

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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EDITORIAL

It seemed like a good idea

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

A relative of mine sometimes starts out a funny story with the line, “It seemed like a good idea at the time.” Ah, yes, how things can turn from well-intentioned to humorous! Or much worse.

Last fall, I attended a lecture by Reina Neufeldt entitled “When good intentions are not enough: Confronting ethical challenges in peacebuilding and reconciliation.” Neufeldt is a professor in the Peace and Conflict Studies program at Conrad Grebel University College, where she is described as a practitioner of “reflective peacebuilding.” (*Her recorded lecture is online at .bit.ly/2BGQWLd.*)

Neufeldt has done research around the ethics of peacebuilding and has worked with nongovernmental organizations involved in international peacebuilding projects. From her on-the-ground experience with communities and societies in conflict, she gleaned stories that illustrate how the best efforts of individuals and organizations sometimes brought about bad results, and even death. It turns out that even the noble goal of making peace can cause trouble.

Neufeldt offered caution on how our good intentions can cause failure in peacebuilding. She charged listeners to examine the moral values that peacebuilders bring to a particular situation. We need to consider how our values differ from the values of the other people in that conflict. Peacebuilders may be

tempted to act on their own assumptions without considering carefully the things that others in the conflict hold dear.

“Hearing and attending to plural moral values offers us an opportunity to clarify, to deepen, to enrich our own values, and the subsequent decisions, actions and judgments then that we make that are part of this journey towards reconciliation,” she said.



Neufeldt’s cautions and advice have to do specifically with the influence of people seeking to build peace. Perhaps we can apply them to other areas of our lives.

At this time of year, we look back and reflect on our actions. Some of our past choices bring a sense of accomplishment. Other memories make us cringe: Why did I do that, say that? Why didn’t I remain silent? Or: Why didn’t I speak up? It seemed like a good idea at the time. . . .

As followers of Christ, we have a strong desire to be ethically pure. We like to think that our actions spring out of the best intentions, out of a deep moral grounding. Yet our actions sometimes have undesired consequences.

Confronted with a tricky situation, we may simply be ignorant of the complexity of that reality. We may also need to acknowledge that our motives are more complicated than we want to admit. Maybe we were afraid to consider those most affected by our actions. There may have been an unrecognized desire for

personal recognition or even revenge. We may need to confront our own sense of moral superiority. (What if we are the self-righteous religious authorities that Jesus confronted?)

This can happen in our personal spheres but also in well-meaning institutions, and even the church. Looking back, we see examples of good intentions gone wrong: the practice of shunning in our Mennonite tradition, the racism of residential schools, the colonialism of mission efforts, and the systems of dominance brought about by patriarchy. Those in power likely saw themselves as moral and upright. Yet they did, and sometimes continue to do, great damage.

We, as individuals and as groups, need to recognize the times when our good intentions were not enough. Hindsight can help us see what may not have been obvious at the time.

The American poet Maya Angelou once said, “I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better.”

How can we move beyond that apparently “good idea” of the past? First, we offer ourselves some grace: we did what we knew; we can let go of regret. Some situations will call for an apology or for restitution. Then we move on, charging ourselves to do better next time—to get more facts, to acknowledge our underlying assumptions, to hear the unheard voices, to examine our motives, and to listen to human and divine wisdom.

We can accept the invitation to move forward, envisioning strategies for doing good—better. As Romans 12:2 says, we are invited to “*be transformed by the renewing of [our] minds, so that [we] can discern what is the will of God—what is truly good and acceptable and perfect.*”

ABOUT THE COVER:

Jim Tubb sits in his Duke Street studio in downtown Kitchener, Ont., surrounded by paintings, art supplies and music—including jazz—that fuels the work. Read Dave Rogalsky’s story on page 24 to learn more about this artist who is literally ‘painting on borrowed time.’

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Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will

• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

Letter to the family: A mother's treasure

BY ARLENE FRIESEN



Anneken Kendriks is burned in Amsterdam in 1571.



Catharine Mulerin is apprehended in Switzerland in 1637.

Children are among the most important things given to us in our lives. With this gift comes the responsibility of passing on our faith. This can be a daunting task in a cultural climate that isn't always friendly to followers of Jesus.

The desire of our hearts

Maeyken van Deventers expresses the desire of our hearts when she writes to her children, "I seek the salvation of your souls; believe me, and no one else, that you may come to me and live forever." Maeyken wrote this from a Rotterdam prison in 1572. She was one of the female Anabaptist martyrs whose final letters are preserved for us in *Martyr's Mirror*.

These letters, written by imprisoned wives and mothers facing impending death, show us what they thought was most important: a primary commitment to God that led them to desire their children's salvation, urge them to fear the Lord, and bequeath them with the true treasure of a mother's testimony and faithful death.

Family is secondary

These women viewed their families and life together as secondary to their life with God; they would sooner leave their family than leave their faith. Adriaenken Jans reminded her husband that they had built their house on the rock of Christ, and martyrdom was the cost they would pay for their house. This was not a cold-hearted stoicism; great affection and longing was also conveyed.

Janneken Muntsdorp, writing to her infant daughter, expressed how well suited she and her husband were, and that nothing could have separated them except a desire to do the Lord's will. Soetgen van den Houte's letter to her children is filled with tearful prayer, loving admonishment and terms of tender affection.

Choosing the narrow way of primary allegiance to Christ was not always easy. Maeyken Wens admitted in a letter to her husband that she was struggling with being thankful for all that was happening to her, and that parting was harder than she had imagined. "Oh, how easy it is to be a Christian, so long as the flesh is not put to the trial, or nothing has to be relinquished; then it is an easy thing to be a Christian."



PAGE 4 AND 5 ETCHINGS FROM MARTYRS MIRROR BY THIELEMAN J. VAN BRAGHT, PUBLISHED BY HERALD PRESS, HARRISONBURG, VA. USED WITH PERMISSION.

The sons of Maeyken Wens search for her tongue screw among her ashes in Antwerp in 1573.

Entrusting children to God

Working through this struggle, the women came to a place of entrusting their children to God. They did not blame God for what was happening to them, but in trusting that their persecution was part of God's foreordained plan, they also trusted that he would care for their

children.

Soetgen, whose husband had already been martyred, wrote to her soon-to-be-orphaned children, "When I thought that for Christ's sake we must separate from all that we love in this world, I committed all to the will of the Lord." Maeyken Wens's final letter to her son, written just before

Adriaenken Jans reminded her husband that they had built their house on the rock of Christ, and martyrdom was the cost they would pay for their house.

her death, informs him that her struggle has been met with God's grace: "The Lord takes away all fear; I did not know what to do for joy, when I was sentenced . . . I cannot fully thank my God for the great grace which he has shown me."

Encouraging a death-defying commitment

Out of their own death-defying commitment to God, these mothers urged their children to a similar decision. In their concern for their children's salvation, they encouraged them to learn to read and write, because in this way they would gain understanding and wisdom. The importance of this for the Anabaptists of that time is evident in their

(Continued on page 6)

Who were these women?

- **ANNA OF ROTTERDAM** (d. 1539) has a 15-month-old son Isaiah whom she entrusts to a baker on the way to her execution, along with a letter.
- **LIJSKEN DIRCKS**, Antwerp (d. 1552), writes to her husband Jerome Segers, also in prison.
- **SOETGEN VAN DEN HOUTE**, Ghent (d. 1560), writes to her three children: David, Betgen and Tanneken. Her husband had previously given his life for the truth. Her lengthy letter is full of Scripture references and quotes.
- **ADRIAENKEN JANS**, Dordrecht (d. 1572), writes to her husband.
- **MAEYKEN VAN DEVENTER**, Rotterdam (d. 1572),

writes to her four children "in the flesh" with a concern for their salvation.

- **MAEYKEN WENS**, Antwerp (d. 1573), writes to her oldest son Adriaen, as well as to her husband, a minister.
- **JANNEKEN MUNTSDORP**, Antwerp (d. 1573, at the same time as Maeyken Wens), writes to her one-month-old daughter Janneken, who was born in prison and is now being cared for by relatives.

Their letters can be found in Martyrs Mirror (pages 453-4; 504; 515-22; 646-51; 926-9; 977-9; 981-3; 984-6).

—BY ARLENE FRIESEN

(Continued from page 5)

Scripture-filled letters: in reading you can know the Scriptures for yourself and come to an understanding of salvation.

Six months before her death, Maeyken Wens urged her oldest son, Adriaen, to begin to fear the Lord, being old enough to perceive good and evil. She pressed him to join himself to those who fear the Lord, and to write her with his decision. She wanted a better letter than the last two!

The fear of the Lord

The fear of the Lord is a predominant theme in these final letters. Whether writing to believing children, or to those “of the flesh,” the mothers commended the “narrow way.” Anna of Rotterdam warned Isaiah that this way is found by few and walked in by even fewer, since some regard it as too severe, even though they see it is the way to life. “Where you hear of the cross, there is Christ; from there do not depart.”

To fear the Lord is to follow the example of Christ and others who have suffered. Persecution is to be expected. Do not for this reason fail to join the fellowship of true believers.

To fear the Lord is to obey. The children were to obey those who took care of them now, as long as it was not contrary to God. Their mothers instructed them in the specifics of speech, diligence, prayer, simplicity and generosity, among others. With their own lives as examples, the women encouraged their children to forsake pleasures of this world for eternal reward. Soetgen wrote, “We are of such good cheer to offer up our sacrifice that I cannot express it. I could leap for joy when I think of the eternal riches which are promised to us as our inheritance.”

Testaments are our inheritance

And so they wrote their final testaments, viewing the testimony of their word and death as the true treasure they left with their children. Soetgen recognized this was not a memorial of silver, gold or jewels, but something more lasting; if her children paid heed to this testament, they would gain more treasure by it than if she had left them perishable riches.

The letters of these martyrs are also

our inheritance. They offer us wisdom for ordering our lives and passing on our faith. We are left with questions of priority, vision and urgency.

Is our first priority God and God’s kingdom? In our desire to give our children every opportunity in this life, are we in danger of neglecting this first priority? What are we communicating to our children?

What is our vision for our children or those we influence? Recently I took some time to think about this vision, to write it out, and to begin praying it. The next step is to share it with the ones I carry in my heart.

Do we sense the urgency?

Do we sense the urgency of these life choices? These women viewed every choice through the lens of eternity, as life-and-death matters. Do we shy away from this “narrow way” talk, desiring a less demanding portrayal of faith? In emphasizing the love of God, has our pendulum swung too far?

What is the “narrow way”? For these

women, one expression of it was choosing adult believer’s baptism as a sign of their loyalty to Jesus, knowing that this baptism marked them for a baptism in blood. They did not shy away from expressing the cost to their children but fearlessly called them to follow in the same path. In our lives, what are the “narrow way” choices we are making and calling our children to?

Recent research encourages us with the fact that the spiritual vitality of parents contributes to “sticky faith” in their children. Let these women’s examples embolden you to speak your faith and live it before your children as the richest inheritance you can leave to them.

“Fear God; this is the conclusion”:
Janneken Muntsdorp, 1573. ❧

Professor Arlene Friesen teaches courses on Bible and worship, and serves as registrar at Steinbach (Man.) Bible College. She is a part of Morrow Gospel Church (EMMC), Winnipeg.



The blood of modern-day martyrs

Anabaptist Learning Workshop focusses on persecution of Anabaptists in East Africa

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
TORONTO

It was the Christian apologist Tertullian in AD 197 who first wrote, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” As he watched Christians killed in the bloody entertainment of colosseums and in summary legal procedures, he saw the church grow.

