

CANADIAN MENNONITE

April 9, 2018

Volume 22 Number 8

Hidden
stories of the
Holocaust

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> WIEDERAUFFÜHRUNG „FRIESENNOT“

Nazi propaganda film screened at
Bethel College conference
pg.12

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EDITORIAL

Ugly stories

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER

I don't like the cover of today's issue. I don't want to see it lying on my coffee table. You probably don't either. At the top, a large uniformed man wields a whip, as armed soldiers ride toward a house below. Red and yellow flames shoot up in the background.

The artwork promoted a Nazi propaganda film, so it makes sense that it would contain disturbing details. The film *Friesennot* (translated as *Mennonites in Peril*)

was screened at a recent conference on Mennonites and the Holocaust. Scholars reported on their historical research, telling stories of the varied roles Mennonite played as witnesses, neighbours, enabler, and killers. (See a report on the conference and the recollections of one witness on pages 12 to 15.)

I wish our magazine cover could feature fluffy kittens gambolling among spring flowers. Some things in life we really don't want to know. But it's impossible to escape the evil that humans have inflicted on each other throughout the centuries and the evil that shows up in today's news headlines.

We can argue over how much our faith ancestors knew about the malicious forces at work during the Nazi era or about how widespread those racist attitudes were in Mennonite communities. It may be hard to determine how complicit particular individuals were in what was later revealed to be a giant system of

death. It would be comforting to believe that none of our faith forbears caused—or benefitted from—the suffering of others. Nevertheless, we must hear these ugly stories, because they are part of our people's larger story.



As I write this on Good Friday, I am reminded of the witnesses, neighbours, enablers and killers in that 2,000-year-old ugly story. Where would you and I have been on that day? I'd like

to think that I would be among those who mourned at the foot of the cross or lovingly buried Jesus. But maybe I would have been part of the crowd that yelled "Crucify him!" I could have rejoiced with the criminal Barabbas that he had escaped the death sentence that landed on Jesus. What if you and I had been among those who knew about Judas's plot but had done nothing to stop it?

One problem is that evil is not always recognizable as such. Sometimes it can masquerade as good. Believing that God is on our side, we can become blind to our participation in evil actions.

A second problem is that, as much as we're tempted to label some people as "bad" and others as "good," that is too simplistic a view. We are all prone to manipulate situations for our own benefit, in order to avoid embarrassment, protect our property or escape injury. There is a mixture of good and evil within each of us, including what Jungian psychology

calls our "shadow side."

The Apostle Paul sees the pervasive nature of evil—he calls it slavery to sin—in his own life. He speaks of the inner conflict common to us all: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. . . . For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Romans 7:15,19).

So, listen to those ugly stories. As we mourn historic evils, we confess that we live—and participate—in a world that allows evil to fester. But we don't have to get stuck there. In this season of the Resurrection, God offers us hope and an opportunity for new, positive choices. Let us rejoice with Paul that the Spirit of the Risen One sets us free from the law of sin and death. With God's help, let us live into that freedom.

Introducing Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, Alberta Correspondent

Donita lives in Edmonton with her husband Tim and attends First Mennonite

Church. They have two sons, one in high school and the other at Canadian Mennonite University. Donita has worked for the Mennonite church for almost three decades, as a camp director, a pastor, and since 1999 as a writer for *Canadian Mennonite*. In September 2017, she began working part-time as the Edmonton liaison for Mennonite Central Committee. Donita enjoys training and riding her horse, reading, writing, gardening, being a hockey mom, and taking photographs of wild mushrooms.



ABOUT THE COVER:

The Mennonites and the Holocaust conference at Bethel College last month screened *Friesennot* (*Frisians in Peril*), a Nazi propaganda film in which Mennonite militiamen rise up to kill their drunken Bolshevik oppressors. After the show, conferees discussed how the film contributed to Nazi programs of anti-Semitism before and during the Second World War. 'Hidden stories of the Holocaust' begins on page 12.

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Hebrews 10:23-25 • Accuracy, fairness, balance • Editorial freedom •

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

• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

When will we say we need you?

The challenge for First-World Christians in a global church

BY MICHAEL THOMAS

Adapted from a sermon preached at Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Church, Vancouver, on Aug. 18, 2013.



2010 FILE PHOTO BY GERRY SPORTAK

'Without understanding, there is no basis for compassionate change or the possibility of partnership.'

(First Nations theologian Richard Twiss, 1954-2013)

Immediately after finishing with undergraduate school in 2008, I went down to Mexico to help translate for a mission trip that my mom and younger brother were taking with my church's youth group.

One day, the Mexican pastor we were working with—a smiling, mustachioed man who led a tiny Pentecostal church called Jehovah's Hand—informed me that I was going to preach a sermon at the Wednesday evening service. This took me aback. I had never preached a sermon before. I had certainly never preached a sermon in Spanish before. And prior to that week, I had had little to no experience with the charismatic brand of Christianity practised by these Mexican brothers and sisters.

What could I—a white, wealthy, evangelical Anglophone—say that would be meaningful or relevant to a congregation of poor Mexican Pentecostals? That week, I had already felt lost and a bit overwhelmed by worship that involved more than an hour of deafening praise choruses that seemed to repeat endlessly, during which congregants would burst into ecstatic, incomprehensible utterances as the Spirit moved them, or fall to the floor, "slain in the Spirit," when someone laid hands upon them to pray for them. I could not understand these expressions of faith, so how was I supposed to speak to them, particularly when I had less than a day to prepare a message in a language that I had learned almost exclusively through school courses?

What immediately came to mind was I Corinthians 12, in which Paul talks about the church as a body: "[f]or as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are [nonetheless but] one body, so also is Christ."

I had always understood this passage as referring to individuals within a congregational body. However, in light of what I had seen at Jehovah's Hand, I began to wonder, might this same principle not also apply on a larger scale, to the global body of Christ? "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, a word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, gifts of healing by the same Spirit."

PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL THOMAS



What could I—a white, wealthy, evangelical Anglophone—say that would be meaningful or relevant to a congregation of poor Mexican Pentecostals?

I could identify with this initial list of spiritual gifts. In my own church upbringing, “knowledge” and “wisdom,” generally understood in terms of sound biblical exegesis, were the central foci of church life and worship, and “healing” of emotions, relationships and bodies was an expected outcome of the Spirit’s presence, although these were typically effected through the mediation of medical professionals rather than the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit.

But what of the other gifts? *“To another [is given] the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, diverse kinds of tongues; to another, interpretation of tongues.”* Quite frankly, my North American church experience had offered me little preparation for my encounter with such “gifts.”

But what did the Apostle Paul himself have to say about this? *“But all these work that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man as He will”*—and, I would think, to each woman, church and culture as well, whether we be rich or poor; white, black or brown; conservative or liberal. We *“have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”*

This revolutionary claim means that it is not enough to say, in a postmodern fashion, that I do my thing, you do yours, and as long as we don’t talk about it, we’ll get along fine. Rather, Paul calls the church to recognize that we must not only be tolerant of these diverse manifestations of the Spirit within the church,

but we must recognize that we, ourselves, are incomplete without them.

Scottish historian Andrew Walls has called this coming together of diverse members an “Ephesian moment.” The first-generation church at Antioch experienced a paradigm shift in its understanding of what it means to be the people of God through the realization of the reconciliation that Christ brings about: *“He himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us”* (Ephesians 2). As a direct result of this supernatural act of reconciliation in Christ, Walls notes that Jews and Gentiles, for the first time in history, could enjoy table fellowship without giving up their cultural identity, since the old markers of Jew and gentile had been subsumed and transformed by the person of Christ.

However, I believe that the nearly 1,500 years in which Christianity has been predominantly the preserve of European culture and intellectual heritage may have in some way obscured the practical significance of these words for us today.

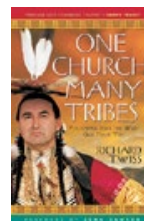
First Nations theologian Richard Twiss argues in his book *One Church, Many Tribes* that “[i]t may be difficult to hear or accept, but I believe that because of clashing cultural worldviews, the Anglo expression of Christ and his kingdom has said to the Native expression of Christ and his kingdom, ‘I

have no need of you. I don’t need your customs, your arts, your society, your language, concepts or perspectives.’ If you look at a thing and cannot identify value in it, you will have no perceived sense of need for it. And if you have no need for it, then you get along without it. Then, to add injury to insult, the Euro-Americans have said to the Natives, ‘But you need us. You need our theology, our leadership, our traditions, our economic resources, education, sciences, Sunday schools—ultimately, our civilization.’ Anglo Christians need to understand that these are some of the painful issues their Native brethren struggle with. Without understanding, there is no basis for compassionate change or the possibility of partnership.”

I believe that what Twiss observes with respect to First Nations Christians is true of the church worldwide. Wherever there are non-European churches, there is a tendency for the older and more established churches of Europe and North America to view them as, in Twiss’s words, “a needy but largely forgotten mission field, a group in need of receiving ministry.”

Anglophone Christians who self-identify as “conservative” or “evangelical” both:

- **OFTEN SMELL** heresy when theologians of the Global South claim that issues of economic justice are, indeed, “spiritual” issues;
- **ARE OFTEN** outraged by the strong stance that Southern Christians



'CHRIST AND THE RICH YOUNG RULER' BY HEINRICH HOFMANN (DETAIL)



While I don't want to give the impression that the West has no gifts to offer the global church, too often we assume that it is our wealth and our wisdom that will be the world's salvation.

(particularly Africans) have taken against homosexuality; and

• **ARE GENERALLY** taken aback, as I was, by the Pentecostal and oftentimes “prosperity gospel” flavour of Southern Christian faith.

All of these reactions reflect a tacit assumption that it is our church that is the full measure of the gospel, and to the extent that they fail to look like us, non-Western Christians are in some way deficient.

Twiss holds that “the non-Native evangelical community has yet to say to the Native American Christian community, ‘We need you.’ Why not? Because differing cultural worldviews determine how value is assigned, measured or determined, whether for a person, group or thing.” As a corrective against this spiritual pride and disdain, he says that he “would love to see some of our Anglo church leaders, when asked to help a Native church, say, ‘Yes, but on one condition: only if you will in turn send your pastors and leaders to come and equip us with the grace and gifting God has given you as Native people.’ When that day comes, it will verify that we are seen by our Anglo brethren as equal collaborators in the mission of the church.”

I don't know if any of my Mexican brothers and sisters got anything out of my stumbling meditations on I Corinthians 12 that night many years ago, but I know that God used that night to speak to me.

While I don't want to give the impression that the West has no gifts to offer the global church, too often we assume that it is our wealth and our wisdom that will be the world's salvation. The West, in fact, has many gifts to bring to the global church, but for those gifts to be received, we must hear and heed the words of the One who bids us “*buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich, and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see*” (Revelation 3:18).

Only by coming to our brothers and sisters in a posture of humility, acknowledging our need, and being willing to

learn and receive, will we be able to offer our gifts and take our place among the global church across space and time, bringing together “the glory and the honour” of all nations into the heavenly Jerusalem. ❧

Michael Thomas focussed on world Christianity for his master's thesis at

Regent College in Vancouver, B.C., travelling to Ghana's Akrofi-Christaller Institute to conduct research on African approaches to theological education. He teaches at Cedar Tree Classical Christian School in Vancouver, Wash., where he lives with his wife Jenn, and Elsie, their six-month-old daughter.



/// For discussion

1. Do you enjoy trying new experiences in worship? Have you ever been in a worship service where there were ecstatic utterances or people “slain in the Spirit”? What was your response to this kind of worship? What are some Christian worship customs used by others such as Global South or First Nations congregations that might feel strange to you?
2. Michael Thomas suggests that people from older, more established Christian churches tend to view non-European churches as needing guidance to know how to worship properly. Do you agree? Has this view been changing over the last number of decades?
3. Are you aware of Mennonite churches in Canada where people have gifts of miraculous powers, speaking in tongues or interpreting tongues? What benefits could these or other spiritual practices bring to our churches? Are there ways in which our worship is deficient?
4. How could our churches take steps to be in a “posture of humility, acknowledging our need and being willing to learn and receive” from other cultures? When the churches of Mennonite World Conference get together, are some worship practices considered more acceptable than others?

