

CANADIAN MENNONITE

January 12, 2024 Volume 28 Number 1



Lord, hear our prayer

Longings for the church in 2024

STATE OF COMMUNITY IN 2024 12
AWAY IN A MANOR 18
LANDING OUT OF HOT WATER 28

Best lines of 2023

WILL BRAUN

editor@canadianmennonite.org

Below are some lines from the magazine that caught my attention last year. I am grateful for all who contributed.

A wall still exists, invisible and seemingly insurmountable at times, that separates “original” Mennonites . . . and new Mennonites. . . .

I long for deep, authentic intercultural connection within the family of God, old and new.

– Joon Park, January 16

Jesus teaches us that [Christian] unity is not the result of seeking unity with other Christians, it is the result of abiding in him and being in unity with his Spirit.

– Troy Watson, February 13

At first, I thought cancel culture was a good idea.

– Emma Siemens, March 13

Who wants to talk about sin? . . . As I write this, my autocorrect keeps changing the word “sin” to “sun.” My computer can’t even believe I want to talk about it.

– Carol Penner, March 13

What is a Mennonite? Mennonites are loud and charismatic; most speak Vietnamese, Amharic or Spanish; love Jesus; and are willing to suffer for him.

– Kevin Barkowsky, March 24

On the day of my mother’s scheduled removal from the country, my sister and I were told we could skip school and go to work with our mother. We ended up at Border Services in Niagara Falls. . . .

– Madalene Arias, March 24

[About people no longer coming to church:] We need to stop thinking, “Let’s invite them in.” They’re not coming. We need to go to them. The church . . . needs to become a movement, in much the same way as the early church was.

– Colin McCartney, quoted by Barry Bergen, March 24

A [drug-addicted] man came in who did not want to eat because he felt unworthy to be with us at the table. He told me about his nightmares and bad dreams He also shared that he did not know how to stop doing what he was doing.

I looked at him and said: “Today, I forgive you of all your sins.”

– Michel Monette, April 7

“There’s no way to undo the Doctrine of Discovery without non-Indigenous Canadians giving up significant rights and benefits and land.”

– David Scott, quoted by Will Braun, April 21

Tell [youth in the church] they are seen, they are appreciated, and there is

a place in the church with their name on it.”

– Kirsten Hamm-Epp, May 19

I’m with Rick Warren: “The only way to have unity is to love diversity.”

– Arli Klassen, June 30

Did you know Christ walked 22,000 miles in his lifetime of ministry?

– Judith McCartney, quoted by Madalene Arias, November 3

The Mennonite land acknowledgement is simple: “We have your land, and we are not giving it back.”

– Peter Reimer, July 28

When a congregation gets tripped up about scuff marks on the gym floor or wear and tear of carpets, the church is unclear about the “why” of ministry and mission.

– Kara Carter, November 3

We’re broken. I think this describes the feeling, more or less, right now in the West Bank, in Palestine. We are broken. . . .

Where is God in the midst of all of this? As I’ve said, he’s under the rubble

I see Jesus in solidarity with us.

– Rev. Munther Isaac, Bethlehem, November 3

I will no longer be silent. The church can no longer be silent.

– Geraldine Balzer, December 15 ☸



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Canada

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Photo by Danie Franco for Unsplash

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CANADIAN MENNONITE

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What in the World



Hollywood takes on Christian nationalism

Oscar-nominated director Rob Reiner has released a trailer for *God & Country*, a film that explores the threat Christian Nationalism poses to America and Christianity. Reiner first gained fame playing "Meathead" on *All in the Family*.

Source: The Hollywood Reporter
Photo: Oscilloscope Laboratories.



Priests jailed

At least 13 Catholic priests were detained in Nicaragua during the Christmas season. The church has been a target of the regime of President Daniel Ortega since political unrest erupted in 2018. The U.S. government has called for release of those detained.

Source: The Catholic Register
Photo: Michael Swigart, flickr



Church subsidies end

The Catholic Church in Argentina will no longer receive government money. Such subsidies constituted about 7 percent of church revenue in the past. The move follows the recent election of President Javier Milei, who is committed to austerity and openly critical of Pope Francis.

Source: The Catholic Register
Photo: Flag of Argentina (1861–2010)

50 YEARS AGO

Women most oppressed

United States — That women are the most oppressed people in the world was the consensus of the 200 participants in the fourth annual conference of the North American Broadcast Section of the World Association for Christian Communication, which met recently in Florida. Representing 29 denominational communications offices from the United States, Canada and the Caribbean, the communicators agreed that the liberation of women should have top priority in church broadcasting.

They also acknowledged that women cannot be free unless men are liberated as well.

MENNONITE REPORTER, JANUARY 7, 1974





In this Mennonite Pioneer Mission photo, a “cat train,” powered by a caterpillar tractor, travels along an ice road, hauling supplies to northern Manitoba communities in the 1950s. Ice roads provide an economical way to transport goods to communities not connected to the all-weather road system.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: CMC Mennonite Pioneer Mission photo collection/ Mennonite Heritage Archives
archives.mhsc.ca/index.php/756



archives.mhsc.ca

CM READERS WRITE

Be in Touch

- Send letters to letters@canadianmennonite.org. Our mailing address is on page 3.
- Please keep it concise and respectful. Any substantial edits to letters will be done in consultation with the writer.
- If you have feedback not intended for publication, please contact editor@canadianmennonite.org or at 1-800-378-2524 ext 5.

✉ Touched by death and life

After reading the November 3 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*, which focuses on Gaza, where so many people are dying (“Attending to war”), contrasted with people who are dying due to illness (“As he lay dying”), I was deeply moved.

Those themes have been preoccupying me deeply and simultaneously recently.

First, my oldest sister, who was 86, died recently and I was invited to write a tribute for her memorial service. That was very difficult because she faced many challenges, including an abusive husband and the death of an infant son.

I felt like I was walking through a minefield as I wrote. Thankfully, the service was a wonderful time of healing and celebration, and it was a great send-off for my sister, whose four amazing daughters, and their families, called her blessed.

In the middle of writing that tribute, during a Sunday morning service at Aberdeen Mennonite Church, a friend who worked in the Middle East with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for several years and is married to a Palestinian-Lebanese man made a passionate plea for us “to at least see the children” caught in that war.

I felt compelled to write a letter to the *Winnipeg Free Press*

on behalf of all the children in Palestine and Israel.

After that, I remembered how deeply war, and especially the suffering of children, impacted me personally while my husband and I served as MCC country representatives for Swaziland-Mozambique in the 1980s. During those devastating years, I found some relief by writing about those who suffered and died.

I’m sharing this because I was moved by the power of your November 3 issue. I continue to care a lot for the work of *Canadian Mennonite*, having been on staff there for a few years myself. Blessings as you keep up the good work.

LEONA DUECK PENNER, WINNIPEG (ABERDEEN MENNONITE CHURCH)

✉ Journeying together

I am responding to the editorial in the December 1, 2023, issue (“What kind of peace church are we?”). I am embarrassed that I have not been able to do more during the Israel-Palestine event.

Much has been reported about antisemitism and Islamophobia; I have said little, but I oppose both. As a member of a priesthood of all believers, I need to speak out more. I have written my MP and MPP and have heard no response. I have prayed daily.

I was surprised to learn that Mennonite Church Canada finds it difficult to speak out because of lack of support from regional churches. Are we not all on the same page?

We are all on the same journey together. We need to ask ourselves if we are living the right way and truly following Christ’s example.

LINDY TIESSEN FAZEKAS, LASALLE, ONTARIO (WINDSOR MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP)

✉ An informative interview

The interview with Uri Weltman was very informative (“Battle for the character of Israel,” December 1, 2023).

Unfortunately, Zionism and Judaism seem to be inextricably intertwined, making it hard to differentiate between what is political and what is religious.

When does Judaism become Zionism, or when does Zionism become Judaism? Is opposing Zionist thought antisemitic? Can one oppose the policies of Israel as a state without being considered antisemitic?

KEN DRUDGE, KOMOKA, ONTARIO (VALLEYVIEW
MENNONITE CHURCH, LONDON)



✉ Raising our voices

Kudos to Will Braun (“What kind of peace church are we?” December 1, 2023) and Geraldine Balzer (“The church cannot be silent,” December 15, 2023) for highlighting the weakness of our church organizations.

Canada is one of the few countries in the world that has not called for a complete ceasefire in Gaza, and Mennonite Church Canada is just as reticent to go on record against the ongoing violence.

As Christians who claim a peace church heritage, we need to raise a strong and consistent Canadian voice against the slaughter of civilians, regardless of who is doing the slaughter.

DEAN PEACHEY, NEW HAMBURG, ONTARIO (PIONEER
PARK CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, KITCHENER)

(Note: Since the letter was written, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has called for a ceasefire in Gaza.)

✉ Apropos of nothing

Belated Merry Christmas and a blessed 2024 to all. I like Christmas and totally approve that it has morphed into something big and all inclusive.

Now that our celebrations are over, we can get back to thinking and praying about death and destruction in Palestine-Israel and Ukraine.

When we need an interlude, let's thank our ancestors and God for holding firm on pacifism.

PETER A. DUECK, VANCOUVER, B.C. (PEACE CHURCH ON
52ND)

✉ MAID considerations

We are writing this letter in response to the news that in 2024, mental health concerns will be an acceptable reason to choose medical assistance in dying (MAID) in Canada.

I (Susan Hackett) have been working with the mental health concerns of youth and their families as a registered psychologist for 25 years.

I (Walter Driedger) worked as a psychiatric social worker for 53 years. My workload included clinical social work, administration and teaching. Direct psychiatric casework was always a part of my work-life balance.

We are concerned about the dangerous implications represented in secular and religious articles we have read on the topic. A death wish leading to suicide is fueled by a decrease of hope. When hope is completely spent, death wishes can easily turn into a preoccupation of planning a method of how to attain death. We have seen this phenomenon in all age groups, from childhood to advanced old age. Most often, after psychotherapeutic counselling, plus antidepressant medications are provided, hopefulness will be restored.

Many of these previously hopeless clients return to thank the therapist for the help received, for holding onto the hope of a better future when they could not.

Offering MAID to people with mental health issues is assuming that they are competent to make the choice, when their judgement is temporarily compromised by a mental health disorder that may, by definition, cause them to want to end their life.

If inexperienced professionals are consulted regarding the viability of choice of MAID, there is a high degree of likelihood that premature death could be the result.

WALTER A. DRIEDGER, MSW (RETIRED RSW)
SUSAN M. HACKETT, PHD, RPSYCH

✉ Change is happening...

Regarding the upcoming changes at *Canadian Mennonite*, I am perhaps an oddball reader in that I am not elderly (I was born in the 1980s) and prefer the printed format of the magazine.

I am making a conscious effort to spend less time on screens, so I keep a copy next to the kitchen table where I can peruse it over breakfast instead of scrolling on my phone.

I also appreciate the basic newsprint as I use *Canadian Mennonite* to line my kitchen compost bucket once I'm done reading it. Glossy paper would not be suitable for this purpose.

I'm glad to hear I'll be able to continue using *Canadian Mennonite* in both ways, even if there will be fewer issues.

DIEDRE R. SPORTACK, VANCOUVER, B.C.

CM ONLINE COMMENTS

✉ Put Jesus first

I find the Hamas-Israel war incredibly sad, and I agree that our peace church voice needs to be raised (“The church cannot be silent,” December 15, 2023).

But concerns for the world's timeliness are troubling. Denominations must show independence that respects our commitment to put Jesus first. Not responding until we are ready is a Christian response modelled by Jesus.

The world's timeliness could lead to the undesirable result that our denominational voice is raised into congruence with specific, widely reported political stances that are not Jesus-focused. It is not Jesus-focused to be overly impressed with memorable statements from august groups, particularly if the august groups share the same funders.

Why, in our world of Zoom and similar options, is our denominational peace church unable to process statements against war?

Numerous possibilities come to mind. One is that people closer to congregations grasp the lack of a Jesus focus in some statements from groups with long-term allegiances elsewhere.

The slow response to the war might show that our current structure allows our denomination to be more independently Christ-focused. Mennonite Church Canada should keep that organizational feature.

Might MC Canada craft a few quintessentially Christian sentences? Sentences that propose protecting civilians no matter what their allegiances. Statements that there are never justifications for promoting genocide or violence of any kind would be appropriate.

A whole lot of groups would dismiss MC Canada. So be it.

LOIS EPP, CALGARY (TRINITY MENNONITE CHURCH)

CM MILESTONES

Births/Adoptions

Thiessen—Brianna Epp (b. Jan. 2, 2024) to Danika and Nolan Thiessen, Rosthern Mennonite Church, Sask., in Altona, Man.

Deaths

Bergen—Mary, 96 (b. July 25, 1927; d. Dec. 20, 2023), Springstein Mennonite Church, Springstein, Man.

Buller—Helen, 78 (b. Jan. 2, 1945; d. Nov. 13, 2023), Rosthern Mennonite Church, Rosthern Sask.

Dettwiler—Carl, 88 (b. July 21, 1935; d. Dec. 16, 2023), Elmira Mennonite Church, Elmira, Ont.

Dyck—Geoffrey, 58 (b. Oct. 29, 1965; d. Dec. 24, 2023), Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Dyck—Loreen (Laura)(nee Enns), 92 (b. June 21, 1931; d. Dec. 19, 2023), First Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta.