Sixteenth-century Anabaptists echoed that quote as the cost of following Jesus in their day and of the fruit born by their martyrdoms. But it is not common for churches to think about persecution and suffering for their faith in secular and pluralistic cultures in the West.

The Anabaptist Learning Workshop—a joint program of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont.—stopped on Nov. 18, 2017, to look at Christian suffering and its impact. The workshop was held at Danforth Mennonite Church in Toronto, also home to Freedom Gospel Ethiopian Church, an emerging church in MC Eastern Canada.

It is a well-known story that the Ethiopian Mennonite Church (Meserete Kristos—Christ the Foundation) num-



Sara Dula looks at a copy of Martyrs Mirror during a presentation about the suffering of 16th-century Anabaptists at the Anabaptist Learning Workshop event that focussed on the persecution of East Africans. Dula herself fled Eritrea because of the persecution and now lives in Toronto with her family.

bered only about 5,000 when the communist Derg took over the country in a revolution in 1974. By the time they were overthrown, the church numbered more than 50,000, and the church has continued to grow almost exponentially since then, now numbering nearly a half-million members and adherents.

Troy Osborne, associate professor of history and theological studies at Grebel, described Anabaptist history in the 16th century, focussing on the persecutions visited on the early Mennonite believers. He made special mention of the use of tongue screws on those being sent to their death by burning or drowning. Magistrates and the police noticed that the Anabaptist tendency to use their trip to their death to witness to their faith was a kind of seed for further conversions. Authorities attempted to silence the prisoners, hence the screws. But families and fellow congregants would go through their ashes after the execution and retrieve as relics the tongue screws of the faithful martyrs who had witnessed unto death.

During the afternoon, participants looked more intently at the experience

of both Ethiopian and Eritrean Meserete Kristos congregations. While the situation in Ethiopia has improved, according to Kassa Lemma, until recently pastor of Rehoboth Evangelical Church, another Ethiopian church in Toronto, Eritrea's one-party state has actively suppressed the activities of some Christian churches. Orthodox Christians and a group associated with the World Lutheran Federation are allowed to operate, but many evangelical and charismatic groups face imprisonment and confiscation of their property. One of the presenters asked that his name not be used since his family remains in Eritrea and would be endangered by knowledge of his presentation being made known.

In both Ethiopia and Eritrea the persecuted church has focussed on meeting in tiny groups, and on training leaders to disciple and multiply those groups. Many leaders have been, and continue to be, imprisoned in Eritrea. In Ethiopia, Meserete Kristos College continues to work diligently to produce leaders for the more than 756 congregations and 875 church-planting centres that can be found in all of the country's administrative regions.



Weiny Hablemichael, left, Tim Reimer and Aron Hablemichael discuss the presentations at the Anabaptist Learning Workshop event held at Danforth Mennonite Church, Toronto, on Nov. 18, 2017, that focussed on East African persecutions.

Tim Reimer, pastor of Danforth Mennonite, ended the day with the description of a small book handed out to all members of Meserete Kristos Church. In it is a checklist for members to keep track of when they had shared the good news of Jesus with someone. The hope was that this would be weekly or more often. He wondered aloud whether spreading the gospel is everyone's job, and something that could be learned in the West. ❧

/// For discussion

1. What are some of the life lessons or guiding principles that you learned from your parents? If you were to write a farewell letter to children you love, what would you include?
2. If you had to choose between caring for your children and serving God, which would you choose? How do we stand up for our faith and for our devotion to God in today's culture? Have we lost respect for a "death-defying commitment to God"?
3. Arlene Friesen writes that the 16th-century martyrs did not blame God for the persecution they faced. Is our society more inclined to blame God when bad things happen? Has our pursuit of pleasure dulled our sensitivities and made us less willing to give our highest priority to God?
4. Who are the Christians you know who have made hard choices to follow the "narrow way"? What hard choices have you made? What can we learn about allegiance to Jesus through the writings of these martyrs? What can we learn from the persecution of the church in Ethiopia and Eritrea?

— BY BARB DRAPER

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VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

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✉ More responses to Maple View's paid supplement on sexuality

RE: "HONOUR GOD with Your Bodies" insert, Sept. 25, 2017.

Thank you, Maple View! I have waited for years to see a statement such as this in *Canadian Mennonite* and I commend CM for publishing it. A true biblical interpretation cannot read other than that which is stated in this paid supplement. I feel it was done respectfully, honourably, kindly and truthfully, and in accordance with Scripture.

I am not intolerant nor homophobic, but I simply cannot affirm what is forbidden in God's Word. I have made every effort to understand this issue by studying what has been written in Scripture, as well as

FROM OUR LEADERS

We know who we are

WILLARD METZGER

Common knowledge helps to form our identity. It creates the basis from which to describe ourselves and helps us to understand others.

Change can create a crisis of identity. When what we thought to be fact changes, it can create a distressing cloud of confusion and uncertainty. We wonder if there is anything we can know. And we no longer trust what we think we know.

This is also true for corporate identity. A sense of peoplehood is formed within a set of shared values. It helps to describe the group to others. So acknowledging disagreement within a group can spark an anxiety of identity. We struggle with how to define the group ourselves and describe the group to others. While disagreements may challenge our sense of corporate well-being, it need not destroy our identity as a nationwide family of faith.

Our identity is not determined by structure or program. Our identity is not dependent on achieving unwavering

agreement. Our identity as a nationwide people of faith is rooted in relationship: our relationship with God and one another.

In visits and conversations across our family of faith, there are common features I continue to experience. While these characteristics may be expressed differently throughout the five regional



Although the experience of Jesus is diverse, we share a common love for Jesus.

churches, they still serve to define us as a Mennonite/Anabaptist expression of Christ followers:

- **WE LOVE** Jesus. Because we are individuals, each uniquely created in the image of God, we do not all experience Jesus in the same way. Although the experience of Jesus is diverse, we share a common love for Jesus.

- **WE WANT** to be like Jesus. Because we share a love for Jesus, we share a yearning to be like Jesus. We do not all agree on what that means. But even in our

disagreement we share a common desire to increasingly reflect the character of Jesus as we see described in the Gospels.

- **WE BELIEVE** the Spirit will help us be like Jesus. A yearning without the ability for realization is merely a frustration. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are confident of the promise of the Holy Spirit. We are not left alone in this yearning. We have the work of the Spirit in our lives. We have the Spirit at work through us as a family of faith. This gives us the confidence to continue the journey of becoming more like the Jesus we love.

A common love. A common yearning. A common confidence in the Spirit. This is who we are. These common elements define us a community. Within these common elements there is much room for disagreement. Within these common elements there is plenty of room for spaces of testing and discernment.

Within these common elements there is much that holds us together.

Willard Metzger is executive minister of Mennonite Church Canada.

Christian and secular articles, and have read numerous books relating to homosexuality. I truly recognize the struggle for those who identify as LGBTQ. However, in my biblical research I find no affirmation of this way of life, but I do find opposition to it.

“Intolerance,” which is so readily ascribed to those who hold the views stated in the Maple View insert was certainly evident to the extreme in some of what

was said in the responses that appeared in the Oct. 23 issue of *CM*.

A letter in the same issue, “Silence him. We are speaking” by Helen Redekopp, is noteworthy in how it calls us back to a biblical view of the matter. Churches have withdrawn from the Canadian and regional conferences, and individual members have left the Mennonite

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FAMILY TIES

Believe the best about each other

MELISSA MILLER

“**B**elieve the best about each other.” When delegates met for the Mennonite Church Canada assembly this past fall, there were swirls of questions, confusion, caution and qualms. From the dense detail and multiple pages on denominational restructuring that we waded through, it was this phrase of hope and encouragement that jumped out at me, and others as well.

Mennonites—individually, in congregations, and provincial and national bodies—were enjoined to “believe the best about each other.” This was one promise we made to each other in the new covenant. It is no small commitment.

We experience many differences that can be divisive. We disagree on what music to sing in worship and how to interpret the Bible. Some of us live in well-resourced centres of power, some of us in sparsely populated or isolated places. Some of us are firmly ensconced with generations of Mennonite lineage pulsing in our blood; others are new Anabaptists, firmly committed to Jesus’ way of nonviolence and reconciliation, yet deprived of full equality in the ethnic-centred church. How might we be mindful and respectful of those differences



while covenanting to believe the best about each other?

One example comes from a church leader who waded into the heated waters of Christian perspectives on same-sex relationships. He said (and I paraphrase): “I refuse to believe that those who seek a traditional understanding of marriage [between one woman and one man] do not care about justice, compassion and hospitality. At the same time, I refuse to believe that those who support individuals in same-sex relationships do not care about faithfulness, biblical integrity and wholesome morality.”

When we encounter our differences, we

How might we be mindful and respectful of differences while covenanting to believe the best about each other?

can easily slide from respectful engagement towards dualism and its resulting “I am right and you are wrong” mentality.

“Attribution” is a psychological term that applies in consideration of differences. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, when we are getting along with someone—a spouse, a child, a sibling—we attribute positive motives and qualities to them. Yes, my spouse forgot to call me to let me know she/he would be late for dinner, but it’s just

because she/he got tied up somewhere for a good reason. Or my sister’s teasing comment did have a sharp edge to it, but she didn’t mean any harm by it.

When we are in conflict with someone, or where tension is high, we tend to attribute negative qualities and motivations to them. At such times, we are more likely to skew the interaction negatively. Yes, my spouse forgot to call me to let me know he/she would be late for dinner; that’s because he/she is thoughtless and self-centred. Or my sister’s teasing comment had a sharp edge to it; that’s because she is unkind and mean-spirited, and she’s been that way her whole life.

For whatever reason, the writers drafting a new covenant for the Mennonite churches of Canada called us to believe the best about each other. A tall order.

Paul, writing to the Ephesians (4:1-2), begged them to “*lead lives of humility, gentleness and patience . . . bearing with one another in love [and] making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in*

the bond of peace.”

As members of Mennonite churches in Canada, as members of families, we can cultivate humility, gentleness and patience to nourish our capacity to believe the best about each other.

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

(Continued from page 9)

church entirely over this very divisive issue.

So how do we go forward from here? Whatever the answer, it must not deviate from biblical teaching. Jesus did not condemn, but he did say, “Go, and sin no more.” And as Redekopp wrote, “Sin will not ultimately be judged by the way we see it, but by the way God sees it.”

LORINA JANZEN, WALDHEIM, SASK.

I FEEL MY heart grow a little colder every time someone equates faithfulness with using lots of Bible verses. This refrain has emerged again with “conversation” that the Maple View paid supplement has stirred. The insert appears to be heralded by many as a courageous return to the Bible. I, and many others, have worked hard over the years demonstrating how uninformed such a view is.

GOD, MONEY AND ME

Be like Scrooge?

DARREN PRIES-KLASSEN

In the last few weeks, most of us have encountered some version of *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens’ classic tale of Ebenezer Scrooge.

In the initial run-up to Christmas, I must admit I am often a bit of a curmudgeon myself. Perhaps it is hearing “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” in November, or perhaps it is the growing list of obligatory gatherings I need to add to an already busy schedule.

Whatever the reason, I find myself resisting the season of Christmas. However, in December something always flips for me, and I make peace with the spirit of the season. I start to embrace the busyness and gift-giving with anticipation. Even the decorations and festive music are things I come to enjoy, and it is easy to give generously in the hope that others will share in the joy of Christmas, too. The family gathers, dinner and laughter ensue, and in the blink of an eye another Christmas is over, and the new year has begun.

