

CANADIAN MENNONITE

JANUARY 2025



Intergenerational
**Household
of Faith**





2024 highlights

WILL BRAUN



It's good to reflect. Below are my highlights from the past year of *Canadian Mennonite*.

Maoz Inon: In February, we held a pair of online events. Jewish Israeli social entrepreneur and peace advocate Maoz Inon shared his audacious and infectious vision for peace. Inon's parents were killed by Hamas on October 7, 2023.

The Wall Between: In the second event, Raja Khouri—a Palestinian-Canadian—and Jeffrey Wilkinson—an American Jew—expanded on the message of their book, *The Wall Between: What Jews and Palestinians Don't Want to Know about Each Other*.

Secret Treaty: In our February 23 issue, Ojibwe elder Dave Scott and Mennonite illustrator Jonathan Dyck teamed up to tell the story of a treaty between early Mennonite settlers and the Ojibwe in Manitoba.

The comic was then printed as a stand-alone book. Over 1,000 copies have been sold, many to schools. Five related public events were held.

MCC HR: Two in-depth, investigative articles—published in July and October—told the stories of former Mennonite Central Committee workers who allege serious mistreatment by the organization. From the July article:

“[The former workers] were left feeling confused and ultimately betrayed by an organization they believed in.” This coverage will continue.

Risk: As part of his columns on intercultural church (February 9), Joon Park asked: “Are we a church in which visionaries, risk-takers and innovators are welcomed?” I put that on a sticky note next to my desk.

Beyond Ethics: Mennos gravitate toward ethics. Our June issue called us to “Transcendence, Prayer and Spirit.” In an article that stands out in my mind, Allan Rudy-Froese moved beyond “what we should do.” Paraphrasing him, I wrote: “The story of the Good Samaritan can be read as a practical example to follow, or it can be read as a beautiful account of how the grace of God extends to all of us who, in various ways, lie wounded beside the road.”

Degrowth: Our August issue contained Zach Rempel's feature piece titled, “A recipe to reverse the economy: Degrowth, Doris Janzen Longacre and the fading allure of net-zero.” From that article: “The current plan is for this economic growth to continue, without stopping, forever.”

Stuck in my heart: Three articles by young women had a lasting impact on me: “Actually, love our enemies,” by Alayna Smith; “Faith before flags,” by Rhianna McGregor Hajzer (both in the

July issue); and “Bending with the youth,” by Danika Warkentin (October).

Peace Shall Destroy: In our March 29 issue, we published an excerpt of Rudy Wiebe's 1962 novel *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, a book that remains a great gift to our people.

From the excerpt: “As the deep voices about him echoed ‘Amen,’ his mind could only dully comprehend that in all the talking that evening, no one had disposed of any of Joseph's questions. They had not even been considered.”

I often think of this line, scene and sentiment when vague, pseudo-peaceful sentiments gloss over vital tensions.

Madalene Arias, who served as Eastern Canada correspondent and social media coordinator, is currently on maternity leave (congrats to her!). We welcome two new people to fill her roles.

Rae Reid, a recent graduate of McMaster University, will serve as Eastern Canada correspondent. Rae, who is from Hamilton, founded and now coordinates Mennonite Young Adults and is part of the organizing group for the U30 young adult gathering to be held alongside the Mennonite Church Canada national gathering in Kitchener, Ontario, in July.

David Oliva Wiebe of Toronto has stepped in as social media curator. David brings smarts, professional social media experience and a great heart.

Welcome David and Rae! ●

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 PHOTO: SUSAN FISH



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 PHOTO: SUZANNE GROSS



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 A historical Swiss congregation and an Eritrean congregation come together as partners sharing a church building.
 PHOTO: SHALOM WORSHIP AND HEALING CENTER

About the cover Original art by Dona Park, a Korean Canadian artist living in Abbotsford, B.C. Through colour and dynamic shapes, Park ties in themes of living abroad, her multicultural identity and femininity. See donapark.com. See masthead on page 47.



What in the world



Disputed tithe

Katherine Leach, who attends a Texas mega-church that offered to refund tithes if donors were unsatisfied, wants her money back. Leach and others are suing Gateway Church, saying the church did not spend 15 percent of tithes on foreign missions, as promised. Pastor Robert Morris resigned in June following sexual abuse allegations.

Source: RNS

Photo: Jared Stump/creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0

Holy See EV

A team from Mercedes-Benz, including its CEO, delivered the first-ever all-electric popemobile to the Vatican in December. Pope Francis, 88, will use it for his Wednesday drives through the crowds in St. Peter's Square. Mercedes-Benz has made vehicles for the Vatican for nearly 100 years. Source: RNS

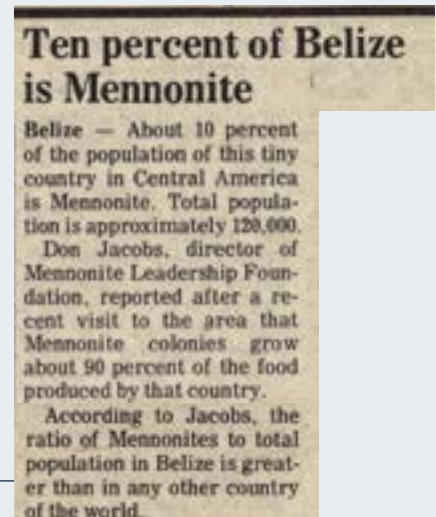
Photo: Mercedes-Benz

Church of England rocked

"Having sought the gracious permission of His Majesty The King, I have decided to resign as Archbishop of Canterbury," wrote Justin Selby in a December statement. Selby had been under pressure to step down following a report of his inadequate handling of an abuse case prior to his time as head of the Church of England. Source: archbishopofcanterbury.org

Photo: World Council of Churches

Like other news sources, we present information because we deem it worthy of consideration, not because we necessarily agree with it. – Eds.



50 YEARS AGO

MENNONITE REPORTER, JAN 6, 1975



Mennonite slur

The Ontario Hockey League suspended a player for five games after he called Brady Martin a “F—ing Mennonite.” Martin, a proud Mennonite from Elmira, Ontario, chirped back: “Yeah, I drove my buggy to the game!” Three weeks later, Martin, 17, was suspended for three games for a hit on another player. Sources: *Woolwich Observer, Sault Star*

Photo: Jared Stump/creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0



Verse of the year

YouVersion, a Bible app used billions of times last year, says the verse most shared, bookmarked and highlighted in 2024 was Philippians 4:26: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Source: YouVersion

Photo: YouVersion



Bible sales booming

The *Wall Street Journal* reports that Bible sales were up by 22 percent in the first three quarters of 2024, compared to the previous year. Publishers say rising anxiety, a search for hope and “highly focused marketing” contributed to the increase.

‘The world is not yours to save or condemn. Only serve the One who is saving it.’

– Tyler Wigg-Stevenson, quoted by Doug Klassen



A moment from yesterday

In the Swiss Mennonite tradition in Waterloo Region, it was common for the family farm to be taken over by the youngest son. It was customary for an addition to be added to the house when he married. Pictured is a red brick Pennsylvania Georgian style farmhouse near St. Jacobs, Ontario, with a grey sided “doddyhouse” attached.

Text: Barb Draper/Laureen Harder-Gissing
Photo: Barb Draper, personal collection



✉ **Effects of dismissal linger for decades**

In 1980, I returned to Canada from my mission assignment, happy to be home after four very difficult years. I looked forward to telling the mission staff about my experience, but the very people I thought would be the most supportive did not listen or ask about my time in Congo.

I was told I was terminated, without discussion or explanation. I was devastated and sought professional help.

Eighteen years later, my final paper at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary was titled “A Theology of Dismissal,” something which, of course, we don’t have. When word got out that I was writing on this subject I had students at my door—pastors, mission workers, and Mennonite Central Committee workers—telling me their stories.

The experience of my termination still haunts me. I try not to think of it too often because emotions surge to the top. I thought it might be good to let people know that these inexplicable dismissals have long-term effects.

Now, my heart aches for the young people who experience the same thing I did.

Surely our Mennonite scholars can come up with a theology of dismissal. It is incredibly sad that there still is a lack of justice and peace.

– ANITA JANZEN, LEAMINGTON, ONTARIO

✉ **Anguish and love amid division**

Those who would wish to sit down with the people from the opposite end of the political spectrum, whether in a Christian or a secular context, always hope for a rational and reasonable discussion. That does happen sometimes, but more often not.

We often fail to see that discussion is not really about facts or rational arguments but about emotion.

I must confess, I’ve studiously avoided these kinds of discussions for many years, even while feeling vaguely guilty that I, as a kind of expert in conflict resolution, should be more engaged.

My last experience was with the husband of a beloved cousin of mine, who, during a weekend at a family cottage, went through the tropes so prominent today: climate change denial, blaming Indigenous people for their problems, alarmism over crime rates, anti-gay, anti-abortion, and the list goes on. Although I tried to interject in a quiet, reasonable way, he simply repeated the same lines, only more loudly and with asides about what’s wrong with people who believe what I do.

All of us have felt anguish at one point at the pace of social change and the loss of moral absolutes or other important matters. I believe we still share some absolutes: faith in a God who loves us all unconditionally and the belief that each of us has a duty to share God’s love, while fully living the life God has given us, as best we can.

I’d like to say my cousin’s husband and I eventually reached a reasonable and rational accommodation, but that wasn’t the case. Instead, when my cousin developed a cruel and debilitating chronic illness, he took care of her with an extraordinary level of love and devotion that, at least in part, allayed my own anguish. I had to love him for that, even though we never reached any kind of accord as far as politics and the rest were concerned. Perhaps the answer lies in there somewhere, in the capacity to love we all share.

– PAUL REDEKOP, WINNIPEG
 (FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH)

Be in Touch

• Send letters to letters@canadianmennonite.org. Our new mailing address is on the back cover..

CM **Milestones**

BIRTHS

Cressman—Gwendolyn Joyce (b. Oct. 22, 2024) to Sam & Nicole Cressman, Nith Valley Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont.

Dorsman-Zehr—Desmond Albert (b. Sept. 20, 2024) to Emily Brubaker-Zehr & Ryan Dorsman, Hamilton Mennonite Church, Hamilton, Ont.

Hirtle—Olivia Elizabeth, (b. June 24, 2024) to Isaac & Angela Hirtle, Community Mennonite Church, Drayton, Ont.

Kyprianou—Loukas Emanuel (b. Nov. 25, 2024) to Madalene Arias & Marios Kyprianou, Toronto United Mennonite Church, Toronto, Ont.

Martin-Weber—Carson Rodney, (b. May 19, 2024) to Natasha & Erik Martin-Weber, Hamilton Mennonite Church, Hamilton, Ont.

Newman—Maverick Paul, (b. April 26, 2024) to Kayla McDowell & Matthew Newman, Hamilton Mennonite Church, Hamilton, Ont.

Robertson—Micah Clifford, (b. May 8, 2024) to Emma Horvatis & Eric Robertson, Hamilton Mennonite Church, Hamilton, Ont.

Snider—Liliana Sophia Marie, (b. Oct. 7, 2024) to Jessika & Ben Snider, Breslau Mennonite Church, Breslau, Ont.

Weber—Elizabeth Rose Marie (b. Aug. 22, 2024) to Travis & Jessica Weber, Community Mennonite Church, Drayton, Ont.

BAPTISMS

Joel Klassen—Toronto United Mennonite Church, Toronto, Ont. October 6, 2024.

Chris Wright—Toronto United Mennonite Church, Toronto, Ont. October 6, 2024.

WEDDINGS

Dettweiler/Rolfe—Brent Dettweiler & Jenna Rolfe, Oct. 26, 2024, Breslau Mennonite Church, Breslau Ont.

Hyde/Weeden—Derek Hyde (East Zorra Mennonite) & Fiona Weeden, Oct. 4, 2024, Wakefield Estate, Bright, Ont.

Scott/Yantzi—Jordan Scott & Jared Yantzi, Oct. 12, 2024, East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont.

DEATHS

Campbell—John Alexander, 94 (b. Dec. 13, 1929; d. Nov. 7, 2024), Elmira Mennonite Church, Elmira, Ont.

Campbell—Olive Jean Lorraine (Forman), 86 (b. April 12, 1938; d. July 11, 2024), Steinmann Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont.

Dorsch—Viola May (Gascho), 97 (b. Nov. 10, 1926; d. August 16, 2024), Steinmann Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont.

Dyck—Emily (nee Guenther), 87 (b. May 23, 1937; d. Nov. 1, 2024), First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

Elias—Peter, 82 (b. Oct. 22, 1942; d. Nov. 15, 2024), Bergthaler Church, Altona, Man.

Enns—Freda (nee Sawatzky), 89 (b. Sept. 3, 1935; d. Nov. 8, 2024), Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Funk—Elsie Annie, 96 (b. June 12, 1927; d. April 22, 2024) Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Vancouver, BC

Gingerich—Robert Louis, 82 (b. Sept. 17, 1942; d. Oct. 19, 2024), Steinmann Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont.

Klassen—Margaret (nee Kroeker), 91 (b. Feb. 11, 1933; d. March 16, 2024), Hamilton Mennonite Church, Hamilton, Ont.

Krahn—Esther, 103 (d. Oct. 28, 2024; b. Sept. 20, 1921), Aberdeen Mennonite Church, Aberdeen, Sask.

Kroeker—Jakob, 89 (b. Nov. 7, 1934; d. Nov. 3, 2024), First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Lichti—Lynda, 63 (b. Mar 9, 1961; d. Aug 30, 2024), East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont.

Loeppky—Wallace (Wally), 80 (b. May 27, 1944; d. Oct. 29, 2024), Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Neufeld—Maria (nee Goertz), 90 (b. Oct. 12, 1934; d. Nov. 1, 2024), Niagara United Mennonite Church, Niagara, Ont.

Schwartzentruber—Carl, 81 (b. Nov. 26, 1942; d. Aug. 8, 2024), Steinmann Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont.

Scott—Lorraine, 76 (b. Nov. 29, 1947; d. Sept. 22, 2024), Crosshill Mennonite Church, Millbank, Ont.

Swartzentruber—Hilda, 94 (b. April 28, 1930; d. Aug. 30, 2024), East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ont.



Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

MCEC reduces salary costs by 17 percent

Due to ongoing budgetary pressure, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada is making a 17-percent reduction in salary costs for the 2025–26 budget year. The leadership have made the difficult decision to lay off five staff.

A November 20 open letter to MCEC churches from Ann L. Schultz, intentional interim executive team leader, and moderator Ben Cassels, says, “The executive council and staff have made MCEC’s finances a key area of focus, responding to input from delegates, mid-year finance meetings, and the 2023 pastor and congregational survey.”

The reduction in salary costs is part of a multi-year plan which also includes a reorganization of MCEC’s structure “to streamline operations and reduce costs.”

The new structure will include an Operations Team and a Congregational Ministries Team.

The people being laid off, effective December 31, are Al Rempel (regional minister), Ronald Alexandre (mission associate), Wendy Janzen (eco-minister), Stephen Reist (regional ministry associate) and Charles Tabena (mission associate).

