

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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EDITORIAL

Be on the lookout for 'pockets of joy'

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

In the first week I started in this role, a former reader told me she didn't read *Canadian Mennonite* anymore because it didn't have enough joy. Ouch!

We Mennonites do take ourselves very seriously. We trudge the hard road of discipleship taking to heart Jesus' call to "take up your cross and follow me." We strive to make our Christian life a matter of right believing and right living. This often involves scrutinizing our own lives—and the lives of others—to see if we measure up to the

Bible study, and encouragement to hope.



"Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God," said the philosopher-theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. A pastor I know has a whole book of artwork depicting Jesus in good humour—grinning, smiling, laughing! This pastor loves

the stories of parties in the Bible and suggests that God loves a good party too!

The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible offers almost 200 instances of the word "joy" and related terms like "joyful" and "joyfully." Verses in Isaiah promise "joy

A pastor I know has a whole book of artwork depicting Jesus in good humour—grinning, smiling, laughing!

high standards of the gospel.

In those high standards, where is deep joy found?

Yes, the pages of *Canadian Mennonite* sometimes carry the controversies of the day, the critiques, the bad news of injustice and pain. They are part of our life together. But we also try to pay attention to the good news present in our church body and in the world. While the word "joy" is absent from this current issue—until now!—turn the pages or scroll the website to spot traces of good news. There are reports on generosity, trust in the Holy Spirit, work in peacemaking, growth in faith through

and gladness," and the Apostle Paul finds joy in the believers he has nourished and mentored. In some of his last words to the disciples, Jesus reassures them: "You will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy" (John 16:20). He reminds them to abide in their heavenly Parent "so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:11).

Many things around us offer despair and cynicism. (Have you been on Twitter recently?) For those of us who see the glass half empty, those of us who identify with gloomy Eeyore, here is the challenge: to seek joy; to search for God present and at

work in the events and people of our lives.

What brings joy—to you as an individual, to your congregation, in your places of work and leisure? Here is an invitation to take a joy "treasure hunt" in our everyday lives, to grab hold of "pockets of joy." Because surely God will be there too, faithfully encouraging and sustaining.

In the meantime, I commit to keep looking for—and helping to tell—stories of joy.

The psalmist declares to God, "You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

May it be so.

Introducing Betty Avery, Graphic Designer

Betty Avery grew up on a multi-generational farm outside Ottawa. She was baptized as an infant in the United Church, and although she herself is not Mennonite, she has surrounded herself with a large group of friends and family from the Mennonite community in Kitchener-Waterloo. She came to Waterloo for university back in 2008, where she studied fine art, moved to Toronto in 2014 to study graphic design, and has now settled with her partner Lucas back in Kitchener. In her spare time, you can find her painting, spending time with friends and spoiling her favourite little feline, Minx.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Michael Neufeld, left, works on one of the timbers used to frame Shekinah Retreat Centre's newest cabin, while Sheila Wiens-Neufeld and James Funk hold the timber in place. See story on page 14.

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Guiding values:

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

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

• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

When church doesn't feel safe

BY CAROL PENNER
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE



Mennonites have often tolerated or ignored hurtful behaviour. We sometimes lack the courage or energy to address it directly with those who have offended. We want to avoid conflict. We expect the hurt parties to be quiet and absorb their pain.

There is a new culture in North America around sexual harassment and abuse. The social media hashtag #MeToo is everywhere, and we are starting to address abusive behaviour in the church with the hashtag #ChurchToo.

Most Mennonite churches today have safe place policies that seek to prevent and address abuse. We know about our duty to report and call the police. But what happens if the behaviour is hurtful yet below the threshold of reporting to police? What happens if it's between church members or between minors of the same age?