—BY BARB DRAPER

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VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to letters@canadianmennonite.org and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

✉ Feature writer breaks faith with Paul's word to the Corinthians

RE: "UNITY OF the Spirit," Feb. 26, page 4.

I found the adapted presentation of Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld disappointing and unhelpful. I cannot detect any engagement by him with parts of I Corinthians. This omission severely, if not completely, undermines this piece of writing.

Paul writes unequivocally in I Corinthians 5:11 that a Christian must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother and is engaged in specific acts, which he lists. Paul is even harsher when he writes in I Corinthians 5:5 that someone in the Corinthian fellowship is to be expelled and "handed over to Satan."

(Continued on page 8)

FROM OUR LEADERS

Ordinary discipleship

NORM DYCK

How comfortable are you with change? Change seems to be the most consistent "unchanging" reality of our lives. We are always experiencing change. Thankfully many, or even most, of the changes we experience are small or gradual, like the steady change in my hair colour to ever-more grey! However, from time to time life events or circumstances bring the reality of significant change to the forefront.

Recently, the regular rhythms of my life experienced significant disruption. As I concluded ministry as pastor of Listowel (Ont.) Mennonite Church and anticipated beginning a new role with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, I was confronted with the disorientation of having no plans for the weekend! While many would relish the thought, my weekly rhythm as a pastor was always directed towards the culmination of sharing a sermon on Sunday, followed by a day off on Monday, which would reboot the rhythm.



As I write this column, I haven't shared a sermon in three months—and weekends still feel strange. That's about to change as invitations begin to arrive; however, this time of disorientation has provided valuable reflection space.

In the course of a recent coaching huddle, I was challenged with the question: What would my life as a disciple look like if I wasn't a leader in the church? Am I clear on the call to be a disciple beyond any ministry role?

In Luke 10, Jesus sends out 72 disciples with the instruction: "*The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go on your way.*" The instructions continue from there, and I invite you to ponder them with your family or community.

What continues to pique my curiosity about this text is that we know little about these 72 disciples whom Jesus sent to the towns and villages "*where he himself intended to go.*" They were ordinary women and men who followed Jesus. They weren't selected because of their particular giftedness or their future

leadership potential; they were sent because they loved Jesus and longed for his coming kingdom. The 72 challenge us to realize that the call to grow as disciples—to make disciples—is the "ordinary" call of every follower of Jesus.

What does ordinary discipleship look like? Within the Mennonite church we are, dare I say, proud of our community ethic. Discipleship flourishes in the context of a believing community. But community must mean more than the few hours I spend with a worshipping community on Sunday! I spend much more of my week with my family/household than I do with the worshipping community I'm a part of. As a result, ordinary discipleship invites our family to consider what it means to be on mission together.

What is God inviting us to see, experience or join in our immediate neighbourhood? Being serious about answering that question is a recipe for radical change.

Norm Dyck is MC Eastern Canada's mission engagement minister.

(Continued from page 7)

If someone can reconcile this piece and Paul's writings in I Corinthians, please let me know. I am listening.

HELMUT BUHR, VANCOUVER

✉ All loving, committed relationships are natural

RE: "UNITY OF the Spirit," Feb, 26, page 4.

May I suggest that the gender identity and sexuality debate be simplified and considered from a scientific point of view. As albinism is the product of genetic make-up in all vertebrates, similarly sexual orientation

KINGDOM YEARNINGS

Confession of a 'road rage pastor'

RYAN JANTZI

I've had a bit of a road rage problem. It peeves me when I need to throw on the brakes because another vehicle pulled out in front of me. Sadly, too often my reaction has been to tailgate, eventually pass and possibly toot my horn. I tell myself that I'm helping the other motorist see his error so he might become a better driver—or she, as the case may be. My dear wife is not convinced.

Recently an incident of this sort happened right in town. My little village of 900. I drive a bright blue car. People know who I am and that I'm a pastor with the Mennonite church. I was feeling convicted. Unfortunately, this time it was because I was afraid I might have been "caught" by the eyes around me.

The good news is that I'd recently been introduced to an idea called the Learning Circle. This is a tool used by Mike Breen and the 3DM team who provide resources to guide churches in building discipling cultures.

The Learning Circle invites us to constantly ask, "What is God saying to me?" and "What am I going to do about it?" as we encounter the usual circumstances of daily life. It leads the disciple through repentance and into belief using a cycle of observation, reflection, discussion,

planning, accountability and, ultimately, action.

I had observed the arrogant, impatient reaction of my road rage. Reflecting on it, I wondered what it was that made me so anxious. Why did I only feel convicted when others may have seen me rather than out in the countryside? What does this say about how I'm influenced by the view of others rather than God's view of me? This clearly was an area that I needed to grow in.

The Learning Circle directed me to the next step: discussion. I'm thankful that I have a group of fellow believers, a "huddle," in which we ask one another the tough questions. We encourage and challenge one another. And so I shared my road rage encounter with them. By prob-



What does this say about how I'm influenced by the view of others rather than God's view of me?

ing deeper, these trusted friends helped expose more of what God needed to reshape in me. They helped me unearth what I ought to do next.

The obvious plan is to respond with patience and kindness the next time someone pulls out in front of me. I'll take a deep breath and ease off the gas, giving the other driver lots of space. Truth be

told, we'll probably end up together at the next stop sign anyway! Sounds easy. But reality is a different story. The works of the flesh are so ingrained in me.

I need accountability. Not only do the members of my "huddle" know, my wife and my co-pastor also know about my plan to grow in this area. When we're driving together, and someone pulls out in front of me, I feel my blood pressure rise as I fill with angry impatience. I look over, and there's my wife smiling at me, waiting to see how I respond. This accountability is a gift. I know that if I deviate from my plan of holiness I'm going to have to account for it.

Through all of this, my aim is to become more like Jesus. Often the process of discipleship can feel frustratingly slow. However, through the gift of the Learning Circle I'm learning to process these life events by asking, "What is God saying?" and "What am I going to do about it?"

Rather than coast through life without reflection, it's a choice to take various life moments and allow God to shape me through them. This time it was road rage. Next time it may be my attitude toward

my neighbour, or my eating habits. Whatever the situation, Jesus wants to form me further as his disciple.

Ryan Jantzi pastors Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite Church, Ont., where he's fascinated with exploring the interplay between traditional church and new expressions of mission.

is also the product of genetic combinations. This knowledge was not known in biblical times; therefore, any statements of censure made should be applicable to all because we are all human.

I suggest that we bless any couple committed to a faithful, loving, caring, monogamous, lifelong relationship. Why would we want to oppose a committed, loving, same-sex relationship? Scientifically thinking, it is all natural.

PETER PETERS, WINNIPEG

✉ More opinions on the future of Israel and the Middle East

RE: “TWO WRITERS weigh in on the future of Israel and the Middle East” letter, Jan. 29, page 8.

I share Richard Penner’s desire to resolve the Palestinian/Israeli conflict but not his assessment of the current state of affairs nor the steps to resolve the conflict.

Unfortunately, he mirrors a view that is not uncommon in North America: We understand the problem and have the solutions; just listen to us.

He trivializes Israel’s blatant flouting of the Geneva Convention and numerous UN resolutions that criticize Israel’s behaviour. “No one would argue that the Jewish people have done an outstanding job of administering their country,” he writes. Does this reflect the horrendous pain the Israeli government inflicts on the Palestinian people on a daily basis?

The comments of “primitive ‘tribal’ state” and “obligatory sabre rattling” of the Arab countries show a total lack of respect for the countries involved in the conflict. Negotiating with such an attitude is doomed to fail.

What we as a faith community must do is:

- **LISTEN TO** the people of good will on both side of the conflict; there are many.
- **ASK THE** people what they need.
- **SUPPORT AND** stand with them.

Unilateral action and force that President Trump applies, and Penner endorses, cannot establish peace. Inclusion, cooperation, compassion and justice must be our way and goal.

GERHARD NEUFELD, WINNIPEG

I’M CONFUSED BY Richard Penner’s letter. More discussion and clarification is needed. We, as Mennonites, need to understand the issues that face both Christian and Muslim Palestinians as they seek peace and justice.

I had the opportunity to hear Daoud Nasser speak

in Phoenix, Ariz. He is a Christian Palestinian who owns land just outside Bethlehem. Because he is not allowed to have water nor electricity, and cannot build on his land due to Israeli law, he struggles to farm his land. Trees he has planted have been bulldozed down by the Jewish state.

In response, he has set up an organization called Tent of Nations (tentofnations.org), which is committed to the following:

- **WE REFUSE** to be victims.
- **WE REFUSE** to hate.
- **WE PRACTISE** our faith using nonviolent ways.
- **WE BELIEVE** in justice.
- **WE REFUSE** to be enemies.

Since 1991, the Nassar family has been fighting the State of Israel to keep their land, land that the State wants to confiscate to build more settlements on. Sadly, many Palestinian families are in the same situation.

I urge all of us to stand up for peace and justice in the Holy Land.

ALVIN THIESSEN, WINNIPEG

✉ ‘Preachy’ preachers owed ‘a big debt of gratitude’

RE: “HOW LONG will it take?” letter in support of LGBTQ inclusion, Feb. 12, page 9.

My father Abram Martens was one of those “preachy” ministers. He was elected to the ministry in Ukraine at the age of 25, when accepting ordination immediately put him on the “black list.”

Dad served faithfully, unsalaried all his life, and passed away in 1979. He served faithfully because he loved the Lord and believed the Bible to be God’s truth that is not negotiable. A German hymn we used to sing asked the question, “If the Bible is no longer valid, what shall faith rest upon?”

I notice that in some churches the hymnal is already obsolete. Is the Bible next?

The ministers of Dad’s generation are the ones who suffered during the Russian Revolution, the Depression and all the hardships of a new life in Canada. They are the ones who built our first churches, Bible schools and colleges. We owe them all a big debt of gratitude.

CORNIE MARTENS, RABBIT LAKE, SASK.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Becks—Lena Anne (b. March 1, 2018), to Trevor and Abigail (Horst) Becks, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Enns—Twins Harrison John and Jack Edmund (b. March 2, 2018), to Matt Enns and Katie Crockett, Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Klassen—Theodore James (b. March 9, 2018), to Zacharie and Melodie Klassen, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Klassen Bartel—Lydia Agnes (b. Jan. 12, 2018), to Adam and Sarah Klassen Bartel, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Thiessen van Esch—Willem Isaak (b. Feb. 20, 2018), to Janelle and Laurens Thiessen van Esch, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Virostek—Zane Lawrence (b. March 15, 2018), to Craig and Melissa Virostek, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Baptisms

Julia Entz, Emma Erb, Emily Jantzi, Rachel Jantzi—Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont., March 4, 2018.

Deaths

Bolger—Lucinda (Cindy) (nee Martin), 96 (b. Sept. 25, 1921; d. Dec. 6, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Elora, Ont.

Brown—Mary (nee Wiebe), 93 (b. June 25, 1924; d. Feb. 16, 2018), Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

Burkholder—Lawrence Edward, 72 (b. July 19, 1945; d. Jan.

25, 2018), Wideman Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Enns—Ella (nee Dueck), 88 (b. April 19, 1929; d. Feb. 17, 2018), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Lebtag—Elizabeth, 84 (b. Dec. 17, 1933; d. March 12, 2018), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Martin—Marie M. (nee Frey), 77 (b. Feb. 6, 1940; d. Nov. 6, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Elora, Ont.

