back of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg are singing about candy-coated chocolate.

"Mommy made me mash my M&M's" isn't a sentence one expects to hear in church, but the members of the Sargent Junior Choir are singing the phrase as part of their warm-up exercises.

Soon, they pick up their sheet music and work on the material they will sing during an upcoming church service.

The choir's 27 members are in grades one through seven. Under the direction of conductor Norinne Danzinger-Dueck, the choir provides monthly worship music from October to March and performs a full musical the first Sunday in May. Last May, the choir staged *The Agape League*, a superhero adventure about the fruit of the spirit.

For Danzinger-Dueck, a voice and piano teacher who has attended the church for 25 years, the goal is to teach children they are part of worship.

"It's [somewhere they can] have a place in church and not feel overwhelmed by the older hymns, older pieces [of music] and older adults," she says. "It's a place for them to worship and a place for them



PHOTO BY AARON EPP

The choir rehearses every Wednesday evening from September to May.

Young voices

Three choristers talk about Sargent Junior Choir:

"I enjoy the musical at the end. I like acting a lot." —Joanna

"I like the music a lot. She's a good conductor. Very good." —Abby

"I like singing and I love the musical at the end. I mean, I haven't done [a musical yet], but I'm excited about it." —Dawn

to show adults they are a vital part of the worship process."

Sargent Avenue has a history of children's choirs dating back to at least the 1960s. Children from other churches have long been welcome to join.

When the number of children from Sargent Avenue who participate in the choir started dwindling, Danzinger-Dueck started advertising the choir in other churches.

This year, only four of the choir's members belong to Sargent Avenue. The rest come from other Mennonite Church Manitoba congregations.

Danzinger-Dueck and pianist Betty Rempel rehearse with the children for one hour each week from September to May.

"I try to mix between more upbeat pieces but also more prayerful and

reflective pieces, because I think it's good for them to understand both and know there's space for both in the services," Danzinger-Dueck says.

She does a lot of teaching with the kids, explaining why they are singing certain pieces and the biblical significance in songs. "I try to make as much of a connection to the spiritual part [as I can]... They're mini-Sunday school lessons, I guess."

Sargent Avenue member Naomi Ewert enrolled her daughter, Roslyn, in the choir because she wants Roslyn to have the same great choir experience she had as a child.

"I still remember songs I sang in junior choir, so those words... they stick with you," Ewert says, adding that Roslyn loves to sing. "It's never been hard to get her [to rehearsal], which is something to be said

for a kid doing activities.”

Elisa Barkman, who attends St. Julian’s Table in Beausejour, Manitoba, has three children in the choir and is grateful that it gives them an opportunity to connect with others their age.

“One of the things I really appreciate about Betty and Norinne is when they communicate with the children . . . they’re inviting the children to participate in worship for the benefit of the entire congregation, as opposed to communicating that this is for their own edification,” Barkman says. “To be invited to participate in the broader picture is significant to me.”

Danzinger-Dueck hopes that the children make friends through the choir and that they feel they have a place in the wider church.

“It’s so hard for kids to find places where they belong,” she says. “I hope that they feel part of the community that we’re trying to establish with them.”



PHOTO BY AARON EPP

Norinne Danzinger-Dueck has led the Sargent Junior Choir for 11 years.

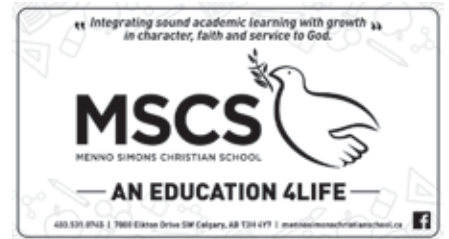


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CANADIAN MENNONITE

Promotional Supplement




Schools Directory featuring Conrad Grebel University College

Empowering Future Leaders in Ministry

Conrad Grebel University College Release

“The MTS program equipped me to be a better leader,” shared recent Master of Theological Studies graduate, Mollee Moua. “I also believe that the MTS program taught me to be a better follower of Jesus Christ by helping me to explore who God is calling me to be and to not constrain myself to the expectations of others or even myself.”