Examples of hurtful behaviour (all names are pseudonyms)

- **PAUL**, a church council member, starts raising his voice at their meeting. Paul eventually storms out. This isn't the first time he has lost his temper. People are starting to walk on eggshells whenever they are with Paul.
- **A GROUP** is working to cater a meal at church. Gina, a relative newcomer, steps out of the kitchen. While she is gone, Mary, a long-time member, says negative things about her. Someone stands up for Gina, but Mary's words hang poisonously in the air.
- **TWELVE-YEAR-OLD ABIGAIL** gets into the church van for a junior youth event, and a boy her age reaches out and touches her breast as she takes her seat. She is embarrassed and upset. She tells her mother when she gets home.
- **MEMBERS OF** a youth group speculate on Facebook about 16-year-old Trevor's sexual orientation, using negative language. It's on a public post, and many people see it, including Trevor.
- **SIXTY-YEAR-OLD PETER** is always seeking out Serena, a woman in her 20s, at church events, or staring at her. Serena



'The Murder of Amnon at the Feast of Absalom' by Gaspare Traversi, 1752.

avoids answering his personal questions about her life. She gets up when he sits next to her, but the behaviour continues. It makes her so uncomfortable that she is reluctant to come to church.

Whenever people get together, hurtful things can happen. But when they happen in a community based on the love of Jesus, these things can be especially unsettling. A church is a spiritual home.

There are healthy and unhealthy ways to react to someone being hurt. Here are some unhealthy approaches I've observed or experienced in Mennonite churches.

Hoping the problem will go away by itself

Mennonites have often tolerated or ignored hurtful behaviour. We sometimes lack the courage or energy to address it directly with those who have offended. We want to avoid conflict. We expect the hurt parties to be quiet and absorb their pain.

We may excuse the offenders' behaviour by trying to understand why they are acting a certain way. Perhaps Paul has financial troubles, or Mary is struggling with depression.

We justify our inaction by saying that love bears all things. We model ourselves after Jesus who said, *"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."* We pray for a change of heart for the offenders. We hope that their consciences will kick in and they will feel bad about what they've done, and then change.

There are some pretty major downsides to this approach. Offenders may never realize what they've done, and they may continue the behaviour and hurt others. Sometimes those who hurt others know exactly what they are doing; they are manipulative and they get their own way through intimidation. Ignoring their behaviour only enables them.

Is it healthy for a church community to simply accept that some members will be mistreated? Is it realistic to think that the victims' anger and hurt will disappear?

Minimizing hurtful behaviour

We don't want our churches to be a place where we are treated badly. We have a lot invested in our congregations, and that's why sometimes we minimize hurtful behaviour. We tell ourselves, "Well, perhaps Paul really wasn't yelling, it just felt that way."

Buried emotions can come out in unhealthy ways. This approach is taken by Absalom in II Samuel 13, who told his sister Tamar, who had been raped, 'Don't take this to heart.'

We can try to shrug off our hurt feelings: "I'm not going to let it bother me." We advise others to minimize things as well. Serena is told she is being too sensitive: "He's just that way, don't let it bother you." Or young Abigail is told that the boy didn't touch her on purpose: "It was probably an accident."

We choose this approach because confronting offenders can be complicated. Perhaps the one who transgressed is a major giver to the church or is part of a powerful family, in which case a confrontation would be too costly. Or maybe we just can't be bothered.

Downsides to this approach are that the person who has offended is never confronted, and the bad behaviour may continue. In this approach, people who are hurt are expected to deny or bury their feelings. Buried emotions can come out in unhealthy ways. This approach is taken by Absalom in II Samuel 13, who told his sister Tamar, who had been raped, "Don't take this to heart." That story doesn't end well: he plotted revenge against his abusive brother, Amnon.

Treating this as a problem between individuals

When people are treated badly in church and the hurting party complains, we often treat it as a problem that the parties have to solve themselves. We cite Matthew 18: the victim should go to the offender and confront him or her. If that doesn't work, the hurting person takes someone along for another try.

But sometimes the Matthew 18 model can't work. Using it, we assume a flat

model of church life, in which all are equal and can speak up for themselves. But will Trevor feel safe sitting down with a group of his peers who have written hateful things about him online? Will 20-year-old Serena feel safe being alone with Peter after his intrusive actions? Even if Serena takes someone with her, her goal is to see him less, not spend more time with him.

Sexism or prejudice about sexual orientation is a problem in the church community. It is not simply a conflict between two people. Those who are victimized are already hurt. Is it fair to expect them to help educate the person who hurt them?