I am always a little sad when quiet returns to the house and the visual reminders like lights, trees and decorations come down. All too often, the spirit of generosity, so prevalent during the holidays, gets packed away for another year, too.

Wouldn’t it be much better if we kept that spirit throughout the year? The charities we love to give to during the

holidays, and the people who benefit, don’t stop needing support when the carols are finished playing. The good feeling we get from giving is the same in January or July as it is in December.

What is it about the Christmas season that inspires us to be a little more selfless then? How do we preserve the generous spirit of Christmas year-round?

Maintaining our generous ways throughout the year requires us to keep our sights on the source of our Christmas generosity. The advent of Jesus on earth signified God’s love for humanity, and in December we are surrounded by constant reminders of that love. It can be harder to focus on the birth of Jesus in the middle of July, but the love and gener-

Waiting to give until we have ‘enough’ likely means we will never get around to it.

osity it signifies is no less important.

During the holidays, we often spend generously on gifts for others, easily putting their joy ahead of our own interests. We make financial adjustments because we decide that giving a particular gift is worth it. This thinking needn’t be limited to Christmas; generosity is a choice that holds true throughout the year. Waiting to give until we have “enough” likely means we will never get around to it. Instead, we can choose to fit giving into our lives right now. Don’t worry about

the size of your gift. Just start giving something, give regularly, and see where it takes you.

January is the perfect time to begin practising new habits. In my work at Abundance Canada, I am constantly inspired by our clients’ generosity. Their gifts, no matter the size, make a huge difference for hundreds of charities that make the world a better place every day. There are many ways we can help you make generosity a part of your life. Talk to us about the benefits of a gifting account, or ask us how we can help you make gifts in your will.

At the end of *A Christmas Carol*, the transformed Ebenezer Scrooge vows to honour Christmas in his heart and try to keep it all through the year. Dickens assures us his curmudgeon protagonist went on to “keep Christmas well,” adding, “May that be truly said of us, and all of us!” As I sweep up the pine needles

from the tree and finish the last of the Christmas leftovers, I am already planning the ways I will keep my generosity unboxed this year. What will you do?

Darren Pries-Klassen is the executive director of Abundance Canada. For more than 40 years, Abundance Canada has effectively helped Canadians with their charitable giving in their lifetime and through their estate. To learn more, visit abundance.ca or call 1-800-772-3257 to arrange a free, no-obligation consultation.



To follow the Bible is also to acknowledge that often the Bible points away from itself in God's call for faithfulness:

- **CONSIDER MOSES**, who was asked to keep the "mercy seat" clear of any fixed object so that the living God might continue to be heard (Exodus 25:22).
- **CONSIDER THE** psalmist, who called out for a new song that, by definition, wouldn't simply be repeating the old sheet music (Psalm 96).
- **CONSIDER PAUL**, who had the audacity to say that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision mattered (Galatians 5:6).
- **CONSIDER JESUS**, who told religious leaders that simply searching Scripture would not lead to eternal life (John 5).
- **CONSIDER THE** Holy Spirit, whose activities appear to have little regard for our best reading of the Bible (Acts).
- **CONSIDER GOD**, who told Peter to disobey biblical commands for the sake of faithfulness (Acts 10).

We can at least acknowledge that we are given the weighty task of discernment, and see in Scripture the difficult and contested path God's people have travelled. At its best, this is what the Being a Faithful Church process called—and still calls—us to do.

If there is concern about how the Bible is used in our context and in these matters, I would suggest we consider the question of idolatry, the use and control of a fixed object in the place of our living God.

DAVID DRIEDGER, WINNIPEG

The author is associate minister of First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

WE WISH TO affirm the passion and commitment that the people of Maple View Mennonite Church have for both following Jesus and taking the Bible seriously.

As part of that passion and commitment, we wish to add the following to the conversation:

Jesus was clear that everything there is to know about God and ethics, wherever written, spoken or acted upon, is to be expressive of love (Matthew 22:34-40). Paul echoes this when he says that whatever we do that expresses love, "fulfills the law" (Romans 13:8-10). Therefore, it would seem to us that when discussing same-sex marriage, all we need to do is answer the following questions, and we will know what to do:

- **IF WE** say yes to same-sex marriage, who will be hurt and who will—or will not—experience love?
- **IF WE** say no to same-sex marriage, who will be hurt

and who will—or will not—experience love?

RAY FRIESEN, WYMARK, SASK.

The author is pastor of Emmaus Mennonite Church in Wymark, on whose behalf this letter was written.

I DISAGREE WITH Maple View's "Honour God with Your Bodies" paid supplement, but I think *Canadian Mennonite* made the right choice to publish it. We are a divided church, and sharing our values may help us to live with our differences.

I find it particularly troublesome that Maple View, in its search of Scripture, ignores the reality that Jesus did not condemn homosexuals, yet the church finds that practising gays are unfit for membership unless they live as celibates or marry heterosexually. In my opinion, there is no quantity of references in Leviticus or Numbers that surpasses the silence of Jesus, the son of God and the church's one foundation (I Corinthians 3).

To me, any examination of homosexuality is an attempt to know good and evil. The third chapter of Genesis tells us that this desire was Eve and Adam's forbidden fruit. Only God has the capacity to know good and evil. Eve and Adam's offence was of such magnitude that it brought death to the human race. Both Jesus and Paul explicitly instructed people not to judge others (Matthew 7 and Romans 2).

Maple View reminds us of Paul's beautiful image of the marriage of Christ and the church joined in a voluntary union in which spouses give their lives to each other. But at no time, in no territory, has Paul's image been the norm in actual life. Ancient Hebrew families, including Abraham and Sarah, violated the ideal, as did Jacob, David and the people of Israel as a whole (I Samuel 8). God noted their failures and reproached them but did not cast them off despite his disappointment with them.

I recently walked by a church with a banner which expresses beautifully the reality and mission of the church: "No one is perfect, but all are welcome."

JOHN KLASSEN, VANCOUVER

The author is emeritus professor of history at Trinity Western University, Langley, B.C.

✉ **Are farmed animals worthy of our compassion?**

I ALWAYS READ with interest in *Canadian Mennonite* about the various concerns of Mennonite congregations as they chart their way through the complex waters of the 21st century, but I have yet to see articles that suggest Mennonites focus on the welfare of

farmed animals, although many Mennonites are hog and chicken farmers with large operations.

Yuval Harari, the Israeli historian and author of *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, has postulated that “industrial farming is one of the worst crimes in history,” and has called the “fate of industrially farmed animals . . . one of the most pressing ethical questions of our time” (*The Guardian*, Sept. 15, 2015).

I have to agree. When I see images of sows in farrowing crates and chickens in battery cages, and studies indicate that many people are starting to question what they see as the extreme practices of modern industrial farming, people like me are turning to small

farms for meat and poultry products, or avoiding them altogether.

I wonder if Mennonite farmers and consumers are wrestling with the issue, and I don't know about it. I also wonder if, in the Mennonite view, leading a Christian life of compassion is understood to solely—or mainly—mean compassion towards human beings. Or is there a movement among us that focusses on farmed animals as beings who, as God's creatures like us, are deserving of compassionate treatment? If so, that's wonderful, and how can I help? If not, why?

JANE SUDERMAN, BARRIE, ONT.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Every name deserves to be remembered

AILEEN FRIESEN

On the evening of Oct. 29, 2017, I found myself in Lubyanka Square by happenstance. This square stands in front of the Lubyanka Building. The vibrant yellow facade, delightful rather than imposing, disarms those passing by. But the suffering planned and perpetrated within its walls cast a heavy shadow for those who know the history of this building that served as the headquarters for the KGB and its predecessors in Moscow.

On this particular evening, the non-governmental organization, Memorial, which has worked tirelessly to research political repression in the Soviet Union and to educate the public on this history, had organized a ceremony to commemorate the victims of repression in front of the Solovetsky Stone in this square.

For 12 hours, individuals (*pictured above right*) waited patiently in the cold in order to step forward to a microphone and speak the names of the dead. Some read the names, occupations and fate of strangers given to them on papers handed out by Memorial volunteers. Others shared personal stories of parents,



PHOTO BY AILEEN FRIESEN

grandparents and relatives shot by the regime. With voices cracking, their emotion showed vividly how families became the repository of this trauma, carrying the burden of the incomprehensible. This is a burden within our own community that many have known.

As I watched people from a variety of ages and backgrounds offer these names into the night, I was reminded of how this history unites us. The victims of political repression under the Soviet regime touched all communities without

exception. No one was safe within this system. In the Soviet Ukraine, this terror victimized not only Mennonites. Ukrainians, Russians, Germans, Jews and other groups also shared the same fate. And as the event organized by Memorial reminds us, each name, whether of a relative or a stranger, matters.

The centennial of the Russian Revolution has just passed and we are approaching the anniversary of the 1920s Mennonite exodus out of the Soviet Union. While approximately 20,000 Mennonites left, more than three times that amount remained and suffered tremendously.

How do we remember those we have lost? At this very moment, we have an unprecedented opportunity to know, to mourn, and to bear witness to the experiences of Mennonites and their neighbours during the 1930s.

For more than two years, the KGB archives in Ukraine have been open without any restrictions, offering us the opportunity to find more names, more stories, and perhaps even the final resting places of some of those who disappeared without a trace. Unfortunately, the community has done nothing to collect these stories hidden in the archives. Maybe eventually we too will understand that every name deserves to be remembered.

Aileen Friesen is the inaugural recipient of the J. Winfield Fretz Fellowship in Mennonite Studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Only one thing is essential

TROY WATSON



In Luke 10:40, Martha complains to Jesus about having to do all the kitchen work by herself. Jesus responds. *“Martha, you’re distracted by many things, but only one thing is necessary.”*

Notice that Jesus doesn’t give Martha a list of seven or 47 things that are essential to life. Just one thing. If that doesn’t give focus to our spiritual journeys, I don’t know what will.

Martha is busy doing “good works.” She is serving others. This is an important part of the story we shouldn’t rush through, but there is no substitute for the one essential thing. We don’t get a free pass on the one necessary thing as long as we’re busy doing many good things. This will require some of us to rethink how we’ve been raised and cultured. A transformed life requires a renewed mind.

This year, I discovered anew my need for a renewed mind. My preoccupation with many good things—like ministry, family, church, Scripture, theology, finances and lawn maintenance—often results in me neglecting the one essential thing. One reason for this was that I didn’t have a clear understanding of what the one essential thing was.

Jesus points us to Mary to understand the one essential thing. In this scene she is fully present in the moment, completely attentive to the presence of God on earth, in Jesus. That’s it. The one necessary thing.

The kingdom of God is here and now. That was Jesus’ primary message. Now is the eternal moment, the only time we can access God. Now is the only portal to Divine Presence, power and peace. The only way I can encounter the Great “I

Am” is when “I am.” You can only meet and commune with God when and where you are, and that is in the present.

This doesn’t mean the past and future have no value. It means the past and future only have value in the present. The value of the

past is learning from it and applying what we’ve learned. Of course, the only time you can do that is in the present. The value of the future is to visualize, hope, plan and create a brighter tomorrow, but the only time you can do that is now, in the present. The past and future inform us, but only the present moment transforms us.

God is always present—right here,

We don’t get a free pass on the one necessary thing as long as we’re busy doing many good things. This will require some of us to rethink how we’ve been raised and cultured.

right now. The problem is that we are usually somewhere else mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The only way to be in tune with God’s presence is to be present ourselves.

