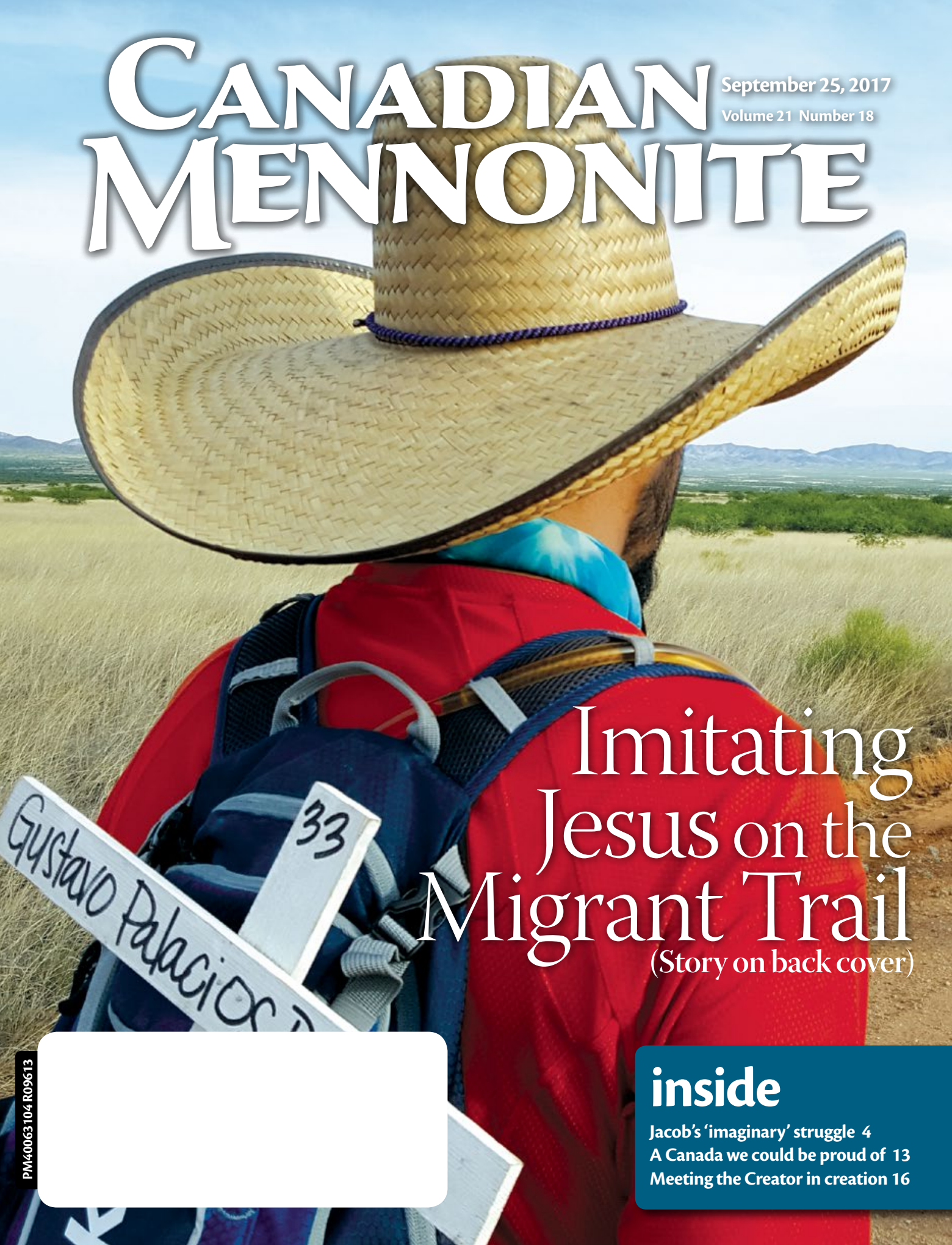


CANADIAN MENNONITE

September 25, 2017

Volume 21 Number 18



Imitating Jesus on the Migrant Trail

(Story on back cover)

inside

Jacob's 'imaginary' struggle 4
A Canada we could be proud of 13
Meeting the Creator in creation 16

EDITORIAL

Making space for the Spirit

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Fourteen months have gone by since the conclusion of the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process and the decision congregational delegates made at Assembly 2016. At the end of that seven-year process, a large majority of the delegates voted in favour of “creating space” for congregations to differ from one another when it comes to committed same-sex relationships.

The framers of the BFC recommendation acknowledged that “there are those among us (congregations and individuals) whose careful study of Scripture and prayerful journey of discernment lead them to a different understanding on committed same-sex relationships than is commonly assumed by readings of Article 19 in our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.”

Their recommendation was “that we create space/leave room within our body to test alternative understandings from that of the larger body to see if they are a prophetic nudging of the Spirit of God.” The discernment document called on both area churches and congregations to “determine how they will create this space” within their midst.

Have we taken up this challenge?

Wearied from the hard slog of difficult BFC conversations, many of us breathed a sigh of relief and moved on to points of agreement about easier issues. A segment of us saw the assembly decision as confirmation that the church has totally lost its way on a key point of faith. Another

segment saw it as permission to proceed with full inclusion of same-sex members into our congregations.

Both of these positions risk marginalizing the “other side.” We can be tempted to scold or “correct” the other party and, in

the process, fail to listen sensitively to the concerns and fears they express. We also risk not hearing the voice of God’s Spirit.

What are we to do with these recommendations to create space and listen for the nudging of the

Holy Spirit? What does it look like, with this particular issue, to make—or allow—room for testing our understandings, as individuals and as congregations?

First, we must ask ourselves: Can we trust that the Holy Spirit speaks not only to us and the ones we agree with but also to the sisters and brothers with whom we have a disagreement?

We might need to confront our own fears as we live into the BFC recommendations. Maybe we fear having our minds and our attitudes stretched. Maybe we don’t want to confront the complexity of our own sexuality. Do we trust God to continue guiding all of us—individually and congregationally—through seemingly unresolvable differences?

The BFC Task Force recognized that the work of discernment in community is a long-term, ongoing process. There was acknowledgement that “unity in Christ is not the same as agreement on all theological, biblical understandings.” In the midst of disagreement, there was also a

deep desire for unity as a larger church body.

The challenge is to not get so entrenched in our own corner that we are unable to provide “gracious space for ‘the other,’” as one of my colleagues put it. This means moving beyond judgment to a posture of listening and caring. It means changing our speech and attitudes toward those we are tempted to chastise or belittle. Paying attention to how we care for each other.

A possible first step is to have honest, caring conversation with individuals who differ from us. Consider the suggestion of John Paul Lederach, Mennonite peacemaker extraordinaire. To cultivate compassion, he suggests: “Give yourself the gift of finding one person with whom you disagree and commit to having coffee once every few months with each other for the rest of your life.”

Lederach explains that the purpose of this meeting would not be to argue or convince, but rather to “bear witness to your lives in friendship,” to cultivate a caring and honest relationship. In that space we can lay our fears aside and invite the Spirit to nudge and guide.

As individuals and congregations, let’s allow space for the Holy Spirit to continue teaching us. Let’s practise a Christ-mandated love towards those with whom we disagree. “*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:35).

Special Assembly coverage

During the event, to be held Oct. 13 to 15, you can follow *Canadian Mennonite* and Mennonite Church Canada on Facebook and Twitter: hashtag: #mcassembly2017. Our report will appear in the Nov. 6 issue.



ABOUT THE COVER:

David Bonilla, a former Mennonite Brethren pastor from Colombia, walks the Migrant Trail in the Sonoran Desert in Arizona, bearing a cross to bring attention to the deaths of migrants traversing the U.S.-Mexico border. See story on back cover.

PHOTO: SAULO PADILLA, MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Canada

ISSN 1480-042X

CANADIAN MENNONITE

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO:

CANADIAN MENNONITE,
490 DUTTON DRIVE, UNIT C5,
WATERLOO, ON, N2L 6H7

Phone: 519-884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 Fax: 519-884-3331

Web site: canadianmennonite.org

Facebook.com/Canadian.Mennonite @CanMenno

Please send all material to be considered for publication to:

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Paid obituaries: obituaries@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

Material can also be sent "Attn: Submissions/Readers Write/Milestones/

Obituaries/Calendar" by postal mail or fax to our head office.

Reprint requests: reprints@canadianmennonite.org

Mission statement: To educate, inspire, inform, and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada as it shares the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. We do this through an independent publication and other media, working with our church partners.

Guiding values:

Hebrews 10:23-25 • Accuracy, fairness, balance • Editorial freedom •
Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will
• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

Area churches and MC Canada financially support 38 percent of *Canadian Mennonite's* annual budget.

Board of Directors (by appointing body):

MC Canada: **Doreen Martens, Henry Krause, Rod Wiens, Elmer Hildebrand;**

MC B.C.: **Linda Matties;** MC Alberta: **Arthur Koop;**

MC Saskatchewan: **Larry Epp;** MC Manitoba: **Ken Reddig;**

MC Eastern Canada: **Tim Reimer;** CMPS: **Lois Epp, Ally Siebert, Bryce Miller;**

Board Chair: **Henry Krause,** hakrause@telus.net, 604-888-3192

Head Office Staff:

Tobi Thiessen, Publisher, publisher@canadianmennonite.org

Virginia A. Hostetler, Executive Editor, editor@canadianmennonite.org

Ross W. Muir, Managing Editor, managinged@canadianmennonite.org

Barb Draper, Editorial Assistant, edassist@canadianmennonite.org

Betty Avery, Graphic Designer, designer@canadianmennonite.org

Lisa Jacky, Circulation/Finance, office@canadianmennonite.org

Aaron Epp, Young Voices Editor, youngvoices@canadianmennonite.org

Advertising Manager: D. Michael Hostetler, advert@canadianmennonite.org,
toll-free voice mail: 1-800-378-2524 ext. 224

Correspondents:

Will Braun, Senior Writer, seniorwriter@canadianmennonite.org

Amy Dueckman, B.C. Correspondent, bc@canadianmennonite.org

Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, Alberta Correspondent, ab@canadianmennonite.org

Donna Schulz, Saskatchewan Correspondent, sk@canadianmennonite.org

Dave Rogalsky, Eastern Canada Correspondent, ec@canadianmennonite.org

One-Year Subscription Rates

Canada: \$46 + tax (depends on province where subscriber lives)

U.S.: \$68 **International (outside U.S.):** \$91.10

Subscriptions/address changes:

(e-mail) office@canadianmennonite.org

(web) canadianmennonite.org

(phone) 1-800-378-2524 ext. 221

contents

SEPTEMBER 25, 2017 / VOL. 21, NO. 18



Jacob's 'imaginary' struggle 4

According to **EMMA PAVEY**, 'When we read foundational faith stories like this, we can incorporate a number of different ways of interpreting them, different ways of understanding what God might be saying to us through them.'

Tears shed over the closing of Riverdale Mennonite 15

The congregation held two closing services, with one on Aug. 20 advertised far and wide as the closing service, while reserving Aug. 27 for a more intimate gathering for members to say goodbye.

Fast for Indigenous human rights 19

Bill C-262 is a big deal. So big, that some are taking up a fast in the days leading up to the bill's debate in the House of Commons. One of those people is **STEVE HEINRICHS**.

Principal hits midlife, takes to pulpit 22

After 23 good years as a teacher and principal, **CHERYL BRAUN** asked herself a simple question: 'What does the last part of my career look like?' Would she stay the course or risk change?

'The price for your glory is their suffering' 23

VIC THIESSEN reviews *Silence*, the latest film from acclaimed Catholic director **MARTIN SCORSESE**.

Young Voices 27-29

AARON EPP reports on three young people in very different roles at the Canada Summer Games in 'Hard work pays off,' and profiles **SARAH MOESKER's** year in an Anglican convent in 'Over and over again, day by day.'

Regular features:

For discussion **6** Readers write **7** Milestones **11**
A moment from yesterday **12** Online NOW! **25**
Yellow Page **26** Calendar **30**

Making space for the Spirit 2

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER

A huge challenge 7

WILLARD METZGER

Paddling down the river 8

MELISSA MILLER

A legacy of giving 9

BRAD FRIESEN



Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

Jacob's 'imaginary' struggle

BY EMMA PAVEY

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

“The same night [Jacob] got up and took his two wives, his two maids and his 11 children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, ‘Let me go, for the day is breaking.’ But Jacob said, ‘I will not let you go, unless you bless me.’ So he said to him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Jacob.’ Then the man said, ‘You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.’ Then Jacob asked him, ‘Please tell me your name.’ But he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’ And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.’ The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip” (Genesis 32:22-31).

Like Jacob, although we may feel dislocated and in pain, we must persevere long enough to ask for and receive a blessing, as Nouwen puts it, ‘allowing the blessing to touch us in our brokenness,’ always so that we in turn can bless others.