Matthew 18 actually doesn't end with individualizing the problem; verse 17 suggests that the whole church can get involved. Many are scared to do this, perhaps because of historical negative experiences with communal church discipline.

Best practices

Hurtful things do happen in church, and we need to be prepared to deal with them. Instead of choosing unhealthy responses, churches can be pro-active and start thinking about best practices.

Healthy community life needs to be nurtured; it doesn't just happen. Basic guidelines for congregational behaviour can be outlined. Sermons, Sunday school classes and Bible study groups can talk about respect. They can suggest what to do when things go wrong between people in church.

We will understand conflict better in the church if we understand power dynamics. We can discuss how age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, race, or even being a newcomer to the country, impacts how we feel in community.

Healthy community life is modelled. Young people are watching. They learn when a person's hurt feelings are taken seriously and when others come to their aid. They also learn when an offending person is lovingly addressed and given an invitation to make things right and change unhealthy patterns. A church is a community that cares.

Maybe concerned friends can sit with

Paul or Mary and explain the effects of their behaviour. They have used words and actions to create an environment that doesn't feel safe. Friends can help them unpack this and suggest ways to address the hurt.

When Abigail, Trevor and Serena are believed, concerned community members can ask what they would like to see done. Perhaps it will be an apology by the offending person, but that isn't always what is wanted.

Perhaps it is education for the whole junior youth group about respecting each other's boundaries, and what happens when boundaries are crossed. Perhaps it will be training in the church about gossip and the impact of name-calling, both in person and online.

Perhaps Paul could be offered counseling to become more aware of the social cues he is ignoring. In the meantime, someone could accompany Paul to make sure he stays away from Serena.

Some conflicts in the church are very complicated. It's important to have policies that address emotional abuse between church members, and not just

sexual abuse of minors or misconduct by church leaders. Policies provide prayerfully discerned frameworks, so that if something inappropriate happens that cannot be easily solved, we know who should act, and how.

The best thing is for the church to try to prevent hurtful behaviour. Take the opportunity to have conversations about power, love and sin in the congregation. Consider together how our life as disciples of Jesus shapes us into a community that cares, that watches, that intervenes when someone is hurt. This will help us be prepared when it does happen again. ❧

Carol Penner is assistant professor of theological studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont. She has been a pastor in three different congregations. See her "Policies for safe places: A checklist for churches" online at bit.ly/2EFSdQn.



For discussion

1. Does your congregation have a safe church policy? How effective is it in keeping people safe? In what circumstances would you feel compelled to get the police involved? How does your congregation deal with emotional abuse or other hurtful behaviour that is not illegal? Are written policies a helpful way to reduce harm?
2. Carol Penner writes, "Mennonites have often tolerated or ignored hurtful behaviour." Do you agree? Why might we tend to ignore or minimize unkind behaviour? At what point does it become a concern for the entire congregation?
3. Penner gives five examples of hurtful behaviour that might happen in a congregation. If these incidents happened at your church, how would they be handled? Are there situations where the Matthew 18 model could make the situation worse? Have you come across situations where there seems to be no solution?
4. What behaviour would you classify as emotional abuse? Whose responsibility is it to deal with inappropriate actions in the congregation? If you felt you were the victim of hurtful behaviour, to whom would you go for help?

—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.

✉ Spiritual directors thanked for their Lenten prayer guide

RE: "LENTEN PRAYER sheet reflects Lululemon spirituality" letter, March 12, page 7.

The references to the Lenten prayer guide as "scriptural soundbites, social-justice propaganda and Lululemon theology" that is "hacking away at the roots of faith" are inflammatory rhetoric that is unproductive, not to mention deeply unkind. Members have the right to agree and disagree, and take to task things happening in the church, but if we call names or use mockery to express ourselves, we are headed for worse than disagreement.

I thank the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern
(Continued on page 8)

FROM OUR LEADERS

Trusting the Spirit

VIRGINIA GERBRANDT RICHERT

At our annual Mennonite Church Manitoba delegates meeting in Winnipeg in March, I concluded my time as a member of the regional church board. I served on this board as a rep from the southern area of Manitoba for six years (two full terms).