Conrad Grebel University College offers a two-year Master of Theological Studies degree. It is open to people from a range of academic backgrounds and is designed for those who may be exploring vocations of ministry and service, those preparing for pastoral ministry, chaplaincy, or further graduate studies, and those seeking personal enrichment.

“Students are often drawn to our program because they want to study the Bible, Christian theology, church history, and the practice of ministry in an interdisciplinary and ecumenical setting,” explained program Director Carol Penner. “I love walking with students in the classroom as they delve into academic study, and as they practice ministry skills in other settings.”

The MTS program encourages frequent interaction with faculty in small classes, and offers access to extensive library resources, study and social spaces. MTS students choose from three program options: coursework, applied studies, or thesis to tailor their degree to specific interests and vocations.

Grebel has cooperative arrangements with AMBS and CMU that allow students to finish an MDiv in one additional year after graduating with an MTS. Plus, all full-time Canadian/permanent resident MTS students are eligible for full tuition scholarships.



Carol Penner (right) teaches and writes in the area of practical theology and is Director and Assistant Professor of Theological Studies at Conrad Grebel University College.

A poster for a 'Discover Rockway' event. At the top is the Rockway Mennonite Collegiate logo. The text reads 'DISCOVER ROCKWAY' in large letters. Below that, it says 'Thursday, November 9, 2023 7 pm' and 'register at www.rockway.ca'. The background has a torn paper effect.

A banner for applying to the University of Waterloo and Conrad Grebel University College. It features a photo of students on a campus. The text says 'APPLY NOW grebel.ca/futurestudents' and includes logos for the University of Waterloo and Conrad Grebel University College.

A banner for UMEI Christian High School. It features a photo of students walking on a path. The text says 'UMEI Christian High School' and 'Learn | Serve | Lead Whole person education preparing young people for a life of purpose'. The website umei.ca is listed at the bottom.

A banner for Columbia Bible College. It features a photo of two young women. The text says 'COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE' and 'EXPLORE YOUR CALLING'. The website COLUMBIABC.EDU is listed at the bottom.

A banner for Westgate Mennonite Collegiate. It features a photo of four students. The text says 'WESTgate MENNONITE COLLEGIATE' and 'Find your place. Find it together. Find it here.' The website westgatemennonite.ca and phone number 204-775-7111 are listed at the bottom.

A banner for the Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) Graduate School of Theology and Ministry. It features a photo of a large building. The text lists 'Master of Arts' (with concentrations in Christian Ministry and Theological Studies) and 'Master of Divinity Graduate Certificate in Christian Studies'. The website cmu.ca/gstm is listed at the bottom.

A banner for the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. It features a photo of two men in a meeting. The text says 'Learn in your own context' and 'Design your plan of study in the fully online Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies program.' The website ambs.ca/certificate is listed. The logo and name of the seminary are at the bottom.

Rod Suderman, Emmanuel pastor, dies at 63

Story and photo by Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent

Rod Suderman, lead pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., died on Sept. 2 following a cancer diagnosis earlier this year. He had also served as a pastor in Saskatchewan and worked in China, both with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the General Conference Mennonite Church.

Suderman was born Sept. 29, 1959, in Winkler, Manitoba. He devoted his adult life to service and ministry, earning a Bachelor of Theology degree at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now CMU); a degree in religious studies from the University of Manitoba, and an M.Div. from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries and the University of Winnipeg.

Together with his wife, Kathi, he served in Taiwan with the Commission on Overseas Mission 1985–1988; as coordinator of the China Educational Exchange in Beijing 1998–2006; as MCC

China representative 2002–2006, and as MCC Northeast Asia representative 2002–2006.

He pastored at Aberdeen (Sask.) Mennonite Church from 1992 to 1998, at First Mennonite Church of Saskatoon 2015–2021, and was called as lead pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in 2022.

Rod Suderman was the father of three children: Chris, Stefanie and Jesse. Among his interests were jogging, reading, food, travel, astronomy, history, theology and peace.