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus says our top priority in life is to seek the kingdom of God. “Kingdom” language is no longer accessible to a growing number of people today, so I’ve asked God to help me find fresh language to articulate this central teaching of Jesus without losing its substance. Here’s the short version of what I’ve come up with.

The kingdom of God is wherever and whenever the presence of God is

recognized and responded to appropriately. I believe Jesus is saying that our top priority, every minute, every day, is to recognize and respond to Divine Presence. Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century monk, calls this “practising the presence.”

Some people are reluctant to “practise the presence” for fear it will make them “too heavenly minded to be any earthly good.” A stereotypical image of “practising the presence” is people sitting cross-legged with eyes closed, paying attention to their breathing.

Meditation and contemplative prayer are extremely valuable, life changing disciplines. However, “practising the presence” is not a 20-minute exercise. It is a way of life. It is being aware of, and responsive to, Divine Presence all the time: during intense business dealings, stressful parenting moments, evening television watching and the busyness of doing many good things.

Tuning in to Spirit isn’t tuning out the world around me. Quite the opposite. It’s having my eyes opened to see the world set ablaze with God’s presence.

It’s awakening to the incredible beauty, hope, peace and love around me. It’s seeing, really seeing, people I usually don’t notice because I’m busy and in a hurry. Seeing them as God’s beloved children, my brothers and sisters. It’s seeing and seizing the opportunities each day to join the Holy Spirit at work in my own life and in the people and places around me.

The “one thing necessary” is to see and respond to God’s presence within us and around us. All day, every day. ❧

Troy Watson (troydw@gmail.com) is pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Anger—Parker William (b. Oct. 9, 2017), to Tiffany and Adam Anger, Poole Mennonite, Ont.

Boese—Theodore David (b. Sept. 30, 2017), to Matthew and Jessica Boese, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Brooks—Micah Ellis (b. Oct. 25, 2017), to Hannah (Jones) Brooks, Rosthern Mennonite, Man., and Drew Brooks, in Edmonton.

Graham—Amos Frederic Hamilton (b. Oct. 28, 2017), to David Graham and Lise Mcmillan, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Horst—Lauryn Anna (b. Nov. 19, 2017), to Jamie and Annalee Horst, Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

Klemp—Connor Allan (b. Nov. 19, 2017), to Carrie and Jeff Klemp, Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

Linley—Fiona Gwen (b. Oct. 26, 2017), to Wendy (Luitjens) Linley, Rosthern Mennonite, Man., and Jon Linley, in Winnipeg.

Minions—Logan Alexander (b. Nov. 10, 2017), to Janelle and Alex Minions, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

Toews—Ezekiel Jack (b. April 15, 2017), to Richard and Amy Toes, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Marriages

Cutchey/Vallotton—Greg Cutchey and Michèle Vallotton, Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, Oct. 28, 2017.

Enciso/Medina—Leydy Enciso and Yeison Medina, at Foothills Mennonite, Calgary, Nov. 4, 2017.

Peters/Peters—John Peters and Violet Peters, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., Oct. 28, 2017.

Deaths

Bartel—D. Roy, 81 (b. May 29, 1936; d. Sept. 4, 2017), Cornerstone (Mennonite), Saskatoon.

Doerksen—Vic, 83 (b. Jan. 9, 1934; d. Nov. 9, 2017), Kelowna First Mennonite, B.C.

Fast—Sarah, 94 (b. June 10, 1923; d. Nov. 4, 2017), Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

Hergott—Thomas Anthony, 78 (b. July 2, 1939; d. Oct. 25, 2017), Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Lebtog—Max, 91 (b. June 19, 1926; d. Nov. 16, 2017), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Penner—John, 79 (b. Nov. 29, 1937; d. Nov. 26, 2017), Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Rempel—Mary (nee Boese), 88 (b. June 20, 1929; d. Nov. 20, 2017), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Schwartzentruber—Vernon, 86 (b. April 7, 1931; d. Aug. 20, 2017), West Hills Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Senner—Les, 81 (b. Oct. 12, 1936; d. Nov. 4, 2017), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Wiebe—Jake, 88 (b. Nov. 3, 1928; d. Aug. 12, 2017), Nordheim Mennonite, Winnipegosis, Man.

Wiens—Victor, 82 (b. May 20, 1935; d. Nov. 15, 2017), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

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

A moment from yesterday



At the 1979 Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC) delegate sessions, David P. Neufeld, left, welcomed three new congregations into the conference by asking several doctrinal questions regarding their churches' beliefs and understanding of CMC. He extended the right hand of fellowship to, from left to right: Bob Friesen representing Calgary Mennonite Fellowship, Stephen Lee of Vancouver Chinese Mennonite Church, and Francis Tung of Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Church." Seated are Helen Rempel and Irene Klassen. After the ceremony, Sally Lee sang a solo, 'Blessed Assurance.'

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Mennonite Heritage Archives



archives.mhsc.ca

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Challenges and excitement

New Joint Council exhibits 'a strong sense of collaboration' at its first meeting

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent
CALGARY

Calvin Quan was “happily surprised” by the positive spirit and efficiency of the first meeting of Mennonite Church Canada’s new Joint Council. “There was a strong sense of collaboration and shared agenda [among regional representatives],” said MC Canada’s moderator of the two days of meetings held on Dec. 8 and 9, 2017.

Both Quan and Willard Metzger, MC Canada’s executive minister, felt that the smaller size of the Joint Council and advanced planning by the nationwide executive and staff groups worked well. Agenda items were handled thoroughly and the meeting ended early, Quan said, adding, “No one felt rushed.”

The main topics on the agenda were timelines for structural change implementation, communications, leadership development and schools, financial plans, relational funding for Witness workers, and initial plans for a nationwide inspirational gathering in 2019.

Metzger and Quan both see the changes facing MC Canada as challenging but also exciting.

Budget is top of mind as a challenge

“For the first time regional churches send their budgets in with a line to support nationwide priorities,” Metzger explained. “There is no history of this, so there is some nervousness. Getting budgets set and getting through the first year is crucial.”

Quan echoed his words, adding, “Typically [we] take the previous year’s actuals. As we move to a new way of relating and testing the structure, there are no precedents. We haven’t seen it go through a cycle yet.”



Calvin
Quan

But the financial plan presented at Special Assembly 2017 in October, with an overall target of \$1.9 million, appears to be on track.

“We are reassured that the numbers do feel like they are accurate, as long as congregations remain faithful in combining their former giving, in terms of the regional and nationwide churches, into one budget amount that goes directly to the regional church,” Metzger said.

A few unknowns, such as whether some congregations will leave their regional body and how much shrinking congregations will be able to give, are a cause of some continuing nervousness.

In case of shortfalls, Metzger said a risk assessment that considered reserves held by MC Canada and the regional churches has been done. “That has reassured us that we have the capacity to manage risks of a donation shortfall,” he said.

Immediately after the October sessions, Metzger and regional church ministers visited the five regions to meet with and encourage donors and to answer questions. Metzger indicated that these were met with support and affirmation. A similar follow-up tour is planned for the spring, when the regions will be finalizing and approving their budgets, and numbers become clear.

Reworking communications an 18-month process

Communications is of crucial importance during the structural change-over, and each regional church is responsible for communicating to its congregations. Some national programs, such as CommonWord, Indigenous relations and



Willard
Metzger

Witness, will provide information to each region, which will then be responsible for getting it to congregations.

Quan commented that asking questions of purpose—“What is wanted?” and “What is the audience?”—are important to ask before a communications strategy is put in place. “This is not a quick process,” he said.

It is expected to take approximately 18 months to evaluate existing systems and determine what this process will finally become. In the meantime, the regional churches are committed to functioning as a team, helping each other wherever possible.

‘Relational funding’ for Witness

The implementation of a “relational funding” model for international Witness partnerships is in process, with funding levels from the regional churches and individual congregations still to be determined. By the end of January, MC Canada will provide a more solid proposal, so that workers will be able to plan whether they are returning to their assignments or completing them when the current terms end in June.

Council exudes ‘energy and drive’

Quan is hopeful about the working of the new Joint Council, seeing more diversity and regional feedback as strong possibilities for the future. “The agenda of the regions in the past seemed almost as an addendum,” he said. “Now it is at the core. . . . [We] feel there is energy and drive to work together on nationwide agenda.”

“In the early stages, the way in which regional churches are working together has been truly exciting,” Metzger said.

The Joint Council is made up of a moderator and representative from each regional church and a four-person national executive. It replaces the old General Board and commissions. Along with an executive staff group of national and regional executive ministers, the council brings regional agendas together to determine nationwide priorities for MC Canada. ❧

For profiles of the new Joint Council members, visit canadianmennonite.org/-joint-council-members.



A renovated Westgate welcomes students back home

Private school's redevelopment finished on time and under budget

BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

They say it takes a village to raise a child. For Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, it takes a village to not only raise its 300 students, but also to complete a \$10.3-million redevelopment project. Westgate, a private school located in Winnipeg, finished renovating its building just in time for the 2017-18 school year.

Among the school's exciting new features are a large atrium, separate choir and band rooms, a fitness centre, a junior science lab and increased energy efficiency.

Westgate only increased its space by 600 square metres, yet it feels like there is a lot more room and everything is more open and accessible, says Natalie Friesen, a

Grade 12 student and senior-high student-council co-president. Almost the entire school is renovated, with the exception of a few rooms.

"It was only when everything was done that it was clear what a good job the architects did with the melding [of] the old and the new sections," says principal Bob Hummelt of the work done by Prairie Architects Inc. and Bockstael.

Ruth Dyck has been teaching at Westgate for 30 years and before that attended Westgate as a student. She began at the school when it was held in the basement of a church and then moved to the building at 86 West Gate, which was built in 1950. Throughout her teaching career, Dyck saw the school slowly progress. The gym was built in the '70s, and the science and computer labs were added a decade later. She says it is astounding to see the school change so much, especially with the latest transformation: "Every morning when I walk in, I go, 'Oh wow.' It's [a] really positive, uplifting feeling."

Westgate's new space didn't come without its obstacles, though. Vice-principal James Friesen says there is no doubt that moving to a new location for a year was the biggest challenge. Westgate relocated to Chapman School for the 2016-17 school year, which involved moving the entire contents of the school out of 86 West Gate and into the new school or storage.

Andrew Hutton, Natalie Friesen's fellow classmate and co-president, says that students ended up adjusting well, though, and had a good year because the core of Westgate stayed the same. "It's not just the school [building], it's the people too," he says.

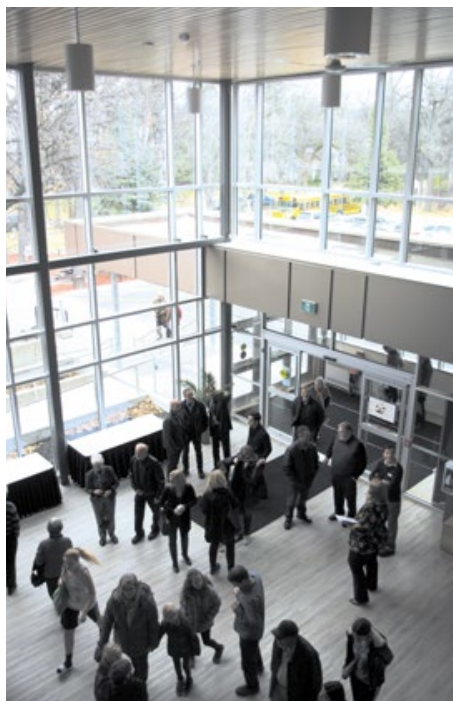
"It's been cool to see that even though we've been in all these different places,



PHOTO BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE
The newly renovated Westgate Mennonite Collegiate

that Westgate the community has stayed the same, and we've kept doing the same things and it hasn't really changed how the school works," Natalie Friesen adds.

