

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

August 29, 2016  
Volume 20 Number 17

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**services** are.  
**no longer required**  
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## EDITORIAL

# Ramadan delights

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

It's been a couple years now, but the experience stands out in my mind as if it were yesterday.

Engin Sezen, executive director of the Waterloo, Ont., Intercultural Dialogue Institute, invited my wife Marlene and me to share a meal with his and his brother's families after dusk during Ramadan.

Even though Engin was a stranger to me, I was encouraged by a fellow Christian, Leon Kehl, to get to know Engin better and to accept his invitation to dine together at this important Muslim religious ritual, in the interests of better Christian-Muslim relations. Engin is very intelligent and accomplished, Leon told me, and that I would enjoy his company as our friendship develops.

Kehl, a member of Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church, had been working at getting Christians and Muslims together for several years. I admired what he was doing, and shared his conviction that we need to counter the prevailing tendency of violence between these two religions with the belief that "love is stronger than hate. It just takes longer."

Even though we happily accepted Engin's invitation, and anticipated the experience, we had our questions. This would be our first exposure to Muslim religious culture. Would we like the food? Would there be a language barrier? Would we say or do something unwittingly that would offend our friends? What would

we find in common? Would there be enough commonality for us to carry on a conversation?

These questions, these anxieties, were all unfounded. After locating their small apartment in town, we were given a warm welcome. Engin's wife and sister-in-law, even though slightly bashful, made us feel right at home. The kitchen was well lit and filled with the aroma of good food. The kitchen table was overflowing with steaming dishes; other food was boiling on the stove.

Since we had only a cursory experience with authentic Middle Eastern cuisine, the various dishes were explained to us, taking away any hesitation that this was going to be anything but a delightful dining experience. Before we sat down to indulge, we knew there would be prayers and perhaps other religious rituals as part of the Ramadan celebration. We entered into this shared experience, which have similarities to our own German-Swiss practice of offering thanks before our meals.

We were feeling more and more comfortable. Conversation flowed freely during the meal. There was no language barrier, and we soon felt at ease as we shared information about our families, our children and our elders. We found that we had a lot more in common in family life than we had differences.

As we retired to a comfortable sitting area to further get to know each other, we noticed another common practice.

Yes, the women stayed in the kitchen to clean up and do the dishes, just the same as happens in our own families of origin. But it didn't take long until they joined us. It developed into a family visit very similar to our own culture.

As we explained our own journey of church life and professional development, as well as our hopes and aspirations, it soon became clear that here, too, we both had very similar goals for our families and ourselves.

We asked for a more in-depth explanation of Ramadan, and expressed regret that following the 9/11 tragedy the tension between Muslims and Christians had intensified.

Even though it was getting late for us, we finished up the conversation with genuine warm feelings and valued the gaining of this new friendship. As we got up to go, we were given gifts of beautiful handmade pottery pieces by our hosts. This was more than we expected.

It was an inspired evening during which we gained new appreciation for persons of a different culture, where our world was expanded with enlightenment on the Muslim faith, all in the context of home and family, forming the beginnings of a new friendship that was graciously offered.

As Engin develops a new website for the upwards of 30,000 Muslims living in Waterloo Region, I hope that one of his goals is to pave the way for better Muslim-Christian relations through highlighting experiences like ours. We will learn that we have far more in common than we have differences.

Likewise, as he reaches the many disparate groups of Muslims from different countries and cultures, I hope he can teach them that they have much more in common than they think.



## ABOUT THE COVER:

'This was my mom's experience today: show up to work; given the news; laptop taken away; password changed; escorted off the premises to a taxi. Who treats my mommy that way?' With this quote, feature writer Henry Neufeld begins his exploration (on page 4) of the way some church organizations treat their workers whose 'services are no longer required.'

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

# When your services are no longer required

*How corporate personnel strategies have crept into the church, and why they are not appropriate there*

BY HENRY NEUFELD  
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/APHRODITE74



*It was a 'hard and cold process. We used to have a people who cared. . . . This is the church, we're not there just for the money.'*  
*(Randy Wiebe, former MC Canada chief financial officer)*

*"So this is how Mennonite Church Canada handles layoffs due to shrinking budgets. This was my mom's experience today: show up to work; given the news; laptop taken away; password changed; escorted off the premises to a taxi. Who treats my mommy that way?"*  
(Posted by Daniel Rempel on Facebook)

**S**adly that summary by Elsie Rempel's son is more common than it should be. Elsie was one of five staff dismissed by Mennonite Church Canada late last year. This style of dismissal is happening too often, whether in MC Canada, Ten Thousand Villages, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) or thrift stores. A strategy not uncommon in the corporate world, it emerges with increasing frequency in Mennonite organizations.

Usually it's a surprise to the employee. They're told their services are no longer required, then given a letter (often with legal wording) and asked to leave the premises. Some are given an hour or two to retrieve their personal effects, others are told they may return to the premises after office hours. The employee might be asked to sign a letter agreeing to the terms of dismissal, sometimes including a "gag order" prohibiting the person from making public comments.

Of her termination, Elsie said it was "incredibly sudden, I was stunned. . . . There were things on my calendar. . . . It felt like I was pushed off a high diving board without any process." With speaking engagements scheduled when she was let go, she said, "With no access to my computer I couldn't even let them know." She found that being told her services were appreciated and valued while being fired was difficult to accept.

Elsie wishes that she had been given several months' notice to finish her work. "That would have been better than the generous severance I got," she said. Besides the financial package, she received many messages of thanks and condolence, including from MC Canada board members.

Randy Wiebe was dismissed after more than 11 years at MC Canada as its chief financial officer. Executive director Willard Metzger told Wiebe it was for financial reasons.

Wiebe said he experienced a full range of emotions—shock, disbelief, sadness and anger—and wondered, “Why me?” It was a “hard and cold process,” he said. “We used to have a people who cared. . . . This is the church, we’re not there just for the money.”

### **MCC: ‘Abrupt and harsh’**

MCC Canada fired James Loewen in 2011 after he made some partisan political comments during an election campaign. The comments appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on a Friday and Loewen was fired the following Wednesday.

Executive director Don Peters said at the time, “I understand that this action . . . may be seen as abrupt and harsh.”

That’s because it was abrupt and harsh. With no negative performance reviews, Loewen was dismissed without any process. He was the one who requested a “facilitated dialogue” with MCC Canada

*A Harvard Business Review article says that letting an employee go should be the last step in a careful, fair and transparent process that starts long before the actual firing. If possible, the firing should not come as a surprise.*

to address his situation.

Loewen taught conflict resolution in a Caribbean country for MCC then continued working for MCC in Canada in restorative justice. At the time of his dismissal, he was working on a major grant

application for services to prisoners. He acknowledges the inappropriateness of his comments and feels a reprimand would have been appropriate. “This was one incident in a 12-year career with MCC,” he said. “It was handled in an unskilled way.” He said he sought to “open a path for learning and reconciliation” with MCC.

Firings affect the family, according to Loewen’s wife Marci. “I felt very hurt, I was blindsided. It affected my walk with the church. We were a broken couple thrown by the wayside. . . . MCC is a whole lifestyle, it’s more than a job. . . . A Christian organization should have more love and care.”

Peters, in a statement signed by him and Loewen, wrote that Loewen’s comments “placed MCC in conflict with its constituency and supporters, and compromised James’s role as spokesperson for [MCC Canada] in the context of his

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Advice for those ‘no longer required’

© BY APRIL YAMASAKI

Since I shared my husband’s painful job loss through no fault of his own, I’ve received many emails and other private messages from people who have also experienced difficult endings in their employment. Some have changed churches or denominations, or left ministry all together. Some have been close to suicide and still struggle with depression and anxiety.

At the same time, some also report that God surprised them with something even better. They didn’t exactly “get over” their painful termination, but for the most part it’s simply become a part of their past, part of who they are today, and no longer a defining event or preoccupation.

So how do people manage to grow beyond a painful job termination? Here’s the advice that I’ve collected so far:

- **LOOK TO** those who love you, and hold on to them. The loss of a job may seem devastating, but you are much more than your paid employment.
- **EXERCISE YOUR** body was made to move, so don’t give in to inertia. Work up a sweat, and work out your anger and other hard feelings.
- **ALLOW YOURSELF** to vent. Tell your troubles to God. Write out your heartbreak and then burn the pages.

Read individual psalms of lament or imprecatory psalms that call down judgment.

- **ASSESS YOUR** situation. Consider all aspects of your life. Consult trusted friends who can pray with you. Get professional financial and legal advice, and don’t let yourself be rushed into any decisions.
- **SEEK OUT** other avenues for your creativity. Have you always wanted to write? Play a musical instrument? Be involved in your community?
- **FIND THINGS** that feed your spirit: Morning coffee on the deck outside. An evening concert. A walk by the ocean. A long bike ride. Fresh-cut flowers. A favourite book. Be gentle with yourself.
- **ACCEPT OFFERS** of help, and look for the good. Cherish every card, every email of support, every word of encouragement.
- **KNOW THAT** there is healing. Have a sense of humour. Get a good night’s sleep. Pray. Look for God’s open door, window or tunnel into the sunlight. Walk with Jesus, and be guided by the Holy Spirit.

*Excerpted with permission of the author. To read her complete July 13, 2016, blog post, visit [bit.ly/april-yamasaki-advice](http://bit.ly/april-yamasaki-advice).*



*(Continued from page 5)*

work with government departments.”

When asked recently what damages Loewen’s comments had done, Peters said, “I’m not commenting.”

Peters refused to discuss specifics of the Loewen dismissal for “privacy” reasons. Peters was not prepared to comment on the impact of Loewen’s firing on Loewen’s family. When asked about accountability to the constituency, Peters said staff are accountable to the executive director, who is accountable to the board. The board says this is a personnel matter; not a board issue. Catch 22.

### **How to avoid the pain and scars**

A former employee of one of these organizations describes “corporatization” as taking over. Corporate strategies might be appropriate for church-related agencies but all, especially those dealing with personnel, need to be challenged, rather than calmly accepted. There are many reasons for dismissing people: downsizing, poor performance, illegal behaviour and funding shortages, among others. Firing someone is never easy, but cold, legalistic terminations leave a lot of pain and scars.

Marion Janssen, a Vancouver area human services consultant, is often hired to deal with dismissals. “Most people don’t know that they’re going to be terminated,” she said. “I get anger, tears, questions. . . . It’s a terrifying experience [but] some are relieved.”

Consultants realize dismissals are an affront to the dignity of the employee and acknowledge the process, which can be cold and efficient, as less than ideal. Most bosses delay terminations as long as possible, since they affect everyone in the organization, morale suffers and staff become more cautious.

Consultant Keith Anderson has worked for MCC B.C. and Menno Place. In terms of his work, he sees “no distinction between faith-based organizations and public organizations. If a person is dismissed without cause, it’s important [for the organization] to err on the side of generosity.”

### **A better way**

There has to be a better way. And there is.