Dyck—Susan (Giesbrecht), 101 (b. Jan. 18, 1922; d. Dec. 22, 2023), Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Friesen—Bernie, 90 (b. June 15, 1933; d. Nov. 5, 2023), Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona, Man.

Friesen—Marge (Margaret), 90 (b. April 16, 1933; d. Nov. 27, 2023), Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona, Man.

Good—Sandra Martha, 77 (b. March 13, 1946; d. Oct. 26, 2023), Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden, Ont.

Janz—Alfred Ernest, 88 (b. Sept. 13, 1935; d. Dec. 13, 2023), First Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta.

Janzen—Cory, 52 (b. Aug. 24, 1971; d. Dec. 1, 2023), Rosthern Mennonite Church, Rosthern Sask.

Klassen—Hilda Elizabeth (nee Froese), 80 (b. May 30, 1943; d. Dec. 20, 2023), First Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta.

Nickel—Lorene (nee Janzen), 87 (b. Sept. 15, 1936; d. Dec. 16, 2023), Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask.

Ogasawara—Morio, 86 (b. Jan. 1, 1937; d. Oct. 23, 2023), Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden, Ont.

Peterson—Evelyn (nee Koch), 77 (b. March 26, 1946; d. Dec. 9, 2023), Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Regehr—Michelle, 51 (b. Nov. 17, 1972; d. Nov. 19, 2023), Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask.

Siemens—Erwin, 78 (b. May 29, 1945; d. Dec. 15, 2023), Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask.

Unrau—Mary (Wiebe), 82 (b. Feb. 17, 1941; d. Dec. 18, 2023), Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Wieler—Ernie, 94 (b. March 28, 1929; d. Nov. 9, 2023), First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, Alta.

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

Lord, hear our prayer

Longings for the church in 2024



May we,
the church, be
transformed, inspired
and called to be radical
messengers of hope, peace, joy and
love.

– Ann L. Schultz, Kitchener, Ontario

May Christ be formed in us, to walk
ever more faithfully in Jesus' way of
love toward greater justice, peace and
joy for all.

– Michael Pahl, Winnipeg

Spirit of God, massage our hearts,
that we would remain tenderhearted
toward one another and the sufferings
of all people and creation.

– Kathy Giesbrecht, Winnipeg

*"Let us not grow weary in doing what
is right." (Gal. 6:9)* I offer prayers for
ongoing and sustained collaboration
toward justice, peace and reconciliation
with Indigenous Peoples.

– Jonathan Neufeld, Oakville,
Manitoba

May our people be the light on the
hill, radiating kindness, seeking justice
and walking humbly with our God.

– Werner and Margot Fieguth,
Waterloo, Ontario

*"Beloved, let us love one another,
because love is from God; everyone who
loves is born of God and knows God." (1
John 4:7)* That our hearts, minds and
senses are open to receive God's
ever-present love, and thus, we partici-
pate in God's love for the world.

– Kevin Driedger, Winkler, Manitoba

My wish and prayer for the church is
to advocate for peace around us and,
collectively, for the people in a world of
genocide and destruction.

– Ken Loewen, Altona, Manitoba

Our God and Redeemer, please guide
us in 2024 to grow greatly in our
understanding and practice of loving
faith, following Christ in community.

– Art Koop, Edson, Alberta

*"The
light shines in
the darkness and the
darkness has not overcome
it." (John 1:5)* My prayer is that we
will be able to join our siblings in
Bethlehem to celebrate Christmas
2024, finding God's presence in our
broken world.

– James Friesen, Winnipeg

*"See, I am doing a new thing." (Isaiah
43:19)* May we embrace a spiritual
posture of curiosity, trust, openness
and bold faith, growing in attentiveness
and responsiveness as God writes a
new story amongst us.

– Kara Carter, Poole, Ontario

I wish for openness, love and
courage. May our hearts and arms be
open to all who come searching.

– Ruth Bergen Braun, Calgary

That we will live lives worthy of our
calling . . . with humility, gentleness and
patience, accepting each other with
love, making every effort to preserve
the unity of the Spirit with the peace
that ties us together. (Adapted from
Ephesians 4:1-3.)

– Marilyn Rudy-Froese, Kitchener,
Ontario

I have no reason to be over-optimis-
tic [sic] / But somehow when you smile
/ I can brave bad weather. (Paraphrased
slightly from Pete Townshend in The
Who's rock opera, "Tommy.")

– Ross Muir, Waterloo, Ontario

Come Holy Spirit
Lead us in wisdom, truth, faith
Enliven your church

– Laura Funk, Winnipeg

We asked people who wrote
for *Canadian Mennonite* in
2023 to share their wish and
prayer for the church in
2024.

I'm easily afraid. So is the church. I
pray that we will listen for, and joyfully
embrace, Christ's "fear not, I'm here" in
2024.

– Dora Dueck, Tsawwassen, B.C.

God make us a shelter for warmth,
safety, meaning, friendship and love.
You are all we have. Our lives are in
your gentle hands.

– Jan Schroeder, Ottawa

Spirit of Jesus, hold us tenderly as we
watch and wait for your strength to be
made perfect in our weakness, uncer-
tainty and loss. Amen.

– Josh Wallace, Saskatoon

Guiding God, walking ahead, beside
and behind us, lead us into hand-shak-
ing hospitality, that mobilizes us way
beyond our borders, for Jesus' sake,
amen.

– Lois Siemens, Saskatoon

I wish for joy—Spirit-infused joy that
ignites energy and imaginations and
that brings together people across our
congregations.

– Brenda Tiessen-Wiens, Calgary



Prayer for intercultural churches, that they can give up their comfort zone, inverting their perspectives and creating a new humanity only in Christ.
– Joon Park, Edmonton

God of the void, garden, flood, bush, cloud, tabernacle, kingdom, manger, dove, storm, tomb, road, fire, book and church . . . what is the next surprise?
– Valerie Kauffman, Leamington, Ontario

My prayer for the church: to find harmony for those divided, health for those afflicted, healing for the hurting and hope for tomorrow.
– Maria H. Klassen, St. Catharines, Ontario

In the Kalahari earlier this year, a woman I barely know drove hours to get meds I needed without asking for money. This is church today, tomorrow.
– Carol Ann Weaver, Waterloo, Ontario

That we'll be known by the way we love and include people regardless of faith, social standing, gender, orientation, culture or ethnicity.
– Angelika Dawson, Abbotsford, B.C.

May we walk humbly with God, being a voice for justice locally and globally, believing the best of others, acting in kindness and love.
– Geraldine Balzer, Saskatoon

Lord, I pray for peace in our families, churches and countries in the world. Have mercy on us. Glory and honour be to you.
– Helmut Lemke, Vancouver

Lord, as we pray for peace in the world, help us keep moral clarity that evil be defeated and the innocents be returned home.
– Janet Dirks, Victoria

Lord, we believe. Help our unbelief! (Adapted from Mark 9:24) Give us the eyes to see you at work in the world and the courage to follow wholeheartedly.
– Doug Klassen, Winnipeg

Sometimes it seems the world is falling apart. We feel threatened by despair. What I wish for the church is the joy of hope as embodied by Christ.
– Marieke Meyer, Toronto

I pray that we take strength from our communities to humbly see the divine in everyone we meet, listening, empathizing, loving and welcoming all.
– Wendy Suddaby, Victoria

May we release our grip on conventions that keep us stagnant, and gently open our hands to the Spirit's gifts in this extraordinary season.
– Anneli Loepp Thiessen, Ottawa

Let the people of the church be who they are. Let people as they are be the church. Saturday night is Sunday morning.
– Barry Bergen, Leamington, Ontario

May we be brave enough to engage with our blemishes and let our nostalgia die, to be resurrected as something surprisingly beautiful and new.
– Joshua Penfold, New Hamburg, Ontario

At the foot of this new year, I'm remembering Mary's song: "He has brought down the powerful and lifted up the lowly."
– Sarah Ens, Winnipeg

During Advent 2023, yearnings for a story of hope sufficient to transform conditions of life today were tended. I pray for these tender roots.
– Cheryl Pauls, Winnipeg

I pray that the church looks forward more than it looks back. May we "seek the peace of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7), courageously loving our neighbours.
– Susanne Guenther Loewen, Saskatoon

My hope is for a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit, bringing unity in diversity in our church, and healing in our world.
– Arli Klassen, Kitchener, Ontario

That the church will shine the light of Jesus, the light of love, courage, truth, mercy, justice and peace into the deep gloom of our human and planetary suffering.
– Esther Epp-Thiessen, Winnipeg

My prayer for 2024 is simple: I pray for the shalom-peace of God, through Jesus, to come more and more in a world that so desperately needs it.
– Jesse Nickel, Abbotsford, B.C.

My wish is that Mennonite Church Manitoba would join the communities of faith around the world calling for an international Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.
– Josiah Neufeld, Winnipeg



PHOTOS (LEFT TO RIGHT) FOR UNSPLASH BY: IEROY SKALSTAD, FRANS HULET, CARLOS MAGNO, MATHIAS KONRATH, RACHEL MCDERMOTT, DANIE FRANCO, VITALII KHODZINSKIY

“Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the living of these days.

“Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, lest we miss thy kingdom’s goal.”
(Voices Together #716)
– Miles Zimmerly Wiederkehr, Mildmay, Ontario

A singular focus on the health and building of local churches. There is no Jesusy-justice, Mennonite Church Canada or Regional Church separate from the local, messy, gathering and scattering local church.
– Shel Boese, Langley, B.C.

May the church start with a right confession: Jesus is Lord. And then accept the confusion, clarity and contradiction that comes from it.
– David Driedger, Winnipeg

My wish for the church, including myself, is to grow bolder in solidarity with people beaten down by poverty, racism and oppression, and worry less about success and image.
– Byron Rempel-Burkholder, Winnipeg

May we build bridges and not walls. Bridges, which link us, which invite others to join us and widen our horizon.
– Cathrin van Sintern-Dick, Chatham, Ontario

That God will bless us with a spirit of unity and grace, that we might witness to the world the strange and beautiful truth of the Gospel.
– Jason Greig, Kitchener, Ontario

I did not receive inspiration that would have been constructive
– Anonymous

My wish and my prayer for churches in 2024 is for more dialogue on more topics.
– Howard Boldt, near Osler, Saskatchewan

My prayer for 2024 is that the church rediscover the energy and the hope of the greatest commandment. To love is to live God.
– Ed Olfert, Laird, Saskatchewan

May the church grow in hope and point the way to God through intentional relationships with Jesus and others for the well-being of all people.
– Melody Steinman, Baden, Ontario

I pray that God’s dream for the world will be reflected in our lives, our congregations and global family of faith as a sign of the new creation.
– Jeanette Hanson, Rosthern, Saskatchewan

I pray the church will be both humble and bold in 2024. Humble enough to learn from Jesus, and bold enough to follow him.
– Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, Edmonton

“As an Anabaptist church we cannot keep silent about the ongoing wars in Ukraine and between Palestine and Israel.” (Quoting Geraldine Balzer, *Canadian Mennonite*, December 15, 2023)
– Henry Fast, Winnipeg

May the God of hope inspire in us the resolve and courage to meet suffering and pain with humility, love and peace.
– Arlyn Friesen Epp, Winnipeg

We pray that we learn from Jonah to follow God’s lead and welcome all, especially those we’re quite sure don’t deserve God’s lavish grace.
– James Barber, Markham, Ontario

CM FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is your prayer, wish or longing for the church in 2024?
2. Which of the prayers above resonate most with you?
3. What Bible verse would you want to claim as a prayer for the church in 2024?
4. Although there is much darkness in our world, where do you see the light of hope?
5. As you reflect on your life, are there specific times when you can say, “God was with us”?

– CM staff

See related resources at commonword.ca/go/961

The state of community in 2024

Darryl Neustaedter Barg

Last year was a tough one. Global concerns raged around us, including images of climate crisis and state-led violence that continued to swirl.

I watched my church community formally come apart, by vote, in a deeply divisive scenario.

Of course, there are many dynamics at play in such situations, but the element I find most grievous was the inability for us to operate well as a community.

In my view, our congregation didn't have a great capacity for talking to one another before COVID, and it feels like the separation we experienced during the pandemic exacerbated the situation.

Ability and desire for being together to talk about difficult things was weak and weakened over time.

2023 was also the year that many would perceive that technology took a frightening leap forward with the "artificial intelligence (AI) revolution." Online tools like ChatGPT put human-like communication with all the info on the internet at our fingertips.

While what we're now calling AI isn't human consciousness, companies are pushing toward something like it. Some call it artificial general intelligence. Whatever it is now, it's very effective at what it's meant to do.

I've recently become more aware of the implications of technology on community.

The work of media and culture theorists Marshall McLuhan and Neil Postman have been pushing me to think about technology in its more broadly affective, rather than effective, ways.

At the risk of oversimplification,

McLuhan and Postman posit that no technology is neutral; it all affects us, and the big question we need to ask is how it affects human community. (If they were around today, they would likely explore its effect on non-human



Photo: Tara Winstead for pexels

life as well.)

In so many ways, the ongoing march of technology has pulled us apart and created division and loneliness. Watch *The Social Dilemma* or *Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones* on Netflix for two interesting and very different ways of looking at the concerns.

You will be pleased or dismayed (there seems to be little middle ground here) that I asked ChatGPT what community is, and whether the concept

is falling apart.