About these people, Schultz and Cassels write: “We are deeply grateful for their years of service at MCEC.”

The work of these staff will be “incorporated into the work of the Congregational Ministries Team, and some of the work will be taken on through the staff of [Mennonite Church] Canada,” reads the November 20 letter.

Additional information about roles and responsibilities in the new structure will be sent to pastors and congregational leaders in January.

While expressing sadness over the losses and asking for patience during the transition, Schultz and Cassels say, “There is much strength around the MCEC table, and we hold deep hope for its future.”

On February 1, Anthony Siegrist will take over as executive minister of MCEC, replacing Schultz, who serves on an interim basis.

Of the 203 churches in MC Canada, 108 are part of MCEC. ●

—CM Staff

Adventures in reading the Bible together

Len Rempel



With the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism this year, I am looking forward to receiving my copy of the Anabaptist Community Bible.

During the winter of 2022–23, I was part of two Bible study groups which were formed in response to a call from MennoMedia as part of this Bible project. The idea was to have 500 Bible study groups from around the world get together, study various parts of the Bible and submit their study notes to become part of the study Bible.

One of the differences from a typical Bible study was that the passages to be studied were assigned to us. This meant that some groups studied sections of scripture that often wouldn't be looked at in a Bible study group.

In a section from 1 Samuel, one of the groups read about the conflict between Saul and David which includes the line, "Saul has killed his thousands, but David has killed his tens of thousands!" Two chapters later the section ends with the description of Saul's gruesome death. This was

definitely not typical Bible study material.

These passages challenged us to think about how we read the Bible and how we try to apply it to our own lives. What value, if any, is there in such brutal parts of scripture?

This generated interesting conversations and led us to insights that were often unexpected and new to all of us. Within a safe place, we were able to explore various ideas about the text, and we came to the various passages with an openness to ask questions.

In the end, we had more questions than answers, but there was excitement as we dug into parts of the Bible we weren't used to digging into. We asked some questions that we weren't used to asking, both of the text and of God. Through those questions, we felt the spirit of God moving and prodding, and we arrived at places we probably wouldn't have on our own.

As Anabaptists we talk about a community hermeneutic; that is, reading and interpreting the Bible within the community with the Spirit's

guiding. As we met around the tables of these Bible studies, it felt like we were putting this into action.

I was part of only two of the groups that took part in the project. The discussions of these two groups went in different directions, and even where we had similar texts, some of the conclusions didn't line up. But I believe that is also part of the community hermeneutic. There is disagreement and messiness as we interpret the scriptures in community, but some of that messiness is built right into the Bible. I believe that is part of its power and its beauty.

I don't envy the editors who had to sort through the notes of nearly 600 different groups, but I am certainly looking forward to reading through the final product. ●



Len Rempel serves as executive minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan. He can be reached at minister@mcsask.ca.

A word about winter blues

Troy Watson

Note: This article discusses suicide and depression.

Suicide is a delicate and complicated subject. As I've walked with people enduring the brutal grief process in the wake of such loss, I've had few words to offer. As I've reflected on my own relationships with people who've taken their lives, I have only questions. The primary one being, "Is there something I could have done?"

This past holiday season, I found myself being more attentive to those who were struggling, as I recalled that suicide rates increase over the holidays.

But recently I came across some data that surprised me. According to recent studies in countries like Canada, the U.S., Austria and the U.K., suicide rates, psychiatric admissions and self-harm actually decrease over the holiday season. The highest suicide rates in all the countries studied occur in late spring and summer. The lowest rates were in late fall and winter.

It seems the winter season doesn't exacerbate specific mental health issues, in general, with the exception being SAD (seasonal affective disorder), which two to three percent of Canadians will experience in their lifetime.

However, there are struggles that accompany the winter blahs for many. For example, a recent study found that people living in colder places with less sunlight are not only more likely to drink but also more likely to binge-drink and suffer alcohol-related liver disease. In winter, our decline in social interactions can also lead to an increased sense of loneliness and isolation.

During the recent holiday season, I noticed something else that increased—volunteering. It's typically up 50 percent in December. Charitable

giving also rises, with 30 percent of annual donations happening in December. I suspect one reason for this uptake in volunteering and giving is our awareness that it improves our own



mental and emotional health. It's an effective way to combat the winter blahs.

There are other tactics we can utilize as well, such as getting enough sleep and physical exercise, ideally 150 minutes of exercise per week. This reduces stress, anxiety and depression, while boosting self-esteem, confidence, emotional regulation, immunity and our general well-being. Being present and practicing gratitude, instead of comparing our experiences with others or to our own past helps too. This might mean starting new rituals and traditions or reducing our exposure to social media.

I also recommend practicing moderation, resisting the urge to overspend or overindulge. Reaching out to others and getting involved in a community or church, especially if we're feeling isolated, is another proactive way to address winter blues.

Back to the data. Even though the belief that suicide increases during the holidays is false, this shouldn't change our benevolent behaviour in future holiday seasons. It's possible this false belief has helped reduce the risk of

depression, isolation and suicide in vulnerable people because it's changed our attitudes and behaviour towards them. We tend to volunteer more in December because we assume people are struggling more during the holidays. And I think it helps. I celebrate churches and individuals increasing their community engagement and support during the holidays. But I challenge us to extend attentiveness to the most vulnerable into January and beyond.

Suicide rates increase in late spring and early summer, the time many of us are busiest with our action-packed lives, focusing on our gardens, sports, recreational activities, vacation plans, cottages, family events and the like, resulting in us spending less time volunteering and supporting those who are struggling. Is there a correlation?

Similarly, psychiatric admissions temporarily rebound right after the holiday season, the time most of us are getting back to our regular routines, reducing our volunteering and relaxing our attentiveness to those who are struggling.

In order to make a point, I'm positing provocative correlations that I can't verify. My point is to challenge myself and all of us to use our holiday attentiveness to those on the margins as the bar for the entire year. Let's remember our Christmas spirit of compassion and sensitivity as a reminder of what our baseline for outreach, service and support should be yearlong. As clichéd as it sounds, I'm encouraging us to act like it's Christmas all year. ●



Troy Watson is a pastor at Avon Church in Stratford, Ontario. He can be reached at troy@avonchurch.ca.



ANIKA
REYNAR

DEEPER COMMUNION

Follow the water

By Anika Reynar

It's Sunday afternoon, and I'm staring at a storm drain. The "Adopt-A-Drain" website led me here. The commitment seems simple. Name the drain, check it regularly and clear debris before and after storms. The promise? Cleaner rivers and less flooding.

I name it "Singing in the drain." Others in my neighbourhood include "Catherine the Grate" and "Sweet drains are made of this."

My church got me to pay attention to storm drains.

Our small Mennonite congregation is in a moment of reorientation, like many of us. So much is changing—climate, politics, our social fabric.

Who do we want to be to one another?

Some members suggest "a small experiment with radical intent": to seek spiritually grounded, justice-seeking responses to climate change in our community. Our congregation is connected by a watershed. One young woman suggests we answer the local watershed association's call to adopt drains. A woman in her eighties says, "I've already adopted two!"

We've been talking about storm drains ever since.

This feels like a beautiful example of communal discernment: asking who we are, where our energy lies, and how we might act.

I also feel cautious. Small actions like adopting drains or installing solar panels can easily become ends in themselves. Worse, they risk becoming theologically rhetorical. Adopting a drain may be an act of love for neighbours downstream, but

if my only action is to clear debris, I risk overlooking deeper inequalities between neighbours in our watershed.

What might adopting a drain ask of me?

I follow the water flowing through it. Water in my neighbourhood runs over concrete, collecting trash and contaminants. It flows into a combined sewer system; during heavy rains, raw sewage spills into waterways. These pollutants concentrate near low-income communities of colour—patterns shaped by mid-20th-century discriminatory housing policies. Wealthier neighbourhoods gained manicured lawns and wide roads; others bear the environmental burden.

This design has theological implications, revealing our desires, relationships, and what we hold sacred. Following the water, I see stories of disordered desires for control, ownership, and protection.

Who do we want to be to one another? What do we desire? These questions are at the heart of climate change conversations—and the work of the church.

Are we courageous enough to follow the water? To be changed?

I recently joined a boat tour of the watershed's industrial corridor. I met Maria, a Spanish-speaking woman who has lived behind the oil refinery near the river for decades. She had never been on the river. "I wish my community had river access," she said. Maria loves her community but worries she won't be able to stay—her rent keeps rising.

I clear leaves from my drain and remember Maria. How might I structure my life to stay in relationship with Maria

and others who struggle? The design of our cities and the rhythms of our lives often separate us, but our well-being is bound together. What does this ask of us?

Theologian Willie Jennings suggests we start by "reintroducing the church to the story of what it means to be a Christian: the constant entering into and becoming part of other people's story for the sake of love."

Our scriptures remind us that we are outsiders, invited by Jesus into God's redemptive story. Jesus gathers people to journey with him, asking them to give up possessions and to reimagine family. Jesus draws his followers into desolate landscapes and social margins, inviting them to enter the lives of others for the sake of love.

That love changes us.

Following Jesus means considering how we organize our lives in material ways. What do we hold sacred? What do we seek to control? What are we willing to give up? These are not rhetorical questions. They may call us to reduce consumption, reimagine property ownership, or show up at public meetings on zoning reform and affordable housing.

These can be spiritually grounded, justice-seeking actions. But they become theological when we test them against the way of Jesus. Today, this means I'm standing at a storm drain and asking: where does the water flow, and who does love call me to follow? ●

Anika Reynar works in Boston as a facilitator and mediator in environmental disputes.

RYAN
DUECK**Held**

What a rich metaphor Anika has provided: follow the water. Consider the impacts of our habits and assumptions, our ways of being in the world. Pay attention to who bears disproportionate burdens and why. Who do we want to be to one another?

It's such an important question for every church to be asking, not least because of the assumption embedded within it. We actually *do* believe (or want to believe) that we have obligations to one another, that our well-being—physically, emotionally, spiritually—is bound up with that of our neighbour.

I love the Jennings quote that Anika includes. Surely, the “constant entering into and becoming part of other people's stories for the sake of love” is an important part of what it means to be a Christian. But the amateur theologian in me wants to say more. For surely what it means to be a Christian is also to trust the God who in Christ reaches down to save us even when, despite our best intentions and efforts, we cannot be enough for one another. We are held by a love that is deeper than we can manage on our own, a love that sends us back into our smaller stories with freedom and grace. ●

Ryan Dueck is pastor at Lethbridge (Alberta) Mennonite Church.

CINDY
WALLACE**Calling**

I love the concreteness of Anika's “small experiment with radical intent”: it's local, tangible, scaled for life. I also love that this care for a storm drain began in community discernment and leads back out to community in a widening sense of “who is my neighbour?”

The experiment reminds me a bit of biologist Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's model for how each person can become involved in climate action, which is a Venn diagram of three questions: “1. What are you good at? 2. What work needs doing? 3. What brings you joy?” This model, in turn, makes me think about theologian Frederick Buechner's famous definition of God's calling as the place where “your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”

God seeks to bless the world through the church. This is why we are here, gathered into the Body of Christ, empowered by the Spirit. We are called to bring our delight and gifts—and sometimes our stubborn persistence—to the work that is ours to do, to the storm drains and the advocacy campaigns, both the hyper-local and the global. This work is not without risks—but Jesus's example, and the faithful through the centuries, remind us that love never is. ●

Cindy Wallace is professor of English at St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan.

JUSTIN
SUN**Risk**

“Are we courageous enough to follow the water? To be changed?”


This question is a gut punch these days, when all around I wonder why the dominant answer appears to be a resounding “No,” if news reels, institutional manoeuvres and elections are any indication.

Two of Anika's points ring particularly clear. The first is that following the water might cost us something, and that is why it takes courage. It is easier to buy into the lie that only some can win, so hoarding, stepping-over and building walls—controlling and protecting, in Anika's words—become the only logical steps. In contrast, it is harder to trust, give and surrender, because in so doing, we risk our very selves.

The second thing that rings clear is how the talk of water echoes a practice at the heart of Christianity—baptism. Thousands of years of reflection rest upon this foundational act of rebirth and transformation, beckoning people to lay down their arms and walk (swim) the Jesus Way. This reminds us that we can strive with confidence, knowing that the one who has gone before risked it all that we might know the way.

In this, I know: the communal risking of self is a resounding, “Yes, we are courageous enough to follow and change.” ●

Justin Sun is a student at Vancouver School of Theology/Vancouver Coastal Health.



Intergenerational
**Household
of Faith**

A. S. Compton and her grandpa, Oliver Good, read together.

Tying Grandpa's shoelaces

By A. S. Compton

Grandpa's shoelaces were round, not flat like my own. They were a challenge to tie up, even for my nimble fingers. He sat in his straight-backed chair at the kitchen table, and, since his fine motor skills had declined, it became my job to tie up those laces before school each morning.

Sometimes he would ask me to do up the buttons on the cuffs of his shirtsleeves too, the tiny, hard-to-reach ones.

If he was embarrassed to ask for my help, I didn't notice. Perhaps asking his grade-school grandchild was easier than asking his grown son or daughter-in-law. They were busy with the farm.

I grew up living in the same house as my grandma and grandpa. Our 175-year-old farmhouse was split into two apartments when my parents took over the farm, before I was born. Our home was on the upper floor and attic, with my grandparents on the main floor.

I knew independence from a young age; my parents would be in the fields or barn while I was in the yard or house, knowing Grandma was not far, even if she wasn't actively watching me. Their part of the house was always open to me and my brother.

My grandparents weren't young, so Grandpa was nearly 80 when I was born. He had a stroke when I was almost five and many mini-strokes while he remained on the farm. I'm sure that was stressful for my parents, but from my perspective, it was an opportunity to see aging in a safe atmosphere, in a normalized way.

A few times, I found Grandpa fallen over from one of his mini-strokes. I knew to find my parents, and they would take care of him. I don't recall feeling fear or being particularly upset. Grandpa was old; his body did not work like mine. I understood that.

If my grandparents were asleep when I popped through their door before school, I would set their table for breakfast. Dishes and cutlery went on the laminate table. I'd leave the honey on the radiator to soften. I would climb on the counter to reach the cupboard where the cereal was stored. Sometimes Grandma would walk in on me climbing. She'd chuckle and call me her little bug.

Grandma was a schoolteacher to her core. I credit

her with teaching me to read and write. I'm sure my parents, older brother and school did much of the work, but Grandma's teachings are my most prominent memories. She didn't just teach me the function of literacy—she taught me the love of it.

Though I don't remember all his words, I can still hear Grandpa's voice and cadence when he would pray for dinner. Faith was quietly ingrained in daily activities. Grandma waited to see crocuses in spring and praised God quietly when they arrived. That faith pointed me to the consistent persistence of God and his promises. When the lawn mower quit far from home, and Grandpa had no walker to get back, he prayed until help came. He taught me trust in God when things looked impossible.

Grandpa stayed on the farm almost until the end. He spent a year in nursing care before he passed away at the age of 93. Grandma had Alzheimer's in her final years. I went to visit her a few weeks before she died. Though she spoke very little at that point, and hadn't recognized anyone for months, when I walked in she said my name.