I joined the board in the middle of a pretty intense churchwide discussion about the future of our camping ministry. The board had made a proposal to close and sell one of our three area church (now regional church) camps, and the responses were not favourable. At my first delegates meeting as a board member the delegates spoke loud and clear and rejected the board's proposal.

This was a hard time to be involved in leadership. Finances were not what they had been, neither were camper or staffing numbers, and some changes were needed. So when the first camping ministry proposal was rejected we, as a board, had to spend some time re-grouping and asking some hard questions. We had to evaluate our role as leaders, we had to

assess the dynamics of our situation, and we had to carefully process the heart-felt responses from our delegates and congregations.

It took the board a few years before we brought another proposal regarding camping ministry to the delegates. And this time the delegates were much more receptive. We had spent time listening to their concerns and also being more



I am grateful that we found a way to trust that God's Spirit was leading us.

transparent about our issues. Selling one of our camp properties was nobody's first choice, but when we focussed on the ministry that we were doing and our goal of keeping that going, downsizing our properties seemed more acceptable.

This issue continued in some way throughout most of my time on the board and, though it was tiring at times, I am glad for the experience. I learned a lot about leading together as a board, trusting the delegates to make the right decision and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

When we were first re-grouping as a board our conversations together were very important. We were each other's support systems. We shared our discouragements with one another and had to discern together how we would move forward. We had to decide whether we would stay in a space of rejection or whether we would hear the decision by the delegates as a leading by the Holy Spirit.

I am grateful that we found a way to trust that God's Spirit was leading us. Without that sense of trust in God we would not have been able to see our way through another discussion. And without

that sense of trust in each other, and in our delegate body, we would not have been able to constructively move forward.

It is my hope and prayer that as MC Manitoba and the other regional churches move forward, they may continue to find ways to trust one another, and seek after and trust that God's Spirit is leading them.

Virginia Gerbrandt Richert is associate pastor of Berghthaler Mennonite Church of Altona, Man.

(Continued from page 7)

Canada writers for the biblical study, thoughtful time and prayerful work they put into the 2018 “Lenten Guided Prayer Experience,” called “The courage to covenant,” that focusses on our relationships with God, each other and creation.

They risked public criticism and the questioning of their faith by referring to LGBTQ Christians

in a positive way—one small point in a dozen pages of guided prayer and biblical reflection—noting the “life-giving/life-saving significance” of the rainbow as a symbol of “safety and belonging.”

I recently heard a gay speaker affirm the importance of rainbow stickers in public places, small assurances that he is entering a place of safety and respect, where he doesn’t need to worry about how he or his family

FAMILY TIES

Life-giving touch

MELISSA MILLER

Many years ago, a boyfriend who subsequently became my husband gave me a book about touch and its essential place in human well-being. At the time, touch was a delightful dynamic in our new relationship. Within the boundaries of our Christian ethics, we explored physical intimacies, one of the expressions of our deepening love.

Then and now, I’m grateful for the men of my life who have touched me in honourable, life-giving ways. I’m grateful for my parents who taught and modelled healthy boundaries, and for each of my siblings who respected such teaching. I’m grateful for the many friends who know just when to fold me in a warm hug, give my shoulder an encouraging squeeze, or in other ways communicate their affection and respect through touch. And I’m grateful for a life unscathed by sexual assault or abuse.

Along with the gratitude, I feel deep sorrow for the many who have not been similarly spared. The last couple of years have been particularly troubling, as an enormous wave of revelations has put sexual abuse before us daily, publicly. Across society, in politics, entertainment, business and education, the great unmasking of sexual wrongdoing has brought “open secrets” into the open air. Christians, too, have their own sobering task to recognize



and hold responsible the clergy who have crossed sexual boundaries.