This community is made up of not only students and staff, but of broader Westgate connections as well. James Friesen says that the redevelopment project has really shown the strength of this community. Westgate was flooded with volunteers when it requested help for the physical



CM PHOTO BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE
Visitors walk around Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's new atrium at their building dedication last September.



PHOTO BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE
Vic Pankratz conducts a choir class in the new building.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WESTGATE MENNONITE COLLEGIATE
ate, features an atrium at the front.



The middle section of Westgate Mennonite Collegiate being demolished in the summer of 2016.

move out of, and back into 86 West Gate. “It wasn’t just a couple people. There were way too many volunteers,” he says. Without them, the move would have been far too expensive and more difficult.

Westgate’s newly renovated building is an impressive feat, completed within a strict 14-month time limit and under budget by \$200,000. This is particularly remarkable, considering how Westgate struggled at the beginning. With the deadline

of a required start date fast approaching in April 2016, the school was still searching for somewhere to relocate for the year of construction. “It really did look bleak,” Hummelt says. Then within just weeks of the deadline, it secured Chapman School and could proceed with the project. Hummelt credits the board’s hard work and the prayers of the community for this small miracle.

To date, the Let Inspiration Shine fundraising campaign has raised, or received pledges for, a little more than \$7 million. This, too, has been the work of the community joining together. Rather than being sponsored by just a few major donors, Westgate’s redevelopment has been funded by a large number of people and a wide variety of contributions, says James Friesen. However, there is still work to do to reach the \$10.3 million goal. He says the school will continue to trust in the support of the community that has been so strong.

“Just simply, this is the future,” says Dyck of the new Westgate. “We’re going to be able to [stay] here for 50 years. . . . Everything is now doable and really makes us be able to deliver good education. I just think it’s wonderful.”



Auditorium room, which overlooks the river.

/// Briefly noted

‘God moved into our neighbourhood’

WINKLER, MAN.—On the second Sunday of Advent, Dec. 10, 2017, Emmanuel Mennonite Church congregants traded in their pews for a different experience of church. They shortened their typical church service to 40 minutes, after which half the church, around 90 people, dispersed throughout Winkler to connect with people in their community. Groups visited seniors homes and group homes for those with mental disabilities. They brought lunch, sang Christmas carols, and visited and ate together (pictured below).



Emmanuel Mennonite’s theme for the Advent season, “God moved into our neighbourhood,” was based on John 1:14. The church thought it was important to move into its own neighbourhood and create opportunities to share the love of Christ and build relationships with people who may have fewer social connections in their lives. Pastor John P. Klassen says he received an overwhelmingly positive response from his congregation towards this different way of living out church. He says that sometimes it can be difficult to get enough volunteers for church initiatives. But within three or four days of posting the sign-up sheet for the visits, all the slots were filled. The hope was “to come in vulnerability, to come with a spirit of listening, to . . . connect with [people] where they’re at,” he says. The homes he contacted and members of his congregation were appreciative of this opportunity.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Steinbach Mennonite turns 75

By KENTON DYCK

Steinbachonline.com
STEINBACH, MAN.

Steinbach Mennonite Church celebrated its 75th anniversary over the Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 2017, weekend.

Church board chair Karen Peters said the festivities began on the evening of Sept. 30 with a program called “Stories and songs” that highlighted various aspects of the church’s history. She noted that the next morning there was a thanksgiving anniversary worship service with a number of former pastors who had been part of the congregation.

“We are calling this our homecoming weekend, and homecoming, of course, refers to people who have attended [Steinbach Mennonite] in the past, but definitely also anyone who feels connected to our congregation, and that would be people from other walks of life and people that have crossed paths with our congregation in various ways over the decades.”

Peters said that since the church was founded in 1942 at the corner of Reimer Avenue and Hanover Street, it has seen

incredible growth and many people’s lives have been touched. “I believe the impact has been seen in many different ways,” she said. “There have been many numerous programs over the years that have opened our doors to the community. The most recent one would be Steinbach Community Outreach, and that program is still going on and is actually booming.”

The church has seen some hard times over the last few years, but Peters noted that the congregation is excited about the future. “Steinbach Mennonite Church is continuing to discover who they are and how they want to move forward,” she said. “The people that are in the congregation are appreciating the opportunity to worship together and grow together, and I think we have the opportunity to support each other, love each other and to grow in our faith.” ☞



STEINBACHONLINE.COM PHOTO BY LOTHAR DUECK

To celebrate Steinbach (Man.) Mennonite Church’s 75 years of worship and ministry, pastors and congregants planted a peace pole in front of its current building on Loewen Boulevard on Nov. 12. Next spring, a garden and bench will be installed.



PHOTO BY STEPH DUECKMAN / TEXT AMY DUECKMAN

With a theme of ‘Transitioning to maturity,’ based on Hebrews 6:1, young people from a number of Mennonite Church B.C. congregations gathered for the fall senior youth Impact retreat at Camp Squeah in Hope from Nov. 17 to 19, 2017, with speaker Reece Friesen, associate pastor of Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church in Abbotsford. In several group sessions, participants learned about growing in Christ, using the Bible for correction in life’s path, being open to growth, spiritual gifts, working together for personal growth, and how to be ‘humble rule breakers.’ Some also found time to pose for a giant ‘selfie.’

An inclusive community with an Anabaptist heritage

Westview Christian Fellowship feels at home in MC Eastern Canada

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

Westview Christian Fellowship in St. Catharines joined Mennonite Church Eastern Canada last year as an emerging congregation. This status is given to congregations as they begin a relationship with the regional church (formerly the area church), and many that do so are new congregations, just a few years old.

But Westview will be 30 years old this year. As lay pastor Victor Ratzlaff says, the congregation “has gone through changes.” Originally established as an outreach congregation, with an evangelical and somewhat charismatic orientation, the congregation has morphed, he says, into “an inclusive learning community with an Anabaptist heritage . . . where participation comes before perfection.”

Westview finds that MC Eastern Canada is there for it in support of the pastors, as well as the programs of which they are a part. The Women of MC Eastern Canada group provided Westview’s Centre4Women with

a financial gift to support Erika Klassen, who is on the church staff as community minister but works as the Centre director.

“You can’t really write about Westview Christian Fellowship without writing about [the Westview Centre4Women] because that in some ways has been the driver for us,” says Ratzlaff.

More than 200 women a week access the services offered at the Centre, which is open Tuesday to Thursday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., according to program director Jane LaVacca, adding that the Centre celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2017.

Caleb Ratzlaff, who serves as the congregation’s convener, makes connections for people, including curating worship on Sunday mornings. Attempts are made to have all 30 of the congregants who attend on average take a part in the two-hour worship service that includes a coffee break.

The goal, he says, is to keep away from a client mentality with those who come

to worship and those who use the Centre4Women. Westview is trying to bring change to the Queenston neighbourhood even though this displaces “the church’s salvific call.” Partnering with the residents is Westview’s goal, even when the church is pushed to the periphery, he says.

Victor notes that, in coming to this place as a congregation, Westview looked at Jesus. Instead of thinking “we have Jesus to share with others, [we think] Jesus has been here a long time.” It is Westview’s job, therefore, to watch for where Jesus is already active.

On Oct. 6, 2017, Westview hosted its fourth annual “Unity in the community” festival. In attendance were a choir from the neighbouring St. George’s Anglican Church, politicians and a dozen or so service agencies that range from alcohol recovery and needle exchanges to outreach nursing, cancer testing and counselling for women in abusive relationships.

To acknowledge Canada’s 150th year since confederation, two brave Canadian women were highlighted. In costume, Jackie Conway told the story of Laura Secord bringing information about American plans to the British military, and then being forgotten for years. Judy Helstrom told the story of Laura Sabia, a local alderwoman who focussed on women’s education. “Equity of opportunity” was Sabia’s mantra, Helstrom told the crowd. ❧



Jane LaVacca, left, program director of Westview Christian Fellowship’s Centre4Women; Victor Ratzlaff, lay pastor; and Caleb Ratzlaff, convener, are pictured in the worship space at Westview Christian Fellowship, an ‘emerging church’ congregation in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

'Choose something to do'

MCC's disaster responses are appropriate and sustainable: Bruce Guenther

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

"There's no such thing as a natural disaster," according to Bruce Guenther. But Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada's disaster response director wasn't in denial.

Guenther was the featured speaker at MCC Saskatchewan's encounter and annual general meeting, held at Cornerstone Church in Saskatoon on Nov. 4, 2017. "Disasters are caused by people's vulnerability to disaster," he said, noting that the more vulnerable people are, the more potential there is for natural hazards such as earthquakes to become disasters.

Speaking on the theme, "Beyond disaster, embracing hope," he told those in attendance that the need for disaster relief has never been greater, with 65.5 million people currently displaced worldwide. This figure has almost doubled in the last decade. Of that number, 22.5 million people

are refugees.

MCC has responded to 26 disasters in the past year, including drought in Burundi; conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo; hurricanes in Haiti and Cuba; flooding in Nepal, Bangladesh and India; and an earthquake in Mexico.

Why are there so many disasters in the world today? Climate change is definitely a factor, Guenther said. "Wet areas are getting wetter; dry areas are getting dryer. There are more frequent and longer warm spells and heat waves, and more frequent drought," he said. "Tropical storms are increasing in both intensity and frequency."

MCC partners with local organizations in order to respond in the best way possible. "People affected by disaster need to be consulted," said Guenther. In Chad, for example, a local partner helped identify the need for water and sanitation. "Working

with local partners ensures our response is appropriate and sustainable," he said.

MCC's response is based on need. This means working with the most vulnerable people. Since Aug. 25, 2017, 607,000 Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar, joining 213,000 Rohingya already in Bangladesh. But they are not recognized as refugees because they don't have citizenship in Myanmar. In addition, there are no local aid organizations in the area to assume responsibility for them, so they are extremely vulnerable.

One aspect of MCC's work is reducing people's vulnerability to disaster. In Haiti, the 2010 earthquake and recent hurricanes have been devastating because buildings

MCC's response is based on need. This means working with the most vulnerable people.

were constructed with poor materials using unstable methods. In response, MCC repaired and built 800 homes that will be resistant to future earthquakes and hurricanes.

Building trauma resilience is another important aspect of MCC's disaster response. In Nigeria, where people have suffered trauma caused by Boko Haram, MCC partners with local organizations to offer trauma healing workshops and local listening companions. "We try to emphasize trauma healing as an entry point to peacebuilding," said Guenther. "We do this by bringing people together who are perceived to be on opposite sides of a conflict."

Guenther acknowledged that responding to disasters can be overwhelming. "This year is very difficult," he admitted. "The pie is not bigger, but the number of disasters is dividing it into many more pieces."

Guenther urged delegates to let their compassion motivate them to action. "Choose something to do," he told them. That something could be making blankets, holding a relief fundraiser or sponsoring a refugee family. "You can't solve all the problems," he said. "Just take the next right step. Choose something that you can do." ❧



Delegates at Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan's encounter and annual general meeting listen as Bruce Guenther, right, describes the organization's disaster response work around the world.

Six miles deep

Indigenous and settler history along the Grand River

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

It was standing room only in the community room at 50 Kent Avenue in Kitchener on Oct. 26, 2017, with more than 180 adults of all ages there to listen to Phil Monture.