Living with my grandparents made aging part of my reality from my earliest days. Aging was not a clinical thing with sanitized floors and locked doors; it was not a scary thing like hospitals and nursing homes full of strangers. That normalization helped me let my grandparents go when they died. I watched them live out their days, knowing I had been an active part of that living. I grieved them both deeply. I still do some days. They were my first real loss, but there was always peace and resolution within that grief. ●



Care comes around

By Katie Doke Sawatzky

It's been 20 years since Rebecca Harder, now 46, and her husband decided to permanently move into her family's intergenerational home in Winnipeg's western suburb of Charleswood. Harder's grandparents, Mildred and David "Doc" Schroeder, who passed away last summer and in 2015, respectively, were the original proprietors, both of the 2,400-square-foot house and of the family's ethic of intergenerational living.

"Grandpa knew that people needed their space, and if we forgot and started to get too enmeshed, he would remind us," said Harder.

Her mother, Lynette Wiebe, 71, added: "He said the reason we built the house this way was because nobody should have to share a kitchen if they don't want to. There should be room to breathe."

But they have also helped one another breathe. When Wiebe was diagnosed with cancer in 2020, Harder said that she lost count of the number of nights she lay beside her mom on

the floor to make sure she was breathing. Harder also recalls that when she was a young mom she sent her toddlers to go visit "Nana" when she needed a break, and that when she and her husband couldn't work during the pandemic, Lynette and husband, Ernie, took over the food budget.

These days Harder is a substitute

teacher, while her husband, Matthew, a luthier, works in a studio built in 2012 on the property. Their kids are busy with music and sports. The Wiebes see friends, exercise and participate in activities at Charleswood Mennonite Church.

"My husband and I run from dawn till dusk and . . ." said Harder.



The late Mildred Schroeder (left) with Rebecca Harder and Lynette Wiebe.



“... we wave!” finished Wiebe.

Their model of communal living has changed often, as have the walls in the house. The Harders and their two kids, ages 12 and 14, live in the property’s “back house,” a two-storey addition built in 1980 onto the original 1960s bungalow—called the “front house”—where the Wiebes now reside.

But the family continues to tackle the challenges of sharing a home through open conversation, something Harder witnessed her parents and grandparents doing as she grew up in the house.

Wiebe recalled one tough conversation when she and Ernie were still living in the larger back house, and the Harders asked how long they planned to stay there, given that their young family could use the extra space.

The Harders have cared for the Wiebes, the Wiebes for the Schroeders, and the Schroeders for Mildred’s father, Hugo Bartel, who lived in the house until his death in 1982.

Harder said they have prepared a room for her father-in-law, who currently lives in Ontario. “We’ve said, ‘When you are not up to living on your own, you are welcome in this space.’”

Tending to family members’ needs is part of the family’s expression of faith, Wiebe said. “It was definitely a faith-based decision, because the Bible says to love each other.... That kind of practical exploration of loving each other, that comes straight out of our faith.”

As her kids grow, Harder hopes that they learn to talk through hard issues



Over 60 years, five generations of one family have lived in the same Winnipeg house.

Pictured: Hugo Harder (left), Lynette Wiebe, Abram Harder, Ernie Wiebe, Rebecca Harder and Matthew Harder.

Ernie had built that back-house addition, and Harder knew he didn’t want to leave it. “It was hard for me to bring it up,” she said. “But once the conversation was had . . .”

“... it was easy,” finished Wiebe.

A core motivation behind the family’s intergenerational living has been to care for aging parents. At times, there have been four generations living in the house at once, with a total of five generations over the 60 years.

and to keep their eyes open to others’ needs, something that is easier to do when you live so close to your relatives.

“I hope they learn flexibility, open conversation and just to keep loving each other.... And yes, we might be helping [parents or grandparents] more right now, but they’re going to help us real soon. It’ll keep going.”

“It comes around and around,” echoed Wiebe. ●

Two parents, two kids and an in-law

The benefits of shared living

By Susan Fish



Twenty-six Gildner Street is a single detached house in midtown Kitchener, Ontario, much like the other houses around it, but inside, something unusual is happening.

At least the neighbours think so. *How does it work?* they ask. *What are the common areas? How do you get privacy? Is there a limit if they start having babies?*

The house is home to five adults—Allan and Marilyn Rudy-Froese, their daughter, Abby, son, Ben, and his wife, Sarah Dyck—as well as two dogs, Caesar and Angus. The house is co-owned by all of the adults.

In 2023, the owner of the house Marilyn and Allan had rented for five years wanted to sell and wanted to sell to the Rudy-Froeses. The purchase was not feasible, and, at the same time, the prospect of renting a different place in the skyrocketing market was daunting.

Marilyn says she'd hear friends question how their young adult children could ever afford a house. "I knew we couldn't help our kids out—our own future was apartment living. I'm like: maybe it's not sustainable, everyone having their own

single detached house. The world isn't big enough, and as you look at climate change...."

Marilyn spontaneously put a note in the family chat: "Anyone wanna buy a house? Shall we form a family commune?"

The response surprised her. "Everyone said yes.... We soon realized we were all serious."

While one of their three kids, Jacob, eventually decided it wasn't for him—he and his partner, Sydnie, live nearby and are what they call "associate members"—the others moved forward. Getting a mortgage took a while, in

The sale closed on August 15, 2023. The five are working on a co-ownership agreement to help if they get to a place where they can't come to agreement.

As Allan had previously, he continues to spend half the year in Indiana, where he teaches at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

Sarah says that so far the biggest revelation is "how easy it is. We've joked: when does this get hard?" Marilyn is pleasantly surprised how much she enjoys this arrangement. Abby had said to her, "Mom, you don't get your empty nest," and Marilyn says she did enjoy having the house to herself previously, but she likes the current arrangement too.

Sarah says, "You don't actually know until you're living together.... But we had hints because . . ."

"... we'd already been living together so much," Abby fills in.

Sarah observes, "I thought this would work [because] when you guys hang out as a family, there's a lot of quiet, solo time.... That has translated well to living together."

Sarah adds, "It's also partly because of personalities—everybody is invested in this working well, everybody's invested in the well-being of each of us."

Marilyn says, "It helps that it's family, and I don't have to entertain. When a guest is in the house, I feel like I have to entertain, and the house has to be tidy, so it's a different mindset."

Ben notes that it was also helpful that he wasn't a kid living at 26 Gildner, so he doesn't fall into old family roles.

This had not been the plan for the family. Marilyn recalls, when the kids were young, toying with the idea of buying a big multigenerational house near her parents, but says they quickly dismissed it because of costs and location. Allan describes staying at the four-generation Schroeder house in Winnipeg [See "Care comes around," p. 14], and seeing how they had supper together. "Their grandkids and great-grandkids would be hanging out, letting loose and being super-honest about everything. And Grandma and



Allan Rudy-Froese (left), Abby Rudy-Froese, Sarah Dyck, Marilyn Rudy-Froese and Ben Rudy-Froese share a house in Kitchener, Ontario.

“We learn compassion and forgiveness when we live in community. And it’s about being good stewards.”

part because few banks accepted more than three owners, and, as Ben says, "It was important to us to have all five owners." A lawyer helped them work out the arrangement, as well as determining how a future sale would be divided, based on differing initial downpayments.

Grandpa didn't flinch."

But still, as Abby says, "It wasn't planned we would live together. It was expected we would grow up and live independently." Before Marilyn's group chat, Abby was expecting to have to try to find a \$2,000 one-bedroom apartment.

All the children had lived on their own and had begun careers. Their work showed them the value of communal living. Abby did several co-op placements at a L'Arche community where she lived in community.

Ben, who works as a physiotherapist, says, "I see a lot of seniors who live in different set-ups: [for instance] where someone has a separate apartment, but

neighbours, Allan says, "This is how people from Pakistan and India and Central America live."

But because it is not how North Americans typically live, it has taken significant conversations—and Abby's PowerPoint presentations—to work out practical details.

"One of things I said in an early presentation was that we are adults," says Abby. "One huge theme was how we would get Mom to stop doing mom things. When Jake lived here, he brought this up at dinner one night: 'Mom is doing a lot of chores, how do we divide this up?'"

"He named my over functioning," Marilyn says.

They have settled on a monthly cleaning day, followed by a takeout meal and a household meeting, during which they discuss everything from large renovation plans to small household purchases.

They each pay the same monthly amount for mortgage, property tax, insurance, utilities and internet. They use an app to divide grocery costs (omitting Allan when he is away).

Ben does most of the snow shoveling, while "Abby keeps us in sourdough bread," says Sarah.

Marilyn says "Many people [think what we're doing] is amazing and unique. They hold us up as this big thing or they think it's weird."

Some people talk to Allan about which of their own family members they could or couldn't live with. Sarah says friends ask her how she can live with her in-laws. Marilyn says, "I don't take for granted that my children and my daughter-in-law want to live with us. I feel really humbled. People say: 'You must have done something right,' but I just lived my life.... My faith is so integral to who I am and what I do, it's hard to be conscious of how it influences. We learn compassion and forgiveness when we live in community. And it's about being good stewards."

Soon they are laughing as they show off Allan's prized coffee maker that he carts to and from Indiana, and together they set the table for supper. ●



it's attached to the house, and once or twice a week or maybe every supper, they come over to the main house, and otherwise they live their own life."

Sarah, who is a midwife, visits many homes and says, "People with newborns do really well when they have a really strong support system with families who live close by." She adds, "It's a Western idea that we have to be individualistic and build our little separate spots."

Allan agrees, saying that his AMBS students are fascinated by this experiment, though those from the Global South see it as normal.

In response to questions from



Adjusting home to include the parents

By Amy Rinner Waddell

For Wayne and Susan Berghauser of Greendale, B.C., living intergenerationally isn't a novelty, it's a family tradition.

Thirty-five years ago, the Berghausers, members of Crossroads Community Church, moved with their two young sons to a one-storey house on a property that also held a small, 900-square-foot house. Various renters occupied it over the years. As the boys grew into their teens, the Berghausers added a family room, with Wayne doing most of the renovation work. After Wayne's mother died, the family invited his dad to move in with them until his death.

At about the same time, Susan's parents, Ed and Dora Becker, moved into a house in Langley, B.C. with Susan's aging grandmother, Maria. They designated the primary bedroom as Maria's, along with another bedroom for her living area, then made a bedroom for themselves in another part of the house. Maria Becker lived with Ed and Dora until her death.

When Ed and Dora retired, they decided to downsize. It seemed natural for them to move to the small house on Wayne and Susan's property. This arrangement worked well until December 2019, when Dora suffered a spinal cord injury and became a wheelchair user permanently. The small house was not wheelchair-friendly, so Wayne, who enjoys having family around, suggested they invite Susan's parents to move into their home, modifying the family room into a suite for them.

"We could have put [Mom] into a care facility," says Susan, "but it was

easier to walk three steps than to drive half an hour across town to see her. This way I could see her every day." Dora was working as a translator for the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C., so Wayne built a desk and workstation for her. He modified access

still joins Susan and Wayne for dinner. He can drive to church or to socialize with friends, and he shares a workshop with his son-in-law.

"The workshop has been huge for Dad," says Susan. "If we had put Mom in a home, he would have had to go



Ed Becker (left), with Wayne and Susan Berghauser.

to the bathroom and added closets as well, giving the elder couple a homey space of their own.

Ed could prepare simple breakfasts and lunches for the two of them, while they would join Susan and Wayne for the evening meal. On Sundays, Susan would make pancakes or waffles as a special treat for her mother.

Dora died in 2022 at age 82. Ed, who turns 87 this month, continues to live in the modified in-law suite. The arrangement suits him well. He has his own sink, a small refrigerator and a toaster oven for making light meals but

somewhere else by himself." Having daily access to the workshop gives him purpose and keeps him busy.

Both Susan and Wayne admit there have been times when they have felt frustrated but say they "just work through it." They have been happy to accommodate their parents in their lives, just as her parents did with her grandmother. Wayne sums it up: "We include our parents in things we do so that our children see that, and they will include us when we are old." ●

Commitment to accommodate

Thomas Bumbeh shares about a culture of caring

By Katie Doke Sawatzky

Living with extended family under the same roof has made sense to Thomas Bumbeh on several different levels throughout the years. After arriving in Edmonton from Liberia in 2001, Bumbeh shared a house with three cousins. Now, the 50-year-old realtor

even though we are living a very busy life,” he said.

Along with the economic benefits—splitting rent and expenses with his cousins 20 years ago allowed them all to save up for houses of their own—Bumbeh said having his mother-in-law and niece around has been good for everyone.



Thomas Bumbeh's family, from left: Margaret (mother-in-law), Nathan (son), Amie (wife), Thomas, Grace (daughter), Edward (son), Amie (grand-niece) and Cynthia (niece).

and entrepreneur who attends Holyrood Mennonite Church lives with his own family—his wife and three kids—as well as his mother-in-law, his niece and her baby.

“You have somebody around, you have somebody that you could talk to,

“Years back, when our kids were little, my mother-in-law was a huge benefit helping us. None of our kids went to daycare, and both of us had time to work,” he said.

The Canadian standard of nuclear families living in their own houses and

moving aging parents into nursing homes is unusual from Bumbeh's perspective. His mother came to live with his family in Edmonton for two years before returning to Liberia. Back home, his siblings took care of her before she passed away in 2019. His older sister was particularly involved, and she now looks back on that time with pride.

Bumbeh said being in long-term care and having people other than family members tending to his mom's personal care would have "traumatized" her. "She has her own kids who should be doing that."

Intergenerational living, especially with one's parents, is rooted in Bumbeh's culture.

"Our parents live with us until they pass on," he explained. "They take care of us until it's time for us to take care of them."

Bumbeh stressed that long-term care is needed if there are medical situations a family cannot help with, but that living alone can also contribute to health issues. Having his niece and her baby in the house keeps his mother-in-law entertained in ways that are more healthy than a TV screen, he said.

That said, Bumbeh recognizes the challenge of living with relatives. He relies on two tools when things get tough: accepting his cultural commitment to take care of aging parents, and

communication.

"Even if your parents have issues, or they are very troublesome, you just have to find a way somehow and accommodate them. Because a lot of the time, if we have choices, then we tend to leverage that," he said.

Communication has been important when utility bills get high, said Bumbeh.

"Back home we don't track those things. You can leave the light on and the water running forever. So I sat everybody down and let them know that every drip of water here costs money. You have to pay for it."

"Once we make sure of how we are going to use [our resources], it benefits us."

The theme of accommodation is something Bumbeh finds in the Bible, particularly in the stories of Zechariah and Mary and Joseph in Luke, which his Bible study group at Holyrood has been studying.

"They accommodate each other," he said. "There are other stories in the Bible that talk about how we should accommodate one another, and that will help to build our faith."

Bumbeh said weekly family devotionals help bring the household together.

"It really strengthens us to be able to manage each other." ●



The time being

Paul Krahn was his father's primary caregiver for nearly nine years. Below is an adapted excerpt from My Aging Father: Taking Care, Krahn's book about this experience.