This odd story of Jacob’s wrestling match breaks into a broader narrative in which Jacob is preparing to meet Esau, his brother from whom he stole the birthright. Jacob is fearful that Esau will want to kill him for his deception, and Esau has threatened as much. Jacob is a trickster with a history of deception and manipulation—his very name means “one who deceives”—so he is right to fear the consequences of his actions.

The tale of Jacob’s overnight wrestling match disrupts the flow of the broader story to tell us this strange and mysterious tale of a being who wrestles all night with Jacob. It is a physically intimate scene, with these two locked in combat in the dark. It is a violent scene, with Jacob prevailing, but only after suffering a dislocated hip. And it is also dislocated as a story, with unanswered questions and unexpected consequences.

As for the opponent, many interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, have tried to determine who exactly it was. Was it a human man, a stranger, an angel, the spirit of Esau? Was it God? We are told that Jacob’s understanding is that through the encounter he has seen God face-to-face, but the details are hazy and mysterious.

Room for imagination

When we read foundational faith stories like this, we can incorporate a number of different ways of interpreting them, different ways of understanding what God might be saying to us through them. It is helpful to have an understanding of the culture and worldview of the day, as much as we can, and it is also helpful to understand oral tradition and storytelling purposes.



'JACOB WRESTLING WITH THE ANGEL' BY GUSTAVE DORÉ, 1855

Another way we can approach these stories is through our imagination. Imagination and religion have a complicated relationship, partly because imagination is unpredictable and sometimes chaotic, and partly because it is personal and so it cannot be controlled by other people.

Perhaps this story of Jacob, like so many in Scripture, leaves many gaps precisely so that there is room for our imagination, room for us to fill in details and participate in the story according to our own interpretation. It provides an opportunity for us each to share our own unique take on the story that is told.

A Christian imagination works with reason to search stories for what is true, to look for meaning, to look for emotional connection and to look for God. When we read the story of Jacob, we might consider how our minds embellish the story:

• **WHAT ARE** the details that we add?

- **HOW DO** we imagine it?
- **CAN WE** imagine ourselves as Jacob?
- **CAN WE** imagine ourselves as his assailant?
- **DO WE** see ourselves as an observer?
- **HOW DO** we use our imagination to weave a meaning?

What my Christian imagination does with this story

What jumps out at me is the way that Jacob's opponent responds to Jacob's request for his name. Jacob politely asks, "Please tell me your name," and the response is, "Why is it that you ask my name?" as if to say, "You ought to know the answer."

I am reminded when I read this of the psychological and cultural idea of our shadow—that is, the negative side of our character that we hide and deny. A recurring theme not only in psychology and literature, but also in cultural practices all over the world, is the idea that as human

beings our quest is to understand and fight with our own shadow. The response of the assailant then means, "Why is it that you ask my name, Jacob? I am you."

If we imagine the story this way, Jacob experiences quite literally a dark night of the soul. He faces down his own shadow and, rather than using deception as he has before, has to do this honestly, head on. We can imagine, then, in this solitary moment, that Jacob is wrestling with his life of deception, with his own sense of guilt about deceiving his brother and with his unresolvable woundedness at being the second-born son.

Surely, this is a way of imagining this story of Jacob that resonates with us. Just like Jacob, we, too, have a history of deliberate sinning and we, too, sin and suffer from a place of unresolvable woundedness. We all have a shadow side to our character. What do we do with this aspect of our character that we prefer to hide, the side that destroys and leads

us away from God and from others? We may try to deny it or hide it, but we must face it or it will come and wrestle with us whether we like it or not. It will come back to bite us in the . . . hip! And, like Jacob, it is when we are alone with time to think that this often happens.

God in the struggle

Jacob recognizes that through this fierce and painful fight, he encounters God (Genesis 32:30). Jacob's sin in pursuing blessing by any devious means becomes his strength in determination as he gains a blessing after this honest wrestling with his shadowy opponent. Destructive forces are turned into creative promise.

God is in the midst of this struggle, at its heart. In God's relentless pursuit of Jacob's well-being, God wrestles with Jacob as much as Jacob wrestles with God, with his opponent, with himself, intimately, forcefully, bodily. After the fight, even though he has a dislocated hip, Jacob refuses to let his opponent go until his assailant blesses him. Jacob is again determined to gain a blessing by whatever means he can.

Notice that in response to this request the opponent replies, "What is your name?" It is as if the opponent is reminding Jacob of the name he was given and is asking him what identity he wants to claim now, who he wants to be after persevering in this struggle.

Theologian Walter Wink writes that "it is God who sets before us our need for healing, God who meets us in the wound, God the terror who frightens us in the darkness of the unknown life that wells up from our own depths, God who needs our healing, God who heals us."

Whatever our wound, whatever our shadow, God is with us in our complexity, turning our wound into strength by God's grace. Light always casts a shadow, and we consist of both as our complex and beloved selves.

Blessing others and ourselves through our struggles

It is our own personal stories and struggles, both with God and with ourselves, that form us as individuals, and that can bless us with gifts we can share with others.

As Henri Nouwen writes in *Life of the Beloved*, "The first step to healing is not a step away from the pain, but a step toward it. When brokenness is . . . just as intimate a part of our being as our chosenness and our blessedness . . . we have to find the courage to embrace our own brokenness, to make our most feared enemy into our friend, and to claim it as an intimate companion." Like Jacob, although we may feel dislocated and in pain, we must persevere long enough to ask for and receive a blessing, as Nouwen puts it, "allowing the blessing to touch us in our brokenness," always so that we, in turn, can bless others.

Along with Jacob, we need not be governed by the fear of being discovered, or by the fear of fear, or by the flaws in our character we always thought were written in stone. We, too, are asked, "What is your name?" What is the identity that you choose now that encompasses all of you as you continue your journey with God?

God undergirds, surrounds and holds us in the struggles we face as we live into our full humanity. Jesus, too, faced the temptations and trials that human beings

struggle with in his time in the wilderness and in the Garden of Gethsemane: "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet is without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). The redemption of Jesus Christ's struggle through the cross means that there is no depth or distance or darkness we can travel to that takes us out of the reach of God.

God is with us as we face our fears and struggles; as we claim our new, whole identity of body and soul; and as we are blessed by God to go out into the world using our reason and our imagination in God's service for others. ❧



Emma Pavey is a former member of Langley Mennonite Fellowship, BC. She now lives in Birmingham, U.K., and works for ForMission College and the Susanna Wesley Foundation.

❧ For discussion

1. When you read Genesis 32, where Jacob is involved in a wrestling match, whom do you assume Jacob was wrestling with? What are some of the imaginative details that you add to the biblical passage?
2. Emma Pavey suggests that Jacob was wrestling with his own shadow, his "life of deception, with his own sense of guilt about deceiving his brother, and with his unresolvable woundedness." Does this interpretation resonate with you? Do we all have a side of ourselves that we want to keep hidden?
3. What are some of the fears that keep us from confronting ourselves and our own brokenness? Do you have a story of struggle in your life? How did you experience God in the midst of your struggles?
4. Will Braun describes how Cheryl Braun struggled as she considered changing her career (page 22). Do you see any similarities between her story and Pavey's description of Jacob's struggles? Why is it important to face the deep, dark things that we are afraid to put into words?

—BY BARB DRAPER

See related resources at
www.commonword.ca/go/1324

CommonWord
 Bookstore and Resource Centre

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.canadianmennonite.org. All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to letters@canadianmennonite.org and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

✉ Watson's wisdom is 'a pernicious fable'

RE: "WISDOM, WHERE art thou? (Pt. 10)," July 24, page 13.

After reading Troy Watson's column, I'm inclined to wonder if we've gone backward to a time when emotions were lodged in the heart, anger in the spleen and reason in the brain. It's my understanding that the human mind is the only repository of not only our thoughts, but our allegiances, our emotions, our ethics, our longings and our beliefs. A brain-damaged person in a vegetative state is unable to express or demonstrate any of the attributes we historically attributed to other still-functioning organs.

The splitting of personality into parts can lead to absurdities like, "Whether you are aware of this or not, you probably believe your mind is who you are," or,

(Continued on page 8)

FROM OUR LEADERS

A huge challenge

WILLARD METZGER

It's a big year for Lutherans—the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. So it struck me as significant that I was invited to present a sermon and serve communion alongside a synod bishop at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada's national convention in July.

At the 450th anniversary of the Lutheran's Augsburg Confession of Faith in 1980, the Lutheran World Federation—representing 95 percent of Lutherans



globally—invited Mennonites to join their celebration. Mennonites responded that it was difficult to celebrate a confession that condemned us for our views on theological matters such as infant baptism, even though the centuries-old memory of Anabaptist persecution had faded. But that invitation led to a 30-year reconciliation process, culminating in 2010.

As I stood before a full sanctuary of Evangelical Lutheran believers, the weight of responsibility descended upon my

shoulders. I felt the eyes of a great "cloud of witnesses" observing. There I was, an Anabaptist leader about to help serve the Lord's Supper to Lutheran worshippers, those with whom we were in such harsh disagreement centuries earlier.

Reconciliation is not an easy task. Although we'd all like to think that it's as simple as "let's kiss and make up," true reconciliation is a lengthy process. It involves truth telling. It includes admissions and confessions. It requires the non-defensive discipline of acceptance. Telling the truth can feel freeing to the one speaking. Hearing the truth can weigh on the one listening. But there is no reconciliation without this exchange.

For nearly 500 years, Anabaptists have borne martyrdom from a variety of persecutors. We have felt the weight of living out our beliefs. We have wrestled with the guilt of living safely and in peace while others risk their lives and take up arms. I wish I could say that in nearly 500 years we have learned how to express

conviction without feeling like enemies to others, but long-standing patterns are difficult to break.

In this single act of reconciliation—of inviting me, an Anabaptist, to serve communion—Lutherans accepted our divergent understandings as an equal expression of love for God. Being invited to offer communion was not a statement of agreement. It did not mean that we are all of one mind. But it did acknowledge that we serve one God. We come to the same source of mercy and forgiveness. We go to the same place for redemption and restoration.

This provides Anabaptists with a huge challenge. Can we accept disagreeing viewpoints as equal expressions of love for God? I fear that we have not even been able to do so among ourselves.

"This is the blood of Christ shed for you." These are not words of entitlement. These are words of recognition. They acknowledge a fact, whether we like it or not, whether we agree with it or not.

In offering Eucharist to the Lutheran family, the feeling of being surrounded by a huge cloud of Anabaptist witnesses affected me more profoundly than serving communion has ever done before.

Willard Metzger is Mennonite Church Canada's executive director.

(Continued from page 7)

“... try to stop your mind from thinking thoughts in your head. Your mind will not obey.” At the same time—and this is its most malicious attribute—it leads us to voodoo-ize the Christian experience: that we are optionally possessed, or not possessed, by the Holy Spirit or by Jesus Christ, in opposition to the recalcitrant wickedness of our minds that can take over the

core and the impetus of our theology and drive us off in what have proven historically to be directions of madness.

I would grant Watson that the mind is capable of becoming undisciplined and erratic, but I would much prefer to see mental illness for what it is: schizophrenia, paranoia, obsessive/compulsive neurosis, sociopathy or psychopathy.

FAMILY TIES

Paddling down the river

MELISSA MILLER

To celebrate our wedding anniversary, my husband and I canoed on our neighborhood river. Due to extremely low water levels, the first stretch was quite challenging, not unlike some stretches of marriage. This was abundantly clear when the stern yelled, “Draw!” and the bow replied, “What’s a draw?” Immediately after, the canoe lodged on a rock.

Getting stuck happens in marriages also. Sometimes we get stuck in sweet places, in a smooth rhythm, in a happy team. Sometimes we get stuck in rocky places, in barren patches and protracted conflicts.

On the water, as we sat on the rock and contemplated our next move, we met a couple of other canoes. One canoeist assured us that we were in the worst section and that the paddling would soon improve. In boating as in marriage, it helps to have others outside the boat providing perspective. Our encourager was right, and shortly after we dislodged, the remainder of the outing proceeded quite smoothly and pleasantly.

Our anniversary on the river was full of marriage metaphors for me. I am not alone in my musings. I once read a novel by Ben Schrank, *Love is a Canoe*. The two marriages at the centre of the book struggled and foundered, evidence of the difficulty of maintaining healthy, vibrant

relationships.

Christian marriages have additional resources. We can draw on Jesus’ model of self-giving love, Paul’s teachings on equal, mutual regard, and the Spirit’s guidance, to name a few. Even so, Christians are not immune to marriage difficulties and break-ups, as many of us know personally. God’s grace holds us in such times, as surely as in happier seasons.

Our personalities and characteristics impact how we journey with our marriage partner. For example, the means to listen to and adapt to one’s partner, and the capacity to release grudges, both play a part in our ease or troubles in relationships. Unexpected events can bring joy or more struggle; either way, we need to respond to what the river brings us. Some of the low-water, stubborn rocks in my marriage came along during years of infertility, and subsequently when

“They will support your marriage; they will provide a place for you to belong and shape you as God’s people.” Excellent advice that we have followed, and that has proven to be true.