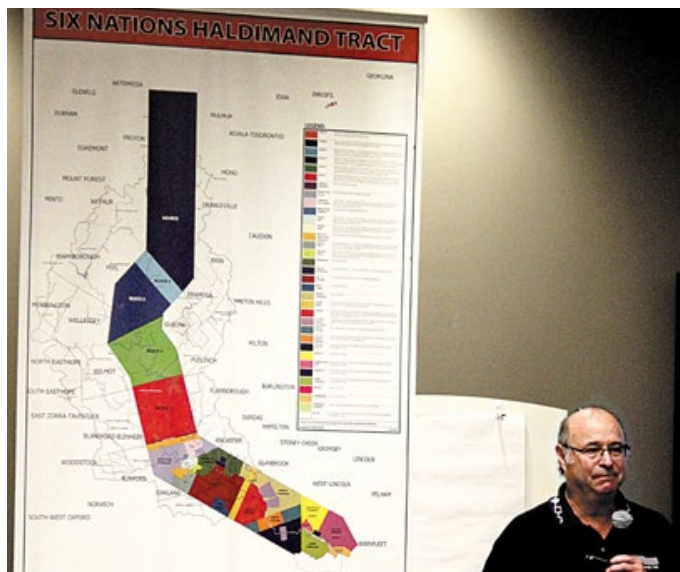
Monture, a Mohawk from Six Nations of the Grand River in southwestern Ontario, has spent the last four decades researching in public and private archives just what has happened to land given to the Indigenous community and the monies realized by those lands.

Six miles (10 kilometres) on either side of the Grand River, from its source to its mouth on Lake Erie, the Haldimand Tract was given to Six Nations for siding with the British during the American Revolutionary War. Having to leave the United

States after the Revolution, the British gave them land that had once belonged to the Neutral Tribe, which had been decimated by illnesses that the British and French inadvertently brought to North America.

But the northern reaches of the Tract were not surveyed to give to Six Nations, so it never received the whole 111,000 hectares. Put under the guardianship of a series of Indian agents, parts of the land were leased for 999 years, with the stipulation that regular payments be made to Six Nations, Monture explained. Those leases were turned into full ownership without Six Nations' knowledge or permission, robbing it of that income, he said.

Some of the money was invested and never given to Six Nations; some was illegally appropriated by the agents themselves. In one case, land that was supposed to have been given to Six Nations, in lieu of stolen monies, was given to settlers



Phil Monture, Six Nations land claims researcher, speaks in Kitchener, Ont., on Oct. 26, 2017, about the Haldimand Tract that was promised to Six Nations in the late 1700s.

instead. Other money was given to the government when it needed cash for projects, he said.

McGill University in Montreal received \$8,000 in 1847. With compound interest, this would be worth more than \$65 billion today, he calculated. Monture spent time on this example since Six Nations does not have enough money to send all of its youth to university or college. Indigenous leaders have approached McGill about the money and making room for students, but to no avail, he said.

According to Monture, all these claims are agreed to by the federal government, but nothing is happening. "The amounts are too big," he said.

Six Nations sees itself held to several treaties. The "One Spoon" treaty binds it with the other Indigenous nations in southern Ontario and Quebec. With only one spoon to eat, the tribes must share

the proceeds of the lands. The other treaty is the "Two strip wampum." Made of parallel blue strips of wampum, separated and edged by white shells, this treaty binds Six Nations, the British and their settlers to travel side by side, sharing the lands, each living according to their own laws, but not disturbing the others in their living by their laws, according to Monture.

But First Nations don't just want the land back, he said. They also want revenue sharing, so that they have enough for their people, plus a share of the taxes. They will not "take anyone's land," Monture said, but they want justice and enough for their people.

In response to the oft-cited "handouts" that Six Nations receive, he compared the \$200 million in excise taxes paid yearly by Grand River Enterprises Six Nations Ltd., which manufactures and sells cigarettes, with the upwards of \$14 million a year in government grants to Six Nations.

Monture repeatedly praised the crowd at the meeting, which was jointly sponsored by the Mennonite Story information centre in St. Jacobs and Mennonite Central Committee Ontario's Indigenous Neighbours Program, "for being here." When he began this work, he said the meetings would draw only two or three.

"What keeps you going? What gives you hope?" he was asked. He replied that large settler responses, as was the case in Kitchener, help, as well as "the children" on whose lands these meetings take place.

"And no one shouted, 'It's been 200 years; get over it,'" he quipped. That was good news. ☞

GOD AT WORK IN US

The quiet labours of a Low German translator

BY WILL BRAUN
Senior Writer

Ed Zacharias started with Exodus, translating word by word into Low German (*Plautdietsch*). For a decade he worked at it, sometimes with institutional backing, sometimes as a volunteer hunkered in his home office, relying on help from interested Wycliffe personnel and a loose network of Low German promoters.

He was motivated by a love of linguistics and a love of Low German-speaking colony Mennonites. “I love those people,” he says with obvious enthusiasm over coffee in Winkler, Man., where he and his wife Susan live.

Originally from Reinland, Man., where he grew up speaking *Plautdietsch*, he



PLAUTDIETSCH MEDIENKONFERENZ PHOTO

Ed Zacharias

served as a pastor on the Santa Rita Colony in northern Mexico with the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference (EMMC) from 1994 to 2000, steadily doing translation “on the side.”

Eventually, the efforts of Zacharias and

Door-to-door on the colonies

Jehovah's Witnesses embrace Low German

BY WILL BRAUN
Senior Writer

While some might see Low German as the arcane language of people stuck in the past, Jehovah's Witnesses have embraced it. For years, they have dedicated considerable energy to learning the language, translating materials and reaching out to Low German-speaking peoples.

They have a centre in Blumenau, a Mennonite community in Mexico's Chihuahua state, and one of their representatives participated in a recent conference of Low German broadcasters, mission workers and educators.

According to a Jehovah's Witness spokesperson, there are Low German-speaking Jehovah's Witness “groups and congregations throughout much of Central America, United States and Canada,” including two congregations and four groups established in Canada since 2015.

There are currently 25 Canadian Jehovah's Witnesses enrolled in a class to learn Low German.

Jehovah's Witnesses have translated 21 publications and many videos into Low German. The January and February issues of their flagship magazine, *The Watchtower*, are already available online in Low German.

Low German translator Ed Zacharias says the linguistic quality of their work is impressive.

There are currently 8.3 million Jehovah's Witnesses

worldwide, and they work in 900 languages.

According to their website, Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jesus is the key to salvation, do not believe in the Trinity, do not believe “God tortures people in an everlasting hell,” and do not believe “those who take the lead in religious activities should have titles that elevate them above others.”

Kennert Giesbrecht, editor of *Die Mennonitische Post*, says the presence of Jehovah's Witnesses is “undeniable,” and they have made a “huge effort” to train their personnel to speak Low German. But he is not aware of them gaining significant traction. He said that, during a recent trip to several Bolivian colonies, residents reported regular visits from Jehovah's Witnesses, but most people wouldn't invite them in.



A page from a Jehovah's Witness Bible study booklet in Low German.

De Bibel

Eventually, the efforts of [Ed] Zacharias and his collaborators led to *De Bibel*, a 1,266-page, hardcover Plautdietsch Bible.

his collaborators led to *De Bibel*, a 1,266-page, hardcover *Plautdietsch* Bible. That Bible incorporates a revised version of the New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs that had previously been translated by J.J. Neufeld.

Since 2003, when the complete Low German Bible was finished, Kindred Publications—the official Mennonite Brethren publishing house—has printed more than 43,000 copies, in addition to 26,000 copies of the New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs.

In 2009, Zacharias self-published *Ons leeschtet Wiedabuak*, a dictionary containing more than 17,000 Low German words.

Zacharias, who attends Pembina Mennonite Fellowship, is part of a small, scattered but dedicated group of radio broadcasters, mission workers and educators committed to the relatively obscure *Plautdietsch* dialect, which dates back to 16th-century Prussia. In addition to use among colony Mennonites, the dialect is spoken by some Mennonites in Germany and older Russian Mennonites in North America, where the language is fading, although loved for its unpolished expressiveness and farmyard-style charm.

Until relatively recently, it was a strictly oral language, with Low German communities reverting to High German for school and church. This remains the situation in numerous colonies.

While it is impossible to generalize over the colonies throughout Latin America, Zacharias says that some colony Mennonites have limited understanding of what is said in church because they are not functional in High German. He tells of a woman at a conference of Low German promoters held in Mexico last summer who exclaimed that reading the Bible in her mother tongue was as refreshing as jumping into water.

Zacharias has observed that some more-learned colony Mennonites would prefer that people move toward High German rather than Low German, the former being

perceived as more sophisticated and useful. Another obstacle to adoption of the Low German Bible is the cultural orthodoxy expressed as “*Soot hab wie noch nienich jehaut*,” or, “That is not how we do things.” Many churches stick with High German.

Abe Giesbrecht, missions facilitator for EMMC, says the conference uses the Low German Bible in some of its colony work. In an email from Belize, where he was travelling for work, Giesbrecht says, “It is not uncommon to have people in these places hear the Scripture in their ‘heart’ language and make comments such as ‘that’s what Scripture says?’”

He says that people who have learned to read High German—without being able to comprehend it—adapt relatively quickly to the Low German Bible.

Royden Loewen, Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg, says that some colony Mennonites he has spoken with view the Low German Bible as

a welcome “curiosity,” although at the same time he feels that presenting the Bible in people’s everyday language has helped to “introduce a more personal and emotional faith.”

Loewen’s sense is that Mennonites of a more “evangelical” inclination tend to be more likely to welcome the Low German Bible than those with a more “communal” understanding of faith as a “community of believers that must remain true and resist the world.”

It is “more than a translation,” he says.

Zacharias has also translated Palmer Becker’s booklet, “What is an Anabaptist Christian?”; Walter Klaassen’s *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic nor Protestant*, and the *Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book*, although these titles have had limited appeal.

While Zacharias has no major projects in front of him now, his behind-the-scenes passion for an obscure language and the spiritual well-being of people on the cultural fringe of the global village remains vital. ✎

Watch Ed Zacharias reading select *Plautdietsch* passages at canadianmennonite.org/ed-zacharias.



Staff changes

Pastoral transition in Ontario

• **RENATE DAU KLAASSEN** began as associate pastor of German worship at Niagara United Mennonite Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake on Oct 1, 2017. She has a bachelor of church music degree from Canadian Mennonite Bible College (a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University) in 1984, and studied at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary on a couple of occasions, mainly in the late 1990s. She and her husband Randy served as pastors together at Bethany Mennonite Church in Virgil from 1998 to 2011; since then she has been working as a floral designer in a retail flower shop.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



ONLINE NOW!

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Swiss official offers apology for Anabaptist persecution

“I apologize tonight for all that has been done to the Anabaptists in our canton.” A government official requests forgiveness for acts against 16th-century Anabaptists.

canadianmennonite.org/persecution-apology



ARTBEAT

COVER STORY

Painting on borrowed time

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Jim Tubb has lived on borrowed time for more than 40 years.

In 1975, he was told that he had only a short time to live due to respiratory issues, but he says that in the meantime he's had "a fantastic life."

A congregant at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, Tubb worked as a personal financial advisor for the last 20 years of his employment at BMO (formerly known as the Bank of Montreal). What his clients needed, Tubb provided—stock broker, portfolio manager, banker—he did it all for them, gaining their respect over time. For the last 10 of those years, he only worked day-to-day, as his clients needed him, because of his health.

But whether he was employed or not, Tubb has loved "helping people."