By Paul Krahn

Today, when I walk into his hospital room, my aging father, convalescing with an infection in his lower legs, still can't get out of bed. "I just want to be *able* to get up," he says.

A nurse assistant maneuvers the mechanical lift into place in front of him. He knows the drill, reaches for the curved and padded bars. It takes two assistants to help him into the harness.

"Who'd have thought," he says again and again, and he breathes to manage the pain.

"Are you comfortable, Mr. Krahn?" says nurse one.

"No," he says. "I'm in pain."

My sister, Marianne, arrives in the middle of this rigamarole. She cuts his open-faced beef sandwich smothered in gravy, and then he eats while she and I talk—one of those conversations parents have while kids are present but preoccupied. We talk about how his treatment is going, how he's doing in general. It's that kind of conversation, on the edge of rude.

After he's finished his lunch, Marianne explains his situation to him. He doesn't like it.

He's impatient with it all, especially since the two of us understand it. He used to know best.

He's been alone for going on eight months. Margaret, his third wife, died last year. A few years ago, they moved to an assisted-living facility with a Mennonite pedigree. They'd expected a utopian diet of morning Bible study and borscht for lunch. It never really worked out that way.

These days, the aging father needs more regular visits and, likely, homecare. I suggest we could move him to an assisted-living suite in Altona, where I live and where he was born. A kind of homecoming.

I watch myself say it. *Do I know what I'm asking for?*

The aging father agrees to visit the Altona facility. He and Marianne drive out. We look through a suite, tour the facility, meet the manager, look at the events calendar that includes Bible study, hymn-sings and Sunday services. The aging father sees that it is good.

He lets his name stand on the waiting list and, all too quickly, we get the call that he's been accepted.

Which brings us to now, in this bachelor suite where we sit together, his eyes brimming with loneliness. He fumbles through his Bible for the three-by-five notecards on which he has scrawled book, chapter and verse references for six passages. "I want to memorize these," he says, "but I can't write them out clearly enough myself. Could you do that for me?"

"Why do you want them written out?" I ask.

"So I can keep them with me in my pocket," he says, "If I need to, I can just

take them out and look at them." Makes sense.

At home I find my King James Version and open it for the first time in years. Grandpa and Grandma Penner gave it to me in 1973. It's not worn enough to show real devotion. I open it to Deuteronomy 31:6: "*Be strong in the*

Lord and be of good courage." I write the verse down. I finish the six passages in less than 30 minutes.

When I visit my aging father tomorrow, he will look at these words, written in my hand, read them, ponder them and cherish them in his heart.

This will not solve his loneliness. It will not remove this lack. In my experience, this is not what sacred texts do. They remind us of what and who is missing.

Remind us of the difficulty of our situation. Echoes of voices who have left us with these words.

They remind us we are not the first ones to struggle under this weight, remind us of the length of the journey. Remind us to seek comfort not for the time coming, but for the time being.

Paul Krahn of Neuberghal, Manitoba, is a retired teacher, member of Altona Mennonite Church and chair of the Neuberghal Heritage Foundation. His writing has been published in Prairie Fire and Rhubarb.



"Sidewalk," by Margruite Krahn.

Kingdom hospitality at St. Clair-O'Connor

By Susan Fish

Many long-term care homes receive annual visits from children whose musical performances provide holiday cheer to the elderly, but by now, everything has returned to normal.

But at St. Clair-O'Connor Community (SCOC) in east Toronto, normal includes people of all ages who live in a complex that includes a 126-unit apartment building, 16 townhouses and 25 long-term care beds.

Fully one-third of SCOC's residents are under the age of 65.

This includes Peter Haresnape, pastor at Toronto United Mennonite Church (TUMC), one of two founding congregations for this housing initiative. Haresnape lived in an intergenerational multi-family household as a child. Today he and his partner, Ken, share a unit looking out onto SCOC's courtyard.



A few floors above lives Aldred Neufeldt, whose apartment overlooks a ravine. Neufeldt was one of SCOC's founders in the late 1970s. Forty years later, he is a resident and the chair of the board.

Neufeldt was an international leader in the field of developmental disability and mental health, where he saw the horrors of "ghettoizing" vulnerable populations, as well as possibilities for meeting needs differently.

When aging congregants of TUMC

taken seriously. My own vulnerability is about affording a place to live."

Neufeldt describes rent at SCOC as "low middle" compared to other real estate in Toronto.

Originally, Neufeldt says, SCOC had "a very vibrant intergenerational context" with young families and individuals. Some of those, including people with significant disabilities, have made SCOC their long-term home, but others moved on and "There wasn't really a strong succession-planning

"I've always found a lot more life doing things with a range of ages. For me, that's what a normal, fulfilled life looks and feels like."

began requiring better supports and those at nearby Danforth Mennonite's Meals on Wheels program realized the need for better help for seniors in the area, together they began to imagine an alternative living environment, which opened as SCOC in 1983.

The churches described SCOC as "an expression of faith," what Haresnape calls "a kind of Kingdom hospitality." This hospitality has always extended to those in the geographic community around SCOC.

Haresnape adds, "It is an expression of faith [to say] people are worth [it]: living well, having their vulnerabilities and needs

process" to attract new younger residents.

Still, Haresnape says, "I was excited about moving to a place that had a vision and history. I appreciate the friendliness and hospitality of my neighbours."

The majority of those neighbours are seniors, including those in long-term care. This is, as Neufeldt says, the stage at which "people are the most vulnerable."

Neufeldt contrasts SCOC with the typical nursing home. "It's not to say long-term care homes are terrible, yet," he says, noting that the model started off "well-intentioned." However, he says, this model is built on efficiencies

and even profit, on an ideology of professionalism rather than person-centred care.

“Everybody wants independence, but there comes a point where dependence becomes inevitable. The question is: what’s the form of support [needed] in that context? I’ve seen the damage that’s done to people by warehousing. The problem with ghettoizing is you create loneliness.”

The SCOC model is based on the Mennonite value of community, although SCOC works with Christian and interfaith groups that share similar values. Neufeldt recalls visits from the late Henri Nouwen, whose L’Arche community also values communal living.

Today, SCOC is looking to build a new “small homes” building where cohorts of eight will live in clusters much like ordinary, independent households.

Neufeldt points to a Saskatchewan long-term care home that adopted this

model. “The life change of the people in those houses is impossible to imagine. They shifted everything, and they’re doing it with the same operational money as before.” He hopes more institutions will consider this model.

Neufeldt and Haresnape are among those seeking to renew intergenerational connections, especially after many activities were halted by COVID. Haresnape describes SCOC’s indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, a library and woodworking shop, but says busy lives make connection challenging.

Haresnape says, “It is easy to get siloed by age group, [but] I’ve always found a lot more life doing things with a range of ages. For me, that’s what a normal, fulfilled life looks and feels like. You have to work at that intentionally in our society.”

He says that children from TUMC usually visit SCOC to perform a typical Nativity play during Advent each year.

“It would be great to do that more.” ●



Aldred Neufeldt (left) and Peter Haresnape in the St. Clair-O’Connor library.



CM For discussion

1. What would it take for you to live in a multigenerational home?
2. How have you benefited spiritually from relationships across generations?
3. What considerations factor into long-term care decisions?
4. What can we learn from cultures in which multiple generations typically live together?
5. How might intergenerational living change views on aging?

– **CM Staff**

Find resources on “Intergenerational Ministry” at commonword.ca/go/4172

Shalom and First Mennonite co-own church

By Lisa Williams, MCEC



Joint Thanksgiving service of Shalom Worship and Healing Center and First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario.

Shalom Worship and Healing Center and First Mennonite Church entered a new covenant this past fall as co-owners of the facility and property at 800 King Street East in Kitchener, Ontario.

Shalom, a Tigrinya-speaking congregation that joined Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) in 2016, worshipped at First Mennonite, an historically Swiss congregation, from 2010 to 2020.

When the Covid pandemic began, like most congregations, First Mennonite closed its doors, prompting Shalom to seek a new home.

The Chin Christian Church in Kitchener welcomed Shalom to use their facility, for which Shalom was deeply grateful. Still, they longed for a space of their own—somewhere large enough to accommodate their entire community, including adults, youth and children.

“God had a plan to bring us back to our place of origin. We were born here,” says Shalom pastor Daniel Tela. “We searched everywhere for a place to worship and tried to buy in several locations, but nothing worked out.”

The pandemic had brought changes for First Mennonite. It became clear that maintaining their large building was no longer sustainable on their own; it was

simply too big and was draining their resources.

“We felt called to a new type of relationship—a shared relationship,” says Rene Baergen, pastor at First Mennonite. They approached Shalom Worship and Healing Center, saying, “We know you’re looking for a home, and we’re unable to fill this one. Can we find a way to do this together?”

In February 2024, First Mennonite and Shalom started meeting to discuss what co-ownership might look like.

Norm Dyck, MCEC Mission Minister, and Fanosie Legesse, MCEC Intercultural Mission Minister, facilitated these conversations, guiding discussions on worship schedules, office hours, custodial needs, and financial arrangements.

Tela says, “Each supported the other as we came together as one, and this harmony was evident. We didn’t face any really difficult conversations—that is the leading of the Holy Spirit!”

Both congregations look forward to learning from each other and deepening their understanding of God’s kingdom.

“We are now in this together. They are

coming home, but as co-owners—not tenants with an office in the basement,” says Baergen. “This, I believe, is what intercultural community calls us to.”

As First Mennonite lets go of sole ownership and all that comes with it,



Rene Baergen, pastor of First Mennonite, signing the covenant, with Norm Dyck.

Shalom is learning the responsibilities of caring for a shared building.

The congregations gathered in joyful unity on Thanksgiving morning, October 12, 2024, their voices rising in heartfelt praise, celebrating the new covenanted relationship as a testament to God’s enduring faithfulness. ●



The cedar bog on the Wiederkehr farm near Mildmay, Ontario.

A localized pilgrimage

By Theo Wiederkehr

As I write this, the birds are flying south. Their migration has me thinking about pilgrimage. I wonder about Mennonite understandings of pilgrimage, and what place pilgrimage might have in our lives and faith.

For much of Western Christian history, pilgrims went from their home to a sacred place, often one where the relics of saints were kept, and then returned home. Post-Reformation, those who left the Catholic church quit seeking relics, but the appeal of practising pilgrimage lingers. I hear about it repeatedly in various Mennonite circles, though ideas have changed.

Some people follow the old model to some extent, walking famous pilgrimage routes like the Camino de Santiago in Spain. However, these pilgrimages are often truncated. The destination isn't

the focus anymore; the journey itself is the place to meet God. Often the traditional destination, such as the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, isn't even on the itinerary. In addition, rather than beginning and ending at home, the pilgrim takes a jet to a point on the route, *then* begins the pilgrimage, ends it somewhere else on the route and flies home.

How do these changes affect the experience?

I think part of the motivation behind these pilgrimages is that our faith hasn't fully, deeply naturalized in this continent.

But I have also heard about other kinds of sacred places, ones on this side of the ocean. While we rarely use the language of pilgrimage to talk about them, I think they partially fill that niche. For Mennonites in Canada, I can think of at least

three sorts of pilgrimage destinations.

First, people with family histories on this continent and/or in this denomination visit places like the Mennonite Heritage Village in Manitoba and Brubacher House in Ontario. Some destinations are more personal—I just revisited a farm near Guelph, Ontario, where I spent formative years of my childhood.

Of course, some of us also follow our family lines back across the ocean, visiting Ukraine, the Netherlands, Switzerland and other points where our ancestors lived. (Is the Khortitza Oak a Mennonite relic?)

Second, many of us love going to wilderness places, usually national or provincial parks, to experience God's presence. In those places, we are on high alert, not just because there might be

bears and moose and rattlesnakes nearby, but also because God might be there.

Third, many of us have connections to a sort of hybrid of those two pilgrimage destinations: church-related summer camps. These are special places in individual faith journeys while also including an element of commonality of experience, as with pilgrims in the past.

But our trips to these special (sacred?) landscapes don't quite fit the traditional model of pilgrimage. Here the journey isn't the point at all; God isn't expected to show up on the highway. And while the destination can guide us toward God, that guiding is subtle. Often, our talk about these places is more about the generations who came before us, or the beauty and harmony of rocks and trees, or experiences of community and belonging, rather than using distinctly Christian vocabulary.

A less distant longing

In both the older and newer forms of pilgrimage, the goal is to seek God and find personal renewal by going somewhere else. I feel distinct discomfort with this.

Certainly, we cannot fully comprehend the majesty and magnitude of our Creator if we know only one corner of creation, and I am as restless as any human, but I wonder whether the transformation comes home with us, or whether it is mostly experienced while we are away.

If we keep seeking God far from where we live, what does that say about our appreciation of our home place, and our alertness to God in our daily lives here?

This is an especially urgent question for me because trips to seek God in far-off places are not without cost.

I live in ordinary farm country, which I happen to love, and where I happen to sometimes think God is around.

Increasingly, I am aware that our home ecosystems—like the areas surrounding the 100 acres my family and I call home—are being sacrificed to accommodate modern ways of life. This involves locating sacred places somewhere else. Ordinary places supply the food and fuel people need to drive through, or away from, as they go looking for places where they

might catch a glimpse of God.

Our area suffers from loss of human community and various ecological shifts like less predictable weather, loss of wetlands, increased size of fields, reduced crop rotations and destruction of fencerow trees—much of this due largely to shifts in farming driven by the larger economic and social system we all



participate in.

My home habitat, a country of small fields and pastures, of mixed hardwood and coniferous forest, of cedar swamps and cattail marshes, is not particularly remarkable. But if I can't find traces of our Creator in a cedar swamp, where am I going to look?

Maybe I speak about pilgrimage too much as an outsider, and maybe my definitions are too rigid. The pilgrimage experiences I describe have not been central to my formation.

I feel the draw of pilgrimage, but I'm not quite comfortable with either of the models I've heard about. I keep wondering what Christian, and particularly Mennonite, pilgrimage on this continent would look like if we tried to hold together both the journey from home to home, and a destination which holds some special significance for our faith.

What if our perspective on pilgrimage included a recognition of the good in our home place and in all of creation, and a determination not to sacrifice some places in our efforts to see other places?

Maybe exploring pilgrimage is part of my inheritance. My last name, chosen by my parents when they married, means "return" in German, the language of our ancestors.

As I watch the birds go, I know they will return next spring. And I know that, on larger and smaller time scales and distances, we all go and return in one way or another. In my work to subsist sustainably, caring for land and other people in a rather small way, I often struggle with feeling that I am just seeking to turn the clock back to some imagined golden age in the past.

But as I reflect on pilgrimage, I don't think so. Instead, I see many aspects of my daily life—cutting firewood by hand, listening to owls calling in the night, learning how Swedish farmers prepared for winter, noting the changes in where tamaracks grow in our cedar swamps—as pilgrimage. This work involves going from the familiar to search for a new way of living, caring for the familiar creatures God created. It is learning from the remarkable knowledge gained in this era of fossil fuel use and turning it to wisdom for the difficult daily life we will have to practice after it ends. It is expecting to glimpse God's imprint in nature during the daily rhythm of living, rather than just in flights away from it. It is, in a way, looking for holy relics everywhere, and living where they are found. ●

A sobering, optimistic challenge

Over 500 years, Anabaptism has gone global. To mark the 500th anniversary, Canadian Mennonite will feature six reviews of books written by Anabaptist thinkers from abroad. Below is the first.