Some of my discouragement comes with a long view. For more than 25 years, I’ve been tending the sexual wounds of others. Part of what sustained me in the early years was a belief that we were making progress. With more teaching and more awareness, we would create healthier, stronger families and communities. I imagined all children would be safe in camps and clubs, and at sporting activities. I imagined women would go out for a walk or to a party without fear of sexual assault. I imagined that people who seek spiritual, emotional healing would be cared for by pastors and counsellors who honoured such sacred trust.

My previous, possibly naïve, hope flickers with each new account I hear of an athlete molested by a coach; of a young woman assaulted on a date; of actors or

Along with the gratitude, I feel deep sorrow for the many who have not been similarly spared.

business people threatened with career destruction unless they “cooperate”; of a congregant wounded by a pastor’s disturbing attention. Jesus’ condemnation, as recorded in Matthew 18, of those who harm children or cause little ones to stumble, strengthens my flagging resolve.

Recently, I reviewed my personal history, this time adding in several

uncomfortable incidents:

- **AS A** young teenager, sitting in a darkened movie theatre when a stranger stroked my neck; I moved quickly out of his way.
- **THE CO-WORKER** who patted my bum repeatedly, in spite of my clearly stated objections.
- **A CO-WORKER** in another setting who joked frequently about having an affair with me. I imagine he didn’t mean it, and that he thought it was funny. But I didn’t. It was demeaning and disrespectful; it was gender-specific harassment.

Perhaps the great reveal occurring now will usher in a new era. Perhaps the safe, respectful policies being implemented in workplaces, businesses and churches will ride the heels of #MeToo, and substantially change the oppressive power dynamics that have for too long permitted sexual abuse to occur.

Two probing questions from Catholic priest Daniel Berrigan may guide us into deeper, more wholesome understandings of touch. Berrigan asks (and I paraphrase): “Whose flesh are you touching and why?”

Whose flesh are you violating and why?”

Of course, there’s much more that could be said. Even so, such questions might call us to account . . . and to holy touch.

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

will be received. I can't fully understand what that is like but I can try to learn, and the prayer sheets help in one small way.

I'm thankful for a mention of the Seventh Generation Principle "found in many Indigenous cultures" about our effect on the environment.

I'm also thankful for the use of "Eternal One," "Holy One" and "Godself" alongside the male names for

God. We worship God, not gender, and the variety of names and metaphors for God in the Bible direct us so.

KRISTEN MATHIES, WATERLOO, ONT.

The author is a member of Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.

GOD, MONEY AND ME

Cascading generosity

KEVIN DAVIDSON

Many of us have experienced the way generosity seems to grow when we pay it forward. This phenomenon is even backed up by scientific research, which suggests that just witnessing acts of generosity can inspire people to be more generous in their own lives. One of the most exciting aspects of my job at Abundance Canada is seeing firsthand the way generosity grows in the hearts and homes of our clients. Their stories never fail to inspire me to stretch a little further out of my own generosity comfort zone.

Ryan and Elizabeth Smith (pseudonyms) experienced very different upbringings. From an early age, Elizabeth saw her parents give their time and money to the church and various other charities, and she learned early on to deeply value generosity. Ryan didn't grow up with that kind of influence.

As newlyweds, the Smiths' early years were punctuated by differences of opinion on how to manage the household finances. This disconnection was especially strong when it came to charitable giving. As their family grew, Elizabeth was eager to model the same object lessons in generosity she had learned from her parents. Over time, Ryan's generosity grew, as charitable giving became a regular part of life in their household.

Years later, the couple received a

generous gift of private company shares in the family farm. Grateful as they were, neither they nor their grown children were interested in farming, so they discussed the idea of selling their shares back to the farming corporation. They hadn't given much thought to what they would do with the proceeds of the sale, so Elizabeth's mother suggested they meet with her wealth advisor. During that meeting, the advisor introduced the idea of giving private company shares to charity, and the Smiths decided to donate a quarter of the sale proceeds. They went home feeling good about their decision.

While reading the Bible one day, Ryan and Elizabeth came across Acts 4:36-37: "*Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the*

facilitate the donation of private company shares. As a result, the Smiths donated all \$500,000 of their private company shares to Abundance Canada, and the farm corporation subsequently purchased the shares from Abundance Canada. The Smiths received a \$500,000 charitable receipt from Abundance Canada, and the proceeds from the sale of the shares were added to their gifting account.