May I encourage you in your relationships. For those of you who are single, either having never married or are now without spouse, may you have sufficient companionship and joy that your journey feels full and satisfying. For those who are newly married, may there be much fun in the early years of getting to know each other and learning how to work as a team. For those in the middle years, may you have strength and commitment to carry you through this stretch of demanding, multiple tasks at home and at work.

For those who have weathered decades of shared life, may you savour the hard work and pleasures of what has gone before, and anticipate more years of happy paddling, metaphorically speaking. At a church potluck, I once saw an elderly gentleman place his arm around his wife’s



We can draw on Jesus’ model of self-giving love ... and the Spirit’s guidance ...

we uprooted from our well-established networks to move halfway across the country.

God’s community is another invaluable resource. At our wedding, the pastor imagined that our shared lives would involve mobility and that we would live in different places. “Seek out the church of God wherever you go,” he counselled.

waist, as they slowly pirouetted from the table with their plates of food like an elegantly executed dance move they’d done many times. It was a beautiful sight.

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

“When we elevate the role of the mind above the heart, soul and body in our faith, we naturally shift the focus from loving to understanding,” is, in my view, a non sequitur. Without our mind and the consciousness it enables, the heart, soul and body are nothing more than carbon, water and a smattering of minerals, their independence a pernicious fable.

GEORGE EPP, ROSTHERN, SASK.

✉ Colonel Dennis a saviour to thousands of Mennonites

RE: “A MOMENT from yesterday,” July 24, page 12.

Thank you for reminding us of Colonel J. S. Dennis’s contribution when the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) saved the lives of thousands of Mennonites. The CPR

(Continued on page 10)

GOD, MONEY AND ME

A legacy of giving

BRAD FRIESEN

A few weeks ago, we welcomed our first grandchild into the world. Amid my great joy, I have recently found myself reflecting on the incredible responsibility of raising children. Scripture advises that if we “*train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6 ESV).

Looking back on my own childhood, I believe my parents did a fantastic job raising their children. Mom and Dad were involved in many aspects of the local church: serving on boards and committees, teaching Sunday school and leading small groups. They truly lived out their belief that both their time and money belonged to the Lord. I remember well the way they modelled biblical stewardship. This was not something that they talked about, but we kids could see it in the way our parents lived their lives and managed the household.

Without fail, right off the top came their giving to the local church, then to Christian charities and, finally, household needs. As children, we wrestled with knowing that a new car, a home convenience or a vacation would never get in the way of their giving. I clearly recall Dad, who always had great ideas and big plans, sitting down with Mom to figure out what we could afford. Many times, those big plans were re-arranged so we could

live within our means.

Did I regret not going on a fancy vacation or not having a car with power windows and air conditioning? Maybe at the time, but now I cherish those decisions and the way my parents were modelling generosity for my siblings and me.

When I became a parent, the world I raised my children in was quite different from the one in which I had grown up. Nevertheless, those core values instilled by my parents remained. Amid rapidly advancing technology, increasingly influential media and shifting societal values, my wife and I did our best to model biblical stewardship and generosity for our kids. We hope that at least some of the time we got it right. Now I want to continue



Perhaps a family foundation would be helpful for your family, too.

modelling these values for my grandchild.

Many of my clients at Abundance Canada share a similar desire to instill generosity in their children and grandchildren. Yet giving today is not as visible as it once was. Automatic withdrawals, the tap of a credit card and online virtual donations are the norm. Our grandchildren won’t often experience placing money in the offering plate or buying material goods to send to a charity. However, recently my wife and I established a family foundation to keep our family focussed on generosity

into the future.

The term “family foundation” sometimes makes people think of wealthy philanthropists like Bill Gates or Oprah Winfrey, but anyone can give in this way. Our family foundation is like a unique savings account for a portion of our family giving. As the leaders of the family, my wife and I seed the account and commit to contribute funds on an annual basis. We encourage our grown children to give to the account as well, and in time we hope our grandchildren will do the same.

Every year, we meet up to prayerfully decide how a portion of the funds will be disbursed. We look forward to these opportunities to gather everyone together to connect, pray and discuss what charities are important to us. This structure helps keep generous giving front-and-centre throughout the year. Perhaps a family foundation would be helpful for your family, too.

I am quickly learning that grandparenting is a wonderful blessing and an

awesome responsibility. Following in my parents’ footsteps, I hope and pray that my family is developing an enduring understanding of the importance of generosity and establishing a legacy of joyful giving for generations to come.

Brad Friesen is a gift planning consultant at Abundance Canada and is in Abbotsford, B.C. To learn more about setting up a family foundation and other gift solutions, call Abundance Canada at 1-800-772-3257 or visit abundance.ca.

(Continued from page 9)

benefited from cheap labour from internment camps set up by the Canadian government, using incarcerated immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian empire during the First World War. That experience was quite negative for the CPR. Then Dennis was seconded to the International Red Cross and travelled to Siberia, where he saw firsthand the destruction of the Russian civil war. It was upon his return from seeing suffering firsthand that he made the agreement with Bishop Toews. The story of the CPR's change of heart is yet to be told. And our grandparents' suffering changed the course of Canada's narrative and its history.

WALTER BERGEN, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

✉ The 'hard work' of evangelism

RE: "ARE YOU prepared to die?" editorial," July 3, page 2.

I was very moved when I read your editorial. When I saw the reference to the film *Silence*, I did a double take. We were quite aware of Endo, because he is a writing hero in Japan.

I was moved to tears at how you brought in mission and martyrdom. Our work was on the island of Kyushu in Japan, and we have visited the various places where Christians were martyred for their faith. One was in Nagasaki, where 26 Catholics were crucified for their faith at one time. Seeing that monument is very sobering. Another place was Unzen, a famous hot spring tourist attraction. When we first visited Unzen, there were many white crosses in and around the hot springs. When we visited a number of years later, the crosses had all been removed, as Japan is very concerned about how it is portrayed to the world.

Closer to home in Oita, the city had a Christian memorial park with a huge statue where a young person is on her knees, with two soldiers hovering over her with swords, challenging her to recant or die. In the centre of Oita stands another statue, a semi-round scene of Japan in the background and, in front, Francis Xavier with outstretched hands holding a Bible out to Japan. Xavier was the first one to bring the Good News of Christ to Japan.

Although these were all Catholics, they have left a lasting impression on Japan. The mayor of Oita when we were there was a Catholic, and I had a very devout Catholic friend. Christianity was not frowned upon in our city, but evangelism was still hard work.

MARY DERKSEN, VANCOUVER

✉ Nazi denialism must end

I WAS TROUBLED to read the review of my book *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era* ("Menno-Nazi connection unconvincing," Aug. 28, page 31), in which Barb Draper expressed scepticism that tens of thousands of Mennonites sympathized with, and benefitted from, National Socialism.

On this subject, the historical record is clear. Pro-Nazi movements developed during the 1930s and '40s among Mennonites in Brazil, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Paraguay and Ukraine. By the height of the Second World War, a fourth of the denomination lived in the Third Reich.

Nazi denialism is, sadly, not surprising. Just last year, *Canadian Mennonite* also published a letter ("Ukrainian survivors rebut 'Aryan' claims," Nov. 7, page 9) alleging that Mennonites under Nazi rule "had not heard of Aryanism and other racial theories until well after the conclusion of the war"—a claim simply at odds with historical documents.

Nor is denialism new. In fact, during the late 1940s, prominent Mennonite leaders Peter Dyck, C.F. Klassen and Harold Bender claimed in numerous memos to the United Nations and other organizations that European Mennonites were "not collaborators," but rather peace-loving non-Germans who had suffered "as the Jews" under Nazism.

Such claims also obscured the extent to which some North American Mennonites had flirted with Nazism. C.F. Klassen was an anti-Semite who owned shares in Canada's largest Nazi newspaper.

Now, more than 60 years later, it is time to face our history. Church-affiliated institutions in the Netherlands, Germany and the U.S. have already begun this process. Of all countries with substantial Anabaptist populations implicated in Nazism, Canada remains the only location where Mennonites have yet to undertake a robust public reckoning.

The time has come for Canada's churches and institutions to consider what obligation they have to the victims of Nazism, both during the last century and in this age of rising white nationalism.

BEN GOOSSEN, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Ben Goossen is a historian at Harvard University.

✉ Future Directions might include Catholic liturgy

I GREW UP in the small rural community of Rosemary, Alta., that was dominated by Mennonites and Mormons. Certainly a sheltered upbringing.

After completing my education, a friend and I

decided to see the world before settling down. We started by driving a VW Beetle to Brazil from Canada. It was 1964. I vividly remember crossing into Mexico and couldn't believe the abject poverty and general living conditions. This, in contrast to the magnificently appointed Catholic cathedrals dotting the countryside.

The Kennedy assassination had just taken place and there was much in the press about the Kennedys, including their Catholicism. I remember thinking, how could a Kennedy from upscale Massachusetts have anything in common with the peasant grandmother in Mexico in terms of their religious experience.

Perhaps it's in the ritual and symbolism so prevalent in the Catholic liturgy and so absent in typical Mennonite worship. Perhaps we can learn something from this inclusiveness, as our Future Directions Task Force investigates Mennonite trends. Perhaps making the same sign of the cross or facing a similar altar allows the worshipper to experience a very personal spiritual depth regardless of class and cultural background.

RICHARD PENNER, CALGARY

✉ 'Silence him. We are speaking'

RE: "CONSTANTS IN the context of change," July 24, page 14.

In his column, John H. Neufeld asks, "What would you like to tell the church before it restructures in the fall?" Here is my response:

Before we restructure, Mennonite Church Canada should first put the issue of homosexual relationships and same-sex marriage back on a biblical basis. In Leviticus 18:22, God says, "*You shall not lie with mankind as with womankind; it is an abomination.*" In I Corinthians 6:9-11, it says, "*such will not inherit the*

kingdom of heaven."

Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon will go down as a watershed event in the life of MC Canada. It was at this time and place that the brotherhood and sisterhood openly declared and documented that it overrules what God had to say on this issue. The assembly decision seemed to say, "Same-sex relationships and same-sex marriages 'done in love' are above God's Word on this. The Bible needs a new interpretation on this." In other words, "God does not have the last word on this. We do."

Some 2,000 years ago, another assembly took place in Jerusalem. Pilate asked the Jews, "Whom shall I release: Barabbas or Jesus?" And in a chorus they answered, "Barabbas." "What then shall I do with Jesus?" Pilate asked. "Crucify him," they shouted with one voice. In other words, "Silence him. We are speaking."

Do we see an analogy between the two assemblies? While there is time, we should repent in sackcloth and ashes of our sin of insubordination. Then, maybe God will forgive us.

Then, maybe there is a point in restructuring MC Canada. Let's heed these words: "Sin will not ultimately be judged by the way we see it, but by the way God sees it."

HELEN REDEKOPP, WINNIPEG

/// Corrections

- **MARY KASTER's** surname was misspelled in the "Immersive experience" photo caption on page 15 of the July 24 issue.
- **ABE JANZEN** wrote the "Pay attention to each other" From Our Leaders column on page 7 of the Sept. 11 issue. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the errors.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Bauman—Naomi Quinn (b. Aug. 13, 2017), to Nichelle Bauman and Greg McCorquodale, Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Betik—Connor Michael (b. July 24, 2017), to Nick and Krista Betik, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Bryon—Kadin Robert (b. Aug. 21, 2017), to Jeff Bryon (Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.) and Sue Dirrhami.

Harms—Nolan Jordan (b. Aug. 15, 2017), to Bryson and Whitney Harms, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Ont.

Klassen—Imogen Patricia Madigan (b. Aug. 4, 2017), to Quinn Klassen and Matt Madigan, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Loeppky—Emery Peter Schellenberg (b. June 25, 2017), to Adrienne Schellenberg and Aaron Loeppky, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Mogk—Vincent Tobias (b. Aug. 16, 2017), to Katie and Bradin Mogk, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Shantz—Owen Daniel (b. Aug. 11, 2017), to Dan and Laura Shantz, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Wigglesworth—Evelyn Funk (b. Aug. 7, 2017), to Rachel Funk and Jason Wigglesworth, Rockway Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Witzel—Jack David Larry (b. July 24, 2017), to Naomi and David Witzel, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Marriages

Bender/Guanzon—Christopher Bender (Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.) and Arlene Guanzon, in Guelph, Ont., July 8, 2017.

Boertien/Martin—Justin Boertien and Kaitlyn Martin,

Floradale Mennonite, Ont., in Floradale.

Chartier/Klassen—Chris Chartier and Marie Klassen (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg), Aug. 11, 2017.

Dyck/Jones—Dustin Dyck (Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.) and Tara Jones, at Rosthern Mennonite, July 29, 2017.