It told me that traditional community seems in decline because of these factors: urbanization and mobility; digital connectivity; changes in social structures; economic factors; and cultural and generational differences.

This sounds about right and was underway long, long before ChatGPT. Some argue it started with the advent of the printing press.

I don't mean to suggest that technology was at the root of my congregation's weakened community, but I do want to propose from personal experience that community as we know it is under immense pressure.

I used to use Hebrews 10:24-25 with friends as a tongue-in-cheek way of goading us to get together: *"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

Now I recognize those verses for the prophetic words they seem to be in 2024.

May God bless all your community interactions. Please, don't forsake meeting together, even when it's tough. In fact, I urge you to lean into meeting even when it is tough.

Also, let's be real: this is hard work, and I'm too often not up for it. Lord, have mercy.

A blessed 2024 to you. ☘



Darryl Neustaedter Barg is the associate director of communications at Mennonite Church Manitoba.

Linking membership and participation

Arli Klassen

It will soon be congregational annual meeting season. Do you look forward to these meetings? Are they well attended in your congregation?

In my congregation, the number of people who participate in voting meetings is small compared to the number who participate regularly in worship. Participation in voting meetings is limited primarily to older people and multi-generation Canadians.

On those occasions, I long for the Anglican definition of membership.

I was baptized by immersion at 15. I moved around a lot, and so I have been an active part of 10 different congregations since my baptism.

I was not involved in the Ottawa congregation where I was baptized because it was the mother church for the church plant my family helped start. I didn't know what membership meant because, as a teenager, I never participated in voting meetings in either congregation.

I went off to Bible college in Winnipeg. When I was 20, an outspoken member in my fiancé's congregation loudly told me that because I was not a member, I could not voice an opinion on issues facing the church—even in the foyer.

I had been actively participating for two years, and I was embarrassed to be singled out as a non-member.

On moving to Toronto, and then Lesotho, we joined Anglican congregations.

We learned that there are minimal membership requirements to be a voting member of an Anglican church. People are eligible to vote if they have attended that congregation's worship services at least three times in the past year. Quite simple!

I could not become an officer ("warden") without going through confirmation, but I could still be involved immediately, as well as vote. I served on the church council and helped lead the young adult group.



Arli Klassen and her then-fiancé, now husband, Keith Regehr, in May 1980. Supplied photo.

After returning from Lesotho, I officially transferred my membership between various Mennonite Church congregations every time we moved.

Given that I was baptized as a youth this was simple; all it required was an affirmative letter from the pastor of the previous congregation to the new one.

Official membership meant I could vote and participate in leadership roles in each new congregation.

I value baptism from an Anabaptist perspective. Baptism is based on one's own public declaration of a commitment to follow Jesus, as a sign of the Holy Spirit's transformation, and is linked to a specific faith community.

The early Anabaptists rejected baptism as a marker of (the infant's) membership in the civic community.

I struggle now with equating voting to official (legal) membership, without any link to active participation.

I struggle with our reliance on government-approved bylaw formats, although I appreciate good leadership and good decision-making processes.

I struggle with electing/appointing a long slate of people to official roles, when maybe we only need some coordinators who find volunteers as needed.

I think these tools are too often ways of enshrining what we think democracy should look like in our charitable structures. These tools and structures are not working very well anymore in many Canadian charities, who cannot find the volunteers to keep the whole infrastructure going.

Is this really how we want our churches to operate?

I believe that participation in any congregation is a journey, not a destination. I long for us to be more inclusive on membership, voting and participation, like the Anglicans.

My life would be very different if, at 20, I had been welcomed into the congregation I attended for two years. Instead, I was welcomed into Anglican congregations.

How might we think theologically more inclusively about congregational participation and membership as a journey? ❖



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Becoming an intercultural church

Joon Park

Just as Matthew 7:21 states, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven,” not every intercultural church will experience the fullest stage of reconciliation in fellowship with others, which is an ultimate goal of becoming an intercultural church.

There are levels of becoming a truly intercultural church, just as there are levels in the maturity of a Christian’s faith.

Level 1: Diversity in the pews. This means diversity in terms of race, culture, social status and class.

If the church lacks a desire to be intersectionally diverse, and is satisfied with the current level of homogeneity by interest and ethnicity, it fails to meet even my first criterion of becoming an intercultural church. It is a club and not a church.

Diversity in the pews can be easily observed by assessing with whom people sit and through whom the worship service is performed.

As the title of a book by New Testament scholar Scot McKnight suggests, a church and church service should be “a fellowship of differents,” not a fellowship of similars.

However, if the church stops at this level, it becomes no more than a display of cosmetic diversity. The church should strive to go beyond this as our faith journey advances.

Level 2: Diversity in the pulpit. We need to consider who is occupying leadership positions.

Are the leaders all the same race or ethnicity? If so, this level of church remains at Level 1. If the congregation has become diverse, that diversity should be reflected in its leadership.

Factors such as gender, age,

education, social status, experience and ethnicity should be considered when choosing leaders.

Intercultural church leadership is about diverse individuals coming together with appropriate levels of tension and conflict, embracing them with gratitude and engaging in careful progress toward the light amid uncertainty.

Whether to succeed in pursuing an intercultural church begins with how the leadership of the church embodies such a disruptive, conflictual journey.

“Don’t rock the boat” isn’t a recommended coping strategy; it is a cop-out. Rather than the avoidance of conflict, anticipating conflict is the best policy. The church grows through conflict.

Level 3: Lived reconciliation by status inversion. Once both congregation and leadership have become diverse, the church should pass this final litmus test to see how much it has embodied the meaning of reconciliation.

The Greek origin of “reconciliation” goes deeper than simply keeping hostile parties from clashing. It literally means, “to change, or to exchange.”

According to theologian John de Gruchy, when we are reconciled, we exchange places with the other and are in solidarity with—rather than against—the other.

Reconciliation is not an abstract notion but an act of exchanging places with others—dismantling alienation and separation through a newly created humanity in Christ. More specifically, it brings about the radical inversion and transformation of people’s old statuses and perspectives.

We can imagine how the Roman centurion Cornelius’ life was changed

after his encounter with Peter, the marginalized Jew.

The true reconciliation happened once Peter and Cornelius experienced “exchanging their places,” in which the marginalized Jewish apostle Peter crossed the ethnic boundaries and the Roman colonizer Cornelius discarded his position of power.

Once an authentic mutual exchange in status and perspective occurred between Peter and Cornelius, true familiar bonds were built.

Conclusion

Becoming an intercultural church involves a strenuous process of inverting our statuses and perspectives, and entering new relationships with others that shape us.

To make this noble process happen, our traditional identities should be flexible and inclusive. With impermeable boundaries in keeping our cultural and traditional identities, we will ultimately remain alone.

Only in a flexible, open and inclusive situation that allows the last to become the first, the weakest to become the strongest, the unfortunate to become the fortunate and the guest to become the host will true reconciliation bear fruit, and only then will the church have become truly intercultural.

Until a new intercultural haven unfolds, “Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23). ❧



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Edmonton. He can be reached at cwcfounder@gmail.com.

Beyond boxes

Troy Watson

Most of you have heard, and likely agree with, this statement: “You can’t put God in a box.”

Of course, this means *you* can’t be put in a box either, for you are made in the image of God. If God doesn’t fit in a box, neither do you. Yet we often put ourselves in boxes. We limit ourselves and confine our identities.

Jesus didn’t live like this. He defied category. He was confusing and unpredictable. People couldn’t pigeon-hole him. They tried to put labels on him, both positive and negative, but Jesus always proved to be beyond their boxes.

Was he too rebellious or too traditional? Was he recklessly irreverent or the godliest man in Israel? Was he too liberal or too conservative? Was he human or divine?

Was he more in line with the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, priests, revolutionaries, prophets, drunkards or gluttons?

It was hard to tell. It depended on who you asked.

Jesus was a paradoxical puzzle who consistently surprised people. The same should be true of us, if we are growing in Christ-likeness.

In my experience, too many Christians are grossly predictable caricatures of their brand. When I meet a charismatic, prophetically-oriented Christian, for example, they are usually carbon copies of every other charismatic, prophetically-oriented Christian I’ve met.

The same applies to Trump-supporting Christians, prosperity gospel Christians, social justice Christians and so on. It seems if you know one, you know them all.

It’s natural to seek out people with common values and beliefs, and to be shaped and influenced by them. We are

social animals, after all.

Yet we are also individuals with unique backgrounds, personalities, life experiences and perspectives. We have unique gifts, callings and relationships with God.

It’s concerning when everyone looks, talks, thinks, worships, believes, dresses, acts and votes exactly like all the other people in their camp.

It makes me wonder: Are they letting their group do their thinking for them? Are they being honest about their own instincts, experiences, questions and insights? Are they not curious why millions of people see issues, current events and scripture passages in a completely different way than their group?

I appreciate that there is safety in numbers. Joining a herd offers security, comfort and simplicity. Yet Jesus, the one we follow, had nowhere to lay his head, both literally and categorically speaking. There was no camp, group, denomination, political party or tribe on earth where Jesus was completely at home. He was homeless on many levels.

As followers of Christ, we need community, but Christian community is intended to transcend groupthink and offer unity to opposing tribes.

I realize it can be lonely to reject the herd mentality. It’s far easier to go with the flow of one’s group.

Why risk offending, contradicting or alienating yourself from the herd by having thoughts, beliefs, convictions, values and questions that don’t fit neatly into their collective boxes? It’s not a pleasant feeling when you see the look in the eyes of people in your group that says, “Wait, I thought you were one of us.”

Being ideologically homeless might

be the harder path, but it’s the journey we must take to follow Jesus and pursue truth and justice. It will make us less predictable, like Jesus, because we won’t always “toe the party line.”

You will find yourself agreeing with your opponents and enemies occasionally. If not, you’ve likely succumbed to groupthink. You’ve become part of an echo chamber.

If you never admit your sub-community or ideological group might be wrong, or you refuse to acknowledge when the opposing side makes a good point, you’re probably living in a box.

The most interesting and inspiring people I’ve met are people who surprise me; people who don’t completely fit into a box.

They’re people like Jesus, who defy categorization. They’re people who share thoughts and ideas that go against the grain of the parroting refrains of the religious, social or political camp I’d assumed they were affiliated with.

These people are rare and valuable gems who tend to listen, study multiple perspectives, read beyond headlines and reflect, before speaking or posting things on social media. They change their minds (repent). They are Christ-like in their unpredictable and uncategorical nature.

When I see these brave souls daring to journey beyond the boring boxes, I feel hope and gratitude. ☼



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Pursuing a career in worship music

An interview with Mykayla Turner

By Madalene Arias
Eastern Canada Correspondent

While pursuing degrees in health studies and music at the University of Waterloo, Mykayla Turner stumbled into a plethora of worship songs that left her wondering why and how she'd never heard them before.

Growing up, she attended Zurich Mennonite Church in Ontario. In this rural congregation, music consisted of what Turner describes as contemporary worship music. Songs from a hymnal were not the norm there.

When she began taking courses at Conrad Grebel University College, she discovered that her experience of what it is to be Mennonite was different from others'. "I felt frustrated that no one had told me that we were part of this larger church with this wealth of different traditions," Turner says.

Turner is a trained pianist and cantor. She graduated from high school with top grades in the sciences and thought she would pursue a career as a healthcare professional. However, her focus shifted while taking courses with Kate Steiner, Conrad Grebel's director of church music and worship.

She was more drawn to music than the health courses.

"It struck me that we don't often think very hard about the music that we're singing," says Turner.

Prior to studying at Conrad Grebel, Turner's observation was that people sang worship songs simply because they liked them. People did not necessarily gain an appreciation of the origins of the songs.

Becoming aware of the different genres inspired her to dig deeper into worship music, to reflect critically and take part in conversations about how to best engage with a piece of music.

Midway through her undergraduate degree, Turner helped launch a Sunday

night hymn-singing group, with encouragement from a friend. By her final year of studies, the Sunday night group consistently attracted 15 or so students.

As an undergraduate student Turner also played piano for The Church at Nairn, a rural congregation that is part



Mykayla Turner. Supplied photo.

of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. She now serves as their worship coordinator.

The Master of Sacred Music Degree offered at the University of Toronto began to intrigue Turner; however, she decided it was important for her to gain a foundation in theology to better comprehend worship music.

After completing her undergraduate degree, Turner completed a year in Conrad Grebel's Master of Theology program before transitioning to the Master of Sacred Music program at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Texas. She says that her time at SMU helped her realize that liturgy and church music are immensely rewarding research areas.

While participating in Steiner's chapel choir back at Conrad Grebel, Turner found that singing medieval chants had

a distinct impact on her. She was fascinated by the fact that some pieces were best experienced without any instruments or harmonies.

During this past Advent, Turner grew particularly fond of a medieval chant called "Creator of the Stars at Night."

"We encounter God in different ways through different kinds of music, and that's worth paying attention to," says Turner.

"And why would we restrict ourselves to only one way or one kind of encounter with God, when we could explore so many others?"

Probing into the various songs that have made their way into worship settings now brings up more questions for her than they did before.

For instance, when is a good time to sing a capella?

Or how does a white-majority congregation include the music of other cultures with integrity?

Turner says this sort of sensitivity "applies not just to the music of minorities, but even just like music from a different century."

Turner says she cares more about the participation of as many people as possible than the quality of sound produced.