*‘I felt very hurt, I was blindsided. It affected my walk with the church. We were a broken couple thrown by the wayside. . . . MCC is a whole lifestyle, it’s more than job. . . . A Christian organization should have more love and care.’  
(Marci Loewen)*

A *Harvard Business Review* article says that letting an employee go should be the last step in a careful, fair and transparent process that starts long before the actual firing. If possible, the firing should not come as a surprise. Haste and secrecy often violate policies of transparency and openness.

When asked about some of these dismissals, the common administrator’s response is, “We can’t discuss it because of confidentiality.”

But secrecy is a more accurate description. There are simple strategies to overcome concerns about confidentiality that seem to have escaped some administrators.

One former MCC B.C. employee, when told he was being dismissed, was given a letter which he felt contained

vindictive clauses. “That was most hurtful,” he said. “Nobody would discuss it. . . . A meaningful dialogue would have been preferable.”

The organizations we love have gone down a corporate path on some issues, but the path should include compassion and love in the name of Christ. Can they find their way back to this path where a conversation and a handshake may be enough? ❧

*Henry Neufeld  
attends Point Grey  
Inter-Mennonite  
Fellowship in  
Vancouver.*



### **/// For discussion**

1. Under what conditions is it appropriate for a church or church organization to lay off an employee without warning? If the organization pays a generous severance package, does it matter that it comes as a surprise? How is an abrupt termination disrespectful to the employee?
2. Henry Neufeld writes, “Most bosses delay terminations as long as possible, since they affect everyone in the organization, morale suffers and staff become more cautious.” Is this concern about morale enough reason to end employment suddenly? Are there other reasons for an abrupt termination? How does fear of legal action impact this process?
3. Neufeld comments that church organizations have been acting too much like corporations when it comes to dismissals. Do you agree? Is concern for stewardship of donated funds a reason to act harshly?
4. When it comes to telling staff that their services are no longer required, do congregations do a better or worse job than church organizations? What advice would you give to church organizations when they are forced to reduce their staff?

— BY BARB DRAPER

## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, **to be kept to 300 words or less**, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. In light of the many recent letters on the topic of sexuality, we will edit any letter on this topic to a paragraph and post the rest online at [www.canadian-mennonite.org](http://www.canadian-mennonite.org). All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to [letters@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org) and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

## ✉ Dealing with mental illness is 'hard enough already'

THANK YOU FOR the recent special issue of *Canadian Mennonite* on "mental health." It is an important topic if we are to love each other well. Mental differences are invisible but they can lead to very different ways of interacting with other people and the world around us.

By every observable measure, I am normal, have a successful career with a high-level position and public recognition, amazing children active in church and now university, physical health and so on. Yet I struggle with what probably should be labelled "depression." Even when something good happens, it takes just a short time before I start to think that things aren't going well. There are times that getting four to five decent hours of work accomplished is a pretty successful

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## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Ride for a 'dream'

DANIEL HORNE

In October 2014, Wame Chiepe invited us to dream.

Wame lives near an abandoned park in Gaborone, Botswana. Young children play on a rusty, broken-down slide. Surrounded by drinking establishments, the park is an unsafe place. Night-time robberies and stabbings are not unusual. Eventually, the playground kids graduate to the nearby bars.

Wame dreamed of transforming the park and the lives of kids who play there. His dream has grown to inspire a local cadre of investors—and supporters in Mennonite Church Canada.

Nathan and Taryn Dirks, MC Canada Witness workers in Botswana, embraced Wame's vision. Working together, they began gathering support from others in sports programs, their young-adult Bible study group and players of the beloved game of five-a-side soccer, or futsal as it is known in Botswana.



Via a short video in 2014, Wame and the Dirks invited the rest of MC Canada to join them in what they called a "Futsal dream." Through partnerships with the Botswana government, local investors and MC Canada, the park is experiencing a miraculous transformation.

Recently, the president of Botswana visited to view the progress: bio-friendly toilets are being built; a buried cistern will collect water from the playing courts; gardens are being developed, sustained by the harvested water; a hut for a disabled shoe repairman will replace his open-air shop under a tree; recycled materials, including glass bottles, tin cans and old tires, are becoming building materials.

MC Canada supported the venture by partnering with Ride for Refuge that involves people from across Canada biking or walking at the same time on the same day in their own cities, raising money for the project via sponsorships. In October 2014, 56 participants comprising eight teams in six locations raised almost

\$20,000 to launch the "Futsal dream" with the help of their generous sponsors.

Via a recent video update from Nathan, he shared that this is not a charity project, but a collaborative one. The initial seed money from MC Canada has inspired local investors, government officials, sports teams, coaches and athletic professionals to build on Wame's dream. Now, each involved person in Botswana and each Ride for Refuge participant in Canada is a leader, too.

On Oct. 1, you are once again invited to lead by signing up for Ride for Refuge. You can ride or walk for any MC Canada Witness worker. There are workers and ministries in 20 countries around the world in need of the same kick-start leadership that launched the "Futsal dream."

If you and your church already have a congregational partnership with a Witness ministry, interest in the work we are doing together, love a bit of low-key exercise and community building, this is a fun and generous way to be a leader. Visit [mennonitechurch.ca](http://mennonitechurch.ca) for more details.

*Daniel Horne is MC Canada's director of partnership development for British Columbia and Alberta, and director of partnership development for Saskatchewan and Manitoba.*

(Continued from page 7)

goal. I've always been hard on myself and others, and it's difficult for me to feel much of anything.

"You sound like you have depression" says the doctor. But mental health is not as clear-cut as sprained ankles and heart disease shown by some test. This "depression" isn't there all the time, and I can't tell when I am feeling this way or when my interactions

with others are affected.

We talk a lot about being accepting in the church. Has God made me this way? Have I made myself this way? Do I only need to find the right technique, mindset or drugs that will remake me the way others want me to be?

I am going to end with no answers or recommendations. You may just have to live with people whose

## FAMILY TIES

# Healthy families adapt

MELISSA MILLER

It's an exciting time for many people in my extended family. Three nieces are university students, preparing for careers in education or medicine. One niece, with BA newly in hand, has entered an intense one-year fellowship, halfway across the continent from her family and friendship supports. Two nephews are marrying this year. Others of that generation are starting new jobs or searching for employment, raising children or serving in international ministry.

They and their parents are facing changes to old ways of being family, and needing to create new ways of connecting. One mother had a 2,000-plus kilometre road trip with her daughter to get her to her new assignment, while her husband stayed home to care for the younger children. Another parent will be mother of the groom and officiating pastor at two weddings.

A third parent will take a long airplane ride to a foreign country to visit children and grandchildren.

Healthy families are adaptive. Last month I wrote about the connection between diversity and family health. In this column, I take up the happy, necessary task of adapting. It's a happy task because it enables us to stretch, evolve and grow into new perspectives. It's necessary because it's an essential part of life. An oft-repeated adage

is that we're either growing or dying. I'm not sure it's that stark. I am sure that the urge to grow is woven into our very wiring, like my nieces seeking educational opportunities and my nephews sealing marriage commitments.

Likely you can think of many examples from your own life of how individuals change over time. These individual changes impact families as well. In a healthy family, the leaders recognize the need to honour and support such change.

If people resist changes in family life, they impede the growth of individual members and the family unit as a whole. My mother, a fervent lover of babies, would sometimes say she wished she had all of us—her eight children!—snug on her lap again. While I appreciate the nostalgia, the reality of such a fantasy would be quite unworkable, not to mention crowded!



*[Adapting is] a happy task because it enables us to stretch, evolve and grow into new perspectives.*

Actually, my parents were wonderful examples of adaptability. They may have started family life with firmly set ideas for how it would unfold; my father had a tendency towards rigidity seasoned with strong religious beliefs. Life, though, served up many challenges to a pre-set plan. As they faced those challenges, they adapted, making space for the unique

personalities and needs of their children, in addition to changes in work and living circumstances. They grew spiritually as well. In doing so, they modelled the way of adaptation and built a healthy family.

In one year, in the space of nine months, they faced three huge transitions. Their eldest child left home to begin college; they birthed their eighth and youngest child in March; and then sadly, 10 weeks later, they buried their second eldest son, killed in a car accident. I often think of that time as a testimony to their resilient spirits, grounded in Christian faith.

Was the Apostle Paul mindful of the need to adapt when he used the imagery of the body to describe the Christian church? In Ephesians 4:14-16 (The Message), he calls for a particular kind of adaptation: "God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. [Jesus] keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us

so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love."

Healthy in God, robust in love: good qualities in family life.

*Melissa Miller (familyties@mymts.net) has a passion for helping people develop healthy, vibrant relationships with God, self and others.*



mental health is different than a normal person's. We don't judge a person's physical disabilities, injuries or chronic diseases, so please be careful with our fragile minds and self-esteem. It's already hard enough.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

## ✉ Congratulations to the Neudorfs for going carless

I ENJOYED READING Randell Neudorf's Viewpoints column about giving up the family car (July 4, page 13).

Congratulations to him and his family on their

(Continued on page 10)

## GOD, MONEY AND ME

# A big change

DARREN PRIES-KLASSEN

**M**ennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) is about to make a big change. In October, we will become Abundance Canada.

This decision did not come easily. Our process was both cautious and comprehensive. Long before we considered rebranding, the board and management began strategizing for the future. Through this process we affirmed a number of core values. Among them is our commitment to serving the church with biblical stewardship education and the facilitation of charitable giving.

We also challenged ourselves with a bold vision that our stewardship ministry is not only for the churches and adherents of our seven founding conferences, but for the wider Christian community in Canada. A broader, more ambitious ministry would allow us to assist more people with charitable giving, and also to increase awareness of God's generosity and the biblical message to share with others.

With a bold vision before us, we began an 18-month process that analyzed the market, evaluated similar service providers, held conversations with clients and potential clients, and gathered input from a sample of the Christian population across Canada. With the help of a branding agency with experience in the faith-based, not-for-profit sector, we also learned that there is a real desire and a need for our ministry and services that

match our vision to work with the wider Christian church. Through our research, we also learned that serving a wider Christian community would be difficult with a name that reflected a specific denomination. This meant we needed to entertain a rebranding of the organization.

It was imperative that our new name be welcoming and inclusive to the wider Christian community, and support our faith-driven approach to our ministry. It also needed to reflect our four principles of biblical stewardship:

- **GOD IS** generous.
- **GOD OWNS**, we manage.
- **GOD ASKS** for our whole selves.
- **GOD INVITES** us to share.



*Through our research, we also learned that serving a wider Christian community would be difficult with a name that reflected a specific denomination.*

After a rigorous creative process, we chose Abundance Canada, and we are delighted with it. Abundance Canada inspires thoughts of God's abundance. It reminds us of the importance of gratitude. It is open and invitational. In short, Abundance Canada helps people share God's abundance with those in need, and more accurately reflects our service, our ministry and our spirit of generosity.