On July 6, the Emmanuel community gathered with Rod and Kathi for a time of singing and prayer, and to express appreciation for Suderman's ministry in the congregation. Many affirmed his gentleness, his kind heart and the keen spiritual insights in his sermons.

A celebration of life took place on Sept. 16 at Emmanuel Mennonite Church. ❧

❧ Staff changes



Garth and Claire Ewert Fisher retired on June 25. They most recently served as co-pastors at Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. Garth started working as the lead pastor at Mount Royal in 2011 and Claire joined him as co-pastor in 2020. During his career, Garth also served as a member of Mennonite Church Canada's general board (now known as Joint Council), including four years as assistant moderator. He was also a member of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's pastoral leadership commission. Prior to joining Mount Royal's staff, Claire was a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) volunteer in Asia for seven years and the executive director of MCC Saskatchewan for seven and a half years. She also chaired Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's ministries commission. Mount Royal held a celebration service to mark the Ewert Fishers' retirement. "When you share a journey with people you love for twelve and a half years, you feel the loss of that keenly," Garth said. "Yet, I also felt a freedom from anxiety. The congregation is healthy, with good leadership, involved laity and doors open to the community," Claire added, "It has been a privilege to worship and work with church folks who focus on their relationship with God and then care for others as a response to it."

—BY EMILY SUMMACH AND AARON EPP



Rod Suderman, in recliner, surrounded by members of Emmanuel Mennonite Church.

Calendar

British Columbia

Nov. 2: Books and Borscht at the Mennonite Heritage Museum. Manitoba author Mitchell Toews introduces his new collection of short stories, "Pinching Zwieback: Made-up Stories from the Darp." Lunch at Noon in the MHM restaurant, reading and book discussion at 1 p.m.

Nov. 14-18: Mennonite Heritage Museum Christmas Market.

More details to come.

Nov. 25: MHSBC Presents: "Holodomor Remembrance: Voices of Survivors." Doors open at 2:30 p.m.; Film/Presentations at 3 p.m.; Faspas at 4 p.m. For tickets call: 604-853-6177 or online: www.mhsbc.com.

Manitoba

Nov. 4, 5: Camps with Meaning celebration banquets. Join us at Emmanuel Church, Winkler (4th) and at Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg (5th).

Nov. 5: The Mennonite Community Orchestra presents "The Power of Hope," featuring a tribute to Ukraine and the premiere of "Rains Song" by CMU student Liam Berry. See mennonitecommunityorchestra for more concert information.

Nov. 8: Dual Hybrid Book Launch. Join host Sue Sorensen and authors Ariel Gordon ("Sightseeing") and Mitchell Toews ("Pinching Zwieback"), at 7 p.m. in the atrium at McNally Robinson Booksellers, Grant Park, Winnipeg. Info: bit.ly/GordonToewsLAUNCH

Nov. 15: Local Authors Night at the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, Manitoba. Join host Nita Wiebe with Mitchell Toews ("Pinching Zwieback") and authors: Elma Koop ("The Little Pioneer"), Noreen Jantzen ("I Wondered as I Wandered: Memoirs and History, Lawrence Klippenstein"), and Mary-Lou Driedger ("Sixties Girl"). Music and refreshments available.

Ontario

Nov. 4: What kind of men are we called to be in 2023 and beyond? How can men live lives that matter?

Attend "Men Listening, Men Talking" a half-day retreat to explore these questions and participate in honest conversations on healthy masculinity with other men. Facilitated by Don Neufeld, coordinator for Mennonite Men in Canada. There is no cost to attend, but pre-registration is required. Continental breakfast and coffee provided. Registration deadline is October 30. Register at mcc.org/men-listening.

Nov. 4: Join Menno Singers and Artistic Director Brandon Leis in a concert featuring Faure's "Requiem" and Thompson's "Peaceable Kingdom." Tickets at mennosingers.com.

Nov. 9: Discover Rockway: Information Night for Grades 7-12, at 7 p.m. To register for this event, please visit www.rockway.ca or email admissions@rockway.ca.