Dyck/Yang—Sara Michelle Dyck and Nick Yang, at Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont., Aug. 26, 2017.

Glass/Natalie—Kevin Glass and Victoria Natalie, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Aug. 19, 2017.

Gingrich/Regehr—Caleb Good Gingrich and Alison Maureen Regehr, at Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont., Aug. 11, 2017.

Horvatis/Robertson—Emma Horvatis and Eric Robertson, at Hamilton Mennonite, Ont., Aug. 26, 2017.

O’Huigan/Thiessen—Francis O’Huigan and Camellia Thiessen (Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.), in Leamington, Aug. 27, 2017.

Reesor/Thomas—Emma Reesor and Graham Thomas, at Hamilton Mennonite, Ont., July 1, 2017.

Steckly/Summers—Daniel Steckly and Alex Summers, Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont., Aug. 19, 2017.

Deaths

Beck—F. Stafford, 93 (b. July 12, 1923; d. Jan. 12, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Elora, Ont.

Bergen—Arthur, 67 (b. March 16, 1950; d. Aug. 3, 2017), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Bergen—Janet (nee Patkau), 45 (b. Sept. 24, 1971; d. Aug. 5, 2017), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Bolger—Robert “Lorne” Eugene, 91 (b. April 29, 1925; d.

April 18, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Elora, Ont.

Braun—George K., 95 (b. March 12, 1922; d. Aug. 17, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Friesen—(Wilma) Leanne, 46 (b. Oct. 11, 1970; d. Aug. 6, 2017), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Kehler Janzen—Tina (nee Loewen), 97 (b. Feb. 22, 1920; d. July 24, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Klassen—Helene, 94 (b. July 2, 1922; d. June 28, 2017), Trinity Mennonite, Mather, Man.

Kohn—Elizabeth (nee Klassen), 91 (b. July 30, 1926; d. Aug. 2, 2017), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Loewen—Abram G., 94 (b. Aug. 13, 1922; d. July 30, 2017), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Martin—Richard, 74 (b. Sept. 10, 1942; d. Aug. 29, 2017), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Nadler—Waldemar, 84 (b. April 6, 1933; d. Aug. 4, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Penner—Valerie “Wally,” 94 (b. July 23, 1923; Aug. 15, 2017), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Reimer—Melita (nee Peters), 91 (b. Aug. 25, 1925; d. Aug. 13, 2017), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Rempel—Jake, 80 (b. Sept. 21, 1936; d. Aug. 10, 2017), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

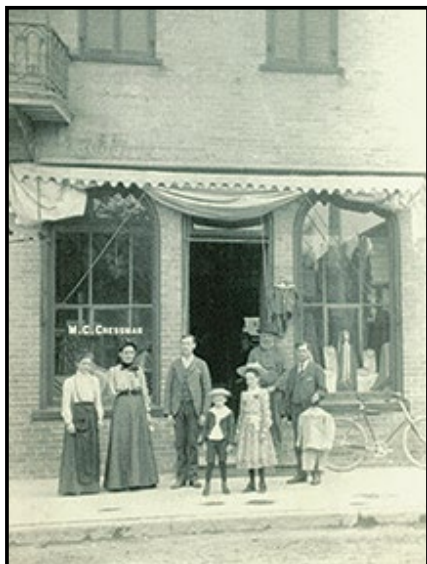
Ropp—Emerson, 104 (b. March 19, 1913; d. Aug. 9, 2017), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Schroeter—Gerhard W., 88 (b. Aug. 26, 1928; d. July 28, 2017), Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Shoemaker—Ella (nee Sittler), 75 (b. July 27, 1939; d. June 20, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Elora, Ont.

Witt—Christa, 81 (b. Dec. 26, 1935; d. Aug. 9, 2017), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

A moment from yesterday



Do you recognize this “Mennonite centre”? Mary Ann Cressman, second from left, her husband Menno C., and others stand outside the family’s dry goods store at 82 King Street East, Kitchener, Ont., circa 1905. Mary Ann lost an arm in a buggy accident, but that did not deter her from becoming the “founding mother” of the Mennonite Women’s Missionary Society in Ontario during the First World War. Travelling to churches, she urged women to “take hold” of the tasks of supporting local needs, war relief and missionary efforts. Menno C. offered the store to collect and ship the garments sewn by the women. Every day, staff and volunteers at the current “Mennonite centre” at 50 Kent Avenue in Kitchener “take hold” of her vision.

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing

Photo: James Reusser / Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca

PERSONAL REFLECTION

A Canada we could be proud of

On how a cycling trip across Canada for mental health restored this writer's faith in humanity

MARTIN BAUMAN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

If Canada's 150th anniversary has taught us anything this year, it's that although we have reason to celebrate, we're far from the country we aspire to be.

In Ottawa, Toronto and Whitby, the deaths of Andrew Loku and Abdirahman Abdi, and the beating of Dafonte Miller, have shown the ugly reality of racial tensions we've long pretended were in the past. With one eye firmly fixed on our neighbours to the south, our political discourse has become increasingly polarized—the extremes on both ends reaching new heights. Despite constant talk of reconciliation, our nascent country's relationship with Indigenous Peoples who preceded it is still a mess. How else to describe the thousands of people on First Nations still living under a boil water advisory?

It's easy to point out the negatives. It's what we hear time and again, each time we turn on the radio or the television. Things are not as they should be.

But what can we look to for hope of change? How can we live out the ideals we hold in high regard: pursuing peace and fellowship, while prizing action over words?

In 2016, I cycled across Canada, intent on my own form of change. Having seen first-hand the plight of mental illness in our country—the despair of losing a loved one to suicide, the terrible dullness of depression, the agony of anxiety—I set out to further the conversation around mental health and raise funds for services in my home of Waterloo Region and Wellington County, Ont.

In cycling across this vast and beautiful land we call home, I hoped, in a very small way, to help people. The last thing I expected was how much this land and those same people would help me.

To travel across Canada is to be in constant awe of nature. The Rockies give way to the endless Prairies and boreal forests before spilling out into the St. Lawrence and the Atlantic beyond. To experience the sheer immensity of the land is to recognize the absurdity of claiming ownership over any part of it. We are not its masters, merely its tenants; at best, its stewards. How different would our relationship to our country look if we started to see things in this way?

To travel across Canada by bicycle is to be in constant awe of its people. I remember riding through sheets of rain in Cape Breton when a black pickup truck pulled up alongside me. The driver stuck his hand out the window, proffering a bag of cherries. "I thought you might be hungry," he told me.

Weeks earlier, while cycling into Hedley, B.C.—again, through rain—I met a man on the side of the road who had been following the trip since I started in Vancouver. He was waiting for me to pass through town so that he could donate to the ride in person.

Another time, in nearby Vernon, I met a man while packing up after a trip to the grocery store. He saw me struggling to load my bike and wondered where I was headed. After I told him, he took down my name and number, and he cold-called half a dozen hotels in the next town until

he found one willing to put me up for the night, free of charge. He continued to do this all across Canada, no matter how many time-zones and area codes away he might have been.

I could tell a hundred stories of these acts of kindness, of people offering their homes for the evening or taking the time to pray for my well-being. What a different picture they paint of who we are and the people we can be.

I was talking to a radio show host in Ottawa when she asked the question: "With all that's going on in the world, do you really think what you're doing is making a difference?"



PHOTO BY BEVERLEY HISCOCK

Martin Bauman exceeded his \$10,000 fundraising goal by more than \$2,000.

Tough crowd. Indeed, how does anyone maintain hope?

It can seem a Herculean task, and yet one I know that is crucial, not just for a bike ride but for all of us as we envision the country we'd like to be. Hope is often confused with passivity, but it can be an incredibly powerful force; it's what allows us to picture a better world and work towards making it a reality.

Things aren't pretty. That much is true. We've got lots of work to do. But I'm hopeful—perpetually so—that we can make things better.

After seeing this country's capacity for kindness, how could I not be? ☘

Martin Bauman's journey was originally profiled in 'Mixed emotions at the end of the journey'. See online at bit.ly/cm-mixed-emotions.



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Focussing our fear

TROY WATSON

I have a nagging thought as I sit down to write this article. It's this: I have no idea what state our world will be in when you read this in a few weeks. Who knows what will happen between now and then?

It's unsettling to be aware of not only the possibility—but the probability—something catastrophic will happen in the near future. Another devastating natural disaster, explosion, school shooting, war, stock market crash . . . the possibilities are endless. Any or all of these could happen before this article goes to print.

This is our current reality, though, isn't it? We live in continuous anticipation of the worst from an apparently angry Mother Nature, to our increasingly fragile economic, social and political systems with a growing number of unpredictable and unstable world leaders. It's no longer shocking to us when disaster strikes. We know it's coming, it's just a matter of when. We slowly become numb to calamity from overexposure, and the melodramatic news updates that qualify as journalism today don't help.

What we're experiencing is more than the media selling fear, though. There's something else going on. Brilliant scientists are starting to sound like fire and brimstone preachers, warning us of the impending day of reckoning for our unrepentant response to climate change. Genius technology pioneers like Tesla co-founder Elon Musk are alarming us to the "fact" that artificial intelligence is the greatest and most immediate threat to the future of humanity. It seems that many of the current TV shows and movies are apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic in nature.

What's going on? Are we collectively anticipating the end of the world?

In his book *The Concept of Anxiety*, Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard describes anxiety as essentially unfocussed fear. He writes,

"When I behold my possibilities, I experience that anxiety which is the dizziness of freedom, and my choice is made in fear and trembling."

For Kierkegaard, anxiety is the paralyzing awareness of endless possibilities. This is why people often gravitate

to rigid authoritarian leaders, systems and institutions in times of elevated anxiety. We try to end our anxiety by eliminating possibility and choice.

Individuals, especially young people,



possibility. When we choose to act, to create, to actualize a possibility, we simultaneously choose to annihilate or let go of all other incompatible possibilities.

Another paradox of possibility is that the very thing we desire—possibility—is the very thing we dread. The possibility of being successful, finding true love, losing weight, being healed: these are possibilities we desire. Yet to accept that one possibility can be actualized is to accept any possibility can be actualized, including those we dread, aren't aware of or can't yet imagine. This scatters our fear into a thousand different directions and paralyzes us.

Kierkegaard says anxiety causes us to sink deeper and deeper into non-being or it forces us to choose, and this is the gift of anxiety. It can be a catalyst for us to choose, to actualize a particular possibility. When we do, our fear is no longer unfocussed. We now know exactly

'When I behold my possibilities, I experience that anxiety which is the dizziness of freedom, and my choice is made in fear and trembling.'
(Soren Kierkegaard)

have never been faced with such limitless possibility. Choose your major, your career, your music sub-genre, your gender, your dream . . . you name it. You can be anything you want. The possibilities are endless. Of course, therein lies the problem. As our possibilities increase, so does our apocalyptic preoccupation with the end of the world. Why? Because the end of the world represents the ultimate elimination of possibility, and this is what we believe, if only subconsciously, will relieve our growing anxiety.

Psychiatrist Rollo May said, "Real creativity is not possible without anxiety," because "creating, actualizing one's possibilities, always involves negative as well as positive aspects. It always involves destroying the status quo, destroying old patterns . . . destroying what one has clung to." This is the paradox of

what we fear, namely, the possibility that the possibility we've chosen will not be actualized! This is why we "choose with fear and trembling."

To fear a specific possibility is better than fearing endless possibilities, but there is an even better option. Kierkegaard says the only path to true freedom from anxiety is "a leap of faith," which requires focussing all our fear on God. This was Jesus' solution to anxiety as well: fear God, and only God.

The concept of fearing God has baggage for many, and needs to be unpacked in new and fresh ways, but I think it's worth exploring. If Jesus and Kierkegaard are right, our freedom and sanity may depend on it. ❧

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

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Tears shed over the closing of Riverdale Mennonite

Berean Community Church has bought the building

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

MILLBANK, ONT.

After 71 years of faithful service, Riverdale Mennonite Church closed its doors on Aug. 31. The building is being taken over by the Berean Community Church, which assumed ownership and took over the charter of the congregation on Sept. 1.

The church was birthed in 1946, planted there by members of the Poole and Maple View congregations. At that time, they were all called Amish Mennonite, showing their roots in the Amish who settled Perth County in the 1830s from Alsace-Lorraine and Bavaria, but also showing that they were from the progressive wing that began building places of worship in the 1880s. These buildings precipitated a split among the Amish, with some continuing to worship in houses and barns, rather than moving into purpose built churches.

A Presbyterian church building built in 1891, but which had not been used since the early 1940s, was repurposed for the congregation, and 60 members signed the charter. After two years, the congregation called its own pastor, Menno Zehr.

The congregation's purpose from the

beginning was to serve as an outreach into the Millbank community. In many ways through the years it did so, but it also became the first home for many of those who left the Old Order Amish, as it was seen by some as more "conservative" than neighbouring congregations.