Let me assure you that while we are

changing our name, the board and staff are committed to ensuring our services and level of client service will not change. Our research showed that our satisfaction rating among existing clients is more than 90 percent. Clients cited our financial stability, our knowledgeable and courteous staff, our honesty and integrity, and our values, as important factors in their overall satisfaction. Over the years, we've heard



from many clients who have said, "We love working with MFC. You make giving so simple and easy." The same will be true for Abundance Canada. And just as it was with MFC, Abundance Canada will be a donor-advised charitable foundation.

If you have questions, please contact us. We would love to tell you more about our expanding ministry, introduce you to our

services, and help you experience the joy of generosity.

Abundance Canada . . . because generosity changes everything.

*Darren Pries-Klassen is the executive director of Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC). For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit MennoFoundation.ca.*

(Continued from page 9)

decision to be mobile without owning a car. I pray that their children will understand and appreciate this decision. Are they suggesting where you could be spending some of the money you are saving by not having a car?

We sold our car three years ago, after I retired. Our expenses are greatly reduced, and one of the greatest challenges with using a car in the city—finding a place to park—is now eliminated.

DAVID SHANTZ, MONTRÉAL

### ✉ Pastor hopeful about move to a 'more regional church model'

RE: "HOPE THROUGH lament and loss," July 25, page 4.

Thank you for all your Assembly 2016 coverage. It was great to relive the assembly through your recaps.

I just wanted to make clear that my comment about how many newer congregations were not present at Assembly 2016 was included in the section referring to the Being a Faithful Church discussion, but was actually made as part of the Future Directions discussion. It was a hopeful statement strongly in support of the Future Directions plan.

I was drawing attention to the fact that it is very hard for church plants and other smaller churches to send delegates to a national assembly. The cost and time are prohibitive for small churches. My own church had no delegates at the assembly; I was only able to go as a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada delegate. On the other hand, these same churches are able to send delegates to their annual area church gatherings.

I'm excited about our Mennonite tribe's move to a more regional model that will increase local representation, and remove the time and money barriers to participation that a vast geography creates.

RANDELL NEUDORF, HAMILTON, ONT.

*Randell Neudorf is pastor of the Commons in Hamilton.*

### ✉ When does 'thrift' cease to be Mennonite?

DURING THIS LAST while I have been thinking a lot about what we, as Christians/Mennonites, are giving up to be "politically correct" or in trying to attract others to our churches and our organizations. Are we ashamed to be known as Mennonites by taking these words off our church buildings and thrift stores? Should we not rather be bold in showing who we are?

Is Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario changing the names of its stores to "Thrift on Kent" in

Kitchener and "Thrift on Mill" in Leamington, in an effort to bring in more customers who MCC feels might be put off by showing a Christian/Mennonite connection?

Here in St. Catharines, Ont., our Christian Benefit Thrift Store has had this name for more than 40 years. Our store continues to bring in a good income for MCC, so should our name be changed?

Are we following along with the world in the same manner as it has taken "Christ" out of Christmas? What will we agree to or allow next?

The small voice of a thrift store volunteer is not counted against operating councils of our stores or MCC, and many of us do not want to rock the boat because we enjoy our volunteer work.

My questions are: What would Jesus want us to do? How do we witness for him and show the world that we are his followers if we do not openly acknowledge that we are Christians and also Mennonites?

ANNE HUEBERT, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

### ✉ Mental health issue praised

IT IS QUITE interesting as I hold the May 23 issue in which the editorial deals with dementia ("A living death," page 2). Mom also has been given the diagnosis of dementia, and even though she is still doing fairly well, it was this diagnosis that prompted her move from the home my dad, Art Janz, built for them 58 years ago. She is in a lovely assisted-living facility in Calgary, where she is very happy. But sadly, we know the journey has really just begun. The articles on mental health also struck a chord, as my husband suffers from depression. Amazing how God puts things in your hands that relate to personal struggles.

MARLEEN LAWLOR, CALGARY

### /// Assembly 2016 clarifications

- **GERRY BINNEMA**, pastor of United Mennonite Church of Black Creek, B.C., confirmed to *Canadian Mennonite* that he did, in fact, vote "yes" to the Being a Faithful Church resolution at Assembly 16, although he went to Saskatoon with the intention of voting "no," as reported in the "Hope through loss and lament" feature that begins on page 4 of the July 25 issue. How he voted was not mentioned in the page 14 story of the same issue, "Delegates vote to allow space for differences."

- **DEB BARLOW** was the machine quilter who worked on the ceremonial quilt created by Alma Elias that appeared on the front cover of the July 25 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*.

## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

## The pursuit of truth (Pt. 8)

TROY WATSON



In John 14:6, Jesus claims that he is the truth. What does this mean?

I used to think that the truth of Christ was a set of doctrines I needed to believe in, but I've become convinced that it is actually his state of consciousness and his way of life that we are now called to participate in.

When Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life," he is not saying that our agreement with his impressive résumé—describing who he is and his accomplishments—will lead to our salvation. He is declaring that his way is truth, his life is truth. Jesus is saying that his truth, his way and his life are interwoven together. We cannot know the truth of Christ without also following his way and embodying the Spirit of his life. Truth, way and life are inseparable in Christ.

Jesus also binds truth and freedom together in the Gospel of John. He says, "[Y]ou will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). This raises two questions:

• **HOW DO** we know the truth?

Jesus gives us a major clue in the verse prior, when he says, "If you continue to follow my teaching" (John 8:31). It seems that this is a prerequisite. We will know the truth by putting his teachings into practice. To know the truth is to forgive those who have wronged us; to not judge people we disagree with; and to share our time, money and possessions with people in need; and so on.

For Jesus, the intellectual pursuit of knowledge is not the best path to divine

truth. Divine truth is the path. It is the way, more than the destination. ("Destination" means a specific theological territory we land and settle on.) We "know" the truth by acting in truth, by being truth.

This makes me wonder if we'd be better off putting away the text books

and Bible studies for a while in order to focus on applying the teachings of Jesus that we already understand. When we continue to search the Bible for new insight and knowledge before putting

*'Forces beyond your control can take away everything you possess except one thing, your freedom to choose how you will respond.'*  
(Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl)

into practice what has already been made clear to us, we're probably not pursuing truth. We're likely avoiding it.

• **HOW DOES** truth set us free?

I believe Jesus is saying that false beliefs and lies impair our freedom. Addicts, for example, are imprisoned by the false belief that they need alcohol, drugs, achievements, money or whatever they are addicted to, in order to be happy and fulfilled. This belief is a freedom-crushing lie, as our addictions and attachments are the very things destroying our happiness and fulfillment.

Jesus is saying that we are set free by becoming aware of a particular truth, namely, that we are already free. Austrian therapist and Holocaust survivor Viktor

Frankl said, "Forces beyond your control can take away everything you possess except one thing, your freedom to choose how you will respond." The truth is, you are free and your freedom can never be taken from you. However, only as we live in the awareness of this truth of our innate freedom are we set free.

And I believe that Jesus is saying our freedom is found in accepting and revealing the whole truth of who we are. Jesus says, "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light" (John 3:21). Living in the light requires awareness, honesty, integrity and vulnerability. However, discernment is also important. Jesus isn't telling us to air our dirty laundry for all to see. Most people haven't earned that right or asked for that responsibility. But God has. God already knows our dirty laundry—past, present and future. So to live in truth is to consciously bring everything about ourselves into the light of God's presence, because the truth is that God already sees our entire beings. Our fig leaves hide nothing from God (Genesis 3:7).

When we bring our whole selves, including aspects of ourselves that we don't want anyone else to see and are too ashamed to face ourselves, three amazing things happen:

1. **WE ARE** liberated from guilt, fear and shame.
2. **WE OPEN** up the most hidden, darkest and tender parts of our beings to God's transformative love—the parts that usually need it the most.
3. **AND OVER** time, all that we expose to God's light is transformed and becomes light itself (Ephesians 5:13). ✎

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

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

An open letter to  
MC Canada

ERVIN R. STUTZMAN

I was grateful for the opportunity to attend your biennial meeting in Saskatoon in early July. As always, I was impressed by the creativity expressed in your worship services and the focused, thoughtful discussions in your business sessions, along with the comic relief I've come to expect in your gatherings.

I enjoyed the conversations that took place at my table in English, German and Spanish with fellow fraternal guests hailing from your other "sister" churches in Mexico and Paraguay. I was intrigued by your focus on covenant faithfulness at the assembly and particularly by Safwat Marzouk's scriptural teaching on covenantal relationships.

Perhaps that's why my most poignant moment at the assembly came when a delegate publicly lamented the way that Mennonite Church U.S.A. had reneged on the covenant we made with your church at the time we divided into two national bodies. Specifically, he blamed us folks in the U.S. for not keeping our promise to meet in joint assembly with you Canadians every four years. He ended his comments by voicing the hope that MC Canada would initiate an "iron-clad" covenant as you make plans for internal structural rearrangements, implying that



a stronger covenant might have forced MC U.S.A. to keep our promises.

I held my tongue, not wanting to prove the adage that "it is better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to

speak up and remove all doubt." From a Canadian perspective, the delegate was right and I could only have offered a nuanced explanation. In a brief and friendly exchange with this delegate later, I sensed grace in his ready admission that the expression "iron-clad covenant" was an oxymoron.

By nature, the best relational covenants remain voluntary and adaptive to changing needs. That's why I can say with confidence, yet with a twinkle in my eye, "My wife has been married to five different husbands, and all of them are me." In my case, the reverse is also true; my spouse has experienced so much ongoing personal transformation that I can say, "I have been married to five different wives, and all of them are Bonnie." In spite of dramatic changes in the way that Bonnie and I have related to each other in 40-plus years of married life, our covenant of marriage remains strong.

I'm pressing this point because I watched with fascination as your delegates in Saskatoon agreed to embark on a dramatic process of redefining and

restructuring MC Canada with neither a clear path to follow nor an agreed-upon destination. I commend you for your trust and courage to adjust to your changing realities.

I'm not sure what implications your new process may have for our relationship as a sister denomination, but we intend to remain in covenant with you. Although we haven't initiated a major structural shift such as yours on the U.S. side, we are rapidly changing, and it's not clear what we will become. We've had plenty of discussion—at times accompanied by acrimonious accusations—that groups within our church have broken covenant with each other or the denomination. The definition and understanding of church covenants is itself a contested matter.

I'm encouraged by the way our two national bodies stay in touch with each other, maintain an up-to-date "Partnership Covenant," and share resources. I'm grateful for the many documents we hold in common, such as the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, "A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership," and a large number of resources related to pastors and congregations, including the "Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure." I sincerely hope we'll find ways to keep supporting each other.