By Josh Martin

Stuart Murray's *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* is a bold project.

Murray is a church planter, founding director of the Centre for Anabaptist Studies in Great Britain and author of *The Naked Anabaptist*. In this book, he takes on the brave task of naming the time the Western church is in, as well as where we've come from. He outlines what it means to face these realities honestly, with integrity and as Christians.

While his focus is on the history and present of Western Christianity, Murray notes the church in Africa and in the East have different experiences. He says we would do well to humbly avail ourselves of the global church's wisdom and insights as we navigate this time of transition.

Murray structures his book as a combination of historic and thematic overviews.

He names the relevant periods—pre-Christendom, Christendom and post-Christendom—and addresses specific themes within each, such as biblical interpretation, centrality of Jesus and clericalism. Within these periods he identifies specific groups such as Roman Catholics, mainline reformers, Anabaptists and dissidents like the Waldensians and the Donatists. He addresses these groups via various themes similar to those above.

Although not always tidy, this structure effectively and concisely gives the reader a strong sense of what Christendom is, how it began, what problems it wrought, how it is ending and what response that ending might require of us today.

The time for the centrality of Christianity in Western societies is past, and though we are not there yet, Christian marginality will soon be upon us. For Murray, this is not a dire prediction, but a reality in a pluralistic society, and one worth celebrating. Murray says what

is being lost is not Christianity itself, but Christendom, a perverse form of Christianity that took root through imperial force.

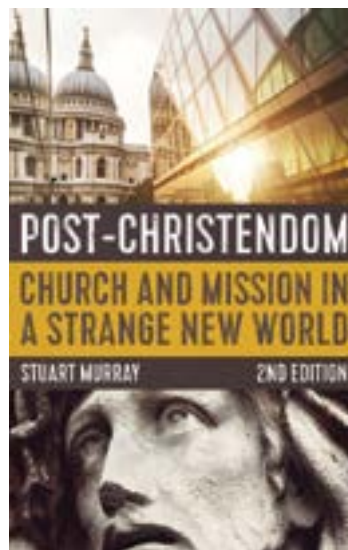
Murray humbly recognizes the complexities of history, acknowledging that this is not a story of “good guys versus bad guys.” He encourages readers to do the honest, hard work of acknowledging the evils and corruptions

of Christendom, while sorting through the mess to find the elements of Christendom that have been good, nurturing and in line with the gospel of Jesus.

Likewise, he says, we must take a similarly critical approach to Anabaptism, sorting the good from the bad, the helpful from the unhelpful.

Murray points out, for instance, that the post-Christendom church will have an opportunity it hasn't had for 1500 years: to tell the Christian story to those in our midst who are completely unfamiliar with it. The challenge of the present moment is that, for the most part, people are familiar enough with Christianity to find it uninteresting or offensive (because of our Christendom history), but not familiar enough to know in detail matters such as what Jesus actually said and did.

As a pastor in the Mennonite Church in the midst of Anabaptism at 500, I found this book both solemnly refreshing and warmly disheartening. As I consider 500 years of Anabaptism, I am grateful for the heritage, but I am more sorrowful for the increasingly fractured church and the way that Anabaptism is another



piece in that tragic puzzle, as the Anabaptist church itself has fractured continuously for a half-millennium.

I acknowledge the necessity for dissidents throughout history and lament how far we dissidents have come in returning to the errors we rejected, even while we reject good fruit from the Catholic and mainline Protestant trees. Each church celebrates itself, its history and its identity as

distinct from other churches, while our sameness is so seldom acknowledged. We share a propensity for failing to be disciples of Jesus with unity in Christ.

Post-Christendom reminds us that the future of the Church does not allow us the luxury of petty division nor of nominalism.

It is my honour as a pastor to serve the people of God. Yet I often wonder what on earth we're doing. What is church? What has it become? How much does what we do at church have to do with being the people of God living in an alternative kingdom and serving an alternative king, even as we wait for his return?

Post-Christendom speaks directly to these troubling questions, affirming my experience and offering even more questions to consider.

I join Murray in welcoming the age of post-Christendom. Perhaps now that the kingdom Christians built for ourselves is failing, we will have more room to wait, actively and well, for our coming king. ●

Josh Martin is pastor of Cassel Mennonite Church in Tavistock, Ontario.

Menno Court celebrates 50th and looks to expand

By Andre Pekovich



Tenants, visitors and supporters line up for food at the 50th anniversary celebration for Menno Court in Vancouver.

In July, a 170-unit residential building serving low-income seniors in Vancouver celebrated its 50th anniversary. Menno Court was built in 1974 as a joint project of Mennonite Brethren and General Conference congregations in Greater Vancouver. At the time, many senior Mennonites, particularly women, were living in unsuitable accommodations.

In response to a 1969 call to action from Erwin Cornelsen, pastor at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church in Vancouver at the time, more than a dozen churches began organizing. In 1972, land was purchased for \$400,000, with board members each guaranteeing part of the debt incurred for land purchase and construction. The project was completed in 1974.

With a chapel, recreation room, community kitchen and dining room all arranged around a spacious green courtyard, it has been a safe home for many through the years, offering rents well below market value, mostly in compact bachelor and studio suites, with some one-bedroom suites for couples.

“This place provided a home for me and my wife after my serious illness when we were in danger of homelessness,” said one tenant, Jim. “We were making plans to

live the rest of our lives in a camper van.”

Spiritual care was initially provided by numerous churches that held services in the chapel on a rotating basis, but as immigrant families from other parts of the world became the majority of tenants, regular chapel services for residents ceased.

However, two prayer groups now meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and since last winter, the chapel has come back to life on Sunday morning as the home of Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship.

Mennonites from various local churches remain on the board to provide direction to the organization, and relationships have been formed with community agencies such as South Vancouver Neighbourhood House that provide services to seniors, and the Jewish Family Services, which provides referrals.

Board members speak of the opportunity to expand the project greatly to serve hundreds more low-income tenants and are making plans to seek funding for a new Menno Court. Anyone interested in serving on the board can contact info@mennocourt.ca.

See a longer version of this article at canadianmennonite.org/mennocourt. ●



Tony Campolo. Photo by Brad Siefert.

Tony Campolo dies

Tony Campolo, known to many Mennonites for his Jesus-centred social justice teaching, died November 19, 2024, at 89. An American Baptist minister and sociologist, Campolo spent decades convincing Christians that faith in Christ should motivate us to address social issues like poverty and racism. As a public speaker and author, Campolo championed the Red Letter Christians movement. *Source: Eastern University, Red Letter Christians*

CMU announces new biblical studies chair

Starting summer 2025, Andrew Dyck and Paul Doerksen will share Canadian Mennonite University's (CMU) new P.M. Friesen Chair in Biblical and Theological Studies (BTS). Funded through a \$2 million endowment from Edwin and Agnes Redekopp of Winnipeg, the chair will ensure “the ongoing strength of BTS excellence” with an emphasis on the Mennonite Brethren church tradition. The chair was inaugurated October 22 at CMU's annual J.J. Thiessen lectures. *Source: CMU*

RJC to include Grade 9

RJC High School in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, will accept Grade 9 students starting in fall 2025. The school, which currently teaches grades 10 to 12, made the change in response to parent and student requests and after years-long consideration by the RJC board. Grade 9 students will live in the dormitory and participate fully in RJC activities. *Source: RJC*



Hugo and Doreen Neufeld with Iris, their first great-grandchild.

Just as interested in life

An interview with Hugo and Doreen Neufeld

By Susan Fish

Hugo and Doreen Neufeld, 84 and 88 respectively, co-directed the Welcome Inn Community Centre in Hamilton before they were both ordained. Doreen was one of the first ordained Mennonite women in Canada. They are now deacons at Trinity Mennonite Church in Calgary.

What is your earliest memory of church?

Doreen: I remember being about three or four years old and being dropped off at our school in Manitoba for Sunday school. There were fun evening programs where large families would sing, and the kids would recite a poem.

Hugo: My earliest memories are around stories. We lived on a fruit farm in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. The whole family would be picking fruit, and someone would say, “Dad, tell us a story.” My father was quite a storyteller. He would tell a story while we picked. I remember him telling about how the Israelites fled out of Egypt, their liberation. That’s etched in my mind.

What is your best memory of church?

Doreen: Singing in the choir. Sometimes my mind wandered, and I didn’t hear the sermon well, but a song would bring me back to the message. Then, at the Welcome Inn, a church developed. Those people had deeply spiritual experiences, but most did not attend church, feeling uncomfortable, the way people looked at them. We asked: what would church look like if *you* were to plan it? It started slowly and became an exciting experience with people who felt this was their church.

Hugo: My favourite memories are at the Welcome Inn, where people began exploring the Bible for the first time. We learned we *all* have something to give and the importance of being created in God’s image. God had been there before we were.

What is your most difficult memory of church?

Hugo: I remember thinking abuse by leaders didn’t happen in the church, only to realize it did.

Doreen: When the charismatic movement began, I thought, this can’t be wrong, it’s biblical. Then it began to divide our church.

Tell us about the people who have influenced you the most.

Doreen: Our lead pastor wasn’t the most powerful preacher, but the sincerity of his life and his caring were important to me. Another pastor had a way of connecting with the young people, bringing ideas to our level. A third pastor preached sermons that had depth—I listened to them, which was unique for me.

Hugo: My parents were very influential, as was Walter Wangerin, who wrote *The Ragman*. He was a pastor who related to those who lived below the poverty line, picking out their gifts.

Can you share a favourite book, passage, poem or song?

Hugo: Don Kraybill’s *The Upside-Down Kingdom*. The title says it all. The other is a book called *Schools Without Failure* by William Glasser.

Doreen: I love the majesty of the song, “O Have You Not Heard of that Beautiful Stream.” The song “Everything is Beautiful in its Own Way” helped me see the beauty in people and things I would previously have classified on the wrong side of beauty.

What do young people not understand about old age?

Doreen: I’ve often said that young people don’t know what old age is like because they’ve never been there, but old people have no excuse; they ought to understand young people because they have all been young. I certainly didn’t understand that old people could be just as fun-loving and frisky and energetic.

LIFE IN THE 80S

Hugo: Young people understand us pretty well.

What is the hardest thing about getting older?

Hugo: Finally realizing you can't do everything you used to. I can't fix a plumbing fixture like I used to. I can still do it, but not as well, and it takes a lot of time.

Doreen: I developed age-related macular degeneration and have hearing issues. Sometimes I think I shouldn't go to meetings [if I can't hear well], but then I miss the connection, so it's weighing the balance. The other thing is that you lose friends and family.

What is best?

Doreen: One of the beauties of old age is learning to appreciate those from a broader age range, recognizing everyone has something to offer.

Hugo: I get excited when I can say, "Hey, I can still relate to a young adult!" I also enjoy reflecting along the whole lifespan. And we're not quite as tied to committees now.

What do you wish someone had told you about getting older?

Doreen: That you're just as interested in life when you're older as when you're younger, unless you're ill. I was floored when my mom turned 80, and she was still

acting kind of normal.

Hugo: My mom lived to 94. She told me that getting old isn't easy. I didn't really listen to her. Now I see what she meant.

If you had one chance at a sermon, what would it be about?

Doreen: Unity in Christ. We tend to think we're a bit better than other denominations, but we will all be present around the throne of God.

Hugo: Truth-telling—discerning what is of God and how to do this in a lifelong way. ●



Anabaptism at 500

Looking Back, Living Forward



PASTORS & LEADERS 2025

Monday, Feb. 17 – Thursday, Feb. 20

Speakers

- Monday: **John D. Roth**, PhD, Project Director, "Anabaptism at 500"; General Editor, *Anabaptist Community Bible*, MennoMedia
- Tuesday: **Kelbessa Muleta Demena**, MDiv, Vice President of Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia
- Wednesday: **Lesley Francisco McClendon**, DMin, Senior Pastor of C3 Hampton, a Mennonite Church USA congregation in Hampton, Virginia
- Thursday: panel discussion and Q&A with all three speakers

Held at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana.
Join us in person or online! Learn more: amb.s.ca/pastors-and-leaders

Plus! Leadership Clinics Monday, Feb. 17

As we celebrate 500 years of Anabaptism, join us to examine how the values of the early Anabaptists still resonate today and can guide us into the future!

Gain intercultural perspectives on how reading the Bible in community can help us connect more authentically in our present and future contexts.



**Anabaptist Mennonite
Biblical Seminary**

Divine mandate to heal and reconcile

The following is adapted from a sermon given at Stirling Avenue Mennonite in Kitchener, Ontario.

By Rula Khoury Mansour

I am a Palestinian Christian—a Christian whose roots run deep in the Holy Land. My story is one of resilience and seeking peace in a land torn by ongoing conflict.

However, this journey wasn't easy.

It began as a law student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict confronted me daily. In the midst of that, I searched for God, and there he was, showing me the mystery of the in-between (being Palestinian with Israeli citizenship), revealing my role as a bridge-builder between two opposing worlds that seemed forever divided.

After law school, I was determined to influence the legal system from the inside, by becoming a public prosecutor in Israel, a role rarely available to Palestinians at the time and not fully accepted by my community. By God's grace, I served all communities of Israel—Jews, Palestinians, Christians and Muslims. But I soon realized that the conflict goes beyond legal issues. This led me to pursue a PhD in reconciliation theology, in an effort to understand how Christ's teachings about truth, forgiveness and justice could bring healing to our broken land.

Several years ago I started a peacebuilding ministry called Nazareth Center for Peace Studies. We work on the grassroots level to empower individuals and communities as peacebuilders through training and research rooted in Christ's teachings.

We are all aware of the deep sorrow spreading worldwide. October 7's devastating war has caused immense suffering and destruction for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank and for people in Israel as well. Wars also rage in Ukraine, Myanmar and other places. Nations and families are divided, often struggling to recognize each other's humanity.

But followers of Christ are called to carry on his mission to love, heal, free, serve and to bridge these divides. In 2

Corinthians 5:18, Paul wrote *"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."*

This calling is a divine mandate and sacred task entrusted to the church by God.

When Jesus said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God"* (Matthew 5:9), he was speaking to people oppressed under Rome's brutal rule. These words echo today, calling us to step into brokenness.

We are called to heal brokenness by speaking truth and acknowledging pain, extending forgiveness, seeking justice, promoting healing and envisioning a shared future. These are the signs of the kingdom of God and are deeply connected strategies to overcome evil with good, leading us toward reconciliation.

Seek truth

Truthfulness is highlighted in the ninth commandment: *"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour"* (Exodus 20:16).

Healing and reconciliation start with the courage to tell the truth. Yet, we often don't genuinely seek truth; instead, we tend to hold tightly to the belief that we know the whole story and feel no need to listen to others' perspectives. We lock ourselves into a cycle of blame and bitterness.