Pauls—William (Bill), 90 (d. July 26, 2017), Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

Weier—Rudy John, 75 (b. March 1, 1942; d. Jan. 30, 2018), Vineland United Mennonite Church, Ont.

/// Obituary

Elsie M. McDowell



Elsie M. McDowell (nee Ramer) peacefully passed away at Parkview Home on Monday, March 5, 2018, at age 94. Wife of the late Emerson McDowell.

Mother of Margaret (Robert), Andrew (Joanna), Paul (Donna), Stephen (Jeannie), and the late John (surviving daughter-in-law Bev). Grandmother of Martin (Tania), Allan (Winnie), Annette (Jordan), Marcus (Tracy), Jason, Kayla (Matt), David, and the late Dean and Lola. Great-grandmother of Charlie (Michaela), Randy, Kim, Lita, Gail, Zoe, Caleb and Emerson. Sister of Grace Ramer and the late Jonas (Norma), Leonard (Ada), Sidney (surviving sister-in-law Viola), and Elvin (Mildred). Interment was at Wideman Cemetery. If desired, donations can be made to Willowgrove/Fraser Lake Camp in her memory.

A moment from yesterday



Families of the Kitchener-Waterloo House Churches sing hymns around a piano in 1974. This particular house church began services in 1969. North American Mennonites rediscovered the house-church model, first described in the New Testament, in the 1950s. Small groups of believers coming together to experience close relationships have been associated throughout Christian history with times of yearning for renewal.

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing

Photo: Mennonite Archives of Ontario

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

Tending and befriending

Women's gifts for the church

BY ELSIE REMPEL

From time immemorial—as the biblical story of Ruth and Naomi illustrates—developing friendships and tending relationships have often been a woman's “go-to, our have-to, our live for,” especially during times of stress. In the current season of stressful change within Mennonite Church Canada, tending relationships may be especially important to the health of the church. Drawing on women's gifts for making connections can help us thrive rather than divide or shrivel.

That's the opinion of Marlene Harder Bogard, a long-time friend and ministry colleague from MC U.S.A. Throughout her life, she has helped empower Mennonite women. One way she did that was to immerse herself in a landmark study on friendship among women by a group of psychologists: “Biobehavioural responses to stress in females: Tend-and-befriend, not fight-or-flight” (University of California, Los Angeles, 2000). Following are some of Harder Bogard's personal highlights from the study:

- **FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN** women shape who we are and who we are yet to be. They soothe our tumultuous inner world, fill emotional gaps in our marriage, and help us remember who we really are. And they may do even more.

- **SCIENTISTS NOW** suspect that hanging out with our friends can actually counteract the kind of stomach-quivering stress most of us experience on a daily basis.

- **HAVE YOU** ever had a friend call you after a stressful day and say, “I just need to unload . . . or I know you're there for me”? If you're a woman, it's quite likely you have. This corresponds to the study's findings that women respond to stress with a cascade of brain chemicals that cause us to make and maintain friendships with other women. Women respond with more than a fight-or-flight response. It's a stunning find that has turned five decades of stress research (90 percent of it on men) upside down.

- **IN FACT**, Dr. Laura Cousino Klein, a UCLA professor of psychology, says, when the hormone oxytocin is released as part of stress responses in a woman, it seems to buffer the fight-or-flight response and encourages her to tend children and gather with other women instead. When she actually engages in this tending or befriending, more oxytocin is released, which further counters stress and produces a calming effect. This calming

response does not occur in men, says Dr. Klein, because testosterone—which men produce in high levels when they're under stress—seems to reduce the effects of oxytocin. Estrogen, she adds, seems to enhance it.

- **THE DISCOVERY** that women respond to stress differently than men was made in a classic “aha” moment shared by two women scientists who were talking one day in a lab at UCLA.

They joked that when the women who worked in the lab were stressed, they came in, cleaned the lab, had coffee and bonded, says Klein. When the men were stressed, they holed up somewhere on their own. This joke actually led the scientists to do extensive research, which arrived at the findings noted above.

For me, these are exciting findings, which mean that, like Ruth and Naomi, women today can bless our faith communities with the calming effect of this God-given gift involving our hormonal stress response of tending and befriending.

As our regional churches take on increased responsibility and ownership of church life, we have new opportunities to use, recognize, celebrate and reap the benefits of this newly named gift.

Mennonite Women Canada and its regional groups want this “tending and befriending” to happen, and we do this by having day- or weekend-long inspirational retreats. For example, MW Manitoba's annual spring retreat takes place on April 28 at Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, with guest speaker Moira Somers addressing the theme of “resilience.” Tend and befriend. ❧

Elsie Rempel is Mennonite Women Manitoba's interim chair and the MW Canada treasurer.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELSIE REMPEL

Members of the Mennonite Women Manitoba working group, from left to right: Laura Funk, Elsie Rempel, Larissa Pahl, Elsie Wiebe and Kathy Giesbrecht.



GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

COVER STORY

Hidden stories of the Holocaust

Bethel College conference probes Mennonite complicity, wartime experiences ranging from atrocity to mercy

By PAUL SCHRAG

Mennonite World Review
NORTH NEWTON, KAN.

In 2004, Joachim Wieler of Weimar, Germany, opened a small wooden box he inherited after his mother's death. To his surprise and horror, it contained letters his late father wrote while serving as an officer in the Wehrmacht, the armed forces of Nazi Germany.

"I almost fell off the chair," Wieler said, speaking to more than 200 people at a conference on Mennonites and the Holocaust on March 16 and 17 at Bethel College.

Writing from France in 1941, at the height of the Nazi conquest of Western Europe, Johann Wieler wrote: "We did not believe we would bring the French to their knees in such a short time. All soldiers who are fighting here for their fatherland are performing worship in the truest sense of the word. Those who do not believe in our victory do not believe in God. The Lord is visibly on our side. Heil Hitler."

While his father fought on the western and then eastern fronts, young Joachim Wieler saw Dresden burning and wound up in a refugee camp, where the family received help from Mennonite Central Committee while Johannes languished as a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union until 1949.

But it would be 60 years before Joachim Wieler discovered his father had celebrated Nazi aggression as the fulfillment of a divine plan.

"Probably a lot of boxes still exist somewhere," Wieler said of probing the secrets of the past.

Uncovering hidden stories of interactions between Mennonites and Jews during the 1930s and '40s in Europe was

the purpose of the conference, which drew scholars from the United States, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and Ukraine.

The event was the third of its kind—following ones in Münster, Germany, in 2015, and Philadelphia, Paraguay, in 2017—to examine Mennonite complicity in the militant nationalism and racism that produced the Holocaust and to ask if anything like it could happen again.

Twenty presenters described their research, which extended across the spectrum of wartime horror and mercy, from Mennonite participation in Nazi atrocities in Ukraine to hiding Jews in the Netherlands.

Steve Schroeder, who teaches at the University of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia, described the failure of Mennonites to acknowledge their anti-Semitism and support for National Socialism under Hitler—whom many viewed as a German saviour—as a denial of the past that can be corrected only by truth telling.

An honest probing of the past can be intensely personal for Mennonite scholars like Schroeder. He told of interviewing his own relatives who had lived in Danzig (now Gdansk, Poland) and celebrated that city's incorporation into the German Reich.

Although more than half a century had passed when Schroeder conducted the interviews, he said those he talked to "did not process critically their collusion with wartime Nazis, nor did they take a contrite position toward the past."

One man remembered singing

anti-Jewish songs with phrases like "hack off their arms and legs; get them out"

Such chilling stories "should matter to us," Schroeder said. "This is our heritage, a heritage that impacts our personal make-up and our engagement with the people around us. . . . Truth telling is a fundamental first step, as is the accompanying act of listening to those who have been harmed, including those who have been harmed by us.

"In my view, a healthy way forward is to acknowledge that Mennonites have not only suffered but have also caused harm, and to address immediate colonial enterprises in which we have participated. I see the seeds of this taking place at this conference, which is encouraging."

Massacre in Ukraine

When Mennonites and Jews were neighbours in Nazi-occupied territories, many Mennonites welcomed the German regime, and some collaborated with it.

In a session on "Mennonite-Jewish connections," two Canadian scholars—Aileen Friesen of Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., and Colin Neufeldt of Concordia University of Edmonton—told of contrasting Jewish and Mennonite fates.

Early in the spring of 1942, Friesen said, Nazi occupation forces ordered the Jewish population of Zaporizhia, Ukraine, to gather, supposedly to be relocated for work. Men, women and children were stripped, led to a ditch and mowed down with machine guns. The massacre lasted three days. When it was over, 3,700 Jews had been murdered, their bodies carelessly covered in shallow, mass graves.

Local police took part in the atrocity. Eyewitnesses reported that among them were two Mennonite brothers, Ivan and Jacob Fast.

Less than a month later, a few miles away on the other side of the Dnieper River, the Mennonites of Chortitza gathered to celebrate Easter. The Nazis had reopened the churches after years of Soviet repression. This would be the first Easter service in more than a decade. The congregation was filled with excitement. Under German rule, life for German-speaking Mennonites might return to normal.

“These two events force us to confront the realities of occupation,” Friesen said. “During this period, Mennonites would gather to worship, celebrating their freedom to praise God, while their Jewish neighbours were humiliated, stripped of their humanity and gunned down.”

While there is evidence of collaboration and perpetration, Friesen said that the most common response was inaction. “Many did nothing in the face of overwhelming violence,” she said. Famine and terror under the repressive hand of Soviet communism had shaped their character. The Nazis not only delivered them from the yoke of Stalin but treated them with favour due to their “racial purity.”

“It is hard to find examples of rescue or aid given by Mennonites to persecuted Jews,” Friesen said.

Jews out, Germans in

Colin Neufeldt described Nazi collaboration by the people of Deutsch Wymyschle, Poland, a mostly Mennonite town of 250 to 400 people, against the neighbouring town of Gabin, with a population of 5,700, about half of them Jews. After the Nazi invasion of Sept. 1, 1939, Jews were rounded up and their property confiscated. Mennonites from Deutsch Wymyschle took advantage of the Nazi desire to move the Jews out and the Germans in. They accepted the invitation to claim houses and businesses confiscated from the Jews. Among them were Neufeldt’s grandparents, Peter and Frieda Ratzlaff.

One prominent collaborator was Erich L. Ratzlaff, who became a Mennonite Brethren leader in Canada and edited the *Mennonitische Rundschau* newspaper from 1967 to 1979. Ratzlaff became the *burgermeister*, or mayor, of Gabin. Neufeldt said his grandmother remembered that she often saw him walking around with a whip, and Jews had to bow to him.

Another type of collaboration was developing intimate relationships that linked Mennonite families to Nazi culture.

“Deutsch Wymyschle women tied their futures to the Nazi regime when they married non-Mennonite and Mennonite soldiers in the German Wehrmacht,” Neufeldt said. “Weddings were often performed in the MB church in Deutsch Wymyschle in



BETHEL COLLEGE PHOTOS BY VADA SNIDER

*Participants in the Mennonites and the Holocaust conference talk after Doris Bergen’s keynote address in Memorial Hall at Bethel College. At left is Ben Goossen of Harvard University, author of *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era*. At right, Joel Nofziger, director of communications for the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society, talks with Rachel Waltner Goossen of Washburn University in Topeka, Kan., who moderated one of the conference sessions.*

military uniform.”

When the Wehrmacht started drafting Deutsch Wymyschle men, they went willingly. “The principles of pacifism and non-resistance were not strongly emphasized” in their churches, Neufeldt said.

Showing 1940s pictures of men in German military uniforms, Neufeldt noted their demeanor: “Most of these people are my relatives, and they wore the [Nazi] uniform with pride.”

Hiding a Jewish baby

Alle Hoekema of Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam shared stories of Dutch Anabaptists who helped hide Jews from the Nazi authorities. Some 40 of these have been honoured by Israel as “righteous among the nations,” although “40 is not a great amount,” Hoekema said.