Finally, I pray that God will watch over your national church with covenant love as you embark on the process of change. May you find hope and joy as you seek to discover God's preferred future. ❧

*Ervin R. Stutzman is the executive director of Mennonite Church U.S.A.*

## ❧ Correction

• CALVIN QUAN is not the pastor of Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church, as was erroneously stated in the Aug. 15, page 2 editorial, "Canadian Mennonite: A Lighthouse." He is a member of the congregation, but his brother Brian Quan is the pastor. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

## ❧ Milestones

## Births/Adoptions

**Dyck**—Calvin James (b. July 9, 2016), to Stephen and Sarah (nee Rich) Dyck, Sterling Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Penner**—Milo John Enns (b. July 20, 2016), to Kyle and

Ashley Penner, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

**Schmidtke**—Maya Luise (b. June 11, 2016), to Melinda and Ryan Schmidtke, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Isaac Hirtle**—Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont., July 17, 2016.

**Taylor Clemmer, Sheri Clemmer, Jeff Martin**—Floradale Mennonite, Ont., July 17, 2016.

**Marie-Jeanne Tétréault, Félix Marchand**—Ichtus Mennonite, Québec City, July 24, 2016.

### Marriages

**Bergwerff/Frey**—Jennifer Bergwerff and Andrew Frey, Elmira Mennonite, Ont., July 9, 2016.

**Kuepfer/Thomas**—Miranda Kuepfer and Justin Thomas, Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont., July 16, 2016.

**Martin/Weber**—Joshua Martin and Krista Weber (both of Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont.), at Community Mennonite, May 28, 2016.

**Pealo/St-Onge**—Alysha Pealo (Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.) and Frank St-Onge, at Mennonite Youth Farm, Rosthern, July 16, 2016.

**Penner/Rasera**—Katie Penner (The First Mennonite, Vineland, Ont.) and Josh Rasera, at Toronto, July 31, 2016.

### Deaths

**Dhanyavong**—Charee, 76 (b. June 18, 1940; d. June 19, 2016), First Mennonite, Calgary.

**Driediger**—Helen, 83 (b. May 18, 1933; d. July 30, 2016), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Elias**—Ed, 79 (b. Dec. 3, 1936; d. July 30, 2016), First Mennonite, Calgary.

**Fast**—Dorothy, 62 (b. April 28, 1954; d. June 15, 2016), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Funk**—Maria (nee Janzen), 102 (b. May 21, 1914; d. July 24, 2016), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

**Gammon**—Elise Maisie, 2 days (b. July 4, 2016; d. July 6, 2016), Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.

**Giesbrecht**—Margaretha (nee Martens), 88 (b. June 18, 1927; d. June 8, 2016), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Heinrichs**—Hilda (nee Ewert), 100 (b. June 14, 1916; d. July 31, 2016), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

**Hildebrandt**—Alice (nee Rempel), 96 (b. Feb. 28, 1920; d. May 29, 2016), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Horst**—Erma, 92 (b. June 20, 1924; d. July 14, 2016), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

**Isaak**—Mary, 89 (b. Oct. 1, 1926; d. July 25, 2016), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Martin**—Florence, 86 (b. Sept. 3, 1929; d. May 18, 2016), Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.

**Reimer**—Wally, 68 (b. Sept. 29, 1947; d. June 29, 2016), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

**Rempel**—Anna, 93 (b. Oct. 17, 1922; d. July 27, 2016), First Mennonite, Calgary.

**Sawatzky**—Ed, 72 (b. Dec. 24, 1943; d. May 23, 2016), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

**Shantz**—Mary (nee Horst, Gingrich), 102 (b. Nov. 7, 1913; d. July 29, 2016), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

## A moment from yesterday



When Mennonites came to Ontario and western Canada in the 1920s, they were helped by the “Swiss” Mennonites, such as those from The First Mennonite Church in Vineland, Ont. (pictured). The poor farming conditions and low commodity prices of the 1930s made the financial situation very difficult. In these circumstances, Mennonite Brethren and Mennonites worshipped together in communities such as Vineland. Within a few years, after they were more established and had more resources, Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren decided to separate and build their own churches. In the 1980s, The First Mennonite was struggling and asked Vineland United Mennonite Church to send over some members. This kick-started life for The First Mennonite and it became a congregation that attracted Swiss, Mennonite Brethren, Mennonite and new Mennonite members. Good things happen when we work together.

*Text: Conrad Stoesz / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies,  
with Lauren Harder-Gissing / Mennonite Archives of Ontario*

*Photo: C.F. Klassen / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies*



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## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# SEED comes to an end

*Number of participants never met expectations to make it sustainable*

BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

Camp Squeah  
HOPE, B.C.

When Geoff Gould ponders his six years directing the SEED program at Camp Squeah, it is with mixed emotions: pride, joy, humility, gratitude. But there is also sadness. After much prayer, discussion and discernment, the decision was made in June to close SEED (Seeking to know God as your Father, Exploring yourself, Experiencing loving community, and allowing God to Develop your character as well as your gifts) after this year's group had finished.

"Our desire from the beginning was to grow a program that would be healthy and strong, and for those who completed the program it was a success," Gould explains. "But we never got to the numbers we needed to be a truly viable program."

SEED was designed as an outdoor/adventure discipleship program, whose participants took part in wilderness excursions that included backpacking, snowshoeing, canoeing, climbing and more. Each participant also received training in such areas as

canoeing, archery, and high and low ropes courses. A mentorship component and the study of spiritual disciplines allowed each person the opportunity to grow and be stretched spiritually as well as physically.

Tamaya Hamm of Germany took the program in 2015 and says it was a defining experience for her. After spending a summer serving at Camp Squeah's summer camp, she decided to enrol in SEED. "I was looking for a challenge, and SEED gave me that and more," she says. "I learned so much about myself and about my relationship with God."

For Hamm, the highlight of the program was enveloped in the biggest challenge: a snowshoe trip. She describes herself as a "summer girl," so camping in the winter was not something she had been looking forward to.

But as the trip unfolded, she realized that she had a choice to make about how she would respond. Turning back was not an option, so she could choose to be miserable



*Self-described 'summer girl' Tamaya Hamm of Germany took part in the final SEED program over the past year, finishing off her time at Camp Squeah.*

or she could choose to enjoy it. She chose the latter, and it made all the difference. "I learned that I actually have authority over my emotions," she says. "It was a defining moment for me."

Hamm also credits SEED with helping her to discover her passion and to apply that to her future career goals. This fall, she'll return to Germany, where she is studying social work and theology, bringing together her faith studies and her desire to work with people.

Gould is gratified that SEED alumni, like Hamm, have been able to apply their learning in meaningful ways. He also realizes that he has learned some things about himself in the course of giving leadership to this program. "It was difficult for me, but



*SEED program participants on their winter camping experience, from left to right: Dustin Siemens, Kimberly Hartman, Nigel Wismath, Tamaya Hamm, Melissa Brubacher and Geoff Gould, director of SEED.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF GEOFF GOULD

*'I was looking for a challenge, and SEED gave me that and more. I learned so much about myself and about my relationship with God.'*  
(Tamaya Hamm)

I learned the importance of giving people space, allowing them to learn from mistakes as much as from their successes," he says.

The goal for SEED had been to have eight students, but it never exceeded four in a year. As difficult as it was to let the program go, Gould says it was time to move on. He and his wife Sarah Beth are grateful for the relationships they, as a family, have built with the other families at Squeah and in the Hope community, where they live. They will take time in the coming weeks and months to pray, and see what God has in store for them and their three children. "It's time to wait and ask God what he will do in our lives," he says. "And for Squeah, we only want the best for Squeah. It will be interesting to see what God has in store there, too." ❧

### ❧ Briefly noted

#### PeaceWorks announces technology award

In celebration of its 20th year in business in June, PeaceWorks Technology Solutions of Waterloo, Ont., established the PeaceWorks Technology Solutions Award with one of its original clients, Conrad Grebel University College. This \$500 award—up to three may be given out each year—will support Grebel students who are pursuing a degree in technology at the University of Waterloo and who have a demonstrated passion for peace and justice issues. Preference may be given to students who have been, or plan to be, enrolled in peace and conflict courses at Grebel.

—PeaceWorks Technology Solutions

# Grace New Life Mennonite turns 25, looks to the future

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
HAMILTON, ONT.

After a quarter-century of shepherding Grace New Life Mennonite Church, Pastor Sririsack Saythavy—now in his late 50s and working two full-time jobs: his day job making custom doors for homes, and his evening and weekend job pastoring the congregation—is hoping a younger leader will arise to take on the Hamilton congregation.

Already a pastor in Thailand in 1990, Saythavy was sponsored by a Christian Reformed congregation, along with other Lao people, to come to Canada that year; the denomination supported him to begin a congregation in Hamilton in 1991.

For a period of time, the church thrived, with about 80 people attending, but then Saythavy moved to Toronto to begin another congregation. It is often the test of a church plant to see if it can continue without its founding pastor, and within a few years Grace New Life dropped to only four families and its relationship with the Christian Reformed denomination had gone sour.

So a plea went out for his return. Which he agreed to.

Through relationships with Lao pastors such as Kuaying Teng of St. Catharines Lao Christian Fellowship, Saythavy and church leaders made overtures to Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. Grace New Life became an emerging congregation of the area church in 2012.

The congregation has now rebounded to around 60, including children, with a potential for around a further 50 young adults in the community.

The congregation's vision extends beyond Southeast Asian immigrants. Already the congregation is a mix of many ethnicities, including white Canadians. Services are currently a mixture of Lao and English, but Saythavy says he can see the day coming when it will be all English. Saythavy's passion, which is shared by church elders,

is that "each visitor be touched by God's love through the fellowship," worship and preaching at Grace New Life Mennonite Church.

A celebratory 25th-anniversary worship service was held late in May. ❧



*Pastor Sririsack Saythavy stands in the entrance of Grace New Life Mennonite Church in Hamilton, Ont.*

# Marching to 'Onward' from 'Zion'

*Rockway Mennonite Church moves to new building*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

**R**ockway Mennonite Church in Kitchener has worshipped in rental properties for all of its 56-year existence. Until now.

On June 26, the congregation had its final regular service in the Zion United Church building on Weber Street West. During the service, Ann Weber Becker added one more item to an "Ark" built by her husband Byron while at a congregational retreat in February: the chair used by the children's storytellers in worship.

Then, with a litany acknowledging both grief and joy, excitement and anxiety, congregants and leaders marched to their new home, the former Olivet United Church, a 35-minute walk away on Onward Avenue. Adapting the Isaac Watts/ Robert Lowry

hymn, "Come We that Love the Lord," the congregation marched "from Zion and (to) Onward from Zion."

When they arrived, the "Ark" was unloaded from a mini-van, and they sang "Praise God from Whom," and gave the benediction.