If she had to pick favourite piece of music it would be "Could it be that God is Singing," arranged by American composer Alice Parker. It's not always clear which line is the melody, while a driving beat carries the lyrics forward. When sung properly, everyone sings their part as loud as they can regardless of their proficiency.

"I kind of love that idea," says Turner.

"The sound that results is what it is, and that's great and pleasing to God's ears."

Turner is considering schools PhD work in Canada or the U.S. next fall. ❧

B.C. churches mark Christmas and New Year's

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

Mennonites in British Columbia celebrated the holidays in a variety of ways last month.

With both Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve falling on Sundays, churches were presented with the question: How many services should be held, and what kind? Will congregants come to multiple services on a holiday weekend?

United Mennonite Church of Black Creek opted to hold three services on Christmas weekend: the regular Sunday morning worship on Dec. 24, a candle-light service that evening, and a worship service on Christmas morning.

Langley Mennonite Fellowship also held three services, observing Fourth Advent in the morning and celebrating Christmas Eve and Christmas morning.

Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship in Vancouver joined St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church for morning worship on Dec. 24. Point Grey has been meeting in the Anglican church on some Sunday afternoons while it searches for a permanent worship space.

"The structure of the service was Anglican, and the priest gave the homily," says Janice Kreider of Point Grey. "We contributed the music, including an enthusiastic singing of ['Praise God (Dedication Anthem)']. Both congregations had decent attendance, filling the chapel to capacity."

Afterward, congregants enjoyed coffee and goodies.

Following Yarrow United Mennonite (YUM) Church's Christmas Eve service, everyone took home a handmade

ornament. Church member Hilda Bergen crafted the ornaments using pages from YUM's German hymnals.

"During the first half of YUM's history, all services were entirely in German," said Darnell Barkman, the church's pastor. "These ornaments are extra unique this year, too, because of the celebration of our 85th anniversary in October."

The congregation held a New Year's Eve gathering on Dec. 31, meeting in the afternoon for games and snacks.

Instead of holding both morning and evening services on Dec. 24, Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford held a late afternoon Vespers on Christmas Eve. The service ended with the congregation's annual tradition of singing "*Der Friedensfürst*" ("The Prince of Peace"), a favourite German Christmas song.

Cedar Valley Church in Mission held a fellowship breakfast on Dec. 24 that had "an awesome turnout," according to Grant Miller, the church's pastor.



A young congregant shares a reading at an evening service at Cedar Valley Church in Mission, B.C. Supplied photo.

"We wanted to concentrate on the evening service, where we invited friends and did caroling together," Miller says.

On New Year's Eve, Cedar Valley designed a pre-recorded online service that members could watch from home. It included an interactive trivia game.

Vancouver's Peace Church on 52nd held a regular morning service on Christmas Eve, including a candle-lighting service as would normally have been done in the evening.

"Thankfully, it was a cloudy day, so when we turned all the lights off it was comfortably dark enough to be able to enjoy the candlelight," says Garry Janzen, the church's interim pastor. "We had a lower attendance than usual, but we also had guests who came."

The New Year's Eve morning service featured reflections on the past year. Afterward, the church held a farewell lunch for Janzen, who wrapped up his 10-month ministry at the church. ❧



Away in a manor

Seniors' living complex in Saskatoon stages third annual nativity play

Story and Photos by Emily Summach
SASKATCHEWAN CORRESPONDENT

Mary, played by Donna Driedger, gazes lovingly at Jesus during Bethany Manor's 'Nativity on Wheels.'

It's not your typical nativity play. While most Christmas productions feature rosy-cheeked children wearing bathrobes and pillow cases, Bethany Manor's "Nativity on Wheels" stars senior citizens, many of whom have mobility challenges.

The seniors' living complex in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, staged its third annual nativity play on December 20, 2023.

"It's such a hit with our community," said Lois Siemens, spiritual care coordinator and the play's co-director. "One of the audience members told me after the show, 'Now I've had Christmas.'"

The idea for the production came from David Neufeld, a Bethany resident. Neufeld staged a similar production years ago when he served as a social worker at Saskatchewan Hospital, a psychiatric facility in North Battleford.

The worship committee at Bethany ran with Neufeld's idea. They mounted the first "Nativity on Wheels" in December 2021, just as COVID restrictions were lifted.

"People were so tired of being in

their rooms and wanted to be a part of something special," Siemens said.

To fill out the cast of characters, the worship committee chooses "unlikely people" and people who have never

Fortunately, most people eventually agree to be a part of it. The play has gained popularity. Each year, characters are added so that more people can be involved.

A play starring seniors, many of



Helen Janzen (left) as Elizabeth and Donna Driedger as Mary.

participated in a nativity play before, Siemens said.

"It certainly can take some convincing to get people to accept the roles," she added with a laugh.

whom use canes, walkers and scooters, is not without its challenges. Aisles must be widened and blocking the scenes takes extra time.

The play is done in pantomime, with



The angel Gabriel, played by Paul Friesen.

three narrators reading the nativity story from the Gospel of Luke. When Siemens realized some of the cast members were hard of hearing and couldn't hear their cues, she appointed group leaders who could hear well and told everyone to follow the leaders.

The joys of putting on the play far outweigh the challenges. To everyone's delight, a cast member, Eric Olfert, transformed a mobility scooter into a camel for one of the magi.

Olfert, an engineer, designed and built the framework in his brother's metal shop. Naomi Unger, one of the crew members, sewed the fur and features for the creature.

"People are so excited to be involved," Siemens said. "It's just heartwarming to see their excitement when they get their costumes at the dress rehearsal. I had one of the magi in my office today and they said, 'When you do this next year, I want to be a wise man again.'"

Embodying the story inevitably touches all members of the cast and crew in a deep way.

Donna Driedger and her husband, Irvin Driedger, played the roles of Mary

and Joseph. Irvin suffered a stroke several years ago and is mostly unable to speak. Donna devotes her life to Irvin's care.

"When we were getting ready and putting on our costumes tonight, Irvin

Siemens reflected on what it means for an aging population to portray familiar characters.

"I think doing the story here at Bethany brings another depth to it," she said.



The shepherds, played by Henry Dyck, George Fehr, Faye Friesen and Emmy Neufeld.

took my wrist and he said, 'Waiting,'" Donna said. "And I thought, yes, we do know something about what it means to wait. We tried for four years to have our first child — and she's here, watching the play tonight."

"People come out and they hear the story differently. It makes it more meaningful. I worried the first year we did this, 'Is this going to feel childish?' It doesn't. It's just beautiful and new again." ❧



PHOTO: TORONTO MENNONITE THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

Reflections on the end of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre

By Jeremy Bergen

On October 24, 2023, the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (TMTC) held a virtual Closing Ceremony to mark the end of its 33-year existence. The centre's mandate was to develop theological leadership for church and academy, by supporting Mennonite graduate students in theology, biblical studies and related fields. It worked primarily with students at the ecumenical Toronto School of Theology (TST). As I reflect on what was shared at this closing ceremony, it is evident that TMTC has made important, often behind-the-scenes, contributions to the Mennonite theological ecosystem.

TMTC was founded in 1990 by several Mennonite denominational entities and postsecondary educational institutions, reflecting binational commitments to advanced theological education. But financial sustainability

was a perennial challenge. Conrad Grebel University College assumed the responsibility of running TMTC in 2000 on behalf of the other institutions. The decision to close was made for financial reasons.

TMTC's character was deeply defined by two leaders. A. James Reimer, the founding director and long-time Grebel faculty member, who passed away in 2010, was passionate about bringing Anabaptist-Mennonite perspectives to ecumenical theological education. But it was equally important for such an institution to facilitate critical Mennonite learning from other



A. James Reimer
Photo: uwaterloo.ca



Lydia Neufeld Harder
Photo: uwaterloo.ca

Christian traditions, as well as other faiths. He taught many courses in Toronto, supervised many students (though TMTC did not admit students or

grant degrees), and organized public forums on key issues, such as how to respond to the September 11 attacks.

Lydia Neufeld Harder also taught and advised students, but her passion as director was in creating community among students, helping them connect their studies to faith and church. At the closing ceremony, she reflected on a short-lived program she designed to place graduate students in churches as

teachers, with mentoring and financial support. Her vision was also realized in biennial Mennonite Graduate Student Conferences, which brought together students from across North America and beyond to learn from each other.

In the 1990s and 2000s, a Mennonite Central Committee student exchange brought two Iranian Shia Muslim doctoral students to study at TST, whom TMTC hosted. At the closing ceremony, Phil Enns spoke of how his relationship with the Iranian students in the 2000s shaped his own career trajectory in which he taught and led academic programs in Nigeria, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Myanmar.

Irma Fast Dueck, professor at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), recalled how TMTC helped her as a doctoral student convene a symposium on worship and ethics, two themes not often integrated in the Mennonite tradition. Former TMTC director Kyle Gingerich Hiebert commented that in an undergraduate course he took at CMU, Irma Fast Dueck taught in a way he only later learned was deeply shaped by her own learning at TST and TMTC. The impact of TMTC has often been hard to pinpoint and may become more evident in hindsight.

Kim Penner, a Mennonite pastor in Kitchener, reflected on the importance of the Women's Group at TMTC. In light of how Mennonite theology and institutions perpetuate male privilege, such a group was key for her personal support as well as the development of alternative visions for theology. Current doctoral student and ordained Mennonite minister Hyejung Jessie Yum spoke of feeling affirmed as the first racialized woman to receive TMTC's A. James Reimer Scholarship, a competitive annual award of \$10,000.

TMTC significantly shaped my own life. It was a major factor in my

decision to study theology in Toronto. I valued the support of this community, especially the monthly student gatherings, during the often-isolating experience of doctoral studies. I have served in various staff roles and as a faculty advisor for several Mennonite doctoral students. Relationships I formed back at the first Mennonite Graduate Student Conference in 2002 led to a collaboration that resulted in



Lydia Harder, Hamid Parsania and Shuja Ali Mirza participating in a Muslim-Mennonite dialogue event at Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre in 2002.

Supplied photo

the 2020 book *Recovering from the Anabaptist Vision*. That project showed how a commitment to the Anabaptist tradition requires criticism of it. It also showed how seeds planted by TMTC may bear fruit decades later.

In addition to its personal impact on over a hundred graduate students, dozens of people affiliated with TMTC have since served various institutions as professors, pastors and administrators.

Through teaching, student research and conferences, TMTC also shaped a theological agenda. It helped deepen the relationship between Mennonites and classical theology, especially the

integration of liturgical practices, trinitarian identity of God, ecumenical reconciliation and a wider range of Christian voices within Mennonite spaces.

Second, TMTC supported the development of Mennonite feminist theology. By giving attention to the ethical implications of language for God, and how churches talk about human suffering, this approach

highlights the importance of human experience in the practice of theology.

Third, the engagement with Islam led to a series of still-ongoing academic dialogues between Mennonites and Iranian Shia Muslims, but also teacher exchanges and learning tours.

Fourth, several doctoral students have recently written dissertations examining various blind spots within Mennonite peace theology in particular. While peace theology has typically focused on nonviolent witness against external forms of power, these students rightly argue it needs to be reconstructed in order to address the violence it has hidden and fostered against LGBTQ+ persons, racialized persons, Indigenous persons and victims of sexual violence within Mennonite

communities.

Though I lament the closing of TMTC, its legacy will continue through the work of the theological leaders it formed and their dynamic engagement with theology from a Mennonite perspective. ❧

Jeremy Bergen was the last director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre and is a faculty member at Conrad Grebel University College.

Friars' Briar invites new curlers

By Pam Bartel

Let one who is without sin cast the first stone.

That said, flipping a coin is an easier way to determine which team will begin a game at the Friars' Briar, an annual curling event held for those who have the faith to walk on water.

In the spirit of good fellowship and love of the game, Don Amos of Brampton, Ontario, came up with the idea of a national curling event for clergy. He called his clergy peers from east to west and they held the first gathering in Winnipeg in 1978. The event has been held every year since then, except two.

Now, we as the Friars' Briar Association

are inviting new participants, whether clergy or lay people, to attend the 2024 Briar in Regina, March 4-8.

The Briar's history is laden with rich stories. For example, Curling Canada "strongly advised" the group not to spell Briar with an "e" lest it be confused with the Canadian Men's Curling Championship which, at the time, was called the Labatt Briar.

Another memorable moment came when Rabbi Michael Dolgin brought his "Frozen Chosen" team to the Briar all wearing jackets with "Blessed be my rock" (Psalm 18:46) emblazoned in Hebrew on their backs.

One year, Shaw cable televised the gold medal game between Team Martin and Team Wall.

Then there was the COVID Briar, which used an online curling game.

The Friars' Briar welcomes ministry leaders and lay people, young and old, from all faith backgrounds, whether experienced curlers or not. Last year, nine new curlers attended, including one who learned of the event from a Friars' Briar comic posted in the bathroom of his home curling club.

People come from far and wide. We come because we love the game and the camaraderie. We come to share our

CM TRANSITIONS

Mennonite Church Manitoba



Janessa Nayler-Giesbrecht began September 10, 2023, as lead pastor of Jubilee Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. She previously served for 10 years as the youth and young adults pastor at Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church. Nayler-Giesbrecht is currently completing a master of arts in Christian ministry at Canadian Mennonite University.