One woman, Geertje Pel-Groot, took a Jewish baby, Marion Swaab, into her home while the baby’s parents hid elsewhere. Later, a neighbour turned Pel-Groot in to the authorities. She was arrested and sent to Ravensbruck, a Nazi concentration camp, where she died, lauded by other prisoners for her selfless behaviour. Pel-Groot’s daughter took care of the baby, who survived the war.

Mennonite war criminals

David Barnouw of the Dutch Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies

spoke about Dutch Mennonite war criminals who escaped prison and emigrated from the Netherlands to Paraguay. One of these, Jacob Luitjens, later emigrated from Paraguay to Canada and was part of a Mennonite congregation in Vancouver.

Barnouw said that during the Second World War, Luitjens was an active collaborator with the Nazis and worked on propaganda. After the war, he gave himself up to the police because he feared reprisals from members of the Dutch resistance. Luitjens changed his name to Harder.

In 1991, the Netherlands sought to extradite him to be tried as a war criminal. Although many Mennonites supported him, a Canadian judge ruled that he got his citizenship illegally and he was sent to the Netherlands, where he was taken to a prison. He was set free in 1994, when he was 74. He was the last Dutch war criminal to be tried.

Breaking the myths

The personal connection is what drew Doris Bergen to begin looking specifically at how Mennonites were affected by and involved in the Holocaust.

As holder of the Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Chair in Holocaust Studies at



Doris Bergen

the University of Toronto, she gave the conference keynote address,

As a young scholar studying Nazi Germany, she was taken aback to come across a Martens (her mother's family name) from the Russian Mennonite colony of Einlage (her place of origin).

One challenge, which came up at several points during the conference, is how to define "Mennonite." Bergen's bottom line: While a functional definition

is important, "resist the temptation to define to distraction," thereby obscuring the real issues of genocide, racism and anti-Semitism.

Bergen noted the oft-forgotten groups in the Holocaust narrative: the disabled, the Roma, Soviet prisoners of war, Polish civilians. At the same time, there should be "a clear focus on the Jews' particular place in the Nazi plan of destruction," she said.

She said the scholar's job is "to break

apart the myths. . . . Many groups are confronting and breaking the myth of their own innocence or non-complicity in the Holocaust. This can be enormously liberating," she concluded. ❧

Gordon Houser of The Mennonite and Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College contributed to this report. Reprinted with permission.

VIEWPOINT

An eye-witness account of Nazi occupation

WALDEMAR JANZEN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

At the age of 85, I am probably one of the few survivors of the German occupation of Ukraine/Russia from 1941 to 1943 who still have clear personal memories of that time.

When the German army occupied Chortitza, Ukraine, where I lived, we Mennonites were exuberant. I remember vividly the euphoria of being liberated from the brutal Stalinist regime. Churches were opened again, friends could meet in groups, and Christmas could be celebrated, and the Soviet secret police needed to no longer be feared.

If Nazism movements developed in the 1930s and '40s in Brazil, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and Paraguay, why not Ukraine? Because the Mennonites there—including me at a young age, but also the adults around me—had heard only vaguely whispered rumours about the developments in Germany. All news in Stalinist Soviet Russia was strictly censored.

From our perspective, we welcomed the Germans as our deliverers with open arms, not the Nazis. For the adults around me, the term "Germans" evoked memories from the "good old days" before the Russian Revolution, the anarchy

and the rule of communism. They recalled the German literature they had studied in school, German stories, poems and folk songs; the German Luther Bible, which could now be taken from hiding; familiar German hymns; memories of places in Germany and Switzerland where many leaders had studied theology, literature, medicine, engineering, midwifery and more. This choice of German-language universities and schools was due to their knowledge of the German language and culture; it had nothing to do with the Aryan race or German nationalism.

Such associations must be recognized as the first of two major components essential for forming a correct interpretive context for understanding our welcoming of "the Germans." The second major component is the terror and cruelty of the Stalinist regime, which had robbed almost every Mennonite family of several members, mostly men, but also many women. We would have welcomed almost any power that had come to deliver us from that brutal rule.

With all his wealth of research, Ben Goossen, the author of *Chosen Nation: Mennonites in the Global Era*, missed

both of these, and replaced them with a hermeneutic of suspicion that characterized all Mennonite connections with Germans and Germany by tarnishing them as complicity with Nazism.

The term "Nazism" in this context, is not historically descriptive, but pejorative. It is the term that the Western Allies and their countries are wont to use when referring to the Hitler-era by its most heinous crimes, foremost among these the Holocaust, once its full extent had become known. To lump terms like "German," "heimat" (home country), and "vaterland" (fatherland) together under "chosen nation" and "Nazism" is a gross misunderstanding of the connotations these terms held for us Mennonites then, and also carry generally in the German language. Goossen is not cognizant of how hurtful such use of "Nazi/Nazism" is for people like me, and probably can't be expected to be.

Did we, then, side with Germany and fail to recognize the Hitler ideology for what it was eventually shown to be? Our disappointment grew gradually during the two years of German occupation.

The killing of Jews in Ukraine became known, sooner by some Mennonites and

eventually by more and more. After the German army came, the party-based civic administration gradually showed us the true nature of the regime: the full extent of the murder of the Jews, and the notion of racial superiority, including the downgrading of Ukrainians and others as inferior races. This process took time—although two years is not a long time in the course of history—and occasioned much disappointment among Mennonites.

The older adults, most of them women with young children—the husbands having been imprisoned, exiled and often executed—suffered severely under the burden of disappointment, as did countless Germans in Germany itself. And yet we were deeply grateful to the retreating German army for making every effort to help us escape from the Red Army to Germany, and to the German people who accepted us refugees into their defeated, devastatingly bombed and impoverished country.

In later years, I have read more than 50 books authored by eye witnesses of the events I am describing, or by their immediate family members. But in Goossen's register of names I find almost none of these authors. Not all of them were scholars, although many were, but most were eye witnesses. Goossen's cavalier disregard of them is akin to a "historian" of the Holocaust who would disregard the testimonies of Holocaust survivors!

I do not question his diligence and sincerity, but I find his work seriously deficient in understanding of, and empathy with, the Mennonites in Ukraine and their descendants, as he attempted in his book to awaken them from their supposed "Nazi denialism." ❧



Waldemar Janzen is a professor emeritus at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg and the author of Reminiscences

of My Father: Wladimir Janzen: Teacher, Minister, and Gulag Survivor, published in September 2017, and Growing Up in Turbulent Times.



 **ONLINE NOW!**
at canadianmennonite.org

MCC celebrates 75 years of service work in India

Mennonite Central Committee began work in India in 1942, in response to a severe famine. Since then its presence in the country has touched many lives.
canadianmennonite.org/mcc-75-india



Telling Anabaptist stories old and new

The 2018 Bechtel Lectures at Conrad Grebel University College focussed on Mennonite stories and how they are used in the media.
canadianmennonite.org/mennonite-stories-media



Planning begins for French-language Anabaptist theological program

A new online training program is being developed to respond to the shortage of French-language Anabaptist literature and training.
canadianmennonite.org/french-anabaptist-training



What 'women's conference' is all about

Fun, bonding and growth—Laura Wiebe offers a reflection on Mennonite Church Alberta women's retreat.
canadianmennonite.org/womens-conference



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A fundraising concert for
CANADIAN MENNONITE

Mennonites respond to Palestinian church

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

Christians in the land where Christianity started have asked sisters and brothers around the world for help. In response to these pleas from Palestinian churches—with whom Mennonites have long-standing relations—delegates at the 2016 Mennonite Church Canada assembly approved a resolution related to violence in the Middle East. What has happened since that resolution was passed?

An initial national working group developed educational materials for congregations—a four-session training resource written by Palmer Becker—and conducted workshops at regional church assemblies.

With reorganization of MC Canada bodies in 2017, the former national working group re-formed into regional efforts. The most active ones are in Manitoba and MC Eastern Canada. Their activities have

focussed on education of congregants, largely through speaking engagements.

In parallel, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has continued its efforts to promote a just peace in the Middle East. Its most recent effort is the Cry for Home campaign, which focusses on how international law relates to the wish of many Palestinians to have safe homes for their families. In many cases, the Mennonite church working groups function in tandem with MCC, organizing additional speaking engagements for guests brought in by MCC.

The 2016 resolution called for more than education. It “asked” MC Canada, regional churches, congregations and members to “avoid investing in or supporting companies that do business with Israeli settlements and the Israeli Defense Forces.” And

it called for the federal government to “put pressure on Israel [including through economic sanctions] to end the occupation and work for a just peace, in accordance with international law.”

On the latter point, members of the working groups have met with numerous MPs, and Willard Metzger, MC Canada’s executive director, sent a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Feb. 2 in the wake of President Donald Trump’s provocative decision to move the American embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Metzger’s letter, approved by the Joint Council, expressed “appreciation” for Trudeau’s public confirmation that Canada’s embassy will remain in Tel Aviv.

“We recognize,” the letter reads, “that both peoples—Palestinians and Israeli Jews—yearn to live in a climate of peace and security without fear of violence.”

The letter encourages the government to “play a more proactive role in supporting a comprehensive peace agreement, and in speaking boldly and with clarity regarding actions that are counterproductive to this aim.”

Byron Rempel-Burkholder says there is often a gap between Ottawa’s forward-looking policies related to the Middle East and its actual willingness to push for peace and fairness. Rempel-Burkholder, who attends Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, has been a key person in MC Canada efforts related to the Middle East. He and his wife Melita spent three months at Bethlehem Bible College in 2016 through MC Canada.

The MC Manitoba working group has had numerous conversations with a Winnipeg MP, and the MC Eastern Canada working group sent a delegation to Ottawa to meet with MPs during the week of March 26.

With respect to the mention of investments contained in the 2016 resolution, Rempel-Burkholder says the working groups are focussing on education in advance of divestment work. While the four-session resource for congregations did speak about divestment, and mentioned Caterpillar and Hewlett Packard specifically, Rempel-Burkholder is not aware of any specific actions yet taken. He says the MC Manitoba and MC Eastern Canada



PHOTO BY BYRON AND MELITA REMPEL-BURKHOLDER

Art on the separation wall on the edge of Bethlehem. The wall is a place of protest and resistance, and a tourist attraction.

working groups are compiling more complete lists of companies to avoid.

Metzger says MC Canada is focussing on calls for peace at this point rather than divestment.

Last summer, MC U.S.A. passed a resolution that goes further than the Canadian version with respect to divestment. As a follow-up, 19 representatives of MC U.S.A.-connected agencies working in Israel-Palestine met in Goshen, Ind., last November to discuss divestment of

holdings in companies profiting from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. Many of the organizations found their existing investment screens had already eliminated companies connected to the Israeli occupation. A follow-up consultation will be held this fall.

The MC U.S.A. resolution also includes a commitment to “opposing anti-Semitism and seeking right relationships with Jewish communities.” This is a new dimension of MC U.S.A.’s long-standing involvement in

Israel-Palestine.

Mennonite involvement in one of the most entrenched conflicts of our time is, of course, contentious. Amidst that, Rempel-Burkholder points to the underlying relational and ecclesiological factor. For him, the bottom line is responding to sister and brothers in the Palestinian church with prayer and support. “We try to give voice to the Palestinian church,” he says. ❧

‘Fun in the Son’ keeps ‘em coming back

Church sponsors popular day camp for children on spring break

BY AMY DUECKMAN
B.C. Correspondent

Spring break comes and students are home from school. What are parents to do to keep them occupied?

Crossroads Community Church of Chilliwack, a Mennonite Church B.C. congregation, has the answer: a week-long day camp.