While the building is being finished, the congregation will worship in space lent to it by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada at 50 Kent Avenue in Kitchener, where Pastor Scott Brubaker-Zehr and administrator Anne Brubacher will have their offices. ❧



*The Rockway Mennonite Church 'Ark' is carried out of its former home in the now-sold Zion United Church building as the congregation marches 'to Onward [Avenue] from Zion' on June 26.*



*Ann Weber Becker loads the children's story chair into the 'Ark' that Rockway Mennonite Church moved to its new location at 47 Onward Avenue, Kitchener, Ont., on June 26.*

## ❧ Staff changes

### Pastoral transitions in Ontario

- **GARY KNARR** will begin as interim supply minister of Floradale Mennonite Church, north of Waterloo, on Sept. 1, replacing Fred Redekop, who is leaving after 25 years. Knarr finished two years as interim pastor at Erb St. Mennonite Church in Waterloo, on Aug. 14, and previously spent 10 years as pastor of First Mennonite in Kitchener, a year at Harrow Mennonite, and did supply ministry for other congregations. He has a doctorate in history from Queen's University, Kingston, Ont.; a master of divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.; and a bachelor's degree in history from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo.
- **JIM WHITEHEAD** will begin serving as the intentional interim minister at Living Water Community Christian Fellowship in New Hamburg on Sept. 6. Previously, he served as interim supply pastor at Community Mennonite Fellowship, Drayton, and in various ministerial capacities at Brussels Mennonite Fellowship, Cassel Mennonite, Maple View Mennonite, Hillcrest Mennonite and Stirling Avenue Mennonite churches. He also served Mennonite Church Eastern Canada in the past as chair of the Theological Concerns Council, Agape Reference Council, and the Peace, Justice and Social Concerns Commission.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



**Gary Knarr**



**Jim Whitehead**



# ESL program celebrates 20th anniversary

Story and Photo by MCC Ontario  
Perth County, Ont.

June marked the 20th anniversary of the Poole English-as-a-second language (ESL) program in Perth County, Ont., home to more than 1,100 Low German-speaking families migrating from Mexico.

Currently, Avon Maitland District School Board teachers provide three levels of ESL classes and a class that assists women with high-school credit study. Low German-speaking women and children from Latin America learn to read, write, understand and speak English so they can participate more independently in activities in Ontario. Attendance has grown from the first group of nine women, to 42 this year.

An anniversary celebration was held on June 9 at Poole Mennonite Church near Milverton, with 45 past and current program participants, program staff and church volunteers in attendance.

“It began as an outreach program of Listowel Mennonite Church in 1996,” explained Lily Hiebert Rempel, the coordinator of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario’s Low German Program. “Classes began with the purpose of providing English classes for Low German-speaking women and a nursery school experience for the preschool-aged children. As settlement patterns changed, the program location changed to Poole Mennonite Church in 2000.”

At that time, several other area Mennonite churches decided to work together to share in the work as the program continued to grow. Through the years, community partnerships were forged to provide early childhood education classes with support from literacy specialists and guest speakers from community and health organizations. At the end of a busy morning of learning, mothers and children enjoy visiting together over a nutritious lunch.

“We are thankful for the support of our many partners in this program,” added Rick

Cober Bauman, MCC Ontario’s executive director. “There are countless volunteers from the community and churches who assist cheerfully in the children’s and adult classes, serve as drivers, lunch helpers and in administrative roles. For all of them, we are truly grateful.” ❧



*Shirley Driedger, left, a member of Listowel (Ont.) Mennonite Church and a volunteer with her husband in driving and child care, is pictured with Mrs. Braun, the first participant in the English-as-a-second-language group at Poole Mennonite Church, near Milverton.*

## ❧ Briefly noted

### West Hills Fellowship shares space with St. James Lutheran

BADEN, ONT. — West Hills Fellowship, a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation of about 65 adults and children moved back to Baden a bit over a year ago, feeling a call to be a presence of God in the town. The congregation had bought a building in Baden, but with one setback after another, it decided to share space with St. James Lutheran Church, a congregation of about 40 adults and children. During this time, St. James has met for Sunday worship at 9 a.m. and West Hills has met at 10:40. During the St. James’ service, a combined Sunday school has been held, and from 10 to 10:40 the two congregations have had coffee together in the foyer of the church. While St. James is willing to continue the relationship long-term, Pastor Sean East of West Hills notes that the very formal sanctuary at St. James does not lend itself easily to West Hills’ active worship. West Hills is hoping to move into its new building this fall.

—STORY AND PHOTO  
BY DAVE ROGALSKY



*Pastor Sean East of West Hills Fellowship, Baden, west of Kitchener, Ont., dances with his daughter Rebekah during worship in the St. James Lutheran Church building on June 19.*

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY OF NHUNG TRAN-DAVIES



*The Tran family a few months after arriving in Canada, with toys donated by their sponsors.*

## From refugee to sponsor: A journey of 40 years

By EMILY LOEWEN

Mennonite Central Committee Canada

As a five-year-old resting in her mother's arms at the bottom of a boat crowded with refugees, Nhung Tran could not have imagined the life she's living now. A life as a doctor in Canada. A life in which she is responsible for bringing two families to safety as a sponsor.

It was the fall of 1978, and Tran's mother, a widow, joined the hundreds of thousands of people fleeing Vietnam. She packed herself and six children into a boat in the midst of the stormy season with the hope they would make it to Malaysia.

"She did sacrifice pretty much everything," says Tran (now Tran-Davies). "Put our lives on the line because she just had hope that we would find something better than what was there in Vietnam."

As a five-year-old she remembers only glimpses of the two-day journey.

"It was really tight, and it was very hot, and you know it was hard to breathe down there," she says. "The smell of the vomit,

and my older sister crying because she was sick to her stomach. Bits and pieces like that."

Despite the difficult crossing, she knows they were lucky. Another boat loaded with refugees that left minutes before them got caught in a storm and sank, drowning everyone on board.

The family lived in a refugee camp in Malaysia for eight months before getting word that, even though a widow and six children might seem like an economic risk, there was a church in Edmonton that wanted to sponsor them.

"When we came over to Canada, our family was a mother and six kids," she says. "What I understood is that not a lot of the other nations wanted our family because they thought that our family would be a burden to their community, to their economy."

Her mother was anxious when the plane hit the tarmac in Edmonton, and feared



*Nhung Tran-Davies receives a doll from her sponsors when she arrived at the airport in 1979. The moment was captured for the local newspaper, and she still has the doll today.*

getting off. Although she was relieved to be in a safer place, Tran-Davies says that she didn't know how a seamstress with little education could make it in a new country with six children. She didn't know there was a group of sponsors waiting to help them.

But then they walked off the plane and saw the faces of the sponsors there to greet them. Tran-Davies recalls receiving a doll from one of the sponsors that she still has today.

"We were just so happy, we knew that we were in good hands," she says. "And we had no idea how good we were going to have it just because these sponsors were so wonderful to us."

Nearly 40 years later, Tran-Davies is bringing that same peace to two families fleeing violence in Syria. Over the last few years, she heard about the conflict in Syria, and wondered how to help. Then last summer, it dawned on her that she could become a sponsor. She wanted to bring over two families, so she asked two separate groups of friends for help—one, a group of former refugees and immigrants from Vietnam, the other, a group of children of the families that sponsored her all those years ago.

They were matched with two Syrian families through Mennonite Central

PHOTO BY PETER MARKOWSKI



*Nhung Tran-Davies, right, with some of the friends helping with refugee sponsorship today.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF NHUNG TRAN-DAVIES



*Nhung Tran-Davies, left, with Basemah Albittar from one of the newly arrived refugee families, and interpreter Dalia Abdellatif.*

Committee Alberta's refugee sponsorship program. Inspired by the church that sponsored her, Tran-Davies specifically asked for families that would be harder to settle, for groups larger than four. In one of those families, a mother with five children coming with her mother and brother, Tran-Davies saw especially strong parallels to her own family. She even brought a doll to the airport for the youngest girl, just as she had received on her first day in the country, offering it up as a symbol of the kindness of Canadians.

"It does seem funny how life works out," she says. "Forty years later, it's sort of like a déjà vu, we're in the same situation, but this time I am the sponsor."

Now that both families Tran-Davies is working with have arrived, the sponsors are getting to know them and helping with things like registering for healthcare and language classes, and going to doctor's visits and school.

Tran-Davies believes that with time and resources these two families will succeed, as did she and her siblings and their families. "I truly believe that their kids will help make Canada more beautiful," she says. "In 40 years, I look forward to seeing the kids' accomplishments and seeing what they will do for Canada." ❧

### /// Briefly Noted

#### 'Still carrying on the vision'

The passions that inspired Winnipeg's community shared agriculture (CSA) movement and the famous Tall Grass Prairie Bakery are now making waves around the world, from Winnipeg to Hokkaido, Japan, and back. Ray Epp, one of Tall Grass's five original co-founders, relocated his family to Hokkaido about 20 years ago to start an organic farm that would spread the influence of sustainable agriculture techniques and improve accessibility to just food systems for local growers and eaters. Epp's produce has since overtaken the local Japanese market and his distinctive composting methods are making their way back to Manitoba. Kenton Lobe, an instructor in international development at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg, means to implement them on the CMU Farm, a CSA initiative he co-founded in the wake of Epp's pioneering work. Tabitha Langel, another of Tall Grass's first five who remains a local co-owner, lauds Epp for continuing the vision their cohort always shared: "It reminds me of what [the Apostle] Paul says: 'somebody plants, somebody tends, somebody reaps.' Ray was certainly a very special part of our group's planting. When he came back to visit, we had many tears. He really hadn't expected to find everybody here still carrying on the vision."

—STORY AND PHOTO BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY



*A scene from the Tall Grass Prairie Bakery in Winnipeg.*

## ARTBEAT

# Familiarity breeds good content

*Andrew J. Bergman of 'The Daily Bonnet' reflects on his blog's startling rise to fame, and satire as a tool for church growth*

BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY  
Manitoba Correspondent

Jane Austen once wrote that, for a developing writer, “three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on.” While Steinbach, Man., is certainly no “country village,” culturally it retains much of its old small-town feel, as so many Bible-belt communities do. Perhaps this is why Steinbach has served local blogger Andrew J. Bergman of “The Daily Bonnet” so well as a source of inspiration and opportunity.

Bergman, 36, says he “grew up culturally Mennonite,” but only began to own his Mennonite identity theologically starting in his 20s. He graduated from university with degrees in English, history and education, and published various short pieces in “traditional” forms, including articles and essays on faith and politics, and even short fiction.

However, his rise to literary celebrity came unexpectedly, he says: “I wrote a satirical post about the Steinbach city council moving the entire city to the Mennonite Heritage Village [a local historic site], in response to some issues that were going on locally, and posted it on my blog. To my surprise the post ‘went viral,’ so to speak.”

That was back in April. Six weeks later, Bergman took a chance and launched “The Daily Bonnet,” a website dedicated to local/“Mennonite” satire. Why “Mennonite” humour?

It’s “just natural,” he says. “It’s the tradition I’m a part of. I know the Mennonite church quite well, so the ideas for satire come easily.”

Still, at that time Bergman says he had no idea whether “The Daily Bonnet” would catch on. But less than three months later, the website (dailybonnet.com) has well over 650,000 views and Bergman’s articles



have been read in nearly every country around the world. He calls the response “shocking.”