Nov. 9: All are invited to attend the 2023 Benjamin Eby Lecture in the Grebel Chapel at Conrad Grebel University College. Speaker Dr. Maisie Sum will present her research on the "guembri", a symbolic artifact of the Black African diaspora in Morocco. More information at: uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events/lecture-series/benjamin-eby-lecture

Nov. 16: "I Love You and It Hurts." Theatre of the Beat presents three short plays on abuse and family violence, at Preston Mennonite Church in Cambridge, at 7 p.m.

Nov. 18: The MCC Peace Conference is your chance to see, hear and experience first-hand how you and MCC are changing lives and communities through peacebuilding. This event will inspire and inform through general sessions, workshops and conversations with messengers of peace. Visit mcc.org/peace-conference for more details.

Nov. 22: Rockway Mennonite Collegiate invites you to their Annual General Meeting at 7:30 p.m. Back by popular demand, this meeting will be online. To receive the Zoom link, please email AGM@rockway.ca. For membership information, visit www.rockway.ca.

Nov. 24, 25: The Church at Nairn (formerly Nairn Mennonite Church) annual Spirit of Christmas (24th) 6:30-9, (25th) 10-4 p.m. Includes live

music, juried crafts, pottery, greeting cards, wood products, stained glass, vinyl signs, quilts and more. Tea room included with admission. Info@nairnmennonite.weebly.ca.

Nov. 25: Prospective students, families, and teachers are invited to visit Grebel to meet current students, staff, and faculty to learn about the residence and academic programs. Learn about student life at the University of Waterloo and tour the wider campus. Register in advance and receive information on in-person sessions, presentations, and how to plan your time on campus. uwaterloo.ca/grebel/fall-open-house-2023.

Nov. 26: Fall Concert of the Soli Deo Gloria Singers at 3 p.m. at Leamington United Mennonite Church. Donations are welcome.

Dec. 10: Menno Singers and the 225-voice Mennonite Mass Choir perform Handel's Beloved "Messiah" at Centre in the Square with Artistic Director Brandon Leis. Tickets at the Centre in the Square Box Office. www.centreinthesquare.com.

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 visit, canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



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OCTOBER 2023 – DECEMBER 2023



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEAR EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (VIA MCC)

A building used by the Near East Council of Churches, a partner of the Mennonite Central Committee in the Gaza Strip. The building was damaged by the Israeli bombardment. October 13, 2023.

Statement by Jack Sara, president of Bethlehem Bible College

Dear praying friends of Bethlehem Bible College from around the world,

In the midst of these challenging times, I want to reach out to you with a heartfelt request. Our country is currently witnessing a significant and distressing conflict. Our faith in Jesus, who taught us, *“Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you”* (Matthew 5:44), compels us to call for the cessation of all violent civilian and military activities that bring harm to both Palestinian and Israeli civilians. We are saddened by the acts that target civilians, regardless of nationality, ethnicity or faith. We pray for sincere, good-faith dialogue and mediation for a just peace and reconciliation. We also know that in order to reach true and viable peace we must address the root causes of the problem. Palestinians have been experiencing ongoing injustice and displacement for more than 75 years. The siege in Gaza must end. Oppression, walls, sieges, and colonization cannot bring security or peace.

In times of conflict and confusion, we turn to the Scriptures for guidance and comfort. Let us reflect on the following verses:

Psalm 46:1 *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”*

Proverbs 2:6 *“For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”*

Please pray with us:

For leaders and decision-makers, that they may be inspired by wisdom, compassion, and a desire for peace.

That God’s love and peace may transcend the divisions and hatred that have plagued this region for so long. Pray also to help us all to be instruments of His peace, promoting justice, understanding, reconciliation, and most importantly a just peace in the Holy Land.

We also lift up the families and individuals affected by the conflict, those who have lost loved ones, homes, and livelihoods.

For our students in Gaza (we have several students and graduates in Gaza who are living in a dire situation now).

For the church in Gaza, that they will be a light and salt to their communities during these difficult days.

We appreciate your support and your love and care for Bethlehem Bible Collge and all the people of the region. ☸