Fun in the Son (FITS), a community service program for youngsters in Kindergarten through Grade 6, has been going for at least 12 years. Pastor Rob Ayer brought the idea from his previous pastorate in Guelph, Ont. The Crossroads congregation regularly worships at Vedder Middle School, where FITS is also held.

This year’s program ran from March 19 to 22 with a “medieval adventures” theme. Morning and afternoon programs engaged 91 children in interactive lessons, gym activities and off-campus events. Reece Friesen, associate pastor of Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, used his graphic novel artwork to teach lessons based on “the armour of God.”

Although organizers are upfront with parents that it is church-based, they don’t actively proselytize. The focus is more on promoting solid morals and values.

Activities this year included skating, hockey, gymnastics, swimming and a

trampoline park. On the last day, the children went to Camp Charis for rope climbing, wall-climbing, archery and s’mores. Participants and their parents were invited to Crossroads’ worship service on March 25 for a wrap-up, which included a video and slide show of the week’s activities and a fellowship time with refreshments.

FITS depends on volunteers to operate the program, and, according to Greg

Duerksen, director of youth ministry, the program never has trouble finding enough people. Church members—in particular, young people who have gone through the program themselves—are happy to volunteer. “This is really good discipleship training for your youth leaders,” says Duerksen. “There’s a good core of youth who like coming back so much, they say, ‘We do this every year; can we do this again?’”

Duerksen believes FITS provides a primary contact for people in the community to get acquainted with the congregation in a non-threatening way. Children are so excited about the program, they want to come back and bring their parents. Parents in the community will tell him, “My kids have come for the last several years, they are comfortable with you. We know what you’re all about.” ❧



PHOTO BY GREG DUERKSEN

Reece Friesen engages children at Crossroads Community Church’s day camp with storytelling on a ‘medieval adventures’ theme.

Bridging Borders in the 'City of Bridges'

Documentary series celebrates refugee sponsorship in Saskatoon

BY DONNA SCHULZ
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

A new television documentary series featuring the work of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan is currently airing on City-Saskatchewan TV.

Bridging Borders is a six-episode series produced by Wavelength Entertainment, a Regina-based production company. Set in Saskatoon, the "City of Bridges," each episode depicts a relationship formed through MCC's private refugee sponsorship program.

From a group's initial decision to sponsor a family and the work of fundraising and preparing a home for them, to the family's arrival at the airport and the welcome they receive, the episodes capture the excitement—along with the fear and trepidation—that often accompanies a decision to sponsor a family. They also show how friendships are quickly formed between sponsors and newcomer families.

Jana Al-Sagheer, MCC Saskatchewan's communications associate, says Wavelength approached its office last June about doing one episode in a series about how different agencies assist in the work of resettling refugees. The plan was to feature a different agency in each episode. But she says Wavelength was so impressed with MCC's private sponsorship model that it decided to build the entire series around MCC.

Al-Sagheer sees this as positive from the viewers' perspective. "If people are motivated to help others, then learning about government sponsorships wouldn't leave them with an outlet to help," she says. Watching a show about how a group of people like themselves committed to sponsoring a family might inspire viewers to do the same.

Filming began two weeks after Wave-



BRIDGING BORDERS FACEBOOK PAGE

*In each episode of *Bridging Borders*, Dana Krushel, left, MCC Saskatchewan's migration and resettlement coordinator, welcomes sponsored families and tells them they are no longer refugees but permanent residents of Canada.*

length initially contacted MCC. While MCC was not involved in the production process, it did provide content. Dana Krushel and Evangeline Patkau of MCC Saskatchewan's migration and resettlement office facilitated relationships between the filmmakers, sponsoring groups and newcomer families.

Al-Sagheer worked from a communications standpoint to ensure MCC would be represented well. "We couldn't have imagined a better partner," she says of Wavelength. "We built relationships with the crew. They were honest with us and said they would tell the story in the best way they could."

She admits there are aspects of the series that MCC would have done differently. For instance, Wavelength used stock footage from war-torn countries to depict the

violence that forces refugees to flee their homes. "This is something you wouldn't see in MCC promotional material," says Al-Sagheer. But, she adds, "They did listen to our feedback. They are not out to present anyone in a negative light and they wouldn't jeopardize the relationship [they have with us]."

Each episode of the series shows Krushel meeting with a newly arrived family to welcome them and tell them they are no longer refugees, but permanent residents of Canada. The series takes care to refer to these families as newcomers, not as refugees.

So far, response to the series has been overwhelmingly positive. Al-Sagheer notes that both MCC Alberta and MCC B.C. screened episodes for their staff during their lunch hours. Plans are underway for a recognition event to celebrate the series. It will also be shown, along with a panel discussion, during MCC Saskatchewan's annual relief sale in June.

Al-Sagheer says MCC Saskatchewan is undecided about whether it would commit to doing a second season of the series, should Wavelength ask. On the one hand, there are many more stories to be told. On the other, the experience was very labour-intensive, particularly for Krushel and Patkau.

For its part, Wavelength Entertainment hopes to sell the series to Netflix.

Al-Sagheer notes that the private sponsorship model is unique to this country. "Other countries are looking to Canada," she says, to find a way to deal with the refugee crisis. A wider audience would be welcomed.

Al-Sagheer feels the series is important in that "it's very reflective of the work MCC Saskatchewan is doing internationally and at home." She says it is important to have a portrayal of a positive, holistic approach to refugee resettlement in mainstream media. The series offers viewers "a tangible way for people to get involved," she says.

She cites a member of one of the sponsorship groups depicted in the series, who says, "Small actions can make big change." ❧

Watch episodes of *Bridging Borders* online at bit.ly/mcc-building-bridges.



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Sharing gifts in a post-denominational era

Canadian Mennonites and Anglicans meet for first dialogue

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

As the Anglican Church of Canada has increasingly found itself on the margins of power in Canadian society, it decided to reach out to a group of fellow Christians that has long been in the position. At the invitation of the Anglicans, a group of Mennonite Church Canada leaders and lay people met with their Anglican counterparts at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo on Feb. 2 and 3.

According to Melissa Miller, Mennonite co-chair of the dialogue, this is not a one-way conversation. “Mennonites are interested in Anglican liturgy, use of Bible, regularity of communion and rituals,” she says.

Willard Metzger, MC Canada’s executive director, echoes this sentiment, noting that “more and more Mennonites are in Anglican worship and congregations. . . . What is drawing them? What is missing in our worship that can be found in Anglican worship?” he wonders.

On the other hand, Anglican priests are naming themselves as Anabaptist, according to Metzger, and Miller points out that

Mennonite materials on Indigenous-settler relationships are being used by Anglicans.

Mennonites are interested in how Anglicans keep together a disparate body that ranges from Anglo-Catholic to evangelical, especially as some issues are presently deeply dividing Mennonites. “As all Christian denominations are shrinking,” Miller says, “it is important to talk and to imagine the future of Christians working together.”

Unlike MC Canada’s dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada a few years ago, this dialogue is not aimed at full communion but rather at sharing gifts, including the possibility for shared mission projects.

During the days of dialogue the group worshipped together twice, taking turns leading.

While future discussions are envisioned, no dates have been set. Miller says that the dialogue is planned with “an open and generous spirit about shaping the future by all participants, that the relationship will

develop organically, with no pre-determined outcomes.”

Other Mennonites taking part in the dialogue were:

- JEREMY BERGEN, associate professor of religious studies and theology at Conrad Grebel University College;
- GORDON ZERBE, professor of New Testament at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg;
- KERRY SANER-HARVEY, Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba’s Indigenous Neighbours program coordinator; and
- KIMBERLY PENNER, an MC Canada representative. ❧

/// Briefly noted

Rockway parent petitions for independent school funding

KITCHENER, ONT. — Stephanie Janzen-Martin, a parent of two children at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, is tired of paying school taxes to support the two provincial systems (public and Roman Catholic), as well as paying 100 percent of her children’s tuition at the independent Mennonite school. She believes that independent schools in Ontario should be funded at least up to the level of other provinces, which fund between 30 percent and 50 percent. For her, it’s a justice issue. To that end, she has begun an online petition directed to both the provincial and federal governments (bit.ly/funding-petition). She says “simple living” Mennonites are hard pressed to pay twice, so many go into debt, live very simply or choose to send their children to a public or Roman Catholic school, a choice she notes that Roman Catholics don’t have to make. The petition, which had 357 signatures on March 28, will stay up until there are results.



Stephanie Janzen-Martin

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



PHOTO COURTESY OF SCOTT SHARMAN

Members of the Anglican Church of Canada-Mennonite Church Canada dialogue at their first meeting at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., on Feb. 2 and 3. The dialogue was co-chaired by Melissa Miller front row centre, intentional interim pastor of Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and CM’s Family Ties columnist, and Scott Sharman, back row right, an Anglican Church of Canada staff person.

MC Alberta celebrates a 'church born anew'

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent
LETHBRIDGE, ALTA.

At the last minute, Lethbridge Mennonite Church had to scramble to host the 2018 Mennonite Church Alberta delegate assembly. Already working hard to finish entrance and meeting room renovations, a burst water pipe flooded the church basement just a week before the March 16-17 gathering.

The Lethbridge congregation was able to host the March 16 evening event while the nearby Coaldale Mennonite Church donated space for events held the next day, highlighted by a Syrian feast prepared by families welcomed to Canada by the Lethbridge congregation in the past several years.

The "Church born anew" was a fitting theme as MC Alberta takes on increased regional responsibilities in the wake of MC Canada downsizing and restructuring. Keynote speaker Palmer Becker encouraged churches to "begin anew" by working together to gain clarity of beliefs, behaviour, and a sense of belonging to each other and to God.

Financial reorganization was the biggest area of concern as the regional church takes on more responsibility, and all donations to both MC Alberta and MC Canada are now routed through it.

The 2017 budget had predicted a \$37,100 deficit and a lack of late-season giving indicated this might reach \$75,000. However, a special appeal late in 2017 resulted in a

surplus of \$46,000. A significant donation toward the work of the North Edmonton Ministry, and Camp Valaqua's on-budget renovations of its water treatment system and washrooms, and its successful fundraising, played a significant part in the surplus.

For 2018, the finance committee predicts a small deficit of \$8,000; however, treasurer Wayne Janz said this allows for "healthy room for errors" as the new structure comes into play.

The 2018 budget for MC Alberta aligns with the new national church structure and contains significant changes. They include: funding for a new women's ministry, a renewal process consultation, a half-time communications coordinator (previously quarter-time), and the executive minister position moving from half- to full-time.

Funding for International Witness workers will begin a three-year transition process into a relational model that will see the regional church and local churches working towards providing half of their financial support. The transition time allows for fundraising concerns and questions about relational funding to be addressed.

The theme of churches working together was highlighted in prayer, with representatives from member churches sharing their joys and challenges, and praying for each other.

The Word of Life, a Spanish-speaking

church in Calgary that joined MC Alberta in 2006, officially left the larger church over disagreement with the Being a Faithful Church decision to remain in covenant with congregations welcoming of committed same-sex relationships.

While there is disagreement over this issue, the church's departure was gracious and mutually supportive. Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, MC Alberta's executive minister, prayed for the departing congregation, acknowledging that sometimes the desire to be faithful pulls congregations in different directions.

The assembly welcomed a new congregation, the Bethel International Church Oromo Edmonton Congregation, a vibrant group of Oromo-speaking immigrants from Ethiopia, including approximately 40 adults and 20 children. Anabaptist theology's emphasis on peace and service attracted the congregation to become part of MC Alberta. Pastor Will Loewen of Trinity Mennonite in DeWinton prayed for the new church, asking God to "let this be a relationship that strengthens us and them."

Two resolutions—one to include women's ministry and funding in regional programming, and the other to accept the Oromo congregation into full membership in MC Alberta—both passed unanimously.

The only question from the floor was posed by Brian Hildebrandt, who asked what would happen to Camp Valaqua's budget if the federal government does not approve the jobs grant for camp workers.