What is it about “The Daily Bonnet” that people around the world have found appealing? Is it simply the good humour? The cultural novelty? Or is this a case of satire succeeding at a time when other forms

have failed to move globally relevant conversations ahead?

A quick look at recent “Daily Bonnet” headlines reveals that Bergman’s writing is not all buggies and *rollkuchen*:

- “**JUSTIN TRUDEAU** confuses yerba mate for marijuana”
- “**NEW SURVEY** suggests 8 out of 10 people cannot identify the man in the Rio statue”
- “**MAN CAUGHT** with John Howard Yoder books under his mattress”

“Satire can communicate to people in ways that straight information or editorial cannot,” Bergman observes. “You can say things with humour that people might feel uncomfortable with if said directly. I think that examining the church through satire enables us to question what is and isn’t

important. There are many great things about the Mennonite church, but there are also plenty of problematic aspects. My hope is that if these areas are exposed to satire they will be made to seem ‘ridiculous,’ and perhaps eventually we will be rid of them.”

If trial by ridicule sounds too harsh to be Christian, Bergman begs to differ. “There is a long history of satire within the Christian church, most notably the great Jonathan Swift,” he says. “Swift’s satire—particularly ‘A Modest Proposal,’ in which he suggested that the rich, since they are treating the poor like animals anyway, should eat infants—was much harsher and more biting than mine usually is, but I appreciate that, as a Christian minister, he was unafraid to deal with the issues. He could have just preached a sermon on being generous, but the satire was much more effective. He’s an inspiration for me.”

As Swift himself knew, the cardinal rule of satire is, “Don’t dish what you can’t take.” Bergman describes the challenges of writing material that is both inevitably personal and explicitly intended not to be taken literally: “Some of my satire is just for fun, while other pieces have a social or political statement. But every reader reads the post in their own way, and even when

*I know the Mennonite church quite well, so the ideas for satire come easily.*

I am sending a message, the message conveyed is not always what I intended. I suppose that’s inevitable.

“Still, I would never want anyone to feel their religious position was being attacked. If anything, I’m attacking my own beliefs and ideas when I write. It’s a public way of figuring things out for myself: What do I believe? What is important? What is the role of the church, and my role in it? . . . Even when it doesn’t look like it, my writing for ‘The Daily Bonnet’ is often very personal.”

In the end, Bergman says the important thing is not that people agree with his messages, or even understand them, but, rather, that important topics—no matter how sensitive—stay open for honest discussion: “Sometimes it’s good enough that people are talking about the issues.” ✎

# Spring into Song wraps up successful first year

*\$80,000 raised through 41 concerts across Canada for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank*

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

With the last notes now sung, the first-ever Spring into Song concert series for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank has successfully wrapped up. The 41 concerts, performed by community and church choirs from Charlottetown to Vancouver Island, raised almost \$80,000 for the Foodgrains Bank's "conservation agriculture" project in East Africa.

After a 3:1 match from the Government of Canada, a total of \$320,000 was made available to the project, to help 50,000 farm families in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania adapt to a changing climate, and to increase yields through crop rotation, minimizing soil disturbance and covering the soil.

Altogether, more than 900 people sang in the choirs or were involved in organizing the concerts. About 4,000 people turned out to enjoy the music and learn more about the Foodgrains Bank.

The concert series, which was conceived and organized by Ron Klusmeier and Christina Bogucki, featured the music of Klusmeier, a well-known Canadian choral composer.

"I am profoundly grateful for the support received from so many Canadians who participated in this year's Spring into Song concerts," he says. "What started as a dream manifested itself as an outpouring of song and caring in communities from coast to coast."

The concerts were well received by local organizers and audience members alike.

"We had a choir of 25 who sounded like 50," says Diane Kjørven, who led a choir in Prince George, B.C. "The audience participated when invited, and seemed to enjoy themselves. The smiles on their faces just increased my joy."

Former United Church of Canada moderator Walter Farquharson attended

the Spring into Song concert in Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask., with his wife Joan. "We were delighted by the Spring into Song presentation," he says. "It was so moving and so effective."

The concerts also encouraged participants to use their own voices by sending postcards to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, asking the Canadian government to increase its support for small-scale farmers in the developing world. A total of 2,500 postcards were signed and sent.

New music and supporting resources are being developed for a new series of concerts in 2017.

"We want to involve more choirs and reach even more people next year," says Klusmeier. "Through singing, we can celebrate God's goodness and come together to

## /// Briefly noted

### MC Canada honours first anniversary of TRC final event

Mennonite Church Canada is honouring the first anniversary of the final Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) event with the release of a new three-part video series exploring the TRC's 94 Calls to Action. Viewers will learn about those calls through key historical aspects of residential schools, story excerpts of survivors, and responses from a selection of settler Mennonites in attendance at the Ottawa 2015 event. *Reconciliation Needs Us All* is available free at [commonword.ca/go/604](http://commonword.ca/go/604). Recommended resources for those who want to explore the topic in depth are available at [commonword.ca/go/601](http://commonword.ca/go/601).



—Mennonite Church Canada

share our vision of helping those who don't have enough to eat." //

PHOTO COURTESY OF CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK



*In Hanover, Ont., more than 200 people participate in the Spring into Song concert.*



*MC Saskatchewan's Music Library began as a repository for choral works sung at annual songfests. This historical photograph depicts the choir that assembled for one of these songfests, which took place at Third Avenue United Church in Saskatoon on May 18, 1947.*

## A unique treasure

*MC Saskatchewan Music Library's large collection of choral music is a resource for churches*

By **DONNA SCHULZ**

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
SASKATOON

**A**nna Rehan has logged countless hours of volunteer time as Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's music librarian. Appointed by the area church council, her mandate was to organize the large collection of music known as the MC Saskatchewan Music Library.

At one time, there was an area-church-appointed music committee responsible for planning an annual choral songfest. Rehan says that the earliest reference to a music library in the committee's minutes was in 1968. Although others were involved over the years, it is the name Albert Wiens that stands out. Wiens led the songfest for many years, and the music library was his brainchild, says Rehan.



**Albert  
Wiens**

When he passed away in 2002, his widow Katie assumed responsibility for the library. But as she grew older, she found it increasingly difficult to care for the growing collection. Rehan took over from her nearly two years ago.

Her first job was to cull any music that was not being used anymore, that was theologically outdated or musically too difficult, or that was simply inappropriate. Of approximately 1,300 titles, Rehan culled close to 500 works. Because the decisions weren't always easy, she called on Ted Janzen of Rosthern Mennonite, Ben Pauls of Zoar Mennonite in Waldheim, and Russ Regier of Mount Royal Mennonite in Saskatoon, to lend their choral expertise.

Some of the music that was culled was donated to Rosthern Junior College and some of it went to the Saskatchewan

PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ



*Anna Rehan notes that the MC Saskatchewan Music Library includes pieces by local composers, such as this one by Val Wiebe of Zoar Mennonite in Langham.*

Choral Federation. About 40 boxes were recycled. However, of each title that was culled, Rehan sent two copies to the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan Archives at Bethany Manor in Saskatoon.

"So it's not totally gone," she says. "If somebody really wanted to use that stuff, they could copy [it], because most of that would be out of print anyway."

While she culled, Rehan also added to the library. When Bethany College in Hepburn, Sask., closed in 2015, she approached the school to see if it would be willing to donate its choral music to the library. The college agreed, but asked whether the music would be available to the Mennonite Brethren churches with which the school had been affiliated. Rehan's answer was, "Yeah, for sure! Why not?"

Rehan would really like to see people use the library. "We want to make this available," she says. To her knowledge, it is unique in MC Canada. She hopes that more MC Saskatchewan congregations will avail themselves of this treasure, but adds, "We're open to others borrowing as well." Churches of other denominations or MC Canada congregations from outside Saskatchewan are also welcome.

This willingness to be a resource for other churches comes with awareness that not all churches enjoy the same music. "We've tried to be mindful of the type of music that they would want to use as well," says Rehan, "even if it would not be something that we would sing."

The library houses choral music for all

voicings. There are unison selections appropriate for children's choirs, as well as pieces for treble voices in various combinations. There is a section with music for men's choirs. One large cabinet contains only Christmas music, while another holds Easter selections. Shelves above these cabinets hold oratorios, cantatas and song-books. But the bulk of the collection consists of general works for mixed choirs in four-part harmony.

The collection—located at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon—is catalogued, and Rehan hopes to eventually publish the catalogue online. For now, visitors may consult a print catalogue. Each entry includes a piece's title, composer and publisher, along with the number of copies available to borrow.

While anyone may borrow music, Rehan encourages MC Saskatchewan churches to purchase \$30 annual memberships, which help pay for needed supplies. Rehan is available by appointment to help people



*Anna Rehan, MC Saskatchewan's music librarian, examines a piece of choral music from the library's general collection.*

find what they need, or visitors may drop by First Mennonite between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. when church staff are available to unlock the library door. Churches may

borrow music for up to three months.

"It's a bigger job than I thought it would be," Rehan admits, but quickly adds, "It's something that I enjoy. For me, it's life giving. As I go through music, I find it's time I spend with God. It wasn't a hardship to do this." ❧

### /// Briefly noted

#### **Annie completes Ellie's People series of Amish novels**

With the re-release of *Annie*, Herald Press concludes the popular series of books about Amish life called *Ellie's People*. *Annie* is Book 9 of the series. The series has sold more than a half-million copies since its original release from 1988-98, originally aimed for younger readers age 10 and up. *Ellie's People* books have been re-released to provide a new generation with entertainment, wisdom and inspiration. In this final book, *Annie Troyer*, born *Pearlie Mae Streeter*, is adopted into an Amish family. *Annie* finds love and security there, but has a hard time adjusting to Amish customs. Her new sister, *Lucy*, is jealous of the attention *Annie* receives, and *Annie* must make choices about where her loyalties lie. —MennoMedia





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## Veterans' needs provide an opportunity for learning and ministry

Graduate students at Eastern Mennonite Seminary call for churches to become healing communities for combat veterans.

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## Finding God at work in the city

In this new Herald Press book Marty Troyer tells stories of action and hope as citizens of Houston, Tex., work together for the good of their community.

[canadianmennonite.org/gospel-work](http://canadianmennonite.org/gospel-work)

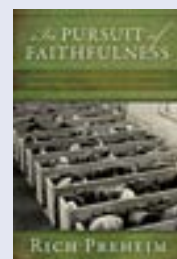


## Briefly noted

### New Indiana-Michigan Mennonite history released

The first Mennonite and Amish settlers arriving in Indiana and Michigan in the mid-19th century were both distinctively American and uniquely Anabaptist. They were part of a wave of settlers expanding westward in their search for new and cheaper land, but they were also distinct in their understanding of Christian faithfulness. *In Pursuit of Faithfulness: Conviction, Conflict, and Compromise in Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference*, a new Herald Press book by journalist and historian Rich Preheim, examines the long history of faith, conflict and outreach that has shaped Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. This 420-page narrative history is Vol. 50 in the Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History series. "In many regards, the history of the conference is the history of the Mennonite church," Preheim said in an interview. The many church agencies eventually located in the northern Indiana region—educational institutions, mutual aid groups, mission agencies and others—brought Mennonites from elsewhere. And they brought differing ideas of faithfulness that sometimes resulted in conflict and change. Through conflict, change, and new fields of endeavour, the Mennonites of Indiana-Michigan Conference have taken their Christian commitment seriously, said Preheim. His history ends in 2001, but an epilogue carries this story of faithfulness up to the present, with its own new challenges and opportunities, building on the past.