Kara Friesen began an 18-month interim pastor position at Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg on December 1, 2023. Previously, Friesen worked with Multiply (formerly MB Mission) and as an executive assistant at the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. From 2004-22, she served as a lay leader at FaithWorks, an MB congregation in Winnipeg.



Elizabeth Wipf was ordained on December 10, 2023. She has been the pastor of faith development at North Kildonan Mennonite Church in Winnipeg since 2018. Wipf is studying for a master of divinity degree at CMU.



Mel Letkeman retired from his role as lead pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach on December 31, 2023. He joined the staff in October 2004. Previously, he held ministry positions at Zoar Mennonite Church in Langham, Saskatchewan, and First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. He served for four years in Brazil with the Commission on Overseas Mission, and for two years with a community development organization in Saskatoon. Kathy Koop has joined the staff at Grace Mennonite as interim pastor.

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada



Kara Carter completed 12 years as pastor at Wellesley Mennonite Church on December 3, 2023. Carter holds a PhD in pastoral leadership and previously served as the youth pastor at Poole Mennonite Church in Poole, Ontario. Carter is taking time for rest and reflection before pursuing further pastoral ministry.



Team Fawksey at the 2023 Friars' Briar in London, Ontario. Supplied photo

stories and build interfaith bridges on and off the ice.

You can register as a team or an individual.

The last word goes out to those who plan to curl in Regina: "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.'" (Luke 10:5) ❧

Pam Bartel serves as president of the Friars' Briar Association. For more info, see friarsbriar.ca.

THE GREAT WINTER WARM-UP

Use your sewing skills to share warmth this winter by making blankets for people in need around the world.

mcc.org/gift-of-warmth

CM NEWS BRIEFS

MC Sask appoints new executive minister

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan has appointed Len Rempel as new executive minister. Rempel will take over from Gary Peters, the current interim executive minister, in early June. Rempel has previously held positions at Ten Thousand Villages Canada, Mennonite World Conference, and as pastor at St. Agatha Mennonite Church in Ontario. He currently pastors Warman Mennonite Church and Pleasant Point Mennonite Church.

New funds provided for women in Asia

A new fund will support Asian women who want to pursue theological studies, including women already enrolled in the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary Journey program. The fund, administered by Mennonite Church Canada International Witness, uses money made available by WOVEN, a women's group within MC Manitoba that disbanded in 2023.

Mennonites threaten Suriname forest

According to a December 15 report in *The Guardian*, 50 Mennonite families from Bolivia, Belize and Mexico plan to carve three communities from the Amazon forest in Suriname, against the will of the local Indigenous people. Mennonite communities have been held responsible for extensive environmental damage in South American countries, including Peru, where they have been accused of deforesting more than 7,000 hectares of Amazon rainforest. Indigenous groups in Suriname are concerned about deforestation of their lands. Suriname is the only country in South America not to recognize Indigenous people's land rights.

MCC blanket blitz returns

Mennonite Central Committee invites churches, groups and individuals to hold or attend comforter-knotting blitzes during January and February as part of the annual Great Winter Warm-up. Last year, MCC shipped 59,277 comforters to countries like Guatemala, Haiti, Malawi, Syria and Ukraine. They are hoping for 7,000 comforters by February 29. See mcc.org.

MC Canada announces green grant recipients

Mennonite Church Canada

Mennonite Church Canada is pleased to announce Emissions Reduction Grants (ERG) totaling \$23,021 to help nine congregations reduce their carbon footprint. Fourteen additional congregations expressed interest in the program.

Sandy Plett, climate action coordinator and member of the Sustainability Leadership Group (SLG), which oversees the process, said they were delighted by the strong response in the first year of the program.

The smallest grant was \$1,341, and the largest grants were capped at \$3,000. The grantees include Sherbrooke Mennonite in Vancouver; First Mennonite and Holyrood Mennonite, both in Edmonton; Listowel Mennonite and Toronto United Mennonite in Ontario; and Lowe Farm Berghaler, Jubilee Mennonite, Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship and Home Street Mennonite in Manitoba.

Four congregations (Sherbrooke, First, Lowe Farm, Listowel) will use the funds to install more energy efficient lighting, which will not only reduce direct electricity consumption but also reduce cooling costs in the hotter seasons. Others (Jubilee, Fort Garry, Home Street) will upgrade insulation, windows or ventilation systems to reduce heat loss in the cold seasons.

One congregation (Holyrood) will make kitchen and water heating appliance upgrades to reduce energy consumption. Toronto United Mennonite will use the grant as seed money for long-range plans to install heat pumps to replace aging natural

gas furnaces, among other upgrades.

The SLG was pleased that the grant process kick-started conversations about emissions reductions in numerous congregations. “Many of the applicants

picture of how your church responds faithfully in a time of crisis.”

Plett said the SLG was pleased to see how many of the applicants share their buildings with multiple groups. “The people who care for these places really want them to be used. It makes me feel proud to be part of a community that shares their space and looks after it.”

Doug Klassen, executive minister for MC Canada, said that generous donors and voluntary carbon levies increased the original \$20,000 available for 2023. Attendees at MC Canada’s Gathering 2022 were encouraged to contribute a carbon levy using a calculation guide for air and car travel to and from various



Sherbrooke Mennonite Church in Vancouver received a grant to upgrade to more energy efficient lighting. Photo by Walter Toews. Used with permission.

said this really was the boost they needed to get the conversation going, or move it to its next step,” said Plett.

The initial plan was to cap grants at \$6,000 or 50 percent of the cost per applicant, but the number of applicants was higher than anticipated. It made sense to lower the cap to help more congregations.

For churches considering an application next year, the SLG encourages congregations to start the conversation soon. Plett encourages facilities committees to contact any of the churches who received a grant this year. “If that church is in your area, go and see what they did, and ask them why they did it.”

Plett says churches need to “start normalizing” conversations about buildings and emissions. “It’s not just about your building, it’s about the broader

locations.

Klassen said, “It was a blessing to receive an additional \$3,000 for the fund. I believe it shows a growing commitment to creation care among our church communities. I hope more people will consider making a gift or contributing a carbon levy on their travel.”

The grants will be drawn from MC Canada’s Creation Care Fund, which was approved by Joint Council in 2022. Source money comes from a carbon levy related to MC Canada’s operations, including travel by staff, executive ministers and Joint Council; donations by individuals, congregations and regional churches; and interest earned by the fund.

The deadline for the next round of applications is the end of September 2024. Successful applicants will be notified in November 2024. ☸



Photo: Amos Thang Chin/Facebook.

Myanmar families return home

Mennonite Church Canada

Mennonite congregations in Myanmar started the New Year with foot washing services. They ask for prayers for 65 Mennonite families returning to their homes near the Indian border after spending months in neighbouring areas

and further into the mountains. Some peace has been restored to the area but economic hardships are plaguing the region as fighting has meant crops could not be planted or harvested. ☸



Change is happening. . .

**CANADIAN
MENNONITE**

canadianmennonite.org/change

Resource centre finds temporary home in Winnipeg church

Story and photo by Aaron Epp
Associate Editor

It's brighter than ever in the basement at First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Sunshine House, a community drop-in and resource centre, is operating there temporarily while its headquarters undergoes renovations.

The organization, which offers programming focused on harm reduction and social inclusion, moved into the church at the beginning of November.

The Sunshine House community chose the location from a list of options due to its relative proximity to the organization's permanent location and the fact that it can offer almost all its regular programs and services at the church, says Levi Foy, executive director.

The church is not charging rent.

"We've historically been located off the beaten path, so that allows us to do the work in the way that we like to do the work. This space accommodated that," Foy says. "And this kitchen, I'm telling you, is really incredible."

Started in 1999, Sunshine House offers community members a variety of services. They can drop in for food and coffee, harm reduction supplies, and recreation and fun. They can also use computers, shower and do their laundry.

Participants are not required to be sober.

Additionally, Sunshine House offers a program designed to aid and advocate for LGBTQ+ people who are making refugee claims, and it operates a mobile overdose prevention site out of an RV.

Foy acknowledges there was some hesitation in Sunshine House's community about the prospect of moving into First Mennonite.

"A lot of us, as queer peoples and Indigenous peoples, we have a complicated history with churches," Foy says. "I



Levi Foy (left), executive director of Sunshine House, stands with Crow Hart, drop-in program assistant, in the basement of First Mennonite Church.

think once people came into this space and realized [we could make it our] own space, a lot of [that hesitation] subsided."

Sunshine House's arrangement with First Mennonite arose in part out of lead pastor David Driedger's efforts to build relationships with social services in Winnipeg.

He noticed many people expressing their respect and appreciation for Sunshine House, so he contacted Foy. He told Foy that if Sunshine House ever needed space for programming or events, they could count on First Mennonite.

Driedger lives close to the church and has, on a few occasions, run into people who are in difficult situations or experiencing distress.

"It's been really neat to know I can direct some people I encounter to Sunshine House," he says.

Driedger adds that inviting Sunshine House to operate at First Mennonite is an acknowledgment that there are

non-church groups out there doing the work of the gospel.

"The church, at minimum, should be able to provide a space or material support for that," he says.

Sunshine House offers foot care services, and Driedger recalls being moved one day when he saw this service in action.

"There was someone on their knees, attending to the feet of someone who had come in off the street," he says.

He is mindful of projecting the language of the church onto what Sunshine House does, but says, "It felt very much like an image of foot washing."

Foy expects that Sunshine House will be based in First Mennonite until at least February.

"I don't think any of us expected to be here this long," Foy says, "but it's been really, really good." ❧

CM ARTS BRIEFS



Maria and the Mennos stars Victoria Exconde, Chuck Fefchak, Kenton Dyck and Erna Peters. Supplied photo.

'Maria and the Mennos' now streaming

A half-hour show following a young Filipino-Canadian woman who marries into a Mennonite family and moves in with her in-laws in Winkler, Manitoba, is now streaming.

Maria and the Mennos is available to watch online when you create a free account at yestv.com/streaming.

The 13-episode series was filmed in and around Winnipeg and Winkler last year.

"The show being a sitcom is such a fun way to share both the Mennonite and Filipino cultures," Victoria Exconde, who plays Maria, said in a release. "There are so many references

and jokes that different audiences can relate to."

Created by Paul Plett, Tina Fehr Kehler and Hazel Wallace, the show was written by a team made up of half Filipinos and half Mennonites.

The writers create an authentic show that breaks stereotypes, Wallace told *Canadian Mennonite* last year.

"I think this story is so important to put out because it puts on screens voices we don't usually see [in] that light," she said.

Faspa opens its doors in Winnipeg

A new takeout and catering company in Winnipeg offers "a contemporary take on traditional Mennonite slow food."

Faspa opened its doors last month. Founded by Josh Penner, a Red Seal chef with more than 20 years' experience, the Faspa menu includes Russian-Mennonite favourites like perogies, schmaunt fat (white sauce), kielke (noodles), platz (fruit-filled coffee cake), borscht and farmer sausage.

"Part of being a chef is at some point in your career, you want to connect with something where food means more than just working in a restaurant," Penner says. "I've always been proud of being Mennonite and where I came from."

Penner has fond memories of eating Faspa—a late-afternoon meal—on Sundays at his grandparents' house in Steinbach, which made "Faspa" a natural choice for his company.

"To me, it's about the fellowship; it's about the camaraderie, the gossip, the cracking jokes," he says. Visit faspawpg.ca.

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- **Funding Congregational Ministry after COVID-19** | 4-session online workshop | March 8–29 | Instructor: Phil Waite
- **Leading Congregations in Transition**
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Landing out of hot water

By Ruth Isaac Wiederkehr

One winter day in 2022, our family was discussing the problem of our society's dependence on fossil fuels. One of our young-adult sons, who perhaps felt we were slipping into finger-pointing, brought the focus back around to our own household by asking: "What about our hot water heater?"

It was a loaded question. Though we'd taken steps to greatly reduce our use of fossil fuels, we relied on oil to heat our water.

With our hot water system up for reconsideration, I instantly tensed up. "What about it?" I asked.

I was alarmed, angry and anxious. Sometimes we need hot water. I suggested getting an on-demand electric water heater (which heats water as it comes out of the faucet), but I was not fully comfortable with that suggestion because our electrical systems are also environmentally problematic.

The question was really whether to have a water heater at all, and I disliked the challenge to my comfort and convenience.

We kept talking, trying to break the problem into manageable pieces.

We listed purposes for which we'd been using hot water: dishes, hand-washing, showers and laundering work clothes. I felt it important to have hot water readily available for those uses. I was adamantly unready to give it up.

Then we considered alternate ways to heat water. Someone suggested we keep

a pot of water on the woodstove we use to heat our home during colder months. We were unsure as to what we might do during the warmer months, but decided we would work at that. In a pinch we could still use an electric kettle for a litre

water satisfactory. I figured that system would give us an opportunity to test using less heated water, perhaps freeing me from the sense of needing hot water on tap.

Some weeks later, I chose to switch from warm, pour-over showers to cold showers, going into the shower when I was warm. I still use warmed water to wash my hair in the winter. Cold showers have brought an unanticipated gift—not only are they tolerable, they've significantly reduced circulation issues in my feet.

I adapted my dish-washing techniques to use far less hot water than before, while still getting the job done well. We've become accustomed to cold-water washing for everything else. We've found hot running water isn't actually necessary for our needs to be met.