According to Doug Amstutz, Riverdale's intentional interim pastor at the time of the closing, over the past 10 years there were a number of "body blows to the congregation." Pastor Clive Ollies died, and Mel Herrfort, a key leader, died in the building at the end of a service. Then the tenures of a youth worker and pastor both ended abruptly, arising out of—and creating—further divisions in the congregation.

Like many rural churches, Riverdale was already feeling the pressure of bigger farms and smaller families, and of young adults leaving for the city. The loss of a number of subsequent families following the conflict seemed to demoralize the congregation. After gentle work by Amstutz and consultant Keith Regehr, the congregation decided on Feb. 26 of this year to close.



Troy Watson, former pastor of Riverdale Mennonite Church, points out into the congregation, naming congregants who had welcomed and disciplined him when he began to ministry there 19 years ago.

Watson was one of the guests speaking at the congregation's closing service on Aug. 20.

The congregation decided to hold two closing services, with the one on Aug. 20 advertised far and wide as the closing service, while reserving Aug. 27 for a more intimate gathering for members to say goodbye.

Former pastors Glenn Zehr, Troy Watson and Jim Brown addressed the grief they felt about the closing, as well as the rich life of the congregation through the years. Watson, in particular, noted that the gentle love and care of the congregation had helped him move into a deeper relationship with God and a sense of calling to lead the church. Other visitors and members told stories of the congregation having inspired them to years of service in and for the church. ☸



Mark Cressman, left, Daniel Penner, Katie Steckly, Karen Steckly, leader Alice Grove and Katy Cressman sing 'Jerusalem' at the closing service of Riverdale Mennonite Church on Aug. 20.

Meeting the Creator in creation

Burning Bush Forest Church takes worship outside

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO REGION, ONT.

Imagine deciding on Saturday that you want to begin a new congregation the next day. Then add to that the plan to meet outdoors in Canada on the Sunday between Christmas and New Year's.

To Wendy Janzen's surprise, an enthusiastic group of 15 was ready to do just that on Dec. 29, 2014. Janzen was finishing up a sabbatical from her half-time position at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church at the time and had become intrigued by the idea of worshipping in nature.

Her children were enrolled in a forest school that fall, and she wondered about the possibility of meeting the Creator in the creation on a regular basis. About the same time, a neighbour told her that

she was "done with worshipping in buildings." Instead, she preferred to hike with her family. Janzen wondered about doing this with others, and including ritual in the outing.

Burning Bush Forest Church now meets on Sunday afternoons monthly, regardless of the weather. Participants come from a variety of church backgrounds, including a few from Janzen's home congregation, as well as those who have no other church home.

Mostly the group is meeting in urban forests, often hearing the cars on the Conestoga Expressway in the distance. Participants express a desire to learn more about the outdoors, to identify birds, trees and plants, and to know more about God's creation. Peter Wohlleben's *Hidden Life of Trees*, while not spiritual, has led to awe about trees as intricate parts of God's creation.

Worship often includes an opening guided prayer. The time is committed to "divine presence," since not everyone is comfortable with "God" language; this is similar to the Watershed Discipleship Movement based on ecological theology. Scriptures and other sacred texts are then read, although the Bible is read every time. Readings around the church year and the natural seasons are also read.

Since the church year was developed in the northern hemisphere, there is a close correspondence to it and the natural seasons. Lent's fasting corresponds with the hunger season, as last year's crops get used up. In the heat of August 2016, the group focussed on "dryness" as a theme.

After the readings, a period of contemplation follows, with 30 minutes of wandering, sitting and reflecting. A sharing time is closed with a final benediction.

Janzen senses a deepening relationship with God through the Burning Bush Forest Church. Her own spiritual practice is more

out of doors, and she is reading the Bible differently.

The group is not forming an official congregation at this time, as Janzen isn't ready to follow any church-planting model. Up to 20 people come each month, with 65 on a mailing list. ☘

While there is a European-based forest church network, Janzen and other North Americans have formed the Wild Church Network. To find more information about gatherings in your area, or to begin your own group, visit wildchurchnetwork.com, which includes a link to the Burning Bush Forest Church's Facebook page.



PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Wendy Janzen at one of the locations Burning Bush Forest Church has worshipped at in Breithaupt Park in Kitchener, Ont.





PHOTOS BY WENDY JANZEN

Burning Bush Forest Church at worship.



To build or buy or lease, those are the questions

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

KITCHENER, ONT.

“Don’t make the mission of the church the building,” were Sean East’s last words at Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s building project seminar. East, who splits his time between pastoring West Hills Mennonite Fellowship in Baden

and serving as MC Eastern Canada’s financial manager, was one of the panel members sharing from his congregation’s experiences at the Sept. 9 event.

But, as Brian Bauman, the area church’s mission minister, had noted earlier, many

congregations see getting their own building as a sign of growing up, of having reached independence.

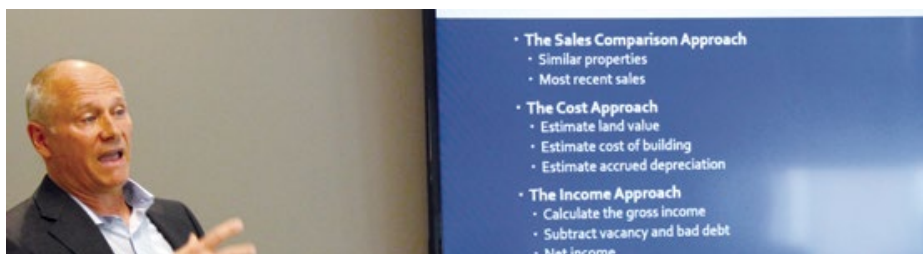
That is exactly what Jack Phasanon of Grace Lao Mennonite Church in Kitchener said. After worshipping in the St. Jacobs Mennonite Church building for a number of years, the Lao congregation bought its own building. The relationship with St. Jacobs continued, but developed as “sister congregations,” as opposed to the earlier “parent/child” relationship.

Also on the panel was Ed Harder. His congregation, Rockway Mennonite Church, bought its own building in Kitchener two years ago after having rented space since 1960. After meeting at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate for many years, it began to feel cramped by the collegiate and its own needs. The congregation then rented space from Zion United Church, also in Kitchener, until that congregation closed and the building was sold to a developer. Rockway just finished renovating the former Olivet United Church located on Onward Avenue in Kitchener.

The panellists also brought practical advice:

- “GET AN architect you can trust,” said Harder.
- “THINK ABOUT a straight move in. Do the renovations later,” said Phasanon.
- “GET PROFESSIONALS to do whole work. Ask honest and complete questions,” said East, who also spoke to the issue that, just because a building is zoned for a church, doesn’t mean that occupancy is automatic, since municipalities can put many conditions on development, including accessibility and safety upgrades.

Marlow Gingerich from Abundance Canada spoke later about financing a building and renovations. He noted that institutions like Abundance, Kindred Credit Union and FaithLife Financial are more accustomed to working with congregations than banks are, because banks are not often used to depending on donors whose giving patterns may oscillate throughout the year. ▮



Richard Steinmann, a local realtor and Mennonite church member, talks about issues of buying and leasing property at Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s building project seminar on Sept. 9.

Giving That’s Easy

Be more generous to the charities you care about now and through your estate. Let us show you how.

Call 1.800.772.3257 TODAY for a free consultation.

www.abundance.ca



Abundance

CANADA

Because generosity changes everything

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Fast for Indigenous human rights

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

Bill C-262 is a big deal. So big, that some are taking up a fast in the days leading up to the bill's debate in the House of Commons.

One of those people is Steve Heinrichs. As director of Indigenous relations for Mennonite Church Canada, Heinrichs began a fast on Sept. 13. Choosing Sept. 13 to start the fast is no accident. That's the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by the UN General Assembly.

Bill C-262, crafted by Romeo Saganash, a residential school survivor and NDP MP for Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou, Que., is designed to help Canada do what it has publicly committed to do and to begin the process of harmonizing Canada's laws with UNDRIP.

According to Heinrichs, fasting isn't



MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO
Steve Heinrichs, director of MC Canada's Indigenous relations, is fasting in support of the adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through Bill C-262.

primarily about giving up food. "It's about taking action and 'walking the talk' about what we believe," he says. "It's about hungering for justice and extending compassion. It's about restoring covenant."

Although he isn't sure how long he will fast, Heinrichs says he is taking at least two weeks of vacation time to participate. He intends to spend part of each day praying in silence outside the Winnipeg office of his friend Robert Falcon-Ouellette, the Liberal MP for Winnipeg Centre, because his office symbolizes those who have the power to pass Bill C-262 in the Liberal-majority House of Commons.

Heinrichs calls this "a potential kairos moment, an opening for societal change," and says that fasting can be a powerful spiritual act. "It also has profound political capacity as a summons to those in places of authority to take action on behalf of the oppressed."

Others are invited to join the rolling fast, which will continue for 46 days—one day for each article of the Declaration. The fast concludes on Oct. 28. Around that time, the second reading of Bill C-262 will take place in the House, followed by a vote. ✎

To sign up for to the fast, visit pfir.ca/fast-for-indigenous-human-rights/.



PHOTO BY HEATHER LEE

Kindred Credit Union, with its head office in Kitchener, Ont., has entered into a new partnership with the Hospice of Waterloo Region, becoming the presenting partner of what will now be known as the Kindred Credit Union Hike for Hospice, that was held on Sept. 24. Pictured from left to right, Melissa Parker, the event coordinator of Hospice of Waterloo Region, receives a \$5,000 cheque from Jenn Shaw and Frank Chisholm, Kindred's community engagement specialist and vice-president of marketing, respectively. 'The alignment between these two organizations can be found in their shared commitment to acting compassionately while respecting the needs and integrity of individuals and families we serve,' a joint press release states.

Raising peacemakers

Summer camp teaches children peacebuilding skills

BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

Summer camp is a great experience for many children. For participants in Raise the Peace Camp, it is an opportunity to have fun while learning about peacebuilding.

Raise the Peace is a day camp for children between 9 and 13. It's offered by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan, and is primarily for children from Saskatoon's Meadowgreen neighbourhood.

It began as a sports-oriented camp, says Kaytee Edwards Buhler, one of MCC Saskatchewan's community engagement coordinators. Although it was well attended, coordinators found it challenging to incorporate MCC's values into the program, so they developed the current model of a camp at which children could learn peacebuilding skills.

Each year, the camp has a different theme. This summer's theme was "nature and peacebuilding." Campers explored how caring for God's creation relates to caring for one another. As part of their week of camp, they spent two days and nights at Shekinah Retreat Centre, north of Waldheim, where they listened to guest

speakers and put what they learned into practice through a variety of games and activities.

Myriam Ullah, another community engagement coordinator, taught campers what it means to have solidarity with those who are suffering. The campers then created postcards for children living in the Aida Refugee Camp in Palestine.

"Some of the participants came to Canada as refugees," says Edwards Buhler. "One youth was able to connect his story with [those of] the kids in Aida," she says. "Another participant was inspired to start a pen pal program in her own school."

A resource person from the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance taught the children about riparian areas and how the way in which people care for them can impact human life. The campers played a form of tag in which some children were water while others were things that hold water; the children had to find ways to get water through an obstacle course to the river.

Another resource person, from the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, taught about Indigenous ways of knowing and the



MCC Saskatchewan's Raise the Peace Camp gives participants the opportunity to engage in team-building activities such as the climbing wall at Shekinah Retreat Centre.



Children, along with their leaders Gabby Martin, far left, and Kerstyn Liddle, far right, participate in MCC Saskatchewan's 2017 Raise the Peace Camp.



Penelope poses with a postcard she will send to her pen pal in Bethlehem.



MCC SASKATCHEWAN PHOTO
BY JANA AL-SAGHEER

Lyndon J. Linklater, of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, performs on Aug. 12 at the Spruce River Folk Festival, which is held annually to raise funds and awareness for landless First Nations in Saskatchewan.

types of medicinal plants that are native to Saskatchewan.

Camp leaders Gabby Martin and Kerstyn Liddle led participants through a variety of team-building activities, including Shekinah's zipline and climbing wall.

Edwards Buhler says Meadowgreen is a racially and culturally diverse community. "It has the highest density of diversity [of all neighbourhoods] in Saskatoon," she says. In fact, English is a second language for 65 percent of students attending W. P. Bate Community School in the area. "There is much conflict and overt racism in the community," she adds.

MCC Saskatchewan began a kids club in the neighbourhood in 2004. Every week, 30 to 40 children attend a program run by paid staff and volunteers in a rented apartment. Partnering with House for All Nations, a Baptist church plant in the community, MCC Saskatchewan also hosts a youth club for 15 to 20 participants. A cooking club and a homework club were added to the program three years ago. Raise the Peace participants come from these programs. ❧

To view more photos, visit canadianmennonite.org/raising-peace-2017.