Kim Wiens, chair of the camp's board, replied that there is no indication this will be a problem. "Every year we aren't sure what we will get," she said. "Camp budgets for the lowest amount and then hopes for more." Janz, added that "there are some funds available in case of shortfall." ❧



Many members of the Bethel International Church Oromo Edmonton Congregation travelled to Lethbridge to be welcomed into membership of Mennonite Church Alberta.

FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

BOOK REVIEW

Barnyard philosopher on hope for the future

Life at the End of Us Versus Them: Cross Culture Stories.

By Marcus Peter Rempel. Privately published with Friesen Press, 2017, 318 pages.

REVIEWED BY BARB DRAPER
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

L*ife at the End of Us Versus Them* is an unconventional critique of the postmodern world from the perspective of a youngish father who lives off the land. Part theologian, part philosopher, Marcus Rempel examines contemporary culture from the perspective of someone who takes the message of Jesus seriously.

Rempel believes in being honest about life's questions. For him, the existential crisis is less about the existence of God and more about the problem of human violence. Using ideas from philosophers René Girard and Ivan Illich, he explains, "We are at the end of the world as we know it," and we need to learn to live without violence by ending the concept of "us" versus "them." Within this philosophical framework, he makes observations about life using many captivating stories.

As he examines the idea of good violence, as opposed to bad violence, Rempel uses the horse-and-buggy Mennonites in rural Manitoba as a case study. He provides fascinating details from the 2013 story of how Child and Family Services (CFS) seized the children in this community because it believed that physical punishment of children was bad violence. He suggests that CFS, with the best of intentions, did more harm than good, using one kind of violence to cast out another.

Wondering about the role of discipline in society, Rempel recognizes that the Mennonite children in question have a high level of self-discipline, while the rest

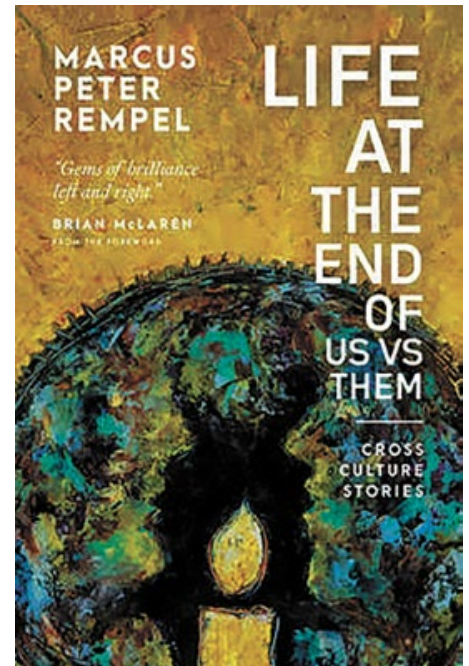
of society, which frowns on any parental violence, struggles with disrespect for authority.

He writes, "My grandfather had a confidence in his moral code and his disciplinary authority that I will never have." There is a sense that Rempel is wistful about the decline of discipline in society.

Rempel is also scathing of what he calls the "pornification of culture." Using the backdrop of the Jian Ghomeshi case, he wonders how we can expect to reduce incidents of sexual harassment given our culture's permissive attitude toward promiscuity and sexual deviance. Our society is full of mixed signals, he observes, recognizing that we have lost many of the constraints formerly held in the broader community. Given the sexual dynamics of our present culture, he wonders how we can provide protection for women while helping men keep their "sexual fire" under control.

Rempel explores a wide variety of other contemporary issues, including relationships with Indigenous people, with nature and with minority groups. He suggests that capitalism, with its mantra that greed is good, has no future, and considers whether subsistence living might be sustainable. Like others of his generation, he has abandoned the hope that society can save us, turning instead to love—suffering love—to provide hope for humanity.

In his final chapter, Rempel considers the role of the church and says, "I continue to have a stubborn belief that the



Given the sexual dynamics of our present culture, he wonders how we can provide protection for women while helping men keep their 'sexual fire' under control.

body of Christ will rise again—and again and again.”

He is not sure what the church might look like, however, and wonders if it is time for new wineskins. He declares that he has always loved the church, or at least the idea of the church, but the “church itself I have often found to be boring, stuffy, hypocritical, self-serving and self-absorbed.”

He suggests that a new sort of church might be in circles of friendship in which people help each other, and he humbly wonders if the Ploughshares Community Farm in Beausejour, Man., could serve as a model.

As a practical thinker, I did not find Rempel's many references to philosophers and theologians overly captivating, but I found his candid comments on contemporary issues most interesting. ☘

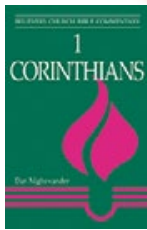
Spring 2018 List of Books & Resources



Theology, Spirituality

I Corinthians: Believers Church Bible Commentary. Dan Nighswander. Herald Press, 2017, 403 pages.

Like other commentary writers in this series, Nighswander provides explanatory notes as well as describing the text in the biblical context and in the life of the church. He also points out which parts of I Corinthians do not appear in the Revised Common Lectionary. A group study guide is also available.



Design for Living: Regard, Concern, Service and Love. Robert Friedmann. Maxwell Kennel, ed. Wipf and Stock, 2017, 200 pages.

Robert Friedmann, known for his theological interpretation of Anabaptism, died in 1970. Believing that his unpublished manuscript from 1954 was relevant for today, Maxwell Kennel has now brought it to publication. The book explores the meaning of life using a philosophical framework to describe discipleship. The foreword is written by Leonard Gross.

Education with the Grain of the Universe: A Peaceable Vision for the Future of Mennonite Schools, Colleges and Universities. J. Denny Weaver, ed., Cascadia Publishing House, 2017, 360 pages.

This collection of essays is Vol. 11 of the C. Henry Smith series. Among the 18 contributors who reflect on the intersection of educational theory and practice and Mennonite thought and peacemaking is Lowell Ewert of Conrad Grebel University College. The foreword is written by Susan Schultz Huxman.

Going Global with God as Mennonites for

the 21st Century. Walter Sawatsky. Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., 2018.

This book includes four lectures delivered at Bethel College as part of the Menno Simons Lectures in October 2014. Beginning with the Russian Mennonite experience in the 20th century, Sawatsky reflects on the global Mennonite experience. Sawatsky taught church history and mission at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) before his retirement in 2012.



Later Writings of the Swiss Anabaptists 1529-1592. C. Arnold Snyder, ed. Pandora Press, 2017, 609 pages.

Although early Swiss Anabaptist writings have long been available in English, this collection contains translated documents written by Anabaptists in Switzerland in the years after Schleithem. It includes letters, essays, court records and other writings by Anabaptists living in Switzerland in the later part of the 16th century.

Leviticus: Believers Church Bible Commentary. Perry B. Yoder. Herald Press, 2017, 344 pages.

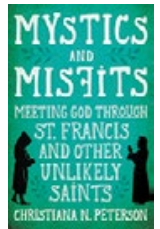
Now retired, Perry Yoder taught Old Testament at AMBS for 20 years. He believes that the worship rituals described in Leviticus are important because they teach us about God and how to be God's people. They also help us understand the New Testament.

Life at the End of Us Versus Them: Cross Culture Stories. Marcus Peter Rempel. Privately

published, 2017, 318 pages.

Although this book includes many philosophical and theological references, Rempel uses easy-to-read stories to reflect on what it means to be a Christian in today's world. He is refreshingly honest in his critique of modern culture and the future of the church. A discussion guide is also available.

Mystics and Misfits: Meeting God Through St. Francis and Other Unlikely Saints. Christiana N. Peterson. Herald Press, 2018, 263 pages.



Peterson weaves together reflections on St. Francis and mysticism with her experience of living in an intentional Mennonite community at Plow Creek in Illinois. As a mother with young children, she ponders her emotions as the community struggles to thrive. It is an interesting perspective on the Plow Creek community, which closed at the end of 2017.

Reflections on Science, Religion and Society: A Medical Perspective. Joseph B. Martin. Privately published with Friesen Press, 2017, 195 pages.

The author, who grew up in Alberta, retired from the faculty of Harvard Medical School in 2016. He has put together a collection of presentations he made to schools, churches and hospitals over many years, reflecting on the interconnection of faith and science.

The Upside-Down Kingdom: Anniversary Edition. Donald B. Kraybill. Herald Press, 2018, 320 pages.

This book, describing the radical aspect of Jesus' teachings, was first published in 1978, and re-issued in 1990, 2003 and 2011. This is an updated and revised 40th-anniversary edition. The book has been widely read and has been translated into seven languages. Discussion questions for each of the 12 chapters are included.

Why People Stop Believing. Paul Chamberlain. Cascade Books, 2018, 210 pages.

Chamberlain, director of the Institute for Christian Apologetics at Trinity Western University, provides rational arguments in defence of the existence of God and the authority of the New Testament. He carefully examines various arguments given by atheists

FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

and explains why they are inadequate.

History

Along the Road to Freedom: Mennonite Women of Courage and Faith. Ray Dirks. CMU Press and MHC



Gallery, 2017, 132 pages, full colour, hard cover.

This book includes 26 full-page prints of Ray Dirks's paintings that made up the exhibition of the same name. As well as the story of each of the featured women, Dirks gives an account of his journey with each painting and the sponsoring family.

Eastern Mennonite University: A Century of Countercultural Education. Donald B. Kraybill. Penn State Press, 2017, 424 pages.

This 100-year history of Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) includes the story of the relationship of the school and the denomination through the years. Kraybill, who is a 1967 graduate, has written many books and is known for his expertise in Amish studies.

Making a Difference in the Journey: The Geography of our Faith. Nancy V. Lee, ed., Cascadia Publishing House, 2017.

This is the fourth volume of a series of memoirs put together by the Anabaptist Center for Religion and Society based at EMU in Harrisonburg, Va. Among the 15 writers who reflect on how their life journeys have made a difference in integrating faith, life and Mennonite thought is Dick Benner, a former editor of *Canadian Mennonite*.

Re-Envisioning Service: The Geography of our Faith. Ray Gingerich and Pat Hostetter Martin, eds. Cascadia Publishing House, 2016, 404 pages.

Vol. 3 of the Anabaptist Center for Religion and Society collection includes memoirs from a variety of Church of the Brethren and Mennonite educators, editors, service workers and peacebuilders. Although most are well-known, only Margaret Jantzi Foth was born in Canada.

Stories of our Founders: Black Creek United Mennonite Church. Terrance James, ed.

Privately published, 2017.

This collection of memoirs, family profiles and stories celebrates the 80th anniversary of Black Creek United Mennonite Church. The first Mennonites arrived in this area on Vancouver Island in 1932; this United Mennonite Church was established in 1937.

The Exceptional Vera Good: A Life Beyond the Polka Dot Door. Nancy Silcox. CMU Press, 2017, 264 pages.

Born in 1915 near Waterloo, Ont., Vera Good did not have a traditional life as a Mennonite wife and mother. She pursued higher education and spent time in India doing voluntary service. She became a school inspector and worked for TVOntario in its early years.

The Quiet in the Land. Richard Toews. Self-published, 2017, 239 pages.

This historical novel is set in 1917 and includes the story of the Russian Revolution. Johann Toews, son of a Mennonite pastor, reflects on the contradictions between what the Mennonite church was teaching and its actions, and he considers joining the revolutionaries.

Other books

Fledge: Launching Your Kids Without Losing Your Mind. Brenda L. Yoder. Herald Press, 2017, 240 pages.

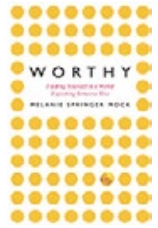
Using examples from her own parenting experience, the author examines the joys and pitfalls of caring for teenagers and older children. She expresses her own struggles with a potential empty nest. Each of the many short chapters ends with a prayer and questions for reflection.