When spring came, we built a small outdoor wood-fueled rocket stove. To further reduce wood use, we built some experimental solar cookers. One turned out to be a splendid way to heat water, both for dishes

and cooking. We also warmed dishwater in our rickety sunroom, simply setting a potful of water on a table in the sun.

Despite missing the convenience of hot water on tap, we've felt no compelling need to turn on the hot water tank through the past 20 months, and for that I am grateful.

I have discovered I can do things which I'd thought I couldn't. We have found ways to have hot water when we need it, and we have come to see that we need it



Water heating on the Wiederkehr woodstove.

Photo by Andre Wiederkehr.

or two of hot water.

I still felt too agitated to constructively move further along that avenue with the rest of our household, so we agreed to take a break for a few weeks and return to the conversation after prayer and reflection.

Refreshing gift

When we did, it was I who suggested we try turning off the hot water heater to see whether we found the woodstove-heated

for fewer things than we'd thought. The alternatives we now use have shown us that it takes a lot of energy to heat water, highlighting the absurdity of having kept 30 gallons of water heated at all times just for our convenience.

The experience proved a turning point for me.

Opening to change

I've found change to be both really hard to make or take, and also a great relief and gift. During the past several years, I've periodically prayed for a renewed mind, that I might be able to better discern what is truly good, what are actual needs (rather than wants), and in which direction God may be nudging.

Repeatedly, I've been grateful for the simple and profound song "Lead me, Lord," (*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, #538), for it recalls me to the sanity of grounding myself in God when fears threaten to discourage or stall me.

It seems to me that when we're unwilling to give up what is familiar, comfortable and convenient, our ability to think creatively about how else we might meet our actual needs and live the abundant life faithfully is hampered.

Our society's scramble to develop "green solutions" is still rooted in seeking to avoid disruption to the way we're accustomed to living. It's troubling that, so far, all the mainstream solutions still depend on exchanging use of one set of non-renewable resources for another, maintaining dire environmental, social and economic consequences for some, particularly those who live in the regions being mined.

Unless we set ourselves quite different goals to reach, we're almost guaranteed to resort to means similar to those which have brought us to the troubling global problems of our time.

Changing our lifestyle goals and

expectations could free us up to find better life-ways. Often, I resist change because I'm part of the small percentage of people on earth who's already well housed, fed and clothed. I don't seek to change for the sake of change, then, but in order to find ways of living which are more faithful.

I'm just a clay jar!

Some people who know of changes our family has made say to us, "Good for you! If it makes you happy to do it, that's great!"



Ruth Isaac Wiederkehr. Photo by Andre Wiederkehr.

I find this discouraging. I'm not making changes in a pursuit of happiness but out of love. Loving possible descendants—whether my own or others'—means I need to live now in ways which will tend the earth in the direction of wholeness for the long haul. I try to consider what changes descendants might wish my contemporaries and I had made.

Sometimes, the changes our family is choosing are difficult and costly, but that doesn't mean we ought not to choose them.

Sometimes, when people hear about our family's endeavours, they ask me what I'll do when I grow old. Currently our family rides bicycle to most of the places we go, though we occasionally still use our car. It's hard work; I resisted it for some time before I tried, and found (just like with hot water) that I could do more than I'd thought. Still, I sometimes worry about whether I will be able to ride when I'm old. Will I be hardy enough to work with our current water system?

I'm well aware of my frailty; my body has never been particularly strong, and I've been aware of my reliance on a mixture of grit and grace since my 20s. How long can I continue doing what I'm doing now?

When I choose to forgo conveniences based on unsustainable systems, I must accept adjusted limits to what I can accomplish and how far I can go. Those things are hard. Some days, I grieve for what I used to assume was my right to enjoy, even though it had costs for others

or other places which I didn't want to admit.

I still live with tremendous comfort and convenience. I could list dozens, even hundreds of ways: good cooking pots, glass jars for food storage, cold water on tap, electricity. Yet, I hear Jesus' urgent call to love my neighbour as myself, and that calls me to consider deeply both those who are living in more difficult environments now, and those

who will live after I have passed on. I feel called to grow in directions which more truly fit within earth's generous limits.

My heart hungers for and is nourished by others in the church who truly seek to rethink their lives and make changes toward a more wholly sustainable, faithful way of living, even though it may be costly. Anything worth anything costs someone; let's choose wisely how we spend our selves. ❧

Ruth Isaac Wiederkehr and her family live on a subsistence-oriented farm near Mildmay, Ontario. Their "Humans and Humus" writings appear every second month.

One thing is necessary

MC Alberta pastor talks about persecution in Ethiopia and prioritizing God in Canada

By Mezgebu A. Tucho

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it will be opened to you.

Matthew 7:7

For after all these things the Gentiles seek, for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:32–33

In Luke 10:41–42, Jesus gives a most poignant answer when he says, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” Jesus guaranteed his followers that they would face hard times (John 16:33), but he promised that he would always be with them (Matthew 28:20).

During the communist regime in Ethiopia, I experienced a level of persecution for my faith while planting churches in the western part of the country. I had been jailed six times, had been beaten unconscious and was even kidnapped. After planting more than 50 churches with my colleagues, I came to Canada in April 2009.

I was born in a Christian family. During my youth, the pastor spoke about the Holy Spirit, and I was touched with the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ came alive to me then, and my heart was changed.

As soon as I finished high school, I was put in prison for six months because of persecution during Ethiopia’s communist regime. They found us at an underground prayer meeting at night, even though we had been trying to pray as quietly as possible.

When the persecution came, we had great love and great unity as a church. Church members sent us messages and

came to the prison and encouraged us. Some begged the guards to be thrown in prison as well, just so they could stay with us. When our fellow prisoners saw the way other believers treated us, most of them came to faith in Jesus Christ, and we started a prison fellowship.

Another time I was put in prison with 41 people. The day I arrived and began speaking with them, all the people came to faith. In the prison, I taught them the basics of following Jesus Christ from memory: baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the trinity, etc. The day we were released from prison, we went to the river and I baptized all 41 of them. Today, many of them are preachers and pastors in Ethiopia. If they didn’t put me in prison, who would have told them the gospel or disciplined them? I find that, every time persecution comes, God has a purpose in it.

I never experienced fear in the moment that persecution arose. Because my mind was full of God’s words: “Desire only one thing, only one thing is necessary.” At that time, the Holy Spirit was dwelling in me and I knew just what to say and what to do. Sometimes when I am sitting here in Canada, I wonder, “How did I pass through that?”

The persecution helped me focus on a single objective. Once we understand the purpose to which God called us, then, no matter what comes, we will be alive in that purpose.

Even today, I have only one thing in my mind: praying and meditating on God’s word. If we do this, change will come in our lives and churches as well. Here in North America, we don’t depend as much on God because we think we have everything. I’ve noticed that many of us pray for a grocery list of wants: a new job, or other earthly things. But, like David wrote in Psalm 27, we need to seek the glory of God. So my great message for our



Pastor Mezgebu Tucho leads an Oromo-speaking church in Edmonton.

Supplied photo.

churches is to change our prayer from a grocery list to the glory of God. At that time we’ll understand that God is full of beauty and everything else is vanity.

“One thing is necessary.”

I have to ask myself: Do

I actually

believe that? Is it reflected in the way I view my time? I’m not used to thinking about what’s necessary. When I look at my time management, there are things I must do (paying bills, feeding kids, etc.); things I should do (exercise, clean rooms, kitchen, etc.); and things I want to do, such as going out to dinner or shopping. God is too easily forgotten in all of our busy lives. We can sometimes be too busy, too tired, too entertained, or too overwhelmed to care.

What else did Jesus say about Mary? Not only was she doing the one necessary thing, but she had chosen the good portion. The good portion was necessary, but it also was a choice. God is with us and gives us the words in time of crisis, just as Jesus promised. May we all strive to see the glory of God displayed here in North America. ☞

Mezgebu A. Tucho is pastor of Bethel International Church in Edmonton.

This article is preprinted, with permission, from the Mennonite Church Alberta Communiqué.



AMBS window

Winter 2024 | Volume 34, Issue 1

Forming leaders together!

From the President: David Boshart, PhD

Our **Forming Leaders Together** campaign at AMBS is taking us to places we have never been before — both in the world and in unprecedented collaborations.

While many national, regional and local leaders today predict that the future of the Mennonite Church in the U.S. and Canada will be characterized

“We need a renewed vision for what a church with an Anabaptist vision can be — a vision we can share together.”

by decline and disintegration, I'm not willing to concede our future to this framing. Based on what we are experiencing in this campaign, AMBS is proving that our Anabaptist witness can thrive even in secular, polarized societies.

We need a renewed vision for what a church with an Anabaptist vision can be — a vision we can share together.

Building programs to grow practical skills

The Forming Leaders Together campaign began with listening to church leaders across Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. We asked, “What is the most meaningful thing AMBS can do to support current and future leaders for the

church?” That project set us on a course to provide practical training for leaders to strengthen their capacity for faithful and vital leadership in the churches they serve.

Examples of new programs include our **Practical Leadership Training modules**, **Doctor of Ministry in Leadership, Ministry Integrity Circles** and **Transition to Leadership** programs. We've developed all of these learning experiences in close collaboration with local, regional and national leaders. We are forming leaders together.

Strengthening Anabaptist identity and leadership worldwide

Through the campaign, we've also sought to respond to the growing number of invitations AMBS has been receiving from national church leaders — through our collaboration with Mennonite World *(continued on p. 4)*



(Above, l. to r.): César García, General Secretary of Mennonite World Conference, and Doug Klassen, Executive Minister of Mennonite Church Canada, share at the Oct. 19 Forming Leaders Together Campaign Launch Celebration about how the campaign is already making an impact in their contexts. (Credit: Brittany Purlee)

(Top): David Boshart (center) and Vikal Pravin Rao, Executive Secretary of the Mennonite Church in India (at right), look on while Sangita Tigga (at left) of Bihar Mennonite Mandli Conference reports during a leadership course in Kolkata, India, in October. (Credit: Andi Santoso/MMN)

Doing together what we can't do alone

AMBS's **Forming Leaders Together** campaign is nurturing and developing Anabaptist leaders both locally and globally. We celebrate and give thanks that we've reached 87% of our \$12 million USD campaign goal, with contributions and commitments totaling \$10.4 million USD!

Through our campaign, we're increasing our collaboration with Anabaptist organizations (see bottom of p. 3) to serve the church in Canada, the U.S. and across the globe. Donations will also support these partners, funding the emerging and existing programs listed below for 10 years.

To participate, see: ambs.ca/formingleaders



Legend

- Master of Arts degree program
- Journey Missional Leadership Development Program
- Mennonite Education Agency Hispanic Ministries – AMBS Graduate Certificate in Theology
- Workshops and lectures
- All of the above, plus: Doctor of Ministry in Leadership, Practical Leadership Training modules, Invite AMBS, Ministry Integrity Circles and Transition to Leadership

“ I took the Practical Leadership Training module **Leading Congregations in Transition** while transitioning into a new pastoral role. I found the case studies that Paula Killough and Gary Martin shared to be immensely helpful, along with the posture they modeled of transitional pastors as collaborators with church leadership teams and boards. Also, the three one-on-one coaching sessions are allowing me to go deeper and receive professional support in my ministry context.



— **Katerina Gea** (MDiv 2016), Pastor, Pasadena (California) Mennonite Church

“ My years at AMBS benefited me a lot. The lectures, assignments and class discussions deepened my understanding of Anabaptist theology. My studies at AMBS have prepared me for a better spiritual life and ministry. Glory be to God!