—MennoMedia



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# Food for body and soul

*'Mennonite Girls Can Cook'*  
bloggers launch newest book

STORY AND PHOTO  
BY AMY DUECKMAN  
B. C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

While the aroma of fresh-baked zwieback filled the air, members of the "Mennonite Girls Can Cook" blog group launched their newest book at the Mennonite Heritage Museum on Aug. 3.

*Bread for the Journey: Meditations and Recipes to Nourish the Soul* is the latest in the series of books from a group of Mennonite cooks mostly based in the Fraser Valley of B.C. While previous books in the series have been entirely cooking-based, this one focusses more heavily on devotional meditations, prayers and stories, along with the recipes.

"We have been encouraged by an extra measure of grace and friendship by you in our hometown," author Lovella

*(Continued on page 26)*



Lovella Schellenberg, left, narrates as Anneliese Friesen demonstrates the art of making zwieback at the Abbotsford, B.C., book launch of *Bread for the Journey*.

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(Continued from page 25)

Schellenberg told the crowd that had gathered for the event. "It's always so amazing how God puts things in place."

The evening began with Anneliese Friesen demonstrating how to make *zwieback*—or double buns. Bread such as *zwieback* was "a symbol of hope" for Mennonite forebears who went through starvation and migration, she said. Russian

Mennonite families survived on dry, toasted *zwieback* on board ship as they journeyed across the ocean to a new life in the Americas.

Several of the women then read their meditations from the book. As with both of the previous two books, royalties will go to support a designated charity. *Bread for the Journey* will benefit Music Mission Kiev, supporting orphans and widows in Ukraine.

The book launch coincides with this fall's premiere of the original play, *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*, a cooperative effort of publisher Herald Press and Blue Gate Musicals. The play will run at the Blue Gate Theater in Shipshewana, Ind., from Sept. 13 to Oct. 15 and at the Ohio Star Theater in Sugar Creek from Sept. 13 to Nov. 4. ☺

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# Letting Christ abide, from Saskatchewan to Gambia

*The outdoors and agriculture have played key roles in Terri Lynn Paulson's faith journey*

BY AARON EPP  
Young Voices Editor

**T**ending to the grapes she grows in the house she lives in provides Terri Lynn Paulson with a very tangible way of considering John 15, a chapter of the Bible she has been reflecting on in recent months. It begins: *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit."*

"That grapevine [has] brought a lot of reflection on what it means to be pruned and what the fruit is of allowing oneself to be pruned," says Paulson, who lives in Saskatoon and is the pastor of faith and community at nearby Osler Mennonite Church. "What it means to let Christ abide in us has been at the forefront of those thoughts."

The 31-year-old joined Osler Mennonite in May to take on her first pastoral role. That a chapter of the Bible that references growing food would be one of her current favourites should perhaps come as no surprise, given her background in agriculture. Paulson was raised on a farm in Foam Lake, Sask., two hours southeast of Saskatoon.

Her family attended a United church on Sunday mornings, and Paulson's faith was further nurtured by attending the youth group at a local Mennonite Brethren church, as well as spending time each year at an interdenominational summer camp.

"I learned about God at church, but sort of encountered Jesus at the Bible camp I

attended," Paulson says. "Being in that place has really translated to appreciating the outdoors and wilderness as a worshipful space and a place I connect with God quite deeply."

Fresh out of high school, Paulson began an undergraduate degree in agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan (U. of S.) with the hope of learning things that would help her fight world hunger. She saw herself eventually working overseas in some capacity.

Studying bio-resources, crop science and soil science brought her to Cuba and Ethiopia to observe local agriculture projects. The trip to Ethiopia was particularly impactful, as it gave Paulson an idea of what working overseas might be like. It also inspired her to learn more about where her food comes from, and what it means to live simply and sustainably.

"I came back from that trip determined to learn how to grow food where I was," she says.

That interest in learning to grow food brought her to work placements and internships on farms in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Texas and Florida, as well as the West African country of Gambia. While in Gambia, Paulson found herself living in a small community, working at a church where she spent time gardening with some local women. These women were new to the Christian faith and were shunned by their neighbours because of their Christian beliefs.

*(Continued on page 28)*

PHOTO BY BRIT MCDONALD



*Terri Lynn Paulson is the pastor of faith and community at Osler (Sask.) Mennonite Church.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF KRISTA LOEWEN



*Terri Lynn Paulson, second from left, was along for the ride during the Mennonite Church Canada Youth Assembly in July.*

PHOTO BY MICHAEL FRIESEN



*Terri Lynn Paulson's interest in agriculture took her to the West African country of Gambia.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF TERRI LYNN PAULSON



*'It's been really easy to get to know and love the people here,' Paulson says of Osler (Sask.) Mennonite Church.*

*(Continued from page 27)*

"I felt nervous and unqualified to teach the Bible to people who were experiencing it for the first time," Paulson recalls. "I thought, 'Wow, this is something I feel is important and it would be good to feel more confident in that.'"

Paulson moved to Vancouver, where she studied theology at Regent College for a year. Afterwards, she moved back to Saskatoon and began a master's program in environmental science at U. of S.

After finishing her degree, Paulson travelled to the L'Abri fellowship on Vancouver Island, B.C., a Christian ministry with locations around the world where people come to work and grow in their faith through independent study, to spend some time reflecting on her faith. While she had enjoyed the rigours of her master's program, it hadn't always left a lot of time for Paulson to read and reflect on her Christian beliefs.

"[There are] issues our generation of church leaders [were] talking about that I felt left behind on," she says. "I hadn't really spent a lot of time letting the Bible form my thoughts on them." She travelled to L'Abri with a list she made of 10 topics to consider that included how the church has encountered and talked about human

sexuality, the importance of Christians reconciling with indigenous people, and creation care.

Paulson may not have been able to read up on each subject on her list, but her time there was restful, and opened her eyes to new possibilities. Learning about the people who were living and working at L'Abri, as well as the posture of prayer with which they approached life, inspired Paulson. "Had I not gone to L'Abri, I wouldn't have considered a position in the church," she says. "It was a pretty formative time."

Paulson returned to her community agriculture work in Saskatoon, as well as her faith community at Nutana Park Mennonite Church, where she had attended since 2006. When the ministry position at Osler Mennonite became available, she applied and eventually got it. She is only four months into her role, but is finding the work life-giving.

A lifetime spent abiding in Christ and letting God prune her has resulted in fruit in her life that she is eager to share at Osler Mennonite Church.

"It's a great church, and I feel really supported," she says. "It's been really easy to get to know and love the people here." ❧

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# A potluck plate full of Mennonite cultures

*Archival internship sparks interest in Mennonite history and genealogy*

ANDREW BROWN

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

JAMES CHRISTIAN IMAGERY PHOTO



Andrew Brown

**T**his spring I was awarded an archival internship with the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission that allowed me to travel to various Mennonite Brethren archives in North America to learn how they work, as well

as to do some of my own research.

I visited the archives at the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford, B.C.; the Hiebert Library at Fresno Pacific University in Fresno, Calif.; the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies at Tabor

College in Hillsboro, Kan.; and the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, spending a week in each place.

I focussed my research on Mennonite migration stories from Russia, diving into old diaries and personal papers to find some incredible stories. I kept a daily blog, in which I reported on my research, wrote about some of the stories I had found, and included some of my adventures throughout the internship.

One of my highlights came in Abbotsford, where I had just finished reading Peter and Elfrieda Dyck's *Up From The Rubble*, a book about Mennonite refugees and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) work in the years after the Second World War. One of the stories in this book was about a group of 33 Mennonites from southern Russia who escaped with the retreating German army into Europe, avoiding death at every turn. Their group started with 614 Mennonites, but only 33 made it safely to the Netherlands, where MCC helped them immigrate to Canada and Paraguay.

On my last evening in Abbotsford, I was at a panel discussion of the Mennonite Faith and Learning Society at the Heritage Museum. People were speaking on the topic of migration, including a man named Peter Redekop. As he told his story of migration, I was excited to realize that he was one of those 33 survivors from the Second World War.

After the discussion, I made my way through the crowd and introduced myself. I told him that I had read his story just a few days ago, and that I was excited to meet one of the historical people from my research.

I had a picture of the group of 33 Mennonites on my phone to help me keep track of my notes. When I showed him the picture, he could name nearly everyone in it. And he pointed out his family members in the crowd at the museum, adding that his brother John was in attendance, too. Once I had a chance to talk to them both, I took a picture with them to remember our coincidental meeting.

One of the most interesting parts of this internship was travelling to the different Mennonite centres, and comparing the different Mennonite cultures.

Geographically, Winnipeg, Abbotsford, Fresno and Hillsboro form a quadrilateral across western North America that exhibits four vastly different regions, lifestyles and groups of Mennonites.

Seeing Mennonites farming fruit in the Fraser Valley, living in the windswept American Midwest and farming in the desert-like San Joaquin Valley was like getting a huge church potluck plate full of various Mennonite cultures, and getting to taste, sample and experience each one.

Other highlights from the internship included visiting Yosemite National Park in California while I was in Fresno, and getting to see the historic Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church in Goessel, Kan.

At the end of my internship, I set about creating my final project to bring together my research. I wrote a paper about the Mennonite experiences from various migrations from Russia, and compared them to the modern migration story and how the impact of once being immigrants or refugees has impacted how Mennonites work through organizations like MCC.

I broke the paper down by migration era and included many Mennonite stories from each timeframe. In each section, I included a background history and analysis of why Mennonites were leaving Russia. The paper ended up being quite long, but it was a great way to cap off an incredible internship.

This internship has sparked a keen interest for me in Mennonite history and genealogy. I have begun loading my bookshelves with Mennonite history books and exploring various genealogy programs to help expand my knowledge of my family's ancestry.