In 2010, he mostly retired as he struggled with lung cancer, his fourth—or

fifth—kind of cancer; he can't remember exactly. "It does give you enlightenment," he says, "to go through anticipating death, and then having time to live. . . . I've embraced death as a new life experience. Some stuff's important, some stuff's not."

With retirement he felt unconstrained, both monetarily and otherwise. He had been painting for a while already—acrylics, no chemicals, no oil paints and their solvents—but then began to paint more earnestly, up to 40 hours a week.

Painting what he wants and how he wants, Tubb is especially drawn to express human emotions on the canvas. Sometimes he paints while listening to music, putting down what he feels the composer and performers are expressing. His work is abstract—bold colours laid down, not in patterns but not haphazardly either—inviting the viewer to enter into



Jim Tubb's jazz-inspired paintings are stacked up to be chosen for a show in the spring at the Registry Theatre in Kitchener, Ont.

the energy underlying the strokes. It's a spiritual exercise for him, expressing courage and love.

Now on oxygen around the clock, and with yet another lung condition, he has slowed down to 10 hours of painting a week, and many hours of people stopping by to talk, to look at his paintings, and, more likely than not, take one home.

"Giving is such a good feeling," he says. "There is absolutely no other way." When someone gets a painting, Tubb might suggest they make a donation to Mennonite Central Committee.

Many paintings get donated to local causes for fundraisers. Averaging around \$300 per painting, between \$5,000 and \$10,000 has been raised for local charities over the years—especially those involving children—such as Big Sisters and Kitchener-Waterloo Habilitation Services.

Some paintings get set outside under a sign inviting passersby to take one home.

An exhibition of his jazz-inspired paintings opens during Winter Jazz Festival Weekend at the Registry Theatre in downtown Kitchener on Feb. 23 and 24. "Posthumously or otherwise," he says of the show, showing no fear of death. ❧



Jim Tubb sits in his Duke Street studio in Kitchener, Ont., surrounded by paintings, art supplies and the music—including jazz—that fuels his work.

Songs for my Mother

Carol Ann Weaver tours new song collection

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

More than 20 years after the death of her mother, Miriam (Lehman) Weaver, Carol Ann Weaver, emeritus music professor at Conrad Grebel University College, turned her mother's journals, letters and later writings into her latest song cycle, *Songs for my Mother*, which she toured recently through Virginia, Ontario and Manitoba.

Weaver says of her mother, "A natural musician, she was limited in her expression because, as the child of an Eastern Mennonite College faculty member, musical instruments were not allowed in the home." After marrying Melvin Weaver, they set out under the Virginia Mennonite Conference to "a highly challenging area in Appalachian Kentucky to work under the Virginia Mennonite Conference, teaching, establishing a church and doing 'community development' long before the term existed."

During these years she kept a journal, keeping a detailed record of living without many modern amenities, living among Hard Shell (Primitive) Baptists, carrying water, using flat irons to smooth wrinkles in clothing, all of this far from her nearest neighbours.

As to why it took so long for her to look at and set her mother's words to music, Weaver says that they seemed so heavy after her mother's death in 1996. She was afraid to be overwhelmed by the emotions. But finally the timing was right and, sitting in her backyard, she read the journals, saying the words "fell into songs" immediately, and those who listened were enriched by the outcome.

The nine-song cycle includes three works from her mother's early journals, a poem of her mother's written at the birth of Weaver's daughter Myra, three soundscapes with piano and vocalizations from a mother-daughter trip to Africa, and two based on her mother's last words as she

died from an aggressive form of leukemia.

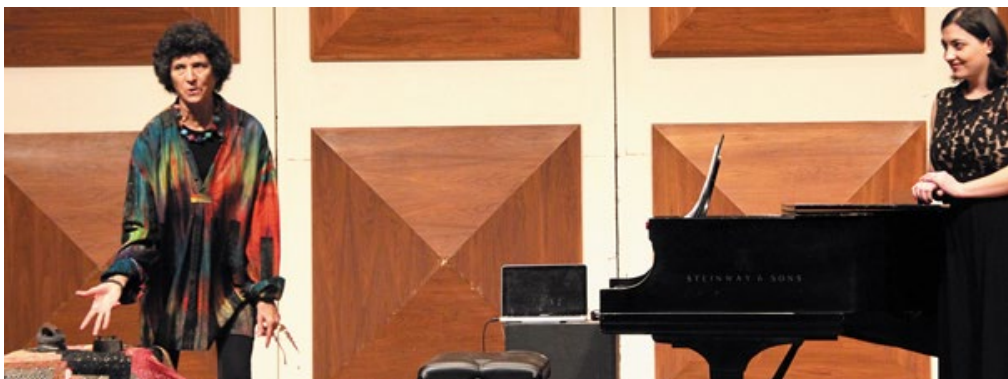
The lullaby-like "Lately Sprung," catches the emotions of joy at a new birth, gently played and sung: "So lately sprung / my little one / In the dark you journeyed the dark tunnel / further joys and sorrows still to come / in care of newly named guardian angel / to watch you day and night / kept by love of God / of Father / of Mother."

The songs based on the early journals speak of isolation, of the grinding work of ironing with wood-stove-heated flat irons, of sewing feed-sack curtains, and of the interminable singing and preaching at a Hard Shell Baptist funeral. The latter two songs describe physical aspects of their

house and the distance from neighbours while portraying "a sense of starting life from scratch."

While all the songs are associated with her mother, the three African ones, with their significantly different style, give a break in the intensity of Weaver's mother's last words. Beautiful and lyrical, they include nature sounds from Africa recorded by Weaver and vocalizations by sopranos Mary-Catherine Pazzano and Margaret Elligson Hull.

In "Crossing Over" and "To the End," the grief of impending loss by someone who very much enjoyed living is matched with music that heightens the emotions. "Hoping they [her family] go as far as they can for me / Hoping that they can be there for me," speaks to Weaver's mother's fear on this new journey: "Death is the hardest thing that I ever had to face / nothing can take away the sense of sadness at giving up life, very precious to me." ❧



During the Nov. 30, 2017, performance of Songs for My Mother at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ont., Carol Ann Weaver, left, describes the flat irons like those used by her late mother, as Catherine-Mary Pazzano, soprano, looks on.

WORK WITH MCC

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/// Briefly noted

2018 VBS curriculum ready for order from MennoMedia

God's way of peace will come alive as children discover how to be peacemakers in "Peace Lab," the 2018 Vacation Bible School (VBS) series from MennoMedia. From learning how to resolve conflicts to helping others, children will find out that peace begins with them. The five-day curriculum includes stories and themes rooted in the Bible, and helps concepts about active peacemaking come to life in age-appropriate ways. Written by a team of writers in Pennsylvania, the curriculum helps the Bible stories become real through



worship, music, dramas, crafts, games and other activities. Children's booklets—"Lab Book" and "My Book of Stories"—include stories and activities to help children learn about peace and peacemakers. Leaders' guides and a resource CD aid teachers as they lead VBS for children from ages 4 through Grade 5. Adaptations for grades 6 to 8 are offered on the resource CD. "Peace Lab" may be ordered in an

all-in-one starter kit that includes everything needed for planning and preparing an effective VBS program. All items are also sold separately. For more information, visit MennoMedia.org/vbs.
—MennoMedia

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A space odyssey

Aspiring astronaut Taryn Haluza-Delay already has out-of-this-world experience

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

For most people who dream of exploring outer space, the dream dies before they reach adulthood. That's not the case for Taryn Haluza-Delay.

The 20-year-old Edmonton resident, who attends First Mennonite Church and is currently a third-year engineering physics student at the University of Alberta, hopes to one day become an astronaut.

"It would be really cool to go into space and do this research in microgravity that really can't be done on Earth," she says. "And then there's always the possibility of going to a different planet or a moon, and discovering something completely different that we haven't found on Earth."

graduating from high school. She was volunteering in the University of Alberta's physics department, and through her involvement there got to help build a sensor for the satellite as well as a rig for testing the sensor. It was a lot of work, she says; at the same time, "it was really cool to see something I had built when I was 18 go up into space."

After she finished her work on Ex-Alta 1, she moved on to working on AlbertaSat's second satellite, Ex-Alta 2. She is an assistant engineer on the project and also its payload lead. As such, she is overseeing the complete technical design of the satellite, as well as leading the team that is develop-

The 20-year-old Edmonton resident, who attends First Mennonite Church and is currently a third-year engineering physics student at the University of Alberta, hopes to one day become an astronaut.

Haluza-Delay is gaining valuable experience by participating in AlbertaSat, a student group at the University of Alberta. AlbertaSat designed and built the Experimental Albertan No. 1, also known as Ex-Alta 1, Alberta's first orbiting satellite.

The rectangular satellite, which is 30 centimetres long and roughly the size of a milk carton, was sprung from the International Space Station this past May. Ex-Alta 1 is currently orbiting Earth 400 kilometres in the sky, collecting data about space weather.

Haluza-Delay first joined the group in the summer of 2015, shortly after

ing the camera that will be on Ex-Alta 2.

Once it's in space, Ex-Alta 2 will collect data that will be useful for forest-fire prediction and detection. Haluza-Delay and her fellow students were inspired after seeing the impact of the 2016 wildfire that ravaged Fort McMurray, four hours north of Edmonton.

"In Edmonton, we saw a lot of smoke from those fires, and a lot of people had to flee their homes," she says. "We spoke to wildfire scientists here at the university and asked them what kind of data was useful, and what data could benefit from having more satellites in orbit to provide that."

(Continued on page 28)



PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Taryn Haluza-Delay is studying engineering physics at the University of Alberta.



TWITTER.COM/UALBERTASCIENCE PHOTO

Taryn Haluza-Delay had a hand in building Ex-Alta 1, Alberta's first orbiting satellite.

(Continued from page 27)

AlbertaSat members do not receive course credit for their involvement in the group, although it is an excellent way for them to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real-life situations.

"It's very hands-on," Haluza-Delay says of AlbertaSat. "All of our coursework focusses on theory, and not so much applications and doing stuff, so this is a really nice way to do some engineering."

She was inspired to go into engineering after seeing the 2009 *Star Trek* reboot. "There was a scene where Scotty [played by Simon Pegg] is rushing around, engineering, trying to fix things in a crisis," she says. "It seemed like the thing I'd like to do: fix things and build things."

She traces her interest in becoming an astronaut back to when she entered a space-themed contest at her local public library at the age of eight or nine. She recognizes that the chances of becoming an astronaut are slim; since 1983, only 14 Canadians have been selected to become astronauts.

When the Canadian Space Agency launched the fourth astronaut recruitment campaign in June 2016, it received 3,772 applications. After a one-year selection process, just two candidates were selected.

Haluza-Delay isn't letting those odds prevent her from chasing her dream, though. "They look for well-rounded people, so right now, for the next 10 years, that's all I can work towards," she says.

In the meantime, she is considering serving with an organization like Mennonite Central Committee or Engineers Without Borders Canada once she's finished her bachelor's degree. Because of her faith, she is interested in creation care and wants to use the engineering skills that she is acquiring to serve society.

"I want to be in engineering to try to develop things that will help with environmental sustainability and things like that," she says. "When you see pictures taken from orbit, it always reminds me at least how fragile life on this planet can be, and how much we need to protect it." ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF TARYN HALUZA-DELAY

AlbertaSat members, including Taryn Haluza-Delay, second from right, met with former Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, centre, this past October.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CLOSE TALKER

Matthew Kopperud, right, spent 2017 touring with his Close Talker bandmates Will Quiring and Chris Morien.