— **Getachew Tegegne** (MA 2023), Gondar, Amhara Region, Ethiopia

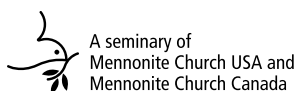
AMBS Window Winter 2024

Volume 34, Issue 1

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Biblical Seminary**
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A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

Emerging and existing programs supported by the campaign

Graduate-level programs

- New competency-based Doctor of Ministry in Leadership
- New Master of Arts program in South Korea
- Master of Arts program in Ethiopia
- New Spanish-language Mennonite Education Agency Hispanic Ministries – AMBS Graduate Certificate in Theology (primarily U.S.-based)

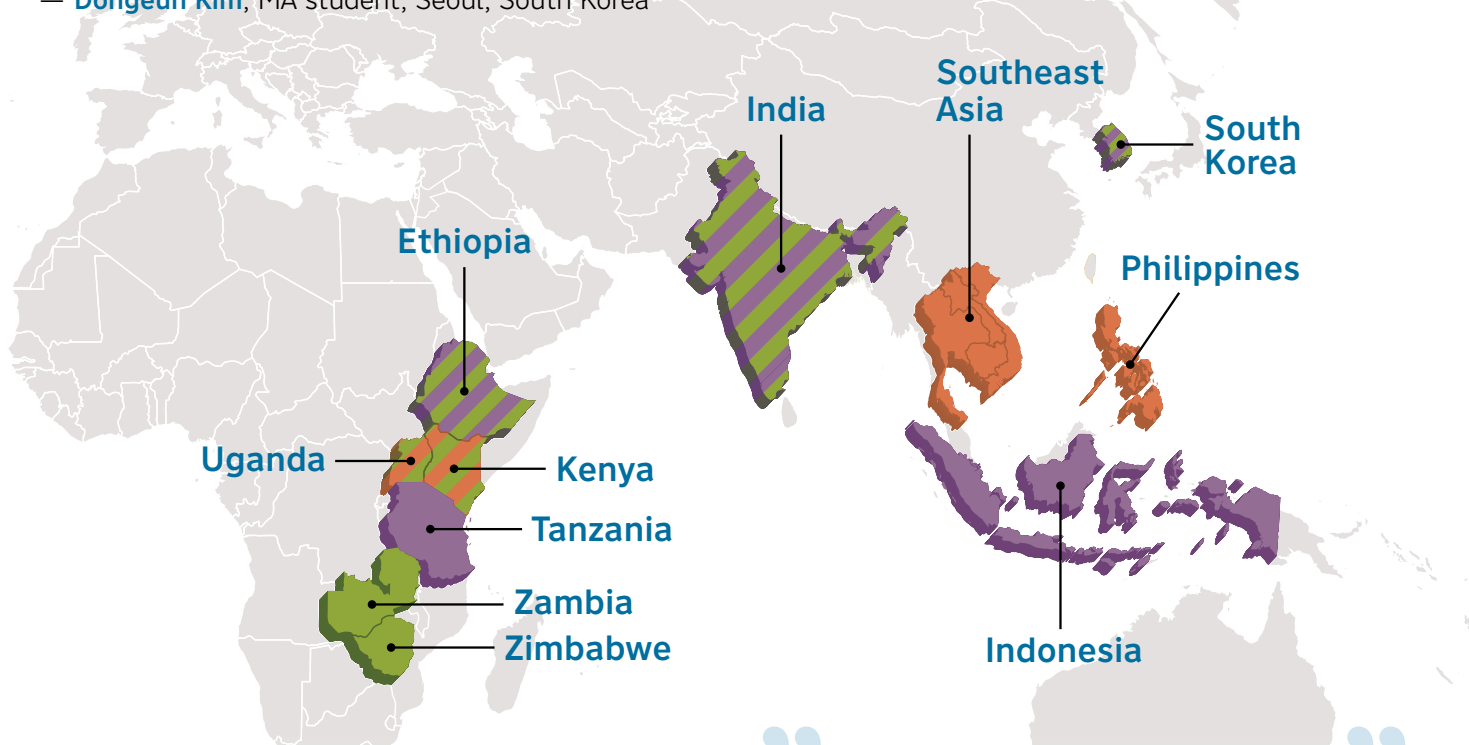
Lifelong learning programs

- New Practical Leadership Training modules
- Journey Missional Leadership Development Program (undergraduate-level, available internationally)
- Ministry Integrity Circles and Transition to Leadership programs accompanying new and established pastors
- Invite AMBS speakers' bureau



I was first introduced to Anabaptism and peace theology through an AMBS course [in South Korea]. I feel that this tradition and theology are a blessing from God, who wants to restore the Korean church and Christian life. Together, my colleagues and I are reflecting on the turmoil within us, the brokenness we didn't recognize, and we are being restored, and we are growing. We are grateful to be able to experience that the discipline of theology can set us free, transform us, and sometimes make us cry and laugh.

— **Dongeun Kim**, MA student, Seoul, South Korea



I'm so excited about our collaboration with AMBS. For decades in Asia, I've heard requests for Anabaptist education from groups of small churches that couldn't sustain their own seminary. They were looking to collaborate with an established institution that would be flexible enough to meet their needs. AMBS offers both academic excellence and the flexibility of an institution focused on service to the global church, and I look forward to seeing how God will lead us together.

— **Jeanette Hanson**, Director, Mennonite Church Canada International Witness



It's been a joy to be part of AMBS's first DMin cohort. Being able to shape my studies to foster personal growth means that I'm excited to engage each new text and activity. There have been a number of activities I've thought about doing for a while that I've written into my Competency Development Plan and enjoyed finally stretching to do. And the regular conversations with AMBS's extraordinary faculty are a highlight of the program.

— **James Rissler**, PhD, Atlanta, Georgia

Global and national church collaborators

- Mennonite World Conference
- Mennonite Church Canada
- Mennonite Church Canada International Witness
- Mennonite Mission Network, the mission agency of Mennonite Church USA
- Hispanic Ministries of Mennonite Education Agency, the education agency of Mennonite Church USA
- Meserete Kristos Church and Seminary in Ethiopia
- Mennonite Church South Korea and the Nehemiah Institute for Christian Studies in Seoul, South Korea
- Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India (MCSFI)
- Indonesia: Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa (GITJ), Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI), Jemaat Kristen Indonesia (JKI)



(Standing on right): David Boshart, AMBS President, and Vikal Pravin Rao, Executive Secretary of the Mennonite Church in India, teach a class on Theological Practices for Spiritual Vitality of Leadership in Kolkata, India, in October 2023. (Credit: Andi Santoso/MMN)

(continued from p. 1)
 Conference — to offer Anabaptist leadership education around the world. We’ve followed the Spirit’s leading into new collaborations such as shared staffing with Mennonite Mission Network for our global partnerships; working with MC Canada International Witness to deliver our Journey Missional Leadership Development Program in the Philippines and Southeast Asia; working with national leaders in Indonesia to provide educational programs for the three Mennonite synods there; and collaborating with Mennonite Education Agency Hispanic Ministries to accelerate access to graduate-level theological education for Spanish-speaking leaders (see map on pp. 2–3). When we form leaders *together*, our collective work becomes a rising tide that raises all boats.

In this process, we’re learning to form Anabaptist leaders together where it counts most: in contextually relevant ways. In October, **Andi Santoso**

(MA 2022), Regional Director for Asia and the Middle East for Mennonite Mission Network; **Joe Sawatzky**, PhD (M.Div. 2005), Global Leadership Collaborative Project Specialist, also of MMN; and I responded to an invitation to provide a short course on leadership for five Anabaptist conferences in India. Each conference sent two women, two men and at least one youth to be trained to teach this material in their area. For the three-day course, we tested the materials with the leaders and then revised them for contextual relevance, providing spaces in the curriculum for trainers to include case material from their local context. This material now belongs to these churches to use and adapt in ways that are most helpful in their settings. We look forward to reconnecting with these leaders a year from now to see how this program has impacted leadership development.

Donors propel program development

Through the support of generous donors, we are forming leaders together through a campaign that funds our global and practical leadership education programs for the next 10 years. Because of early contributions we received, we have been able to implement these programs at full speed.

The results are clear: we have experienced **70 percent growth in our enrollment** over the past four years; we are living into our **fourth consecutive balanced budget**; and we have the means to **continue growing our mission**.

Forming leaders *together* is proving that the future of our church need not be marked by ongoing decline and disintegration. When we form leaders together, we have a future with hope! ●

When we form leaders together, our collective work becomes a rising tide that raises all boats.

Global Leadership Collaborative leaders meet

The Oct. 19 Forming Leaders Together Campaign Launch Celebration at AMBS brought together leaders from organizations that make up the Global Leadership Collaborative.

(Front, l. to r.): Jack and Irene Suderman (Mennonite World Conference/MWC); Andi Santoso (Mennonite Mission Network/MMN); César García (MWC); Doug Klassen (Mennonite Church Canada); and Bruce Campbell-Janz (MWC).

(Back, l. to r.): Andrew Suderman, Joe Sawatzky and Sibonokuhle Ncube (MMN); James Krabill, David Boshart, Paula Killough and James Gunden (AMBS). (Credit: Brittany Purlee)



Cross-cultural interactions spark mutual learning

Faculty members often talk about the mutual learning that happens in AMBS's cross-cultural community, so we invited them to share specific examples of how having a culturally diverse student body is both informing their teaching and shaping them as teachers.

Malinda Elizabeth Berry, PhD, Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics



This semester, teaching and learning in **Christian Ethics and Peace Theology** has been a global conversation (in person) with students from Chad, Congo by way of South Africa, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Tanzania, Thailand and the U.S. This has allowed us to talk about things like the cultural meaning of last names and all the different biomes we come from.

Recently, students got into small groups to assess their learning this semester. Each one shared what they had learned about different forms of normative ethics (duty, goal and virtue) and reflected on what it means to them to "widen the circle" of moral concern to include all life on planet Earth as relevant to God's vision of biblical shalom, not just the moral agency of humans.

Afterwards, when the students reported on their group process, it was incredibly gratifying to hear them talk about what they are learning from each other that helps the reading come alive and create a sense of intellectual and interpersonal connection to the course's content.

David C. Cramer, PhD, Core Adjunct Faculty

My experience of teaching **Christian Attitudes Toward War, Peace and Revolution** via Zoom for a cohort of Ethiopian students in 2021 transformed the way I think about the material. In previous semesters, I had tended to approach the material theoretically from a place of relative comfort, but the Ethiopian students consistently brought it back to the practical: should they have armed guards at the entrance to their churches, for example, to protect their congregations in the midst of the violent conflict their country was facing?

These are not the kinds of dilemmas I'd thought much about prior to teaching pastors who work in a context of armed conflict. The students came into the course

apprehensive about their status as Mennonites if they didn't conform to a certain pattern of faith and practice. But what I came to appreciate over the duration of the course is that being Mennonite isn't about adherence to a settled position as much as it is about the communal practice of Spirit-led discernment over sacred texts about how to live faithfully in our contemporary contexts. This understanding of nonviolence as communal discernment became the thesis of my book *A Field Guide to Christian Nonviolence* — thanks in large part to what I learned from my students from the Global South.



Allan Rudy-Froese, PhD, Associate Professor of Christian Proclamation



In both my **Preaching** and **Biblical Storytelling** courses, I've invited students to perform their final sermon or story in the language of their choice. For some of them, English is their second — or even fifth — language.

In most cases, we express ourselves best in our first or "heart" language; our voices and bodies come alive in a powerful and nuanced way.

Students who choose to preach in a language other than English provide an English version in print so that all can follow along. Hearing our peers preach in Amharic, Oromo or Korean — even if we do not understand the language — grants insight into people's natural and unencumbered voices. The gospel is shared in myriads of languages. Thanks be to God.

Faculty photos by Brittany Purlee

Thank you to our board members!

We're grateful to AMBS's board members for contributing their time, experience and expertise! See: ambs.ca/board

- **Ending:** **Hyun Hur**, MA, Pasadena, California (2020–22); ReconciliAsian, Los Angeles; Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference
- **Beginning:** **Luis Rodriguez**, DMin, Humble, Texas (2023–27); Iglesia Menonita Casa del Alfarero, Pasadena, Texas; Western District Conference



Meet our Journey graduates!

Four participants in the **Journey Missional Leadership Development Program** completed the distance-friendly undergraduate-level certificate program in 2023. The program — which develops leaders centered in Jesus Christ for ministries in local churches and communities — is designed for pastors, those exploring a call to ministry, church planters and lay leaders. It consists of online study, biweekly meetings with a mentor, and face-to-face gatherings twice a year. The program has 40 participants in the U.S., Canada, Uganda, the Philippines and Southeast Asia. See: amsb.ca/journey



Bill DeVries of DeMotte, Indiana, serves as a lay leader at Hope Community, an independent congregation in Rensselaer, Indiana. His mentor was **Kent Towler** of Burr Oak Community Church in Rensselaer (Evana Network). Bill retired in 2021 after farming for 47 years. Almost 10 years ago, his pastor at the time, **Philip Leichty**, invited him to preach.

“I had no training or experience in this area, but I enjoy studying the Bible and encouraging others, so I agreed to,” Bill said. Soon he was preaching several times a year. “I decided if I was going to be doing this regularly, I wanted to be better trained. The Journey program helped prepare me for this. I also made friendships that I will cherish for years to come.”



Greg Eads of Bourbon/Goshen/South Bend, Indiana, volunteers full time as a hospital chaplain for Goshen Health and serves other ministries such as the Elkhart County Jail Ministry and The Way Goshen. He’s an

active member of Christian Center Church, a nondenominational/Spirit-filled charismatic church in South Bend. His mentor was **Jim Martin** of the Church of Jesus Christ of Argos, Indiana. **Dennis Miller**, a fellow volunteer chaplain and 2018 Journey graduate, suggested the program to him.

“The work in the Journey program and the others going through it alongside me gave me an outlet for unburdening as well as the filling of the heart with knowledge in the Lord,” he reflected. “Thank you, Journey, for the education and cultivation of the Christian faith.”



Ursula M. Hess of Goshen, Indiana, serves as a lay/volunteer chaplain and volunteer grief group facilitator. She’s also a lay leader at Waterford Mennonite Church in Goshen (Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, Mennonite Church USA). She works in hospice care as a registered nurse. Her mentor was **Mary Hochstedler**, also of Waterford.

“The Journey program has enriched my life and increased my faith in God,” she said. “I have gained a new rich understanding of the Bible and how to interpret it. I learned to see God as who God is according to my new understanding of Bible texts. I experienced a spiritual transformation and growth in my walk with God. My heart was deeply touched by our studies on pastoral care. They prepared the way for me for my current involvements.”



Bikash Shankhar of Nepal, who lives in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, joined Journey while attending Living Water Community Church in Chicago (Illinois Mennonite Conference, Mennonite Church USA). His mentor was **Olak**

Sunuwar, a pastor at Living Water. Bikash is now Secretary of True Worship Nepal Church in Cuyahoga Falls, a nondenominational church. He works as an Amazon Warehouse Associate.