Shared truth calls us to step away from "truth-owning" to "truth-seeking." It's a shift that requires humility to recognize that we may not have the full picture or might be misinformed. It also demands a willingness to listen to others' perspectives, even when they challenge our convictions or sense of identity.

It means confronting histories we'd rather ignore. A powerful example is South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Churches across

the country played an important role, providing spaces for victims and perpetrators to share their stories. In doing so, they fostered a shared truth that acknowledged harm, encouraged understanding and prepared the way for healing.

Remember and forgive

Forgiveness is the hardest part of reconciliation. To ask people to forgive after tragedies might feel offensive. The saying "Never forget, never forgive" feels like the only way to honour their pain. Yet when we hold tight to this mindset, we only deepen our wounds.

Forgiveness doesn't ignore justice; it seeks to transform it. It refuses to let justice become a weapon of retaliation but instead pursues it as a healing, restoring act. In our context, where hatred and trauma run deep, forgiveness is not a sign of weakness but a radical, courageous choice that disrupts the cycle of violence. It doesn't deny the past; it acknowledges it and then releases it.

In Rwanda, programs led by churches encouraged genocide survivors to forgive the perpetrators. Though incredibly painful, this approach offered communities a way out of bitterness and revenge. These churches, working alongside survivors, created spaces where the message of forgiveness could take root, turning a cycle of hatred into one of healing and resilience. Forgiveness became a strategy to overcome evil with good.

Revenge to restoration

Proverbs 31:8-9 says, *"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."*

Justice and forgiveness are deeply connected. Christianity inherently condemns injustice. Justice, in the context

of reconciliation, promotes healing by restoring dignity and rights, holding wrongdoers accountable, and repairing what's broken. True biblical justice confronts the systemic injustice, but it also hopes for transformation—a justice that not only heals the victim but seeks to restore the perpetrator.

The African-American church in the U.S. guided the Civil Rights Movement with Christian values of liberation, equality and nonviolence. Through worship, teachings and prayers, they reinforced these values, helping change discriminatory laws. With peaceful sit-ins, marches and public sermons, they showed a path to justice that uplifts, holds people accountable and seeks healing and transformation.

Exclusion to embrace

Romans 15:7 teaches: *“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God”*

The most challenging aspect of reconciliation is imagining a shared future. God's welcome of hostile humanity into divine communion is an example for how we should relate to others.

Right now, in the Holy Land and in many places, separation and exclusion dominate. Reconciliation calls us to see beyond the walls to a future in which we embrace each other fully as God's children.

In Northern Ireland, the church played a crucial role in bridging divides between Catholics and Protestants. Through shared projects, worship services and youth programs, they slowly helped communities break down barriers. They worked to envision a world where they could be neighbours and friends rather than enemies.

Of course, sincere apologies and reparations that recognize pain, restore dignity and raise public awareness are essential for healing and change.

This vision of reconciliation may seem aspirational. When war rages, reconciliation can feel like a luxury we can't afford. Yet conflicts—whether in my homeland or anywhere else—are not just about land or ancient claims. They are about people who suffer tragedies and long for dignity, security and a place to call home.

It's easy to lose hope when surrounded by suffering and scenes of destruction,

but we are called to be bearers of hope for those who suffer, even when it feels impossible.

My commitment to reconciliation is grounded in four main convictions:

1. This mission is woven into our very identity—it's not just what we do, but who we are.

2. There is deep joy in walking through valleys with God, seeing his redemptive power at work.

3. Suffering isn't merely a hardship to endure—it's part of the mission shaping us and those we serve.

4. Even in darkness, we celebrate small victories—moments of grace that remind us reconciliation is not a distant dream but an unfolding reality. ●



Rula Khoury Mansour is the founding director of the Nazareth Center for Peace Studies and associate professor at Nazareth Evangelical

College. She holds a Ph.D. in peace studies and theology from Oxford. She lives in Nazareth with her husband and three sons.

Floored by historic beauty

By Kalkidan Ararso, Conrad Grebel University College

On November 8, the “Resurfacing: Mennonite Floor Patterns” exhibit launched at the Conrad Grebel University College Gallery in Waterloo, Ontario. Guests engaged with Margruite Krahn (pictured), the Neubergthal, Manitoba, artist whose natural, hand-cut stencils showcase historic Mennonite floor patterns. Margruite's passion for this art form began unexpectedly while renovating her historic “house barn” home, where she uncovered a hand-painted floor beneath layers of carpet and linoleum. For Margruite, this is not just an artistic endeavour but also a social and cultural investigation into an overlooked aspect of historical Mennonite culture: women's creativity and statements of beauty in a rigidly structured world. ●



Peace Train arrives in Ottawa

By John Longhurst



Val Falk (left), Agnes Hubert, Lori Matties and Gordon Matties prepare to board the Peace Train in Vancouver.

For Winnipegger Gordon Matties, being part of the November 15–23 Peace Train from Vancouver to Ottawa was about imagining “a hopeful future, a future without war, a future of peace with justice for all of creation.”

Gordon was one of four people from River East Church, which is affiliated with Mennonite Church Manitoba, who went on the train. Also on the trip from the church was his spouse, Lori, as well as Val Falk and Agnes Hubert.

The goal of the Peace Train was to ask the federal government to spend a fraction of the money it devotes to the military to establish and fund a Centre of Excellence for Peace and Justice focused on research, education and training in conflict resolution, diplomacy and peace operations around the world, and to renew Canada’s historical commitment to peacekeeping around the world.

Forty people from B.C. and Manitoba were part of the train journey. The trip began with an interfaith service at Canadian Memorial United Church in Vancouver. More than 100 people

attended the event that featured blessings from the Indigenous, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Tibetan and Christian traditions. Along the way, supporters met the train at station stops in Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Brockville and Ottawa.

In Ottawa, the Peace Train held a reception with Members of Parliament from all four parties. Individual Peace Trainers also met with their MPs, and a rally was held on Parliament Hill.

For Gordon, being on the train was a way to show how all the talk about the money Canada spends on NATO “avoids conversations about how we might prepare for peace, rather than war. Wouldn’t it make more sense to spend a portion of that money on training and providing resources for diplomatic solutions to conflict?”

For Lori, going on the train was a way to contribute to the “recovery of Canada’s voice for peace.” Agnes was inspired by her Anabaptist background to “highlight peacemaking and diplomacy as a role that Canada can make its own in a more

substantive way.... I think it is a faithful interpretation of Jesus’ teachings.”

The Peace Train was the brainchild of Keith and Bernadette Wyton of Port Alberni, B.C. The retired couple want to see Canada recover its much-lauded and highly respected tradition of peacekeeping—something it no longer is known for.

Bernadette noted that Canada once had as many as 3,000 peacekeepers in hotspots around the world, but today it has only 31.

For Keith, it was about Canada recovering its “honourable history of peace efforts going back to 1957 and Lester Pearson’s Nobel Prize for helping create the first UN peacekeeping force.”

Through the train, the two hoped the message of the importance of peace was communicated to politicians.

“It wasn’t a protest but an effort to lift up all those who will rise to the current global challenges of resisting polarization, rampant self-interest and an industrial war machine that is out of control,” Bernadette said.

Their message was amplified on November 16 in Edmonton, where Douglas Roche, a former Canadian Senator, parliamentarian and diplomat, met Peace Train participants at the station.

Canada needs “to find a new way to stop militarism. We need new diplomatic initiatives for peace,” Roche said.

Noting that the election of Donald Trump may mean Canada can expect pressure to spend more on the military, Roche said money would be better spent on housing, education and healthcare at home. “That’s where Canadians want their tax dollars to go, not more militarism,” he said.

For more about the Peace Train, see peacetraincanada.blogspot.com. ●

John Longhurst is a freelance writer from Winnipeg. He rode the Peace Train from Vancouver to Ottawa.




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Formation that matters

Cross-cultural experiences shape faculty members' teaching

With 18 countries currently represented in AMBS's learning community, both students and faculty members have opportunities to grow through collaborative cross-cultural learning processes. We invited four faculty members to share about cross-cultural experiences that have shaped how they prepare leaders for ministry and service across the world.

Leah R. Thomas, PhD,
Assistant Professor of Pastoral
Care; Director of Contextual
Education

"Every human person is in certain respects (1) like all others, (2) like some others, (3) like no other."
— Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling*

As a professor of pastoral and spiritual care, I've found this definition to be a helpful guiding principle, both for teaching intercultural pastoral care and for practicing it in the classroom. It holds together the three-fold truth that there are characteristics that all have in common; that are shaped and influenced by our distinct community and culture; and that are unique to each one of us. In my own cross-cultural experiences, whether teaching in Zimbabwe,

studying in Jerusalem or visiting base communities in Mexico, I have realized again and again that certain human experiences are universal. We all seek love and connection; we all grieve when faced with loss. Studies in grief and trauma confirm that certain neurobiological realities cut across culture, such as the response of the brain and body when confronted with an event that we interpret as a threat to our survival.

At the same time, the way we talk about grief, loss and trauma varies by culture; some languages don't have a word for trauma, for example. Even the definition of "dead" can be culturally specific. Paul Rosenblatt notes that on Vanatinai Island, southeast of Papua New Guinea, people who would be considered

unconscious in Western culture are referred to as "dead." In this culture, it is possible for a person to die a number of times. Patterns of grieving — what people who have experienced loss believe, feel and do — also vary enormously from culture to culture.

In AMBS's multicultural learning environment, three or more continents are frequently represented in the classroom, as well as various racial identities,

(continued on p. 2)

Above: Leah Thomas teaches a course on pastoral care in June 2022. (Credit: Peter Ringenberg)

The way we talk about grief, loss and trauma varies by culture; some languages don't have a word for trauma.

(continued from p. 1)

ethnicities and languages. To teach about grief, I begin the class by inviting students to speak about what grief and mourning “look like” in their home culture. Students offer rich, culturally diverse descriptions of grief and mourning in their culture — including how it is (or is not) expressed, the role of the body in grief, what is considered “normative” or “excessive,” and rituals and traditions that accompany the grieving process.

While it’s important to seek knowledge about other cultures, it’s also essential to recognize that knowledge cannot be a substitute for authentic encounters with one another! Each person is beautifully unique — physically, psychosocially and spiritually — and needs to be respected as such. To respect interculturality in pastoral/spiritual care is to live at the intersection of these three realities,

constantly discerning which aspect of human personhood is in need of our immediate attention while holding the other two in view.



Luis Tapia Rubio, MDiv, MPhil, Director of Practical Leadership Training; Core Adjunct Faculty

Luis Tapia Rubio
(Credit: Peter Ringenberg)

In my teaching at AMBS, I bring my intercultural and ecumenical experiences from my time in Chile, Ecuador and the U.S. I have worked in Baptist, Catholic and Mennonite settings with Latinos/Latinas from different countries. From all of those experiences, I have learned that to be an effective teacher, you need to be aware of your own social and cultural context and your students’ as well.

When I was a young pastor and theology instructor in the Baptist Church in Chile, my first theological teaching experiences were in my congregation and also in training Baptist pastors and leaders in the local Bible institute. Back then, I believed that teaching theology meant “depositing” abstract and academic “content” into the congregants’ and students’ minds, with the hope that it could change the way they lived and ministered. Over time, I realized that I was having problems connecting that specific theological “content” with my congregants’ and students’ needs because it was coming from other

social and cultural contexts — usually from the U.S. and Europe. Our social and cultural context determines our theological convictions — the beliefs that we live out and communicate in different ways.

I aim to form students who “do” theology within their own social and cultural contexts, considering their own needs and questions in line with the Anabaptist tradition.

In my teaching at AMBS now, instead of trying to “deposit” theological “content” into students’ minds, my goal is to facilitate a teaching-learning process

where we can learn from each other. I aim to form students who “do” theology within their own social and cultural contexts, considering their own needs and questions in line with the Anabaptist tradition. In that sense, I am aware that I, too, participate in the teaching-learning process. My own social and cultural background and AMBS’s social and cultural context are two specific settings that participate in a cross-cultural theological dialogue — a dialogue that integrates our bodies, minds and spirits.

Jamie Pitts, PhD, Professor of Anabaptist Studies

I lived in Scotland for five years while studying for my PhD. Very few people in Scotland are committed Christians, and almost no one has even heard of Mennonites. I had to explain repeatedly why I have faith — despite all the bad things Christians have done — and who Mennonites are. Over time I learned to not make many assumptions about what kind of theological knowledge someone might have; to honor their experiences with the church; and to answer their questions as directly and clearly as possible. Prioritizing clarity was especially important since, although Scots speak English, there are myriad idioms that do not translate well across cultures. These experiences helped prepare me to navigate AMBS’s multicultural



Jamie Pitts (at back) teaches a course on Christian ethics and peace theology in September 2024. (Credit: Brittany Purlee)

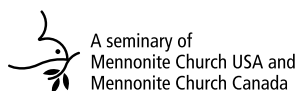
AMBS Window Winter 2025

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classrooms, which always include students with a range of experiences with academic theology, the church and the English language.

At the level of spiritual and emotional formation, my time in Scotland also helped me to embrace my identity as a Christian from the United States — and Texas, no less. To be honest, it could be a little embarrassing to identify myself in those terms at a time in which American Christianity was associated with fellow Texan George W. Bush bombing Iraq. But as the years went on, I had many opportunities to reflect on how growing up as a Christian in the U.S. had shaped me in complex ways.

Coming to understand, accept and even affirm aspects of this shaping while I was learning to navigate Scottish culture began to teach me about

“My time in Scotland also helped me to embrace my identity as a Christian from the United States — and Texas, no less.

the dance of differentiated relationships. In other words, the quality of my cross-cultural relationships did not depend on me becoming or acting

Scottish but on my authentically being me — American Christian that I was — even as I opened myself with curiosity and receptivity to others. I have found cultivating this posture essential to everything we do at AMBS, especially as we have expanded our global partnerships.

Janna Hunter-Bowman, PhD, Associate Professor of Peace Studies and Christian Social Ethics

Every day at AMBS brings opportunities for rich cross-cultural interactions and learning. Since joining the Teaching Faculty in 2015, I've enjoyed working with students from 22 countries. In May, I had the honor of traveling to South Korea to teach Introduction to Peace Studies and Nonviolence to a cohort of students through AMBS's partnership with the Nehemiah Institute (*see sidebar*).

These cross-cultural encounters — in addition to nearly a decade of working for peace and non-violent action in Colombia — have led me to think, teach and engage in what I call a third wave of Anabaptist peace theology. The first wave consists of nonresistance; the second emphasizes transformation. The third is about reckoning with the forms of violence that exist within our peace church communities, institutions, histories and theologies — so that we can more fully carry forward our commitments to justice and transformation. My students from the Global South voice that



first- and second-wave peace theologies exclude them because they don't grapple with legacies of colonialism. In addition, my South Korean students said respectfully and clearly what I have also learned from people from the Global South and from survivors of sexualized violence: the second-wave conflict transformation peacebuilding framework does not adequately address hierarchies of power within a community.