God at Work in the World Snapshots



MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE PHOTO

Women collect dry rations from a government relief camp in Naihati, West Bengal, India. In West Bengal, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is partnering with Nabarun Seva Niketan to provide food assistance to 1,500 flood-affected families. Food packages include rice, daal, potatoes, onions and spices. MCC is also partnering with the Economic Rural Development Society to provide a food basket for 1,520 families in Malda district, West Bengal. Two weeks of incessant monsoon rains occurring at the end of August displaced more than 1.7 million people and killed 1,246 in the region.

GOD AT WORK IN US

Principal hits midlife, takes to pulpit

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

After 23 good years as a teacher and principal, Cheryl Braun asked herself a simple question: “What does the last part of my career look like?” Would she stay the course or risk change?

As Braun (no relation to the author) considered this over several months with a small support group, she eventually asked herself, “If I’m going to make a change, why not explore a big change?”

Last January, she resigned as principal of Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) in Gretna, Man., effective in July. She was excited, nervous and committed. Possibilities and uncertainty lay ahead.

The healthcare field was an option, or the non-profit world, or perhaps completing a master’s degree related to counselling. Her explorations included a spring-break chat with Rick Neufeld, director of leadership ministry for Mennonite Church Manitoba, although being a lead pastor was not on her radar.

After months of dreaming, and worrying, she received a call from Neufeld in June. He had something for her to “think about”: a lead pastor position at Glenlea Mennonite Church, a small congregation about 20 kilometres south of Winnipeg.

She already knew the congregation through numerous MCI students from Glenlea. By early July, an agreement was in place for her to serve as interim minister for a year, starting in September.

Braun has moved to Winnipeg, where she grew up and from where she will commute. Of course, saying goodbye to students, staff, parents and “life” at MCI was tough. “I’m gonna miss the place terribly,” she said.

Central to her story are two elements:

- **COURAGE TO** consider change
- **A TIGHT** support group



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHERYL BRAUN

Cheryl Braun

She said an “ever-growing confidence” and “peace” about doing something brand new propelled her. “Steeping the whole process in prayer and conversation with others whom I deeply trusted helped me to make this series of small leaps,” she said.

Whether facing a career decision or family tragedy, she can tell herself: ‘I’m not the only one who has my eye on this.’ ‘We’re just not designed to do life alone,’ Braun said.

The group of trusted people with whom she talked came together in 2010 when Braun learned she had a chronic form of leukemia. In the wake of the diagnosis, she was distraught and overwhelmed. At a school event, Diane Hildebrand—mother of a student as well as a pastor in a neighbouring region—asked her how she was doing. “I just unloaded,” Braun said of her emotional response. “I was just floundering.”

Hildebrand said she would pray that Braun would find a support group, and Hildebrand offered to help, eventually connecting Braun with a local pastor who helped her come up with a list of names, and Hildebrand contacted those people.

Three women from the Altona-Gretna area agreed. They were people Braun knew and trusted, but were not part of her inner

circle of friends and family. “Their lives are very different than mine,” Braun said.

They had enough distance that they could ask good questions and then “sit back and listen.” At first, they met in each other’s homes every three to four weeks. They provided Braun with a steady contact, a safe place to “unravel,” room to share the “deepest, darkest” things people are often afraid to voice. In recent years, they have met less often, but they were still essential in her testing of new paths.

Whether facing a career decision or family tragedy, she can tell herself: “I’m not the only one who has my eye on this.”

“We’re just not designed to do life alone,” Braun said.

As for cancer, she has taken oral chemo every day for seven years. While she says it still overwhelms her at times, it is not as mentally loud and emotionally demanding as it once was. And while it limits how many work and social engagements she can agree to, she has found a way to share her path with the cancer.

The 80-percent-time pastoral position at Glenlea, along with the flexibility of the job—no bells ringing—should help her manage.

As for pastoral work, while she is comfortable with public speaking, she is nervous about coming up with sermons that inspire and connect on a regular basis. She does not have formal theological training but loves being a student and is clearly thrilled to have a job that allows her to spend “hours a day” reading the Bible and related resources.

She says she could imagine doing pastoral work for the next 10 to 15 years, a possibility she will surely revisit as next September approaches.

For now, she is at peace, both with the “new adventure” and a “rich and meaningful time” at MCI. “I’m looking forward to going back for concerts,” she said. ☛

ARTBEAT

FILM REVIEW

“The price for your glory is their suffering!”

Silence.

Directed by Martin Scorsese. Based on the novel by Shusaku Endo. Starring Andrew Garfield, Adam Driver and Liam Neeson. A Paramount Pictures release, 2016; now available on DVD and Blu-ray. Rated PG for violence.

REVIEW BY VIC THIESSEN
ON MOVIES (THIESSENBROS.BLOGSPOT.CA)

Why is God so silent? Why doesn't God hear the prayers and stop the endless suffering of believers? These are the questions that lie behind the title of Martin Scorsese's epic film about Jesuit priests in Japan in 1640.

Silence stars Andrew Garfield as Father Rodrigues, a Portuguese Jesuit who comes to Japan in 1640 in search of his mentor, Father Ferreira (Liam Neeson). Ferreira is rumoured to have renounced his faith and married a Japanese woman, something Rodrigues refuses to believe. Accompanying Rodrigues on his search is Father Gaurpe (Adam Driver), a passionate priest who always seems to be living on the edge, which is particularly challenging when you arrive in a country whose isolationist government is killing off all Christians who refuse to recant.

In the decades prior to 1640, more than 300,000 Japanese had been converted to Christianity by Jesuit missionaries. By the time Rodrigues and Gaurpe arrive, only a few pockets of Christians remain, tucked away in remote communities, although these are also threatened by the infamous Inquisitor (Issey Ogata), who utters the words of this review's title. In the weeks and months ahead, Rodrigues and Gaurpe will experience incredible highs as they encounter groups of believers who are thrilled by their arrival, and incredible lows as they watch believers tortured and executed for their beliefs while feeling powerless to stop it.

The lows will challenge their own

beliefs. Rodrigues, in particular, begins to struggle with his doubts and with God's unending silence, placing him in a vulnerable position when he finally meets the Inquisitor and the Inquisitor's interpreter (Tadanobu Asano).

The interpreter, in particular, presents the voice of calm reason, suggesting to Rodrigues that Buddhism is much better suited to the needs of the Japanese people than Christianity. However, to me, the Buddhists come across as cruel and often hypocritical themselves.

One of the failures of the film is this ambiguous depiction of faith/belief. There is no convincing case made for any faith, and yet faith seems to be particularly lifted up in *Silence*. For example, the question of why Jesuit missionaries are desperate to bring Jesus to Japan is never adequately addressed. Is it just the misguided obsession with saving people's souls from an eternity in hell?

Silence is dedicated to Japanese Christians and their pastors, but I found that dedication almost as confusing as the film itself. Is Scorsese trying to say that he admires the Jesuit priests who sacrificed so much to try to bring Jesus to Japan, or that he thinks they were doing a great thing and that the small number of Christians who remain in Japan are a testament to their courage and commitment?

There are many things that make *Silence* a superior film. The cinematography is sublime and helps to create the film's many breathtaking scenes. The



PARAMOUNT PICTURES STILL

A scene from Silence.

acting is generally quite strong, especially in the case of some of the Japanese actors, like Asano and Yosuke Kubozuka, who plays Kichijiro, a comedic Judas figure who is a constant thorn in Rodrigues's side. But while the Japanese actors may have performed well, I frequently questioned the choice of words and actions for their characters.

If it sounds like I have mixed feelings about *Silence*, that is correct. Insofar as the film is about Rodrigues's spiritual doubts in light of the Japanese context he is facing, *Silence* is a hauntingly profound film. However, insofar as it is supposed to convey any kind of message about faith and about what is really driving the characters, I am left confused and unconvinced, with endless questions, like:

- **HOW DOES** the Catholic Inquisition of the Middle Ages relate to the Japanese Inquisitor?
- **WHY IS** the recanting of faith so often depicted in a positive light?
- **WHY IS** the work of the Jesuit missionaries shown to be both so positive and so useless? Did the converts worship the sun instead of the son?
- **WHY ARE** the references to colonialism so subtle?
- **ARE ALL** the Jesuits in the film to be viewed as heroes?
- **IS IT** supposed to be viewed as positive that Christianity survived in such an inhospitable environment? ☞

Spanish translation slated for Menno Simons biography

Paraguyan seminary promoting Anabaptist academic works

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Despite Menno Simons' significant influence in northern Europe during Anabaptism's infancy in the 16th century, and his name living on by having the Mennonite church named after him, relatively little is known about his early life and his conversion from Catholicism to Anabaptism.

Now Helmut Isaak, a British Columbia pastor and scholar, is hoping to translate his biography of Menno into Spanish. Born in Paraguay, Isaak obtained his licenciatura in theology in Montevideo, Uruguay, and his doctorandus in Anabaptist theology in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. In 2006, he published *Menno Simons and the New Jerusalem*, a work that concentrates on the limited information known about Menno's early years. In this spiritual biography, Isaak compares the early writings of Menno with his later revised editions, with special emphasis on his relations to the Melchiorites and Jan van Leiden's



Helmut Isaak

disastrous apocalyptic kingdom of Muenster.

An ad hoc committee of three in Abbotsford—Isaak, along with Artur Bergen and Walter Bergen—are promoting the translation of Isaak's book into Spanish at the invitation of the Centre for the Study of

Anabaptist and Peace Theology (CETAP), a department of the Centro Evangélico Menonita de Teología Asunción in Paraguay and the Universidad Evangelica del Paraguay. CETAP has a goal of providing a variety of Anabaptist books and translations of academic sources into the Spanish language. Menno's *Dat Fundament* book was translated and published in Spanish as *Un Fundamento de Fe* by CETAP in 2013.

"We're trying to raise \$7,000 Canadian to have the work translated professionally and have the book published in Paraguay," says Walter. "Many evangelicals in South America count their roots back to the

Radical Reformation much stronger than North Americans." With more than 200,000 Mennonites in Latin America, the committee feels there is a substantial market for this translated work. There are also 350 million Spanish-

speaking people living in Latin America, of which many are very interested in Anabaptism and peace theology, says Isaak.

In a fundraising bid to promote scholarly research on the sources of Anabaptist theology, CETAP explains, "We have chosen this book because of its academic quality, excellent research, for the relevance of the topic and for the positive reviews the book received in English."

The importance of this book is confirmed by Walter Klaassen, emeritus professor of history and religious studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., who writes: "With this book, Helmut Isaak has moved the work of recovering Menno Simons ahead, in considerable measure. Anyone working on Menno from now on will need to engage this work." ❧

Tax-receiptable donations can be made by cheque only to: The Schmidt Family Foundation, E 31192 South Fraser Way, Abbotsford, BC V2T 6L5, with "Paraguay Project" in the memo line.



Cast members of Souls at the Edmonton Fringe Festival pictured from left to right: Shawn Prasad (Eli), Amena Shehab (ghost), Ginin Alyousef (Ginin), and playwright Aksam Alyousef. Missing: Sarah Spicer (Hanna).

Syrian 'souls' at the Edmonton Fringe

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent
EDMONTON

Sometimes bridges built between faith communities are quite literally dramatic.

Donna Entz, Mennonite Church Alberta's community outreach worker who strives to build better relationships between Christians and other faiths, played the part of one of several background

connectors helping to piece together the people and stories that brought a play telling of displaced Palestinians to the stage at the 2017 Edmonton Fringe Festival in August.

Souls was sparked by conversations Gordon and Wendy Baergen had with a Palestinian doctor who was speaking at

Edmonton's city hall. The doctor's daughters had been killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza. The Baergens had recently been in Palestine at a Christ at the Checkpoint conference and had seen some of the situation there.

Meanwhile, Entz was having conversations with the author of *Smuggled Stories From the Holy Land*, Carmen Taha Jarrah. Entz introduced the author to Wendy, a Mennonite Central Committee volunteer. When Wendy suggested theatre as a more effective medium than a book, Entz introduced her Syrian playwright neighbour to Taha Jarrah and the Baergens. The playwright, Aksam Alyousef, is married to an actress whose ancestors were displaced from their home in Palestine.

The coincidental conversations and connections eventually all came together. "Do you follow the nudges or let them fall by the wayside?" Entz wondered. Wendy agreed to produce the play, taking on a large number of promotional and organizational details necessary to grow the idea into reality. "We were way over our heads, right from the start. Our whole purpose was to get the story out," Wendy said.

Alyousef used Taha Jarrah's stories to inspire his work, drawing particularly on a story she tells of Jewish immigrants moving into Palestinian homes and claiming they are haunted by the ghosts of their former owners. Alyousef wrote the original script in Arabic and Taha Jarrah translated it into English.