Love Undocumented: Risking Trust in a Fearful World. Sarah Quezada. Herald Press, 2017, 196 pages.

The author explores the experience of those who live in the United States without legal documentation, comparing their situations to those of biblical characters. She exposes some of the injustices they experience. She speaks from a personal perspective as she dates, falls in love with, and marries someone who is undocumented.

Worthy: Finding Yourself in a World Expecting Someone Else. Melanie Springer Mock. Herald Press, 2018, 220 pages.

Using many personal anecdotes, the writer reflects on the numerous times throughout her life when she felt unworthy, including in the church. She advocates for accepting people as they are without judgment. Church book clubs should find this book eliciting lots of conversation.



Resources

Faith and Toleration: A Reformation Debate Revisited. C. Arnold Snyder. Canadian Mennonite University, 2017, online video lecture series.

Three online lectures from the combined J.J. Thiessen Lecture series and the John and Margaret Friesen Lectures are available through CommonWord or the CMU Media Centre. The three lectures are entitled: "Scripture alone, faith alone, toleration doubtful"; "Compel them to come in: The theology of intolerance examined"; and "Hiding in plain sight: Anabaptism and toleration in Switzerland."

Peace Lab: Discover God's Way of Peace. MennoMedia. 2018, boxed set.

This year's five-day Vacation Bible School curriculum explores ways of peace. It is again Bible-based and flexible to be used for a variety of ages. Each day's theme is centred on a Bible story and comes with many suggestions for songs, activities, games, worship and drama.

—**Compiled by Barb Draper,**
Books & Resources Editor

Many of the featured titles on the book list are available for purchase or to borrow from CommonWord Book Store and Resource Centre in Winnipeg. For more information, visit commonword.ca or call 1-877-846-1593.

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FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

BOOK REVIEW

A peace that ignores Jesus' atoning work

A Palestinian Theology of Liberation.

By Naim Stifan Ateek. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y., 2017; 172 pages.

REVIEWED BY HAROLD JANTZ

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Some years ago, in the book *The Body and the Blood*, reporter Charles Sennott of the *Boston Globe* lamented the Middle East's vanishing Christian population, many leaving because of the bitter conflicts there. They were needed, Sennott argued, because they represented a mediating force, even those not committed to pacifism.

Naim Ateek, an Anglican priest and co-founder of Sabeel, a liberation theological movement among Palestinian Christians, is committed to working for resolution of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, and ultimately for "reconciliation." This is what the modest *A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* is about.

His own Christian family was among the 750,000 Palestinians displaced in 1947 when Israel was given nation status and occupancy of 55 percent of the territory of the former Palestine, which later events increased even more.

In his book, he does a quick survey of the early history of the land and the recent developments that led to the State of Israel. Critical to his thinking, and to Sabeel, is the effort to reinterpret the image of God as seen from the first books of the Old Testament by the lens that Jesus provides.

The Jesus we know from the New Testament speaks in such different language and provides an example that is so different that Ateek concludes that some texts have "no moral or theological value." These are texts that he describes as texts of terror and exclusion, that reflect the "prejudice, bigotry and racism of tribal societies." They have been used by Israel



The Jesus we know from the New Testament speaks in such different language and provides an example that is so different that Ateek concludes that some texts have 'no moral or theological value.'

to justify taking the land that was once occupied by Palestinians or systematically create settlements in settings previously agreed on as belonging to Palestinians.

The Jesus whom Ateek finds in the New Testament is a Jesus "who lived under

occupation," and as the man Christ Jesus becomes the liberator of those facing injustice at the hands of superior powers, he becomes the example of inclusion rather than exclusion. He becomes the teacher and model of love for God and neighbour.

Albeit brief, the book takes us through a survey of texts in the Old Testament that begin to show a God who is not just the God of all the earth, but also one who is for the alien just as he was for Israel when they were aliens in Egypt.

Without minimizing the approach of this book, I have several serious difficulties with it. Fundamentally, it hesitates to accept the legitimacy of the Jewish claim to see a homeland in Israel, rooted both in its history and Scriptures. It minimizes the story of the Holocaust as a moral argument for such a homeland. It also minimizes the actions of Israel's Arab and Muslim neighbours, and of extremists among the Palestinians, that have been used by Israel to justify very harsh actions of its own. It essentially ignores Jesus Christ's atoning work on the cross, his death and resurrection, choosing instead to focus on his embrace of the outsider.

However intractable the issues might be, a solution for the conflict this book seeks to address will require all to lay down their arms, and accept one another's existence and their claims as having substance. Can that happen without also accepting the peace that Jesus on the cross represented? I wonder, although every effort at seeking peace is surely worth trying. ☸

Harold Jantz of Winnipeg is the retired editor of the Mennonite Brethren Herald and founding editor of ChristianWeek.

Naim Ateek is currently travelling in North America arguing for justice for Palestinians in nonviolent ways. To find out if he is speaking in a location near you, click on the "Events" link at canadianmennonite.org.



ARTBEAT

Singing into the future

Resonate committee members host fundraiser for new song collection

STORY AND PHOTO BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Manitoba Correspondent

WINNIPEG

Music is an integral part of Mennonite worship. Whether it's in church, at camp, at school or in everyday activities, songs have been faithful companions to Mennonites for centuries.

They can get so invested in music that it can be a point of unification but also a dispute that causes tension and division. The importance of music is why many people strive to keep Mennonite song collections in tune with the constantly evolving faith community.

More than 80 people from at least 16 different congregations across Manitoba gathered at Douglas Mennonite Church on March 11 to sing together, hear a progress report and raise funds for a new song and worship resources compilation that is currently being created.

Roughly every 25 years, Mennonite hymnals are re-examined and updated. Since *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, fondly known as “the blue hymnal,” was published in 1992, the time has come to once again review the current songbooks and create a new one. Resonate, a committee of 13 Mennonites from across Canada and the United States, was formed in 2016 to do just that.

Darryl Neustaedter Barg, Anneli Loepp Thiessen and Paul Dueck, members of Resonate, led the Winnipeg fundraiser. Old favourites like “What is This Place” and “My Life Flows On,” and new contributions like “Christ Be All Around Me” and a musical setting of “The Lord’s Prayer,” filled the sanctuary. Douglas Mennonite offered its space for the event free of charge.

The team was joined by Mennonite music legends Marilyn Houser Hamm and Henry Engbrecht, who reflected on the importance of singing in early Mennonites’ experiences and for the church today. Engbrecht emphasized the profound spiritual impact that congregational singing has on so many people’s faith journeys, as it did for him.

“This [hymnal] is a canon of the church’s life,” said Houser Hamm. “And it’s our history. Our identity.”

Many Mennonites agree and are asking the question, “So why are we changing it?”

“Well, because the world changes and the church changes, and what we sing needs to change, too,” said Neustaedter Barg, adding that it’s important to have a resource that reflects who the church is

today and how congregants currently worship. One part of this is connecting with the global Mennonite church and larger Christian church, he said.

Loepp Thiessen agreed that change is important because a song collection should represent and support the broad diversity of Mennonite churches and speak to their needs. “At this point in history, we need songs that bring people together and unite our church,” she said.

The committee has already met a handful of times, but there is still a lot of work to do before the 2020 release, said Neustaedter Barg. The tasks are to review every song in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story* (almost half of the new collection will be made up of material from these resources); sort through more than 2,200 submissions of song texts, tunes, readings and visual art; and investigate what songs are important in the wider Christian worship scene right now. Resonate is also working on an accompaniment edition, and projector and tablet friendly versions of the book. This is not a quick and easy job.

(Continued on page 26)



More than 80 people gathered at Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg on March 11 to sing together and raise funds for the new Mennonite worship and song collection.

/// Briefly noted

MennoFolk Manitoba celebrates 20th anniversary



Selena Dyck's piece, 'Esther's Recipe,' was an entry in the 20th annual MennoFolk art exhibition.

WINNIPEG—Much feasting and festivities took place on March 24 at X-Cues, a Winnipeg café and lounge, in celebration of MennoFolk Manitoba's 20th anniversary. MennoFolk is an organization that hosts events to showcase music and art by people connected with the Mennonite community, either culturally or theologically. The Manitoba chapter started in 1998 as an outdoor music festival at Camp Assiniboia before moving to its current model in the city. It is the only Canadian chapter of MennoFolk left. The theme for this year's event, "Pause to celebrate," was a chance to reflect on 20 years of Mennonites and art, and dream about the future of that relationship. Poetry, photos, paintings, collages and many other pieces of art lined the walls, including an exhibit of every MennoFolk Manitoba event poster since the first event and clips of MennoFolk coverage that have been written over the years. Copious amounts of zwieback, pickles, cheese and sausage were eaten at the fasha meal. Four musical acts—Paul Bergman, Whizbang Shufflers, Katie MacDonald and Kenzie Jane—entertained the audience and the night even ended with some dancing.

—BY NICOLIEN
KLASSEN-WIEBE

(Continued from page 25)

The team is divided into three committees to look at song tunes, song texts and worship resources. Other than project director Bradley Kauffman and each committee's editor, all the committee members are volunteers. Yet there are still a lot of costs for creating a new songbook. The expected development cost is almost US\$700,000, of which \$431,000 has been raised so far.

MennoMedia, the publisher of the new song collection, is a small organization that doesn't have the funds to develop the resource itself. The project is entirely funded by donations, which also help keep the resource more affordable for congregations, according to Steve Carpenter from MennoMedia, who spoke at the fundraiser. Additionally, MennoMedia has created the opportunity for donors to have names placed in the back of the hymnal, starting at a minimum donation of \$500. Different donation levels give different benefits.

The hymn sing fundraiser in Winnipeg raised almost \$2,200 and followed eight other events of a similar nature across Canada and the U.S.

"The hymn sing at Douglas went really well; it was tons of fun," said Loepp Thiessen. "I think it was an accurate representation of what our experience as committee members is like: lots of laughing, singing and learning. When I hear the singing, something stirs in my heart, and I know that these are my people and this is my church." ❧

Discover more about the new *Mennonite Worship and Song Collection* at mennomedia.org/resonate.



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Schools Directory featuring Rockway Mennonite Collegiate

Father, son laud athletics program at Rockway

Athletics has had a large impact in my life during my six years at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener. In high school alone, I have spent over a thousand hours on 18 teams across five sports to reach nine Central Western Ontario championships and four provincial championships.

Athletics has taught me how to act in ways consistent with my Christian beliefs and values even when circumstances get rocky and emotions run high. I have learned the importance of resilience and determination in the face of adversity, and enjoyed the satisfaction of accomplishing goals with teammates. It is through Rockway athletics that I have done a lot of maturing, learning and becoming the person I am today. Physical activity has allowed me to relieve stress, and refresh and stimulate my brain.

Rockway athletics provided a second place for me to call home. I continuously formed new and strong friendships with teammates

who committed their time, energy and bodies to develop skills, overcome adversity and achieve common goals.

JAMES CARR-PRIES (SON)

Athletics at Rockway creates a healthy and supportive community for our family. The teachers that coach create a positive atmosphere that encourages participation, focusing on health, leadership, sportsmanship and Christian actions.

James travels all around Ontario and witnesses many large crowds, but none of them measure up to those in our own gym. Rockway's boisterous and supportive crowds strengthen the community and create enjoyable, lively and memorable events, with many faculty, staff, alumni, students and parents in attendance.

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ROCKWAY MENNONITE COLLEGIATE PHOTO

James Carr-Pries sets up a shot for the Rockway Flames.

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young voices



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHNNY WIDEMAN

'I understand God through inspiration,' says writer Johnny Wideman of Stouffville, Ont.

Different stages

Theatre of the Beat's Johnny Wideman talks about his short story collection, To Aid Digestion

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

Most people know Johnny Wideman as a playwright and the artistic director for Theatre of the Beat, the social justice-oriented troupe behind plays like *This Will Lead to Dancing* and *Yellow Bellies*. Now Wideman has released *To Aid Digestion*, a collection of 26 original short stories and poems. Canadian Mennonite called the 30-year-old at his home in Stouffville, Ont., to discuss the book.