I'm grateful for how our students help us grapple with textured truths about our peace theology from the perspectives of those it excludes and those most affected by violence. We can open ourselves to understand and address harmful patterns. When we pay careful attention together to the limitations of previous waves of peace studies frameworks, we gain new insights that students then use to design peacebuilding approaches for their contexts and to contribute to scholarship. ●

Janna Hunter-Bowman (at left) and Sun Ju Moon, MDiv (second from left), Course Assistant, pose with students at the Nehemiah Institute. (Photo provided)

“I'm grateful for how our students help us grapple with textured truths about our peace theology from the perspectives of those it excludes and those most affected by violence.”

Responding to a call for peace education

Since 2022, AMBS has collaborated with the Nehemiah Institute for Christian Studies (NICS) in Seoul, South Korea, to offer an accredited graduate-level Anabaptist theology and peace studies program to NICS students.

A cohort of nine students is enrolled in AMBS's Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism program with an emphasis on Anabaptist peace studies. Course materials are translated into Korean, and the courses are taught either in Korean or in English with Korean interpretation.

NICS leaders who knew Anabaptist leaders in South Korea (including some AMBS alumni) initiated the partnership. Also, Mennonite Church Canada International Witness and Mennonite Mission Network (both AMBS partners) have strong and historic connections to the Korean Mennonite Church and Korea Anabaptist Center.

Hands-on learning forges new skills

Graduate students reflect on their internship experiences

Abenezer Dejene,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Abenezer is a Master of Divinity student majoring in Theological Studies: Biblical Studies.



Last summer, I participated in Mountain States Mennonite Conference’s (MSMC) Future Anabaptist Leaders internship program. The program is designed for young adults interested in exploring leadership opportunities in congregations and passion ministries in the conference. Beth-El Mennonite Church in Colorado Springs hosted me as a home church. In the first half of my internship, I worked with



Abenezer Dejene (at right) makes a mattock from a gun barrel as Fred Martin, founding blacksmith of RAWtools, watches. (Photo provided)

RAWtools, a peacemaking mission organization committed to beating guns into plowshares and reimagining the world in a new way. In the second half, I spent most of my time with MSMC – visiting congregations, shadowing pastors, and participating in church and conference ministries.

My first responsibility was to help with an annual blacksmithing marathon; this year’s marathon involved RAWtools blacksmiths across the U.S. laboring one minute for each of the 44,000 lives lost to

gun violence in 2023. I was involved in various activities, from creating videos to metalwork. With MSMC, I visited seven Mennonite faith communities, traveling from Denver to Albuquerque. I spoke twice during Sunday services and participated in the conference’s Annual Assembly. I had the unique opportunity to engage in theological and pastoral discussions with pastors serving in various contexts.

Before the internship, I had no metalwork experience, but during it, I learned how to transform guns into garden tools and made a garden spade, a mattock, art pieces and talking pieces. In addition, I gained hands-on experience with actual

peacemaking engagement on the ground, starting with understanding a big-scale problem and moving toward action. I witnessed and learned from congregations’ active engagements in their communities through peacemaking, social justice and lamentation for those suffering in wars.

Sue Short, Archbold, Ohio

Sue, who serves on the pastoral ministry team at Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, completed a Master of Divinity with a major in Pastoral Ministry in August 2024.



The prospect of choosing a placement for my two-semester internship was a bit daunting. As a working pastor completing my seminary degree, I wanted something outside of my church’s walls that would enhance my ministry to the congregation. Volunteering with our local hospice and home health organization seemed like an excellent fit.

My educational goal was to learn as much as I could about this organization’s many services in our area. I helped at the adult day care center – serving as a conversation partner, a singer accompanying an elderly pianist and a gracious loser at card games. I accompanied the hospice nurses and social workers on their home visits, observing their kindness and care. And I received training to serve as a regular volunteer at the inpatient hospice center.

As I visited patients on my first day at the hospice center, I stopped by the room of an older woman sitting up in bed reading the newspaper. She welcomed me as I entered. I told her my name and that I was a new volunteer. She smiled and said, “This is my first time, too.”

The dying taught the pastor that day.

I discovered during these two semesters that this placement went far beyond what “fit” the course assignment. I grew in my capacity to sit with those at the end of their lives and with their families, gaining a broader perspective of loss. As I did so, I encountered the unique needs of adults grieving their parents, both before and after death. As the general population grows older, the number of adults who carry this largely unacknowledged pain

This placement went far beyond what “fit” the course assignment.

will also continue to grow — an important fact to keep in mind for those of us in helping professions.

Ultimately, this experience became a place where God met, humbled and nurtured me, even as I served others. I am forever changed and grateful.

Stephen Lowe, Virginia

Stephen is a Master of Divinity student majoring in Theological Studies: History, Theology and Ethics.



What does it mean to be a missional leader in the context of undergraduate education? The answer wasn't obvious as I began my role at Goshen (Indiana) College (GC) in August 2023 as an adjunct instructor of "Engaging the Bible" — an academic Bible class that all GC students take. However, the ideals of missional leadership deeply formed me over my yearlong internship.

My first learning goal was to work towards being what Doug Lemov describes as a "warm/strict" teacher in *Teach Like a Champion 2.0*: 62

Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College. He says teachers should be both warm and strict; flexible and inflexible; nurturing and "by the book." Finding the bal-

“What I uncovered was how missional leadership intersected with my vocation as an educator.

ance was a struggle. I tend towards being a "warm" teacher, but by not enforcing expectations of quality of work and timeliness in my classroom, I was doing my students a disservice.

For my second learning goal, I wanted to emphasize two key tasks for my students' study of the Bible: to engage voices inside and outside of the Bible that challenged their preconceptions about it; and to engage in reflection on their own beliefs, actions and relationship with faith. I hoped that while students might experience my class as a place of deconstruction on the surface, their deeper experience would plant the seeds of reconstruction towards life-giving belief structures as they navigated the complexities of college.

Neither of these goals seemed to be oriented towards mission; however, what I uncovered was how missional leadership intersected with my vocation as an educator. In both goals, I sought to introduce students to the paradox of the gospel: that what seems like failure may be God's victory; that growth only comes through death. In being a warm/strict teacher, I engaged my pastoral self to

Student internship placements (2021–24)

- 54 students who completed an internship/practicum (required for students in the Master of Divinity, MA: Theology and Peace Studies and Graduate Certificate in Spiritual Direction programs)
- 25 congregations served by student interns
- 21 organizations served by student interns, including nonprofit organizations, church agencies/organizations, educational institutions, a church camp and a retirement community
- 5 hospitals served by students fulfilling Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) requirements
- 13 U.S. states in which AMBS interns served
- 2 Canadian provinces in which AMBS interns served

Support endowed scholarships!

AMBS's Development Team recently established a new webpage that displays most of the seminary's 90 endowed scholarships, which significantly reduce the amount of tuition that graduate students must pay.

Each scholarship has its own subpage with a photo and brief biography of the people for whom the scholarship is named; the priorities for the scholarship; and testimonials from recipients (when available). Through these webpages, anyone can give to an existing scholarship in any amount and at any time!

I invite you to browse the scholarships at amsb.ca/endowed-scholarships and to see what a difference they are making in students' lives.

If you'd like to add your support, **would you consider donating to AMBS's endowed scholarships or establishing a new one?** Our goal is to raise \$400,000 for endowed scholarships by June 30, 2025 — the end of our fiscal year.

For new endowed scholarships, the name of a benefactor can be added once the fund reaches \$25,000. Scholarships can be named for the founders or their family, in memory or in honor of someone, or for a particular field of study. Criteria can be established for awarding the scholarships.

We're grateful for all who have contributed to endowed scholarships throughout AMBS's history in support of current and future leaders! — Bob Yoder, DMin, CFRM, CFRL, Director of Development

show God's love and compassion to my students. In inviting critical analysis of the biblical text and their own embedded beliefs, I helped students discover the paradoxical painful joy of putting to death life-stealing ideologies and encountering the life-giving gospel of God's shalom.

What does it mean to be a missional leader in education? My internship showed me that, personally, it means centering the liberating, regenerative and saving gospel of Jesus Christ as the virtue, rule and end of my work as an educator. ●

Meet our Journey graduates!

Two participants in the **Journey Missional Leadership Development Program** completed the distance-friendly undergraduate-level certificate program in 2024.

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 currently has 41 participants in Canada, the Philippines, Southeast Asia, Tanzania, Uganda and the United States. ambs.ca/journey

Alisha Garber of Phoenix, Arizona, works as Communications and Initiatives Coordinator for Circle of Peace Church (Church of the Brethren) in Peoria, Arizona. At Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Arizona (Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference, Mennonite Church [MC] USA), she's a lay leader, serving as the Children's Ministry Assistant and a Sunday school teacher, and on the Trinity Kids Advisory Team and Worship Team.



She and her family are missionaries-in-residence at Hope House Farms, an urban historical homestead in downtown Phoenix. Online, she facilitates book studies for the SoulSpace Celtic Community. Her mentors in the program were **Rev. Karen Sethuraman** of the United Kingdom Anabaptist Mennonite Network and **Rebecca Kauffman** of Bethel Mennonite Church in West Liberty, Ohio (Ohio Mennonite Conference, MC USA).

Alisha, who participated in Journey while going through a difficult life transition, reflected: "The Journey program provided an outlet for my anxious heart and a place for my 'doer' mentality to put its energy. I was enrobed by the wisdom of so many prophets, pastors, professors and theologians who came before me, and accompanied by two fantastic mentors to guide my path when I felt especially lost. I'm still in the wilderness, and it's not clear where God will lead me next. But I feel a little older, a lot wiser and certainly better equipped for the journey ahead."

Alysa Short of Pettisville, Ohio, is involved in preaching, serving on committees, teaching Sunday school for all ages, and planning and leading worship for her home congregation, PEACE Mennonite Fellowship in Archbold, Ohio (Central District Conference, MC USA). Her Journey mentor was **Sue Short** of Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, Ohio (Ohio Mennonite Conference).



"Journey was a wonderful program to learn, explore and deepen not only my biblical understanding but also my pastoral leadership skills," she reflected. "I was allowed to question, ponder, doubt and wrestle with new and old concepts while also practicing the skills taught. The Weekend Learning Events provided time for reflection and learning from others. But the best part of the Journey program is the mentor-mentee relationship. Having someone to walk with me on the journey was so meaningful. This relationship is what really makes the entire Journey program what it is." ●

Employee transitions

The AMBS learning community has experienced the following transitions in 2024:

- AMBS's Faith Formation Collaborative welcomed two employees: **Naomi R. Wenger**, MAR, MA, of Three Rivers, Michigan, began June 17 as Program Administrator; and **Margaret J. Miller**, BA, of Centreville, Michigan, began July 29 as Administrative Assistant. Both will support Orienting With the Word, a new program that is being designed to equip congregations in the U.S. and Canada to read and interpret both the Bible and their sociocultural context with the goal of connecting



(l. to r.): Margaret Miller; Malinda Elizabeth Berry, PhD, Director of the Faith Formation Collaborative; Naomi Wenger

- **René LeBlanc**, BS, CFRM, of southern Louisiana and Berne, Indiana, began Aug. 5 as Caterer in Residence.
- **Paula Killough**, MDiv, ended her role as Director of Campaign in October, following the successful conclusion of AMBS's Forming Leaders Together campaign.

2024 Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition Yusak Budi Setyawan and Sally Schreiner Youngquist

Yusak Budi Setyawan, PhD, of Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia; and **Sally Schreiner Youngquist**, MDiv, of Evanston, Illinois; are the 2024 recipients of AMBS's Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition. Yusak, a pastor, professor and academic administrator, earned a Master of Arts: Theological Studies with a concentration in Theology and Ethics in 2003. A longtime pastor and community leader, Sally earned a Master of Divinity with a major in Pastoral Ministry in 1987.

"Yusak and Sally have given their lives to service in and for the church," said Alumni Director **Janeen Bertsche Johnson**, MDiv. "Those who nominated them for the recognition described them as invaluable mentors, calling out and encouraging the gifts of others. They have led wisely, holding together clear convictions and gracious respect for others. We are delighted to honor them as leaders shaped by and shaping AMBS."

Yusak came to AMBS in 2002 to strengthen his Anabaptist theological roots. He had served as a pastor of the Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI, or Muria Christian Church of Indonesia) in Salatiga and was on the Faculty of Theology at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (UKSW, or Satya Wacana Christian University) in Salatiga. After earning his MA, he held various academic roles at UKSW until 2022, including serving as Dean, and currently is Professor of Christianity Studies and Theology there. In 2001, he was ordained by the GKMI for the special ministry of higher education. He earned a PhD in Postcolonial Studies and Biblical Interpretation from Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia, in 2009.

In other roles, Yusak is an Accreditor with the Badan Akreditasi Nasional (National Board of Accreditation for Higher Education) for the Republic of Indonesia and with the Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia. In 2012, he participated as a delegate for the Republic of Indonesia in a regional inter-faith dialogue among Asia Pacific countries.

Sally began studies at AMBS in 1983 after serving with Mennonite Central Committee.

Because of her interest in urban ministry, she did a yearlong internship with the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago. (AMBS was a participating seminary in that organization, which no longer exists.) During and after her internship, she and other members of Reba Place Fellowship — a Christian intentional community in Evanston in which she is a covenant member — explored an outreach into Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood. They developed relationships with recently arrived immigrants, eventually establishing a daughter church there.

In the mid-1990s, this church became a new multicultural, multiracial, multilingual Anabaptist-Christian congregation called Living Water Community Church (LWCC). Sally served as a founding pastor and was ordained in 1994 by Reba Place Church — the first woman to receive ordination in the congregation. In the mid-2000s, she helped lead LWCC in raising funds for and rehabbing part of a vacant mini-mall in Rogers Park to become their meetinghouse. She served with LWCC until 2009, when Reba Place Fellowship called her to serve in leadership there.

Read the full article, view the reception recording and nominate a graduate for 2025: ambs.ca/alumni • —Virginia A. Hostetler for AMBS



(l. to r.):
Yusak Budi
Setyawan and
Sally Schreiner
Youngquist
(Credit:
UKSW/Carol
Youngquist)

Thank you to our board members!

We're grateful to our board members (pictured l. to r.) for contributing their time, experience and expertise! See: ambs.ca/board

- **Ending:** **Gerda Krause** of Vancouver, British Columbia (2012–24); Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Vancouver; Mennonite Church British Columbia
- **Ending:** **Patrick Vendrely** of Goshen, Indiana (2012–24); College Mennonite

Church, Goshen; Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

- **Beginning:** **Stanley W. Green** of Lake Elsinore, California (2024–28); Peace Mennonite Fellowship, Claremont; Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference
- **Beginning:** **Caleb Longenecker-Fox** of Goshen (2024–28); East Goshen Mennonite Church; Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference





AMBS celebrates conclusion of Forming Leaders Together campaign!