Souls tells the story of Hanna, a Canadian lawyer, and her husband Eli, who move to Israel shortly after 1948 and into a home formerly occupied by a Palestinian family. Hanna's discomfort with the situation grows steadily as she is expected to use the former homeowner's belongings, sleep in their bed, and eat preserves they left behind. When a young Palestinian girl shows up looking for her cat, Hanna and Eli's relationship is thrown into conflict as they disagree on the right response. A ghost—the soul of the girl's mother who was killed by a settler's bullet—converses with Hannah, adding layers of both understanding and discomfort to the Canadian in Israel, pushing her to make a decision about her relationships to both husband

(Continued on page 26)



ONLINE NOW!

at canadianmennonite.org

Great Day of Singing planned for October 22

The planners of the new Mennonite hymn collection have released a sampler and invite congregations to participate through worship.

canadianmennonite.org/day-singing



New award brings diversity to Grebel campus

Newer Canadians and Indigenous students will be eligible for financial help through the Mennonite Diversity Award.

canadianmennonite.org/diversity-grebel



A cry for home

MCC's new resources provide a window into the lives of people living Palestine and Israel and issue a call for a just peace.

canadianmennonite.org/mcc-israel-palestine



Overdue dictionary

Jonathan Bonk began collecting stories of African Christians more than 20 years ago. Three thousand of them are now online.

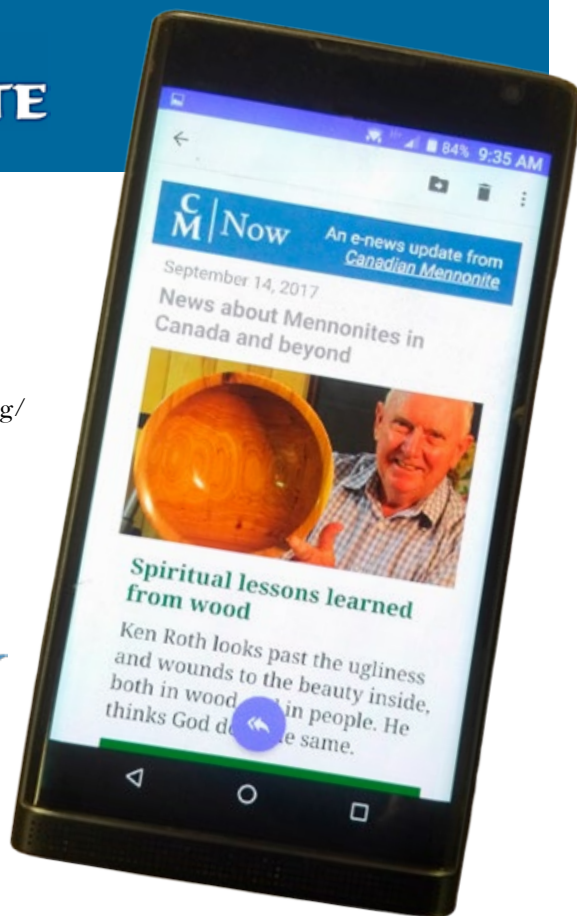
canadianmennonite.org/african-biographies



A *Canadian Mennonite* update delivered to your inbox.

For your free subscription visit our website at www.canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/cmnow

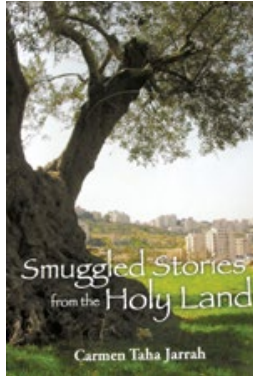
C M | Now



(Continued from page 25) and country.

While the play received a poor review in Edmonton's *Vue Weekly* for "putting the message before the story," it was one of few serious dramas in a festival dominated by comedic acts. *Souls* stood out as a play with something important to say. As such, it succeeded in highlighting some hidden realities of injustice and the variety of its effects on all sides of conflict.

Wendy said she recognized many



Smuggled Stories from the Holy Land by Carmen Taha Jarrah is a book of short stories drawn from the author's travels in the Middle East.

Mennonites and general festival-goers in the audience, but couldn't tell if there were Jewish or Muslim people in attendance. "One thing I watched for were Muslims. I know they supported [the drama] financially, but I didn't notice attenders," she said. ☺

Smuggled Stories from the Holy Land by Carmen Taha Jarrah is available online at Amazon.ca.



Yellow Page Directory

Financial Services




Because generosity changes everything

We connect you with the charities you wish to support. We'll help you with gifts over time, gifts in a will, gifts of securities, and gifts to multiple charities.


1.800.772.3257
abundance.ca

Will your retirement savings last?
If you are retired and unsure where you stand financially, I can help. **The time to call is now.**



Wesley Dueck BTh, BA, CFP, Division Director
Investors Group Financial Services Inc.
Tel: (204) 222-1700
Wesley.Dueck@investorsgroup.com

Insurance products and services distributed through I.G. Insurance Services Inc. Insurance license sponsored by The Great-West Life Assurance Company.



Legal Services



Russel Snyder-Penner
B.A., LL.B., M.A. Trademark Agent
Corporate/Commercial Law
Charities/Non-profits
Wills/Trusts, Real Estate

SUTHERLAND MARK FLEMMING SNYDER-PENNER
PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION
BARRISTERS AND SOLICITORS

675 Queen St. S. Suite 100
Kitchener, ON N2M 1A1
519.725.2500
www.sutherlandmark.com
russ@sutherlandmark.com

Retreat/Accommodations



house of friendship
www.residencemq.ca
experience@maisondelamitie.ca

Student residence and summer guestrooms

120, rue Duluth est
Montréal, QC
(514) 843-4356



EBY FINANCIAL GROUP INC
Listen. Understand. Plan.

Duane Eby MBA, CFP, CLU, Financial Advisor
deby@ebyfinancial.com

Ben Eby MBA, CPA, CMA, CFP, CLU, Financial Advisor
ben@ebyfinancial.com

410 Conestogo Road, Unit 208
Waterloo, Ontario N2L 4E2
tel 519.725.2006 www.ebyfinancial.com

Insurance

Honesty, Integrity and Good Judgement

Dennis Roth, Ed Nowak and their experienced team are committed to providing you with the personalized, quality service that you need and deserve.

Roth Nowak
INSURANCE BROKERS
AUTO | PROPERTY | BUSINESS


novex

Contact us for a quote:
519-746-1151
service@rothnowak.com
rothnowak.com

119 University Ave. E., Waterloo, ON N2J 2W1

SERVING ONTARIO SINCE 1983

Service Opportunities



Responding
Rebuilding
Restoring

Ways to volunteer with MDS:
Short-term (1-3 weeks): 800-241-8111
Long-term (1 month+): 866-261-1274
RV Program volunteers
Youth volunteers

Volunteers needed Fall 2017

Lafayette, Louisiana **NEW!**
Greenbrier, West Virginia
Lake County, California

<http://mds.mennonite.net>

Hard work pays off

For three young people, the Canada Summer Games were a highlight of 2017

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

One of the biggest events in Winnipeg in recent months was the 2017 Canada Summer Games. From July 28 to Aug. 13, 4,000 young athletes from across the country competed in a variety of sports. It was the 50th anniversary of the Games, and drew an estimated 20,000 visitors to the city. Canadian Mennonite spoke with three young people from Winnipeg about their involvement.

Chloe Penner

Chloe Penner represented Manitoba in both the mountain bike and road bike competitions at the Games.

Although she finished in the middle of the pack in most of her races, the 17-year-old's indomitable spirit was on full display: When her bike broke down during a mountain bike competition, she continued to run alongside it for four kilometres in order to finish the race.

"I was a little frustrated since I had just passed the area where you can go and get your bike fixed, but I knew I had to keep going," said Penner, who goes to Douglas Mennonite Church.

When asked what the biggest highlight of the Games was, she responded, "I think just the experience in general of being in the athletes village with other people who are interested in sports and are committed to it," adding that attending the nightly concerts and celebrations at the Forks, which coincided with the Games, was also a highlight.

Penner, who has been cycling for 10 years, joined Manitoba's provincial team in 2014. She and her fellow Team Manitoba cyclists trained two hours a day at least five days a week in preparation for the Games.

Although she isn't sure what comes next in her competitive career, Penner plans to keep cycling. "I like the competition, and how even though it's an individual sport,

it's also a team sport because you do work together and practise together," she said.

Thomas Friesen

Thomas Friesen took a break from his studies at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) during the 2016-17 school year to work for the Canada Summer Games Host Society, so, for him, the Games were the culmination of a year's worth of planning and preparation.

In addition to coordinating the venues and volunteers for the volleyball, golf, basketball and triathlon events, his work involved producing the content that was broadcast over the public-address systems.

One of the 23-year-old's biggest highlights was when a basketball player broke a backboard while warming up before a game. Just days earlier, he had sat his team of volunteers down and instructed them on what to do during such an event. By the time he arrived on the scene, he found the volunteers calmly and confidently cleaning up the shattered backboard and moving the game to the next court. In the end, the delay only lasted 25 minutes.

"It affirmed all of the hours I sat down at my desk thinking about these things," he said. "That definitely was an incredible feeling, to see our work come to fruition."

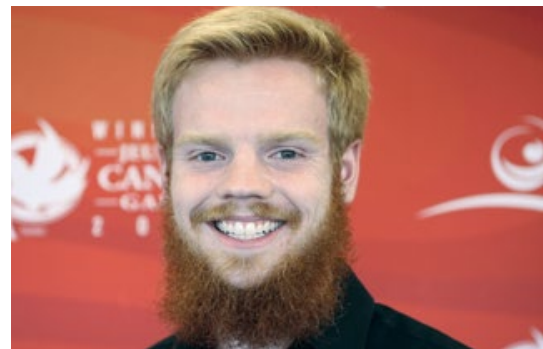
Organizers can't stress enough how thankful they were for the 6,000 volunteers
(Continued on page 28)



2017 CANADA SUMMER GAMES

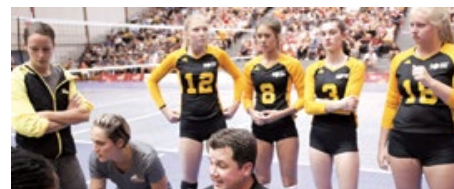
PHOTO BY MARC NEDELEC

Chloe Penner competed in mountain bike and road bike competitions at the Games.



2017 CANADA SUMMER GAMES PHOTO

Thomas Friesen worked for the Canada Summer Games Host Society as a sports and venues coordinator.



2017 CANADA SUMMER GAMES

PHOTO BY DENIS DROUIN

'I don't think we went in expecting we would win,' said Evelyn Kampen, standing at far left.

(Continued from page 27)

who helped out. “The Games are delivered by the volunteers,” Friesen said. “It was awesome.”

Evelyn Kampen

A CMU alumna who spent 2012-14 playing volleyball professionally in Germany

and Denmark, Evelyn Kampen was selected this past spring to be an assistant coach with Manitoba’s 18-and-under girls provincial volleyball team.

The team defeated Ontario 3-1 in the semifinals before moving on to the finals. They earned gold at the finals after beating Alberta 3-1 in front of a sellout crowd of more than 3,000 at Investors Group Athletic Centre at the University of Manitoba.

“I don’t think we went in expecting we would win,” said Kampen, 27, who attends Bethel Mennonite Church. “Each game was a pleasant surprise that we’d gotten further and further. . . . We have a lot of talent on our roster.”

Participating in the Games contributed to Kampen’s development as a coach.

“Learning about the game strategy was good for me as far as development for the future,” she said, adding that head coach Josh Thordarson is talented at recognizing athletes’ strengths and using them at the right times. “I also learned that team chemistry is really important. Our team got along really well. There were good vibes between everybody.”

It was amazing to win gold, Kampen said, and it felt good being a citizen of the host city. “I think [Winnipeg] represented well and people enjoyed it here,” she said. “It made me a proud Winnipegger.” ❧



2017 CANADA SUMMER GAMES PHOTO BY DENIS DROUIN

Manitoba’s 18-and-under girls volleyball team beat Alberta to win gold.

‘Over and over again, day by day’

CMU student Sarah Moesker reflects on a year spent living in an Anglican convent

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

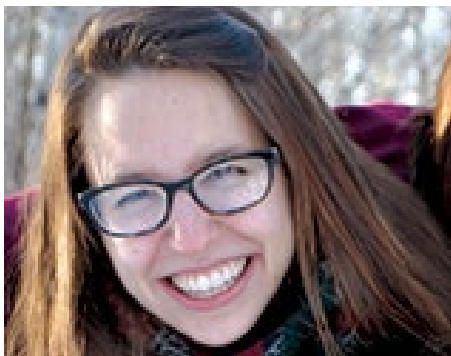


PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH MOESKER

Sarah Moesker describes her time living in an Anglican convent as ‘good and hard.’

When Sarah Moesker began asking herself how she could deepen her faith, living in an Anglican convent for almost a year was the answer.

Moesker, a student at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg, spent September 2016 to the end of this past July in the Companions on the Way

program, during which she and a group of other young women lived in residence alongside members of the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine in Toronto.