“Joining Journey is one of the good decisions I made,” he said. “It was a great learning experience. I always wanted to do some kind of theological studies, and it opened my eyes to understand the Bible more deeply. Praise God — the program really encouraged my interest in continuing to study theology in the future.” ● — *Annette Brill Bergstresser*

(Below): Participants at a Journey Weekend Learning Event in September 2023 at Amigo Centre, Sturgis, Michigan (l. to r.): Rebeca Benavides, Mariela Sanchez, Dick Barrett (retired Conference Minister, Ohio Conference), Dwight Moody (mentor) and Francisco Gonzalez. (Credit: Peter Ringenberg)



2023 Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition

Martha Smith Good, Peter Wood Stucky and J. Denny Weaver

Martha Smith Good, DMin, of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada; **Peter Wood Stucky**, MDiv, of Bogotá, Colombia; and **J. Denny Weaver**, PhD, of Madison, Wisconsin; are the 2023 recipients of AMBS's Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition. All three earned a Master of Divinity: Martha in 1977, Peter in 1971 and Denny in 1970.

"Martha, Peter and Denny have dedicated themselves to their ministry for many decades," said Alumni Director **Janeen Bertsche Johnson** (MDiv 1989). "They have been trailblazers, influencers and mentors of so many others. We are delighted to recognize them for their accomplishments and their deep commitment to God's reconciling mission in the world."

In Martha's 30-plus years of pastoral ministry, she served in campus ministry (Goshen College); chaplaincy; and congregations in Ohio, Indiana, Colorado, Illinois and Ontario. In 1982, she became the first woman to be ordained as a pastor in Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec (now Mennonite Church Eastern Canada). She documented her journey into ministry in her self-published autobiography, *Breaking Ground: One Woman's Journey into Pastoral Ministry* (2012).

For 28 years, Peter has pastored Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogotá, Colombia. He also served as Executive Secretary and President of the Mennonite Church of Colombia and has been involved with ministries such as the Seminario Bíblico Menonita de Colombia and Justapaz, among others. He was on the Executive Committee



of Mennonite World Conference and helped organize the Decade to Overcome Violence of the World Council of Churches.

Denny taught theology, religion and ethics for 31 years at Bluffton (Ohio) University. His scholarship has focused on peace theology, Christology, the atonement and Anabaptist theology. He has called attention to the way that traditional Christology and atonement formulas have accommodated violence and racism. Using the New Testament's narrative of Jesus as the beginning point, he articulated an intrinsically nonviolent alternative, which incorporates the views of Black, feminist and womanist theologians.

Read the full article, view the reception recording and nominate a graduate for the 2024 award: ambs.ca/alumni — Virginia A. Hostetler

(l. to r.): Martha Smith Good, Peter Wood Stucky and J. Denny Weaver (Photos provided)

Employee transitions

The AMBS learning community experienced several transitions in 2023 (pictured l. to r.):

- **Steve Norton** became full-time Assistant Director of the Journey Missional Leadership Development Program and Church Leadership Center Program Coordinator in February, ending his part-time role as Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll.
- **Carla Robinson**, MA, of Goshen, Indiana, began Feb. 6 as half-time Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll.
- **Jamie Pitts**, PhD, was promoted to Professor of Anabaptist Studies July 1.



- **Morgan N. Koehler** of Freeman, South Dakota, began July 24 as half-time Digital Marketing Manager, working remotely from Freeman.
- **Andy Brubacher Kaethler**, PhD, concluded 20 years of service to AMBS on Aug. 31. He served as Associate Professor of Christian Formation and Culture; Associate Director, Institute of Mennonite Studies; Co-editor, *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology*; Associate Director, Faith Formation Collaborative; MDiv and MA in Christian Formation Program Director; and Director of Campus Care.

Read more: ambs.ca/news

Practical Leadership Training modules

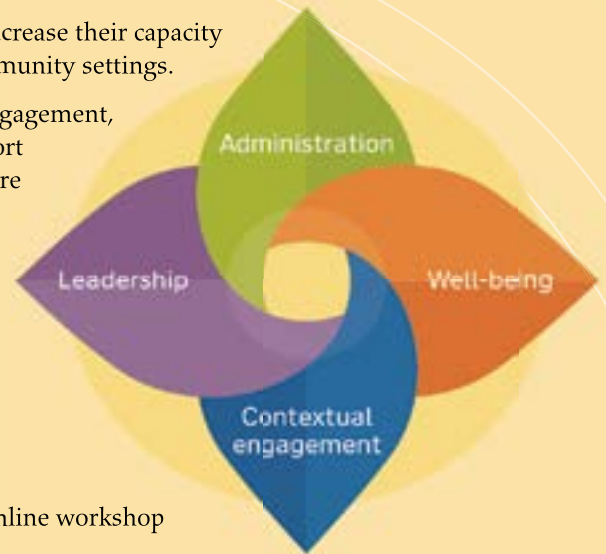
PROMOTIONAL SUPPLEMENT

Practical Leadership Training modules are designed to help leaders increase their capacity to provide effective Christian leadership in congregational and community settings.

The modules focus on areas of administration, leadership, contextual engagement, and well-being. Formats include webinars, online workshops, online short courses, and in-person clinics. Participants can select the modules that are best suited to their needs and interests.

Upcoming modules

- **Pastoral and Congregational Financial Wellness** (in collaboration with Everence®) | Four-session online workshop | Jan. 23 – Feb. 13
- **Riding the Wave of Conflict and Change** | Webinar | Jan. 31
- **Seeing through Technology** | Webinar | Feb. 8
- **Anxiety and Depression in Church Ministry** | Online short course
March 5 – April 16
- **Funding Congregational Ministry after COVID-19** | Four-session online workshop
March 8–29
- **Leading Congregations in Transition** | Online short course | April 10 – May 15
- **Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication** | Online short course | April 10 – May 21
- **Practicing Resilience in Response to Trauma** | Webinar | May 22
- **Beyond Boring Bible Studies** | Online short course | May 22 – July 2



Learn more and register: ambs.ca/plt

UPCOMING OFFERINGS

Pastors & Leaders 2024

Feb. 19–22: Strategies for Peacemaking
Featured speaker: Betty Pries, PhD, CMed. Preachers: Nekeisha Alayna Alexis, MA; Isaac Villegas, MDiv. Sign up by Jan. 19 (early) or Feb. 12 (final).
ambs.ca/pastors-and-leaders

Leadership Clinics: Feb. 19

- Anxiety and Depression in Church Ministry
- Cultivating Vital and Faithful Congregations
- Healthy Boundaries 101
- Leadership for Antiracist Spiritual Formation

ambs.ca/clinics

Online Short Courses

Jan. 31 – March 12

- Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture

April 10 – May 21

- Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication
- Biblical Interpretation Across the Two Testaments

ambs.ca/online-short-courses

Invite AMBS

Faculty members are available to speak on trauma-informed caregiving, non-violent communication, intercultural competence, confessional Bible study, and more. Ask about virtual visits!
ambs.ca/invite

Transition to Leadership

This program guides new pastors during the crucial first years of ministry. Apply by March 4 to begin April 4.
ambs.ca/transition-to-leadership

Ministry Integrity Circles

Pastors, need help with ministry transitions or significant challenges? This program provides the support of consultants within a community of peers. Apply by March 22 to start April 22.
ambs.ca/integrity-circles

Free journals online

- *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 24.2 on “Family”:
ambs.ca/vision
- *Anabaptist Witness* 10.2 on “New Anabaptist Communities”:
anabaptistwitness.org

Graduate-level courses: Intensive Term

Hybrid courses

(Online work: May 6 – July 19; Hybrid Week on campus: June 3–8)

- Christian Leadership in the 21st Century
- History of Christian Spirituality

In-person courses (open to auditors)

- Biblical Storytelling: May 6–17
- Spiritual Practices: Trees of Life: May 31 – June 1
- The Trail of Death: A Pilgrimage of Remembrance, Lament and Transformation: June 10–24

Nonadmitted students get 50% off their first three credit hours.

ambs.ca/upcoming-courses

You can afford seminary!

AMBS offers generous need-based financial aid, scholarships and matching grants for graduate students. Apply for merit-based scholarships by March 15 and ministry scholarships by April 1.

ambs.ca/affordability

CM CALENDAR

British Columbia

Feb. 23: LEAD Conference at Emmanuel Mennonite Church.

Feb. 24: MCBC AGM at Emmanuel Mennonite Church.

March 11-14: Mennonite Camping Association is hosting its bi-national gathering at Camp Squeah in Hope. More information to come.

April 19-21: Youth Impact Retreat at Camp Squeah.

June 7-9: Young Adult (18-35) Anabaptist Conference, "Faith, Activism, and Church: Building an Active Future" at Camp Squeah.

Alberta

March 15, 16: MC Alberta Annual Delegate Sessions at Holyrood Mennonite Church.

Saskatchewan

March 8-9: MC Saskatchewan Annual Delegate Sessions at North Star Mennonite Church, Drake. Theme: Rekindling Relationships.

Manitoba

Feb. 2-4: MC Manitoba Winter Retreat for ages 22-30 at Camp Assiniboia.

Feb. 23-25: MC Manitoba Youth Winter Retreat at Camp Assiniboia. For more information contact Kathy at kgiesbrecht@mennochurch.mb.ca.

March 1-2: MC Manitoba Annual Gathering at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler. Worship and celebration (1) deliberations (2). More information to come.

March 17: Mennonite Community Orchestra concert for children and adults including "Peter and the Wolf" at Lutheran Church of the Cross,

560 Arlington St., Winnipeg at 3 p.m. For more information visit www.mennonitecommunityorchestra.ca.

May 4-5: Faith and Life Choirs Spring Concerts. First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg (4); Morden Mennonite Church, Morden (5).

June 21-23: 75...Already?! Save the date for Camp Assiniboia's 75th Anniversary. More details to come.

Ontario

Jan. 27: MCC Comforter-knotting blitz at New Hamburg Material Resources Centre, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

March 7: MCEC Spiritual Retreat Day for Pastors.

March 16: Intercultural intergenerational volleyball tournament at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Register at <http://mcec.ca/events>.

March 21: Bechtel Lecture at Conrad Grebel with John P. Eicher, "A Plot-Driven People: Mennonite Narratives in the Age of Nationalism (1870-1945)" at 7:30 p.m. The presentation will focus on two groups of Mennonites from Russia who settled in Paraguay with very different national and religious identities. More information at <https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events/lecture-series/>.

Apr. 26-27: MCEC Annual Church Gathering, "Transformed, Inspired, Called," at UMEI Christian High School in Leamington.

Aug. 11-23: Ontario Mennonite Music Camp at Conrad Grebel. A two-week overnight camp for students who have finished grades 6-12 to enrich faith, musicality and leadership. Register before April 15 for discounted price. Go

to <https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/ontario-mennonite-music-camp>.

Online

Jan. 19: Join Anabaptist-Mennonite church leaders from around the world in prayer, 8 a.m. (Central time). <https://mwc-cmm.org/en/form/mwc-online-prayer-hour-registration-january-2024>.

Feb. 1: CommonWord online book launch of Unburdened: A Lenten Journey Toward Forgiveness by Carol Penner at 7:30 p.m. (Central). To register go to www.commonword.ca/go/3610.

Tuesdays until Feb. 13: Climate

Pollinators, a webinar series on creation care at 2 p.m. UTC. This webinar is jointly organized by the Creation Care Task Force and Anabaptist Climate Collaborative. Register at mwc-cmm.org/en/resources/climate-pollinators-webinar-series.

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.

CM CLASSIFIEDS Employment Opportunities



Hamilton Mennonite Church

Employment Opportunity
Pastor

Hamilton Mennonite Church (HMC) invites applications for a full-time pastor who embraces the Anabaptist vision of peace. Located near McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, HMC has just over 100 members and 40 participants under the age of 18.

Our love for Jesus calls us to inclusion and we seek candidates who are fully LGBTQ+ affirming. The pastor will provide spiritual and pastoral leadership, supported by strong lay leadership.

The salary ranges from 70K-95K (plus benefits and pension) for candidates with an MDiv and increases for those with previous pastoral experience.

The position is open until filled. Visit at our website at hmc.on.ca to see the full job description. learn more. Email search@hmc.on.ca or pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca for a link to join in our hybrid worship services.

Shekinah Retreat Centre (www.shekinahretreatcentre.org) has an opening for the Executive Director position. We are seeking a high energy person to grow our camping and facility rental programs. The preferred candidate will have a commitment to the Anabaptist tradition, an entrepreneurial spirit, non profit leadership experience and excellent communication skills. Position starts as soon as possible. Most salary and benefits follow MC Canada guidelines. For further information contact Board chair, Phyllis Goertz: 306 242 8367 or p.goertz@sasktel.net.

Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date

January 26

February 9

Ads Due

Jan. 17

Jan. 31

Advertising Information

Contact Ben Thiessen

1-800-378-2524 ext. 3

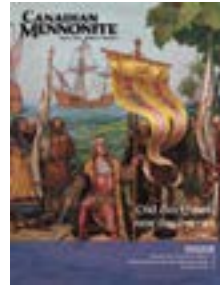
advert@canadianmennonite.org



Thank you

for your financial support in 2023.

With your gifts, we create space for you, and others, to be heard and to stay open to hearing others. We want to model healthy dialogue in the church, even on contentious issues. Together, we will spur one another on toward love and good deeds, per Hebrews 10:24.



CANADIAN MENNONITE