'I'm aware of my sin and my need for a Saviour'

Close Talker guitarist Matthew Kopperud talks about faith and life as a touring musician

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

2017 was a big year for Matthew Kopperud. The 25-year-old guitarist toured across North America and Europe with his band Close Talker in support of its most recent album, *Lens*.

One particular show in the Netherlands saw the group, which is rounded out by singer-guitarist Will Quiring and drummer Chris Morien, play in between two acclaimed rock bands from the U.S. with big followings: "Clap Your Hands Say Yeah" and "Portugal. The Man" (whose band name includes the period).

Not bad for Close Talker's first time in Amsterdam.

"Every time you tap a new market, you're not sure how it's going to be," Kopperud says by phone from his home in Saskatoon. "There were a couple thousand people there, though. Everyone [in the band] was stoked and happy, and when we're stoked and happy, we play that much harder and better, so the stars aligned."

Close Talker released *Lens* last April on Nevado Records. The band recorded the majority of the 10-song album with Royal Canoe lead singer Matt Peters serving as engineer and co-producer. Marcus Paquin, known for his work with Arcade Fire and the National, mixed eight of the songs.

In his review of the album, NPR music critic Stephen Thompson noted that *Lens* “most frequently focusses on love and connection frustrated by the walls people place around themselves. . . . Close Talker’s members are clearly fascinated with the way people push each other away, but their music never stops inviting you further and further in.”

Although he’s currently focussed on his music career, Kopperud spent a few years after high school exploring and deepening his Christian faith at two institutions supported by the Mennonite church. First, he enrolled in Canadian Mennonite University’s Outtatown Discipleship School, and then he moved on to biblical studies at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C.

“It’s the greatest investment you can make,” he says of taking time to study the Bible at the post-secondary level. “Learning simple hermeneutics, how to read your Bible well, how to listen to God—these are gifts that keep on giving.”

Kopperud grew up the youngest of four children. His mother was a homemaker. His father operated a number of taekwondo schools and is now a pastor.

“That was kind of what we did in our family: take piano lessons, go to taekwondo and go to Sunday school,” says Kopperud, who attends Rock of Ages Lutheran Brethren Church. “I had a pretty phenomenal childhood and deeply convicted Christian parents who made sure us kids knew Jesus personally.”

Participating in Outtatown and studying at Columbia was a chance for Kopperud to take the things his parents taught him about faith and make them his own. “As I was gaining independence, really I was just learning how to be more dependent and more humble, and [gaining] a heightened awareness of my need for Christ,” he says.

While he enjoys leading worship at Rock of Ages, where he used to work as the youth pastor, he feels called to write and make music outside the church. “We’re not a Christian band,” he says of Close Talker, “but . . . I’m not shy about my faith. I don’t preach from the stage or anything, but if someone wants to chat with me, it hopefully shouldn’t take too long for them to clue in that I’m aware of my sin and my

need for a Saviour.”

He adds that, while he isn’t shy about his faith, he also isn’t trying to lead people through the Sinner’s Prayer every night. “I just want people to feel safe and understood, and know that you can be a deeply convicted Christian and it doesn’t have to be this wacky thing that they’ve heard about and read about [in the news],” he says.

He encourages everyone, regardless of where they are in life, to think about how they might share their faith. “No matter what their context, or however menial or secular their day job can look, there’s room for wearing your faith on your sleeve and proclaiming God in subtle or bold ways.”

Kopperud and his bandmates are hoping to build on their accomplishments in the coming year. They have shows booked from Regina to Hamilton, Ont., later this month, and they have begun working on their next album.

“Writing music with my two best friends is pretty special, and we feel pretty privileged that we get to do that,” Kopperud says. “We’re thankful when people take note and care.” ☘



Close Talker’s latest album, Lens, came out on Nevado Records last April.

To learn more, visit closetalker.ca. Three related video links available at canadianmennonite.org/close-talker.



‘It’s the greatest investment you can make,’ Matthew Kopperud says of going to Bible school.



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Calendar

British Columbia

Feb. 23: Lead conference, Made in the Image of God: Engaging Prejudice, Power and Privilege, at Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack, beginning at 8:30 a.m.

Feb. 24: MC B.C. annual meeting, at Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack.

Alberta

June 30-July 1: Springridge Mennonite Church, Pincher Creek, is celebrating its 90th anniversary. All past and present congregants are invited. RSVP to delwillms@gmail.com. For more information, visit springridgemennonitechurch.ab.ca.

Manitoba

Until Jan. 20: Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery in Winnipeg presents two exhibitions: "Work as Prayer/Prayer as Work" by Carolyn Mount, and "Sacred DNA: Family and Icons."

Jan. 26: Opening of exhibition of art from First Nation communities, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit gallery.mennonitechurch.ca.

Feb. 2: CMU campus visit day. For more information, visit cmu.ca/campusvisit.

Feb. 5: Face2Face panel discussion at CMU's Marpeck Commons, at 7 p.m. Topic: "Is 'sola scriptura' a Reformation slogan that matters in the church today?"

Feb. 6-7: ReNew: Resourcing Pastors for Ministry conference for pastors and all those involved in ministry, at CMU, Winnipeg. Topic: "Delighting in Scripture: Sola Scriptura at 500 years." Includes a half-day preaching clinic. For more information, visit cmu.ca/renew.

Feb. 9: Discover Outtatown visit day, at CMU, Winnipeg. For more information, visit cmu.ca/campusvisit.

Feb. 11: CMU Men's Chorus festival, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Feb. 15: CMU presents the 13th annual Verna Mae Janzen Music

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Competition, in the Laudamus Auditorium, at 7 p.m.

Feb. 16: Grade 10 to 12 students are invited to dance the night away at Mennonite Heritage Village' "Guys and Dolls Gala," from 8 p.m. to midnight. Advance tickets required; tickets available at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach.

Feb. 17: Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, hosts a winter carnival, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Activities include skating, snowman-building contest, sleigh rides, bonfire, hot chocolate bar, tug of war and snow bowling. Fun for all ages.

March 2: Music Therapy Coffee House, at CMU's Great Hall, at 7 p.m.

March 9: CMU campus visit day. For more information, visit cmu.ca/campusvisit.

Ontario

Jan. 8-April 13: Conrad Grebel University College's Peace and Conflict Studies program celebrates its 40th anniversary with Beyond Essays: Approaching Peace Education Differently, an exhibit of art-based PACS assignments completed by students over the past decade.

Jan. 12-14: Fathers and kids retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. To register online, visit slmc.ca/retreats.

Jan. 25: Conrad Grebel University College presents the Fretz Visiting Scholar Lecture: Muslim-Mennonite Encounters in the Russian Empire, at the College, at 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 9-11: Women's winter retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. To register, visit slmc.ca/retreats.

Feb. 15: Conrad Grebel University College presents the Rodney and Lorna Sawatsky Visiting Scholar Lecture: Psalms in a Difficult Time—Rhythms of Lament and Doxology, by Don E.

Saliers, at the College, at 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 25: Menno Singers presents "Midwinter Hymn Sing," at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

March 1-2: Conrad Grebel University College present the Bechtel Lecture in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies, at the College, at 7:30 p.m. each evening: (1) One Generation Away: Martyrs Mirror and the Survival of Anabaptist Christianity, by David Weaver-Zercher; (2) Mennonites and the Media: Telling Mennonite Stories Today, a panel discussion with David Weaver-Zercher, Sherri Klassen, Katie Steckly, Sam Steiner and Johnny Wideman.

U.S.A.

Feb. 2-4: 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: 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 email to calendar@canadianmennonite.org. For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



Classifieds Announcement

Seeking a female roommate on the main floor of a spacious house on Portwood Road in Winnipeg for Jan 1. Rent is \$450 and includes everything except food. Contact us at loreek@mts.net.

Employment Opportunities



Bethel Mennonite Church
www.bethelmennonite.ca

Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg invites applications for a full-time associate pastor. The associate pastor joins the existing pastoral team in fostering Bethel's community life and its mission to a diverse neighbourhood. Expressions of interest should be directed to:

Rick Neufeld, rneufeld@mennonitechurch.mb.ca
Director of Leadership Ministry Mennonite Church
Manitoba by February 9, 2018.



CAMPUS HOSTS

Conrad Grebel University College
at the University of Waterloo

Conrad Grebel University College, a residence and teaching community affiliated with the University of Waterloo, seeks a married couple for the position of **Campus Hosts** (formerly known as Senior Residents), beginning **spring 2018**. The role involves living in an apartment in the College's residence building and supervising the College during non-business hours. Rent and utilities are free in exchange for performance of duties. Applicants should be mature, responsible and able to relate to a broad range of people, especially students in residence.

Application deadline is January 8, 2018

Read more at grebel.ca/positions



**Glenlea
Mennonite
Church**

Employment Opportunity
FULL-TIME PASTOR
Closing Date: March 31, 2018

Glenlea Mennonite Church, a hospitable multi-generational congregation, located 15 km south of Winnipeg, invites applications for a LEAD PASTOR, beginning September 2018.

We welcome candidates who are committed to Anabaptist theology, and have experience in working with groups and individuals in a church and/or educational setting. Candidates should be: approachable; able to engage with people of all ages; and able to demonstrate gifts in Biblical preaching, officiating, pastoral care and leading believers to grow in Christ likeness.

To apply, please contact Rick Neufeld, Director of Leadership at Mennonite Church Manitoba, via email:

rneufeld@mennochurch.mb.ca

Advertising Information

Contact
D. Michael Hostetler
1-800-378-2524 x.224
advert@canadianmennonite.org

Upcoming Advertising Date

Issue Date	Ads Due
Jan. 29	Jan. 16

PHOTO BY SUZANNE GROSS / TEXT BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

On a chilly Nov. 11, 2017, evening, the eighth annual prayer service and peace walk was hosted by the Edmonton Ecumenical Peace Network and Mennonite Central Committee Alberta. In the promotional material, organizer Scott Key wrote, 'There has probably rarely been a time in recent years when prayer and action for peace is more urgent.' A Christian prayer service, open to everyone, was held in McDougall United Church, after which the walk began. At each of four stops, a group gave short reflection on peace; First Nations people, Muslims, Quakers and Catholics were involved in the reflections. Afterwards, McDougall United Church hosted a fellowship time, as it has done every year.



God at Work in the World Snapshots



PHOTO BY FRED W. MARTIN / TEXT BY JENNIFER KONKLE
Sarah Martin-Mills, the founder of Growing Hope Farm, proudly presents one of her chickens at the Peace Incubator Showcase at the Kindred Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement (CPA) on Nov. 7, 2017. At the showcase, the six social enterprises of the Epp Peace Incubator introduced their organizations and connected with guests from Waterloo Region. The Epp Peace Incubator is a beehive of entrepreneurial and collaborative engagement for peace-related start-ups supported by the CPA through seed funding, mentorship and a space to call home.

PHOTO BY NICHOLAS HAMM / TEXT BY DAVE ROGALSKY

John Dyck of Ottawa Mennonite Church, right, works with a volunteer from the Old Order Mennonite community, repairing a home through the auspices of Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) after flooding last spring in southeastern Ontario. MDS director Nick Hamm, a retired engineer from Vineland, Ont., who coordinated the volunteer crews in Constance Bay told CBC News: 'It doesn't matter if the flood is in New Orleans or here. It's the same effect. . . . Our mandate is to help [flood victims] in Christian love. We are taught to help our neighbours, and our neighbours are here as well.' Hamm has been working with MDS since Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans along the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005.