The AMBS learning community, the AMBS Board of Directors and guests from collaborating organizations marked the successful completion of the seminary's Forming Leaders Together campaign at an evening celebration on Oct. 24 at AMBS. Above left: An ensemble made up of graduate students sings "Kombo na Yesu (The Name of Jesus)." At right: **Paula Killough**, MDiv, Director of Campaign, addresses those present. With Paula's leadership, AMBS exceeded its \$12 million goal for the campaign, which was created to nurture and develop Anabaptist leaders in the U.S., Canada and across the world. (Credit: Brittany Purlee)



What can I do with a seminary education?

Seminary isn't only for pastors!

Our programs integrate academics, spiritual formation and practice — preparing and equipping students for:

- Cross-cultural mission or service work
- Serving nonprofit and/or ministry-related organizations
- Chaplaincy
- Mental health work/counseling
- Offering spiritual direction
- Pursuing further postgraduate education
- Teaching and research
- Church planting
- Bivocational ministry
- Advocacy in peacebuilding, social justice, climate action and leadership development, among other areas

Find your fit at AMBS

Take a short quiz to find AMBS offerings that are best suited to your interests:

ambs.ca/find-your-fit

UPCOMING OFFERINGS

Pastors & Leaders 2025

Feb. 17-20: Anabaptism at 500: Looking Back, Living Forward

Join in person or watch via livestream! Sign up by Jan. 20 (early) or Feb. 10 (final). ambs.ca/pastors-and-leaders

Leadership Clinics: Feb. 17

Daylong clinics; held in person:

- Biblical Interpretation across the Two Testaments
- Healthy Boundaries 101
- Introducing the *Anabaptist Community Bible*
- Orienting With the Word
- Starting with the Spirit
- Worshiping with the Global Church

ambs.ca/clinics

Invite AMBS

Invite a faculty member to speak in person or online on confessional Bible study, intercultural competence, trauma-informed caregiving, non-violent communication, and more.

ambs.ca/invite

Practical Leadership Training modules

Increase your capacity to provide effective Christian leadership! ambs.ca/plt

Online Short Courses

Dig into Anabaptist theology, history and practice in our six-week discussion-based noncredit courses. No grades, no papers!

- **Jan. 29 – March 11:** Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture
- **April 23 – June 3:** Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication

ambs.ca/online-short-courses

Ministry Reflection Circles

Pastors, need help with ministry challenges? This program provides the support of consultants within a community of peers. An in-person cohort starts March 31; apply by Feb. 24.

ambs.ca/ministry-circles

Graduate-level courses: Intensive Term

Hybrid courses

(Online work: May 12 – July 25; Hybrid Week on campus: June 2–6)

- Ethics and Care: Living and Dying with Purpose
- Preaching

In-person courses (open to auditors)

- Religion, Violence and Peacebuilding: May 12–30
- The Spirit World and the Global Church: June 23 – July 1 (also available via videoconference)

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

Call from a war zone

Member of Toronto church unable to return from Lebanon

By Madalene Arias

A handful of people sat in the sanctuary of Toronto United Mennonite Church (TUMC) on November 10, awaiting a call with a beloved member of their church, Youssef Kanaan, a stateless Palestinian in Lebanon.

A middle-aged man in a green shirt and glasses emerged on the screen.

“We are in hell over here,” he said once, and then again. “We are afraid to fall asleep at night because we don’t know that we will wake up.”

Later in the call, Kanaan said, every time the sound of drones grows louder, his nine-year-old daughter, Ghazel, asks, “Is this where we die?”

Vernon Riediger, who arranged the call, got to know Kanaan during the period from 1993 to 2008 when he lived in Canada.

As Israel’s war spread into Lebanon in fall 2024, Kanaan, along with his wife, Fatima, and daughter were already living in dire conditions in a Palestinian refugee camp a refugee camp in northern Lebanon. He updated Riediger from there, talking about the drones, the bombs, the bodies. Riediger conveyed the story to his congregation during sharing time.

Kanaan’s request was to have his wife and daughter brought to Canada where they could be safe, even if it meant they would never see each other again. Riediger and other TUMC folks recently learned this is not possible.

“He is willing to sacrifice himself,” Riediger told the congregation as he fought back tears.

Fleeing Lebanon

Separation from loved ones is not new for Kanaan. After graduating as a nurse in 1985, he worked at the Islamic Hospital in Tripoli. In 1987, the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO) began to recruit him to work at a hospital it was building. Initially, he was interested, as it seemed ANO

was doing good in the community. But after attending several ANO meetings, Kanaan became uncomfortable with their political nature. He distanced himself and continued to work at the Islamic Hospital.

Then, in 1991, two male friends visited Kanaan and stayed overnight. A month later, their faces were on posters throughout the community. ANO had executed them.

Kanaan grew fearful. By 1992, with the hospital completed, ANO again asked Kanaan to work for them. Afraid to decline, he told them he had to wrap up his current duties before he could work elsewhere. Instead, he fled to the city of Sidon.

By this time Kanaan had married his first wife, and they were expecting a son, who was born while his father was away.

When he returned in 1993, ANO again pressured him. He became more suspicious of their intentions. Fearing execution and endangering his family, he left for Canada.

Life in Canada

Canada did not recognize Kanaan’s nursing credentials, so he worked in restaurants and at a car dealership.

The year he arrived, he connected with Riediger and with former TUMC member and now-retired physician Jane Pritchard. Kanaan attended the church regularly and was baptized in 1998.

Inadmissible

ANO, which began in 1974 as an offshoot of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), is remembered for multiple deadly attacks targeting the PLO, Israel and Arab officials. Although ANO ended with its founder’s death in 2002, it remains on Canada’s list of terrorist entities.

It also remains the reason Kanaan can never return to Canada. His brief encounters with the organization were sufficient for Canada’s government to decide he was



inadmissible to the country on security grounds.

According to Riediger, who has access to Kanaan’s legal records, there is no evidence that Kanaan collaborated in any capacity with ANO. In 2007, his ministerial relief request was refused and his application for permanent residence was denied. Kanaan, who was worried about his two children, whom he was unable to sponsor and who were growing up without him, was voluntarily deported to Lebanon in 2008.

Looking ahead

A group of Kanaan’s friends from TUMC and Danforth Mennonite continue to send him financial support monthly. They also sought legal counsel from refugee lawyer Andrew Brouwer, who concluded Kanaan’s inadmissibility to Canada still stands, and that his family would be deemed suspected security threats by association.

During the November video call with the church, Kanaan expressed gratitude for their support and explained that the conflict has made it impossible for him and his wife to work. They have no other income.

Riediger is trying to help Kanaan find a home in Chile, Spain or Scotland, countries that seem more inclined to welcome a stateless Palestinian and his family.

“I don’t want to carry on with my comfortable life and find out how he died one day,” Riediger told *Canadian Mennonite*. ●

The Tonight Show at RJC

Celebrating alumni & friends with entertainment and conversations

By Alex Tiessen, RJC High School

It's not typical for an RJC fundraising event to open with a cover of Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Fortunate Son," but at the Tonight Show at RJC that's just what happened. With the goal of creating a late-night talk show, the event opened with a bang as live studio band Nichols & Dimes, made up of Finn Nichol (Grade 11), Conall Harris (Grade 11), Stefan Jones (Grade 11) and Piper McCallion-Sass (Grade 12), took to the stage.

The evening kicked off with event host Corey Ginther (Grad 1990) filling the role of RJC's Jimmy Fallon. Corey has spent his career as a sportscaster for STV/Global Saskatoon and CTV in Ottawa, where he covered the Senators.

Special features throughout the night included MaryLou Driedger, a writer and teacher from Winnipeg, whose parents attended RJC, father was on the board and son is an RJC teacher. Corey also asked MaryLou about her bestselling novels, *Lost on the Prairie* and *Sixties Girl*, and her teaching career in Manitoba and Hong Kong.

Adelle Sawatzky, RJC's new music director, was also featured in an interview. Adelle shared about her career in



Adelle Sawatzky (left) and Corey Ginther at an RJC fundraising event.

Yorkton and what drew her to the RJC community. "There is such a passion for music, in particular choir, at this school that is pretty rare to find," she shared.

The final interview of the night was Graham Forrester (Grad 2017) who discussed his career playing baseball with Prairie Baseball Academy in Lethbridge, Alberta, and Waterloo, Ontario. Graham now works as manager of sales for the

Saskatchewan Rattlers.

Thanks to all RJC alumni and donors who helped to support this event! ●



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NATIONWIDE

Jan. 15: MC Canada Faithful Leadership in the Climate Crisis: Responding in Hope, 6-month cohort registration deadline. See mennonitechurch.ca/article/45081

July 2-5: MC Canada Gathering in Kitchener, Ont.

July 2-5: MC Canada Youth Gathering, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ont.

British Columbia

Feb. 21: MCBC LEAD Conference.

Feb. 22: MCBC Annual General Meeting.

Alberta

March 14-16: MCA celebrates 500 years of Anabaptism, Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary. Join for Sunday worship in person or on zoom.

Saskatchewan

Jan. 12: MC Sask Townhall meeting, Eyebrow.

Jan. 21: Anabaptism at 500 showing *The Radicals*, 7 p.m. Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

Feb. 2: MC Sask Townhall meeting, Swift Current.

March 7-8: MC Sask Gathering (Annual Delegate Sessions), RJC Highschool and Rosthern Mennonite Church.

Manitoba

Jan. 19: City-wide Ecumenical Worship Service, 7:30 p.m., Holy Family Ukrainian Catholic Church, Winnipeg.

Jan. 23: John and Margaret Friesen Lectures by Dr. Astrid von Schlachta, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m., CMU Chapel, Winnipeg.

Feb. 8: IMCA's Annual Valentine Coffee House and Charcuterie, Morrow Gospel Church, Winnipeg.

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/community-calendar.

Feb. 10-11: Annual Pastors' Conference "Reckoning With Power," at CMU.

Register at cmu.ca/renew

Feb. 15/16: Young Adult Retreat at Camp Assiniboia. More at mennochurch.mb.ca/events

Feb. 21-23: Youth Retreat at Camp Assiniboia. More at mennochurch.mb.ca/events

Feb. 28-Mar. 1: "Looking to Jesus" MCM Gathering 2025, Grace Mennonite Church, Steinbach.

Ontario

Jan. 10-11: *Bonhoeffer: Cell 92*, a Cinematic Theatre Production, 7 p.m., Great Hall, Conrad Grebel, Waterloo.

Jan. 15: Multi-vocation ministry online webinar. Register at mcec.ca

Jan. 16: Anabaptism at 500: Service of Commemoration and Celebration. 7:30-9 p.m. Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, Waterloo.

Jan. 17: Bechtel Lecture: Commemorating Anabaptism's 500 years, 7:30-9 p.m., Great Hall, Conrad Grebel, Waterloo.

Jan. 18: MCC Meat Cannery dedication, 1:45-4 p.m., MCC Resource Centre, New Hamburg.

Feb. 1: Intercultural Volleyball Tournament, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener.

April 26: MCEC Annual Church Gathering, online, 10 a.m. Registration to come.

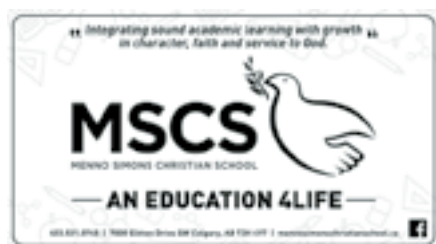
July 2-5: MC Canada Gathering, Kitchener.

July 2-5: MC Canada Youth Gathering, University of Waterloo.

ONLINE

Jan. 18-25: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. weekofprayer.ca

Jan. 17: Mennonite World Conference international hour of prayer, 14:00 UTC. Register at mwc-cmm.org/en



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FaithStory

The blessings of life with Opa

By David Hrynyk

Throughout my 20s, I've struggled with feeling "behind." Whether it's marriage, finances or career success, I'm tempted to look at the blessings others have and to resent the fact that I don't have the same things.

It's not that there are set paths—people in my generation choose incredibly diverse ways of life. And yet, as I figure out how to "adult," I often feel pressure to be further ahead in my independence.

Recently, I've been trying to reframe how I think about my life situation, remembering the ways God has blessed me on my unconventional path.

I was born in Oshawa, Ontario, and lived there with my parents through my university education at Trent University's

Durham campus. I studied social work and felt God was calling me to ministry work. Not long after I graduated, my parents moved to Trenton, Ontario, and I was offered a job as a music director at a church there. Following my passions for the church and music, I moved with my parents and began my journey of working in ministry in 2019. Ministry work has been a challenging and rewarding journey, one I am grateful for.

After three-and-a-half years in Trenton, I sensed God was leading me in a new direction. As I was trying to discern my next steps, an unexpected opportunity came up—to move to Leamington, Ontario, to serve in youth and children's ministry. I felt peace and excitement

about this call. In September 2022, I joined the staff of North Leamington United Mennonite Church as youth and children's ministry leader. It's been an incredibly rewarding experience.

With it also came the opportunity to live with my opa (grandpa).

Growing up, my family would regularly travel from Oshawa to Leamington to visit my opa and other extended family members. When I decided to relocate to Leamington, moving in with Opa was an easy decision. My aunt and uncle also live with him, and there was room for one more.

My opa, Alfred Driedger, has always inspired me with his faith in God and service to others. He is skilled at building

and fixing things and uses those gifts to bless others. I don't share his particular skills, but I aspire to love Jesus and serve people the way he does.

Since moving to Leamington, I've gotten to know my opa much better than before. I've probably spent more time with him in the last two years than I did in the previous 26. I've gotten to hear stories from his rich life experience. He's told me about adventures he had when he was younger, and how he met and married my late oma. He's also shared about the hard

scripture and pray before breakfast.

On occasion, Opa and I play hymns together on our instruments.

I want to be someone who prioritizes my walk with God the way he does.

As I said earlier, I've often felt pressure to be independent. I'm 28 years old now, and I've never lived on my own. At times, I view this negatively, but as a spiritual practice, I also think of the blessings I do have in this season, such as getting to live with my opa.

Every season of life will have blessings,



David Hrynyk (left) and his opa, Alfred Driedger.

work of farming, and he has been open about difficult times when he needed to trust God.

I've seen my opa serve people around him, even at 90 years of age. He regularly fixes sewing machines for the Mennonite Central Committee thrift store. He has a strong work ethic, which is something I strive for. I am especially grateful that he makes cookies for me.

Most of all, I am inspired and encouraged by my opa's deep faith and love for Jesus. He regularly spends time in prayer and reading scripture, and he faithfully worships at Leamington United Mennonite Church. Sometimes I join him and my uncle for morning devotions, though not as often as I would like, as I am not a morning person. We read

challenges and limitations. We don't get to do everything. Not every dream comes true. But in accepting that reality, I am learning to be more grateful for the unique blessings and opportunities in this season.

I have a living situation that provides the financial flexibility to work on a Master of Theological Studies degree at Conrad Grebel University College while working part-time. I have a job I love, doing youth ministry. And while doing this, I can live with family I love and get to know them on a deeper level.

When I feel "behind" in life, I remind myself that living with others is a blessing. However much longer the season of living with my opa lasts, I am thankful to God for this unique opportunity. ●

PHOTO: DAWNE DRIEDGER

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So then, let's work for
the good of all whenever
we have an opportunity,
and especially for those
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