If nothing else, this internship has made me into a passionate and budding Mennonite historian. ✎

*Andrew Brown, 23, has a degree in history and political studies from Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, where he lives and is a member of Charleswood Mennonite Church. Visit his internship blog, which includes his final project, at [tinyurl.com/mbhcintern](http://tinyurl.com/mbhcintern).*



PHOTOS THIS PAGE  
COURTESY OF ANDREW BROWN



*During his internship, Andrew Brown, centre, happened to meet brothers John, left, and Peter Redekop, right, who were part of a group of Mennonites that Brown researched.*



*Andrew Brown, left, stands with members of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission.*

## UpComing

### EMU to host conference on women of Anabaptist traditions

HARRISONBURG, VA.—“Crossing the line: Women of Anabaptist traditions encounter borders and boundaries,” a conference to be hosted by Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) from June 22 to 25, 2017, will encourage participants to think creatively and across disciplines about how Anabaptists, Mennonites, Amish and related groups have crossed—and continue to cross—lines, borders and boundaries. The conference will build on the 21-year-old legacy of a groundbreaking conference at Millersville (Pa.) University in 1995 entitled “The quiet in the land? Women of Anabaptist traditions in historical perspective.” One important objective of the 1995 conference, says Professor Kimberly Schmidt of EMU, chair of the 2017 planning committee, was to “engage in a dialogue with American and Canadian women’s historians who had already made names for themselves to help us all to think about how Mennonite women’s history relates to the broader regional and global women’s histories.” The phrase “women of Anabaptist traditions” has been retained in the new title to highlight the significant contributions to the field made both at Millersville and in the years since then, she says. For more information, visit [bit.ly/emu-crossing-line](http://bit.ly/emu-crossing-line). —Eastern Mennonite University

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**Sept. 16-17:** MCC Festival for World Relief, at the Tradex, Abbotsford; (16) 5 to 9 p.m., (17) 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Sept. 18:** Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. fall fundraising dessert banquet, featuring letters out of the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev “thaw,” at King Road Mennonite Brethren Church, Abbotsford, at 3 p.m.

**Oct. 1:** “Ride for Refuge” in support of MC Canada Witness ministries in 20 countries around the world. For more information, visit [mennonitechurch.ca](http://mennonitechurch.ca).

**Oct. 14-16:** Women’s retreat, “Piecing together our identity,” at Camp Squeah, Hope, with speaker Song Yang Her. Register at [mcbc.ca/womens-ministry](http://mcbc.ca/womens-ministry).

**Oct. 15:** M2/W2 50th-anniversary fundraising banquet, at Columbia Bible College, at 6 p.m. To register, call 604-859-3215.

### Alberta

**Sept. 10:** MCC Alberta fundraising golf tournament at Tofield, at 7:30 a.m. For more information, call 403-275-6935.

**Sept. 11:** MCC Alberta fundraising golf tournament at Okotoks, at 1:45 p.m. For more information, call 403-275-6935.

**Oct. 1:** Camp Valaqua fall work day. Lunch is provided. For more information, call 403-637-2510.

**Oct. 1:** “Ride for Refuge” in support of MC Canada Witness ministries in 20 countries around the world. For more information, visit [mennonitechurch.ca](http://mennonitechurch.ca).

### Saskatchewan

**Oct. 1:** “Ride for Refuge” in support of MC Canada Witness ministries in 20 countries around the world. For more information, visit [mennonitechurch.ca](http://mennonitechurch.ca).

**Oct. 22:** RJC corporation meeting, and appreciation/fundraising banquet, at 5 p.m.

**Oct. 28:** MDS awareness and fundraising event, at Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon; supper at 6:30 p.m. For reservations, call 306-342-4344.

**Oct. 28-29:** RJC alumni volleyball tournament.

### Manitoba

**Sept. 9:** “Somos su futuro/We are your future” exhibition from Mexico opens at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg. Featured artists Alejandro Arando, Ray Dirks and indigenous women weavers. Until Nov. 12.

**Sept. 10:** Eden Foundation’s 14th annual “Head for the hills” ride for mental health, near Morden. For more information, or to register, visit [edenhealthcare.ca](http://edenhealthcare.ca).

**Sept. 18:** “Supper from the field,” at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, at 5:30 p.m. Held in conjunction with Open Farm Day.

**Sept. 23:** CMU Face2Face Conversation Series: “Journey to renewed covenants,” including a screening of “Reserve 107,” with Brad Leitch and other panelists.

**Sept. 23-24:** CMU annual Fall Festival: Distinguished alumni awards, class reunions, MennoCross cyclocross bicycle race, and more.

**Sept. 24:** Brandon MCC Relief Sale, at the Keystone Centre.

**Sept. 30:** Fundraiser for the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m.

**Oct. 1:** “Ride for Refuge” in support of MC Canada Witness ministries in 20 countries around the world. For more information, visit [mennonitechurch.ca](http://mennonitechurch.ca).

**Oct. 1:** Westgate Mennonite College cyclathon at Bird’s Hill Park.

**Oct. 21:** CMU open house for prospective students. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/campusvisit](http://cmu.ca/campusvisit).

**Oct. 25-26:** CMU’s J.J. Thiessen Lecture Series: “The silence of Abraham, the passion of Job: Explorations in the theology of lament,” with J. Richard Middleton, Ph.D.

**Oct. 28-29:** “Mennonites, land and the environment: A global history conference,” at the University of Winnipeg.

**Oct. 30:** “Along the road to freedom” exhibition opening celebration at the Manitoba Legislative Building, Winnipeg, at 2:30 p.m.

**Nov. 2:** CMU Face2Face Conversation Series: “Why beauty matters: Radical amazement, spirituality and the climate crisis,” with Tim Rogalsky, Ph.D.

**Nov. 4, 25:** CMU campus visit day. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/](http://cmu.ca/)

CANADIAN MENNONITE

The church and future directions

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Photo by Frank Dabick

campusvisit.

**Nov. 15:** "Evening at the arts" at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg.

#### Ontario

**Until Dec. 26:** Exhibit at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo: "Conchies speak: Ontario Mennonites in Alternative Service."

**Sept. 9-11:** "Building community" retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Theme: "Gifting our community." Speakers: Catherine Gitzel and Matthew Arguin. For more information, call 519-625-8602.

**Sept. 10:** Corn fest fundraiser for the Cambridge Food Bank, at Wanner Mennonite, at 5:30 p.m.

**Sept. 19:** MCC Ontario annual general meeting, at the Kitchener MCC office, at 8 p.m. To register in advance, visit [mcco.ca/agm](http://mcco.ca/agm).

**Sept. 26 or 27:** Fall seniors retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Theme: "Our houses, our hearts, our faith." Speaker: Ingrid Loepf

Thiessen. For more information, call 519-625-8602.

**Oct. 1:** "Ride for Refuge" in support of MC Canada Witness ministries in 20 countries around the world. For more information, visit [mennonitechurch.ca](http://mennonitechurch.ca).

**Oct. 30:** Menno Singers present "Romantic Rarities," featuring Widor's "Mass for Two Choirs and Two Organs," at Church of St. John the Evangelist, Kitchener, at 3 p.m.

**Nov. 5,6:** Pax Christi Chorale, with the Bicycle Opera Project, presents Mendelssohn's "Elijah," at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto; (5) 7:30 p.m.; (6) 3 p.m.

**Dec. 10:** Mennonite Mass Choir with the KW Symphony and soloists perform Handel's "Messiah," at Centre in the Square, Kitchener.

#### Québec

**Sept. 18:** Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal hosts a meal and discussion for young adults interested in community and fellowship at Maison de l'amitié, at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call 514-849-9039.

#### U.S.A.

**Oct. 6-8:** "Deep faith" conference exploring "Anabaptist faith formation for all ages," at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. To register, visit [mennoniteusa.org/deepfaith/](http://mennoniteusa.org/deepfaith/).

To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by e-mail to [calendar@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:calendar@canadianmennonite.org). For more Calendar listings online, visit [canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar](http://canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar).



## Gift Planning Consultant

### British Columbia

Mennonite Foundation of Canada (soon to be Abundance Canada), a donor-advised charitable foundation committed to helping others live generously, is seeking a Gift Planning Consultant for our office in Abbotsford.

#### As the ideal candidate you will:

- provide charitable gift and estate planning services, and promote biblical stewardship of financial resources,
- support and incorporate MFC's core values of stewardship in your personal life,
- communicate effectively with individuals and in public presentations,
- have knowledge of charitable gift and estate planning,
- be creative, organized, and self-motivated in balancing multiple projects,
- be willing and able to contribute as part of an inter-dependent staff team, and
- have the ability to travel within Canada and the USA.

MFC offers a competitive salary and benefits package. This is a full-time, salaried position. Please submit resume by October 7, 2016 to:

#### Gayle Fangrad

207-50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1  
[gfangrad@MennoFoundation.ca](mailto:gfangrad@MennoFoundation.ca)  
 519-745-7821



Abundance  
CANADA

[MennoFoundation.ca/careers](http://MennoFoundation.ca/careers)

## Classifieds

### Employment Opportunities



Mennonite  
Central  
Committee

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY  
Program Director

The Program Director for MCC BC provides leadership and support to program staff and ensures that all activities are focused on approved strategic priorities, plans and budgets.

MCC BC programs serve in areas related to abuse prevention and response, indigenous relations, refugee assistance, homelessness, child poverty, sustainable livelihoods, restorative justice and voluntary service.

The Program Director reports to the Executive Director and is a member of the leadership team that collaborates on the development of strategic plans.

Please send your cover letter and resume to [MarieReimer@mccbc.ca](mailto:MarieReimer@mccbc.ca) or call (604) 851-7728 or (604) 850-6639.

Only those candidates who are legally eligible to work in Canada should apply. View the complete job description at: <http://mcccanada.ca/get-involved/serve/openings/program-director-mcc-bc>.

All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to: a personal Christian faith; active church membership; and non-violent peacemaking. MCC is an equal opportunity employer and invites all qualified candidates to apply.

PHOTO BY NEIL MAYHEW / TEXT BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY



*For the last two-and-a-half months, four passionate Alberta men cycled across Canada, raising money and educating the public in an effort to help end human trafficking in this country. The team, which includes, from left to right, Ryan McAuley, Luke Wahl and Dominic Mayhew, and Matthew Wright, not pictured, left Vancouver on June 6. Their ride, called BASIC (Biking Against Slavery In Canada), ended on Aug. 15, when they dipped their tires into the Atlantic Ocean at Cape-Spear, NL, the easternmost point in North America. However, their fundraising efforts will remain ongoing for roughly another month in the wake of their success. All proceeds go to Defend Dignity, a registered charity, to support its work in the prevention and abolition of slavery in Canada. For more information, or to donate, visit [basicride.com](http://basicride.com) or email [basicride16@gmail.com](mailto:basicride16@gmail.com).*



# God at work in the World Snapshots

PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN



*An evening of hymn singing and playing drew 450 people to Clearbrook Mennonite Brethren Church in Abbotsford, B.C., on Aug. 4., all for the benefit of the city's homeless through the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C.'s Homeless Prevention and Outreach Program. Local musicians Calvin Dyck on violin and Heather Dyck on piano, together with guest pianist Phyllis Geddert of Winnipeg, performed several solos, while the congregation enthusiastically joined in on singing several favourite old hymns. A freewill offering netted \$9,500 for the cause, while sales of Geddert's CD added another \$750. MCC B.C. estimates that Abbotsford's homeless population numbers about 150. Through loans for rent and utilities, low-barrier housing and community meals, MCC B.C. provides ongoing support and friendship for the local homeless population.*