Throughout their time at the convent, she and her fellow companions shared the daily rhythm of the sisters’ life by engaging in regular prayer, Bible reading and

reflection. During the day, companions focussed on study and work projects.

Moesker, who is originally from Rocky Mountain House, Alta., said in an email interview that her biggest reason for participating in the program was an inarticulate sense that she needed to.

"In addition to that, though, there had been a growing awareness in me that information was not enough to sustain or deepen my faith [perhaps an obvious thing, but not to me at the time]," the 25-year-old said. "Reading to know the right words and definitions to articulate my beliefs and theological standing was interesting, but was lacking something for me."

Acting out a rhythm of being that oriented itself around prayer seemed to be the answer. "I needed practices, embodied expressions of prayer and faith," she said. "I knew I needed to be taught through doing—needed to immerse myself and let my body learn how to live a balanced and contemplative life by doing it over and over again, day by day."

On an average day, she woke up at 6 a.m. and spent two hours in personal prayer. After breakfast, the companions and sisters spent a half-hour in collective prayer, followed by "conference," during which the sisters would say what they were doing for the day.

Afterward, everyone dispersed to their various work assignments for the morning. Moesker spent the first half of the program working in the convent's kitchen and the second half providing pastoral care at a nearby hospital.

At noon, the sisters and companions reconvened for communion and lunch. After an hour rest time, everyone went back to their work assignments. Evening prayer began at 5 p.m., followed by supper and then after-supper clean-up.

After a short break, everyone gathered for community time at 7 p.m., followed by the Compline (night prayer) at 8:10. Compline ended at 8:30, and companions were expected, although not forced, to be in bed by 10 for adequate rest.

All but one meal each week was eaten in silence. A "greater silence," during which convent inhabitants were not supposed to talk to one another, except under special circumstances, began at 9 p.m. and ended

at 9 the next morning.

"Good and hard are the two words I ascribe to the 11 months; the goodness and the difficulty of it being completely entwined," Moesker said. "The difficult and best part simultaneously was living in community. I had no idea what I was doing, and so learned several things about healthy boundaries, interaction generally, and a great many things about my own needs in relation to others."

One of the hardest things was the fullness and restrictiveness of the schedule, "despite it being exactly what I needed at that time," she added. One of the biggest highlights of the year was living a prayerful, contemplative life with others. "It was good to pray together and share silences. I will miss that most of all."

Spending a year in the Companions on the Way program has influenced Moesker's faith by putting more impetus behind her spiritual practices. "I am convinced now not only of the necessity of them, but of their cumulative joy," she said. "I think, too, that living out my faith in such a way this past year has helped me experience it as simply a part of me, part of living—like breathing. It's not just an addition, perhaps not even an option. It just is, and I can attend to it or not."

Participating in the program changed her in many ways. "I'll have to reflect on the effects for quite some time to come, I think, but I already know that it contributed a balance and stability to my life that wasn't there before," she said.

"I'm not suggesting that going to a convent or monastery is necessary for learning how to have a prayerful life," she added, "but it was exactly what I needed." ❧



PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY OF THE SISTERHOOD OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE
Sarah Moesker, front row right, and her fellow companions share the daily rhythm of the sisters' life.



One of the biggest highlights for Sarah Moesker, front row second from left, was living a prayerful, contemplative life with others.



Sarah Moesker spent the first half of the Companions on the Way program working in the convent's kitchen.

UpComing

Exhibits offer unfamiliar perspectives on the First World War

Beginning on Sept. 25, and running for 48 days, the names of 661,818 soldiers and nurses on all sides of the First World War will be digitally displayed at more than 60 locations around the world. The Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., will be one of these locations. Canadian actor R.H. Thomson initiated the commemoration, called The World Remembers. It is a unique expression of remembrance, reconciliation and education, and shows the enormous human cost of the war. The website—theworldremembers.org—has a database to look up names and the exact times they will appear in the display. The display runs concurrently with the Archives' exhibit, Sites of Nonresistance: Ontario Mennonites and the First World War. War monuments, cenotaphs and honour rolls remind people daily of the most dramatic and familiar stories of war. Sites of Nonresistance tells war stories of a different kind, as Mennonites tried to navigate the passage between their 400-year-old peace tradition and Canadian society engaged in its first modern war. Classes and members of the public are welcome. For more information, visit uwaterloo.ca/grebel/nonresistance.

—Mennonite Archives of Ontario

Calendar

British Columbia

Oct. 13-15: Women's retreat, at Camp Squeah.

Oct. 26: Columbia Bible College view day.

Nov. 2-5: MEDA "Business as a calling" convention, at the Westin Bayshore, Vancouver. Keynote speakers: Samantha Nutt, Wally Kroeker and David Esau. For more information, visit medaconvention.org.

Nov. 3: Pastor/spouse retreat at Camp Squeah.

Nov. 4: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. presents its annual fall genealogy workshop.

Nov. 12: Mennonite Heritage Society of B.C. fall fundraiser, "A legacy: The Mennonite conscientious objectors," featuring "The Last Objectors" film by Conrad Stoesz, at King Road MB Church, Abbotsford, at 3 p.m. Faspa to follow. For more information, visit mhsbc.com

Nov. 17: Senior youth IMPACT retreat at Camp Squeah.

Nov. 23: Columbia Bible College view day.

films on conscientious objectors.

Manitoba

Until Nov. 18: "Colourful faith" exhibit by Segun Olude and Gibril Bangura, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery.

Oct. 13-15: MC Canada special delegate assembly to discuss and vote on the future direction the national and area churches will take. Registration is open; see more at home.mennonitechurch.ca.

Oct. 14-15: Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship 50th-anniversary celebrations: (14) evening coffee house; (15) worship and celebratory lunch. RSVP for catered lunch to fgmf50th@gmail.com; for more information, visit fgmf.org.

Oct. 19-21: "Mennonite/s Writing VIII: Personal narratives of place and discernment" conference, at the University of Winnipeg, featuring Miriam Toews and Rhoda Janzen. Presented by the Chair in Mennonite Studies and the "Journal of Mennonite Studies." For more information, email Royden Loewen at rloewen@uwinnipeg.ca.

Ontario

Until May 2019: "Sites of Nonresistance: Ontario Mennonites and the First World War" exhibit of letters, photographs and documents from the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

Oct. 1: Pioneer Park Christian Fellowship celebrates its 175th anniversary; worship at 9:45 a.m., followed by a fellowship meal, then "Songs from our history" at 1:30 p.m. For more information, email ppcf.mc@gmail.com.

Oct. 5: Book launch of "The Later Writing of the Swiss Anabaptists, 1529-1592," edited by C. Arnold Snyder, at Conrad Grebel University College, from 4 to 5 p.m.

Oct. 14: Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario celebrates a century of Mennonite sewing circles in Ontario, at 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, at 2 p.m. Visit mhso.org for more information.

Oct. 15: Sixth annual Male Chorus Sing at the Detweiler Meeting House, Roseville, at 2:30 p.m. Song

Alberta

Oct. 14: Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta fall conference, Gem of the West Museum, Coaldale, at 1:30 p.m. Theme: "Tapestry of two uprooted cultures: Japanese and Mennonites in southern Alberta." Speakers include author Joy Kogawa.

Saskatchewan

Oct. 27: MDS awareness and fundraising event, at Grace Mennonite Church, Neuanlage; supper at 6:30 p.m. For reservations, call 306-342-4344 by Oct. 20.

Oct. 28: MC Saskatchewan Equipping Day, at Zoar Mennonite Church, Waldheim.

Oct. 28: Mega Menno youth event, at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

Nov. 11: Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan hosts a peace event at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon, at 2 p.m. Walter Klaassen will tell three short peace stories followed by two short

Let's celebrate *International Credit Union Day!*

Drop by your local Kindred branch on Thursday, October 19 between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.

- Refreshments served all day long
- Branch tours available on request
- 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. free lunch (varies by branch, while quantities last)

Win a Kindred bike!

Local food!

GIC Draw!

Join us for food, fun, and fellowship. Everyone is welcome; bring your family and friends!

We hope to see you there!



info@kindredcu.com | 888.672.6728 | www.kindredcu.com

leaders: Laverne Martin, Charles Kruger and Laverne Brubacher. For more information, call Sam Steiner at 519-884-1040.

Oct. 29: Pax Christi Chorale presents "Romantic masters," at Grace Church on-the-Hill, Toronto, at 3 p.m.; featuring works by Bruckner, Brahms and Beethoven.

U.S.A.

Feb. 2-4, 2018: Mennonite Arts Weekend 2018, at Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. Canada's Theatre of the Beat will be among the featured performers. For more information, visit mennoniteartsweekend.org.

March 16-17, 2018: Mennonites and the Holocaust conference, at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. Featured speaker: Doris Bergen, who holds the Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Chair in Holocaust studies at the University of Toronto. For more information, visit mla.bethelks.edu/MennosandHolocaust.

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. For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



Coming!



In the next issue of Canadian Mennonite:

Your copy of MEDA's Gift Solutions 2017

12 gifts you can give to change the world* <<<<<<

Build peace and restore dignity for families living in poverty globally with gifts that:

- Create opportunities for social inclusion and community cohesion
- Offer hard-working people the tools to build sustainable livelihoods
- Share your values and show you care

For over 60 years, MEDA has been sharing God's love through economic empowerment. We serve the working poor around the world, bringing dignity and joy by helping them grow sustainable, locally owned small businesses that are not dependent on charity for survival.

* Your gift is multiplied in impact seven times, on average, through funding from government and organizational donors.



giftsolutions.org



MDS RESPONDS to disaster by sending volunteers to help clean up, repair and rebuild. Your gift restores hope.

We invite you to respond by giving to current disaster funds such as British Columbia wildfires, Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma. Volunteers are also needed for on-going and future projects. Donate or volunteer today!



HELP RESTORE HOPE!

mds.mennonite.net 866-261-1274



COVER STORY

Imitating Jesus on the Migrant Trail

BY DANIELLE GONZALES AND KARLA BRAUN

Mennonite World Conference

“Our Anabaptist history is intrinsically tied to migration, and so is our Christian story,” says Saulo Padilla, immigration education coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S. “We must keep challenging the narratives that separate us, build borders and invite us to dehumanize others.”

Several Anabaptist-Mennonites participated in the 14th Migrant Trail Walk from May 29 to June 4, a 121-kilometre solidarity hike from Sasabe, Sonora, Mexico, to Tucson, Ariz., that mirrors the paths migrants travel to cross the border. Some seven thousand people have died en route, a thousand of whom have never been identified.

“[This pilgrimage] allows us to honour those lives and to accompany the families that were not able to give a proper burial to their loved ones,” says Padilla. “As Anabaptists and Christians, we believe that every person is created in the image of God and deserves to be respected.”

Why they walk

For seven days, some 50 participants walked up to 25 kilometres a day, eating meals provided by volunteer supporters and sleeping outside. Support vehicles provided water and logistical support, and carried supplies.

Seven-time participant Padilla’s commitment to the walk comes in part from personal experience as an immigrant. Born in Guatemala, he lived as a political refugee in Mexico before immigrating to Canada in 1986.

He invokes Hebrews 13:1’s invitation to entertain strangers. “This kind of hospitality has slowly been blurred by the narratives in society about how dangerous it is to welcome strangers,” he says. “Yet, we should continue to welcome strangers as if God was always knocking at the door. Wouldn’t we treat each other

very different if anyone could be God?”

“As Mennonite Brethren, we work for justice,” says David Bonilla (pictured above left), who works with MCC partner Cafe Justo’s migration programs in Mexico. He joined the walk to support vulnerable people. “Jesus taught us this. We are imitators of Jesus.”

Jonathan Ziegler, a member of Circle of Hope, a Brethren in Christ congregation in Philadelphia, Pa., was drawn to walk the Migrant Trail because, as an Anabaptist, he says nation states and borders are “inherently violent. I believe in radical peace that undoes the oppression they cause.”

For Sara Ritchie-Helmuth, MCC’s Connecting Peoples coordinator in Guatemala, the walk was part of a larger journey, from learning about “the American Dream” as history to meeting people who chase the dream today. “I understood why migrants leave their country and what they experience once they reach the so-called Promised Land, but I wanted to understand what happens in between,” she says. “However, I will never fully understand those struggles because I will never be able to abandon the privilege that has been assigned to me.”

Lessons on the road

Ziegler says “the waste of money on the border patrol” frustrated him, but by maintaining a friendly and respectful relationship with the officers, he began to consider police in his city. “How do we stand up to the powers while loving our enemies [at home] in a way that might just transform them?”

“God was present in glimpses and grandiose moments” through her fellow walkers and the landscape, says Ritchie-Helmuth. Like a simple flower she discovered growing in the desert, she says, “God’s goodness extends to unlikely, desolate and harsh places. Sometimes, it’s just a little harder to find.” ❧