CM: People know you as a playwright, but how long have you been writing short stories? How did that come about?

JW: Not very long—probably since around 2010. I guess I started writing short stories as a way of keeping my skills sharp between plays. I started reading Roald Dahl and I had a book of his short stories and I was captivated by the idea of what you could communicate in just a short period of time. It became a bit of a practice on brevity for me, trying to condense a large idea into a small amount of pages.

CM: Do you have a favourite story in the collection?

JW: There are a couple stories in here that are true stories, which is kind of a new thing for me. I've always dramatized events and I've always written somewhat ideologically, where I explore a belief system through a character, and then as I write that character I'm basically saying, okay, how would [the character with] this belief system react in this situation?

I think that's useful for political theatre and for trying to create social change through theatre, [like] what we do with Theatre of the Beat, but it's not very personal. It kind of distances me and my thoughts sometimes from the work at hand.

For me, this project was [about] wanting

to be personal and wanting to write about what I wanted to write about, and not even necessarily consider who the audience might be. It made it a lot more honest.

CM: Tell me about your mantra, "Find inspiration at all costs."

JW: I think I understand God through inspiration—this idea of this presence that you feel that is good and is creative. Inspiration is what causes creativity, it's what causes things to exist.

I think that it has really driven me in terms of what I create and how I create—feeling inspired about a social issue or feeling inspired about an artistic idea, and that being almost like the cup of coffee that kind of gets me going and gets me driven and feeling like I'm doing this for a purpose, I'm doing this because I believe in it.

I think it's very rarely that a bad idea or a non-benevolent thing comes out of inspiration. I think it is a purely good force, which is probably why I connect it to God in some ways. . . . The trick for me has been [finding inspiration] through play. I've been really trying to [make] time to play because I think that that is what makes me feel inspired.

At 28, I took up skateboarding again, which is kind of embarrassing at the skateboard park with these eight-year-olds



To Aid Digestion was published late last year. The book features 26 short stories and poems by Johnny Wideman.

giving me tips and stuff, and when I fall they all rush over to see if the old man's okay.

But it's been really good because I'm doing something purely for the sake of doing it. I have no illusions of becoming a professional skateboarder, and [I'm] just

and trust that it's still very universal and will connect with an audience. . . .

With Theatre of the Beat, I know who my audience is. I'm writing in many cases for the Mennonite community. I'm thinking about how I can challenge this community, what I can say to this community,

I think it's very rarely that a bad idea or a non-benevolent thing comes out of inspiration. I think it is a purely good force, which is probably why I connect it to God in some ways.

kind of making choices like that, where I'm working at something because it's fun and it excites me and it inspires me.

Those experiences have been really leaching into my life, and I think I've been able to feel more inspired in my personal relationships and the work that I'm doing. It's helped me put things into perspective in a very helpful and useful way.

CM: *What is the greatest lesson you've learned about writing?*

JW: I think it's been to trust your instinct. I've learned that I just need to trust myself and not try to write what I think an audience wants to hear or needs to hear, but just try to write from my own place and what I'm wrestling with and dealing with,

which has been tricky at times.

Through [writing] the short stories, this has been the thing that I've learned: I do have a lot to say, and it's easier to write when I'm not overthinking it and when I'm just writing from this honest place, and to try to just be confident in that.

I think if there's such a thing as a voice for a writer, that's where I've found my voice: Just writing what comes naturally to me. I really do think that has come through in this collection. ✎

This interview has been edited and condensed. For more information, visit johnnywideman.wordpress.com.



Writing short stories has been a learning experience for Johnny Wideman, pictured with one of his Theatre of the Beat colleagues, Rebecca Steiner.



'With Theatre of the Beat, I know who my audience is,' says Johnny Wideman, pictured here performing in This Will Lead to Dancing.

Converting to Catholicism

After growing up Mennonite, James DeGurse has found his home in the Roman Catholic Church

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

It's not every day you meet a Mennonite whose faith journey has led him to the Catholic church, but that's James DeGurse's story.

Baptized as an infant in the Anglican church, DeGurse spent his formative years at Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. After worshipping at an Anglican church for a year or two, he began attending a Catholic church at the age of 18.

He formally converted to Roman Catholicism a few years ago after completing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, a program for adults who want to enter the Catholic church. Now 22, he attends Holy Cross Roman Catholic Parish, located in Winnipeg's historic St. Boniface neighbourhood.

DeGurse says his journey to Catholicism began when he was a pre-teen.

(Continued on page 30)



James DeGurse attends Holy Cross Roman Catholic Parish in Winnipeg.



I've come to really like things like icons and crucifixes as ways to help me pray,' James DeGurse says.

(Continued from page 29)

"From early on, I just really liked to read about Christianity and faith matters," he says. "When you're 12, you're not reading [theologian] Karl Barth or anything like that, but you find interesting things to read on the internet, and that's when I first started reading about Catholicism"

One of the biggest things that attracted him to Catholicism was the way the Roman Catholic Church traces its history from the present back to the apostles of the early church. "I felt very strongly that it's important for me to be in this apostolic community that has this historical lineage," he says. "Christianity, at least in my mind, is not just a set of ideas or doctrines. I really

faith was something people aren't supposed to talk about.

"At CMU, I'm surrounded by people who take faith seriously," he says. "So even if we have disagreements, I really appreciate that common ground. Being able to dialogue with people has been really cool, and even to be able to disagree with people in love has been really nice."

He believes that Catholics have something to learn from Mennonites. "At least in my experience, Catholics can learn from Mennonites this kind of radical hospitality that I've encountered at CMU," he says. "I think Catholics could also learn from the Mennonite peace tradition. . . . There is a strain of militaristic thinking among

*'There's this idea that the world is good, that it's good to enjoy life—to dance, to even smoke a pipe.'
(James DeGurse, of his embrace of Catholicism)*

became convinced it is a specific community, established by Christ, carried on throughout the centuries."

He finds Catholicism life-giving because, at its best it affirms the physical world. He points to a quote from the famous Catholic convert, G.K. Chesterton: "In Catholicism, the pint, the pipe and the cross can all fit together."

"It's a sacramental religion," DeGurse says. "There's this idea that the world is good, that it's good to enjoy life—to dance, to even smoke a pipe."

The structure of Catholicism and its adherence to the liturgical year is also life-giving for him. He describes it as "kind of breathing with the church. It's as if the church is a living organism, so when I'm participating in something like Lent, I'm participating in the life of the church."

The beauty of Catholicism appeals to DeGurse. "I've come to really like things like icons and crucifixes as ways to help me pray. I think that's very human because we're physical beings and because Jesus became a human being. I think it makes sense to encounter him through physical things like crucifixes."

DeGurse is currently studying theology at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). He enjoys it, especially having come from a public school background, where he felt

certain Catholics that I don't think is very Christian."

At the same time, Mennonites have something to learn from Catholics. "I would say that Mennonites can learn from Catholics a greater respect for tradition maybe, or for the faith that's kind of come before us," he says. "I'm very aware of how much splintering there is in Protestantism in general, and among Mennonites in particular. So to have reading the Bible tempered by, or helped by, a strong sense of Christian tradition, I think that might be helpful."

One of the experiences he has most appreciated during his time at CMU was when he led a worship team at Wednesday Night Worship, a weekly gathering for students living in residence. "It was just getting together with Christians [of] all stripes and just being able to worship together and to make something beautiful," he says.

"I really liked that, especially because something like that . . . transcends doctrinal differences in a way," he adds. "I think theological differences are really important, and it's really important to be able to discuss them, but when you worship together, you find a unity that sort of goes beyond theology." ❧



'At CMU, I'm surrounded by people who take faith seriously,' says James DeGurse, centre, with fellow students Marnie Klassen and Kenny Wollmann.

Calendar

British Columbia

May 3: Hear and See, a poetry reading and artist talk by 14 poets and artists who deal with the theme of mental illness through words and images, at the Reach Gallery Museum, Abbotsford, at 7 p.m. The exhibit continues until May 6.

May 5: Women's Inspirational Day. Speaker: Elsie Rempel.

May 6: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. presents "Seven Points on Earth," Paul Plett's latest film, at the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium, Abbotsford, at 7 p.m. For more information, call 604-853-6177.

Alberta

April 28: "Canadian Mennonite" benefit concert by the Janzen Boys and Art Koop, at the Cardell Theatre, Calgary, at 7 p.m. To reserve seats, email office@trinity.mennonitechurch.ab.ca.

Saskatchewan

April 21: ReLearning Community taster day at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

April 22: Closing service for the 1910 Langham Zoar Mennonite Church building.

April 28: Spring Banquet in the Wood fundraiser for Parkland Restorative Justice, at 6 p.m. at the Prince Albert Wildlife Federation. For more information, email heather@parklandrj.com.

Manitoba

April 28: Women's retreat at Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Theme: "Resilience Road: Solidarity, steps and strategies for travelling well. Speaker: Moira Somers. For more information, email eprempel@gmail.com.

April 28,29: Faith and Life Women's Chorus and Male Choir present their spring concert, Send Forth Thy Spirit; (28) at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.; (29) at Steinbach Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m.

May 11: Opening of an exhibit by Gabriella Aguero at the Mennonite

Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit gallery.mennonitechurch.ca.

May 14: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate bursary banquet, at the Canad Inns Polo Park, Winnipeg. For more information, visit westgatemenonite.ca.

Ontario

Until 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.

April 13-15: Dinner theatre at Floradale Mennonite Church: "Family ties through thick and thin: The story of a family losing the older generation," by Barb Draper; (13,14) at 7:30 p.m.; (15) at 2:30 p.m. For dinner tickets, call the church at 519-669-2861.

April 20: Conrad Grebel University College's Peace and Conflict Studies program celebrates its 40th anniversary with "Pursuing peace: Stories from home and abroad," at the University of Waterloo's Federation Hall; alumni networking at 5:30 p.m., followed by a gala dinner at 6. Keynote speaker: Bob Rae, former Ontario premier. For more information, or to register, visit uwaterloo.ca/grebel/pacs-gala.

April 28: Pax Christi Chorale presents "The Creation" by Haydn, at Grace Church on-the-Hill, Toronto, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit paxchristichorale.org.

April 30: New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale promotion dinner, at Bingeman's Marshall Hall, at 6:30 p.m. Speaker: Sarah Martin Mills, founder of Growing Hope Farms. Tickets available online at nhmrs.com.

April 30 or May 1: Spring seniors retreat, at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, with speaker Marianne Mellinger. Theme: "Green and full of sap." For more information, or to register, visit hiddenacres.ca.

May 1: Naim Ateek, founding director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, will speak on "The Bible, justice and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: A Palestinian theology of liberation," at Conrad

Grebel University College, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m.

May 4-6: Silver Lake Mennonite Camp spring work weekend. For more information, or to register, email the camp at fun@slmc.ca.

May 5: Menno Singers presents

Come Joy and Singing, at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, at 7:30 p.m.

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



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities




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We at First Mennonite Church Edmonton are a multi-generational, urban church of approximately 180, guided by Anabaptist theology and principles. God has called us to be an inclusive, affirming, Christian community. Members and adherents are actively involved in church/community ministries and programs.

Preaching, worship planning and pastoral care are all important to the congregation, but we recognize that some pastors might excel more in some areas than others. Master of Divinity/Theology or equivalent training or experience is desirable.

More information is available on the church website: edmonton1st.mennonitechurch.ab.ca and at Mennonite Church Alberta: www.mennonitechurch.ab.ca

Inquiries, resumes and letters of interest may be directed to the chair of the search committee, Adela Wedler at mwedler@shaw.ca



**Employment opportunity
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