Today, the Smiths and their children are enjoying the convenience and flexibility of being able to choose when and how much they wish to donate to the charities they care about. Seeing their joy reminds me of Paul's assurance to the Corinthians that "*he will make you rich in every way so that you can always give freely*" (II Corinthians 9:11, NIV).

The Smiths' story is a wonderful example of generosity cascading from generation to generation, touching the hearts of an entire family. In turn, many people



Over time, Ryan's generosity grew, as charitable giving became a regular part of life in their household.

apostles called Barnabas (which means 'son of encouragement'), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet" (NIV). The next time the Smiths met with their wealth advisor, he challenged them to consider donating more, if not all, of the proceeds to charity. Reflecting further on the Scripture, and after a short discussion, they agreed to donate all the money.

During this time, the Smiths' wealth advisor introduced them to me, and we discussed how Abundance Canada could

have benefitted from their generosity.

Perhaps even by reading this account of the Smiths' experience, you have caught a little of the generosity bug yourself. If you have, I hope you will pass it right along.

Kevin Davidson is a gift planning consultant with Abundance Canada, serving generous people in Calgary and across Alberta. Visit abundance.ca to learn more, or call 1-800-772-3257 to arrange to meet with a gift planning consultant in your area.

✉ ‘Lululemon spirituality’ means ‘God’s love has reached everyone’

RE: “LENTEN PRAYER sheet reflects Lululemon spirituality” letter, March 12, page 7.

Marcus Poetzsch has used his full and considerable powers of word craft in drafting this churlish letter. It is ironic that the very nature of the Mennonite church, centred on a spirit of inclusion, is what allows a letter like this to be published.

His characterization of Mennonites as believing in a benevolent God, using “scriptural soundbites,” trafficking in “social justice propaganda” and possessing “Lululemon spirituality” land with me as affirmations of my own beliefs and of those of the Mennonite church, grown through deep roots in history.

He ignores huge swathes of the Bible, as well as its overarching theme of love in his analysis:

- **GOD IS** love, and God’s love is infinite and all-encompassing and extravagant.
- **SOCIAL JUSTICE** was not just part of Jesus’ ministry, it was all of Jesus’ ministry.
- **“LULULEMON SPIRITUALITY”** means the message of God’s love has reached everyone, the lowest common denominator. How is that not good news?
- **HE SEES** Mennonites as following what is culturally de rigueur, but God’s love never goes out of style.

Furthermore, we live in an open and democratic society where all are free to express their faith and to prayerfully choose a church with undiluted theology with which they agree. For me, that church is the Mennonite church, where I have found a rich and solid foundation of Scripture, community, acceptance and love. I want to live a joyful and faithful life in Christ, undergirded by the Mennonite church.

ELINOR SNELL, WATERLOO, ONT.

The author is a member of Waterloo North Mennonite Church in Waterloo.

✉ ‘Grateful we are’ for *Anabaptist Essentials*

RE: “ANABAPTIST ESSENTIALS ‘a quintessential travesty” letter, Feb. 12, page 7.

Wayne Northey’s critique of Palmer Becker’s latest book, *Anabaptist Essentials*, does not deserve quite the indignation he shares with us in his letter. If Becker has not quite adequately documented his overview of early Anabaptist history, the essence is nonetheless very clearly and pastorally communicated in this brief and very readable book that is not necessarily

intended for the academics.

In our congregation, this book has been utilized as adult Sunday school material for the last several months. Our class has a nice multicultural mix of new Christians and seasoned Mennonites, and we literally read it in class, chapter by chapter, stopping at will to discuss paragraphs pregnant with edifying information that is helping all of us to discover or review the profound gift of being Anabaptist Christians, especially in today’s “fragmented” world. Grateful we are not only for the cognitive learning but also for a fresh experience of Jesus, the centre of our faith.

JACOB C. FROESE, CALGARY

✉ Ethics not the basis for Christian unity

RE: “OUR BASELINE for unity,” March 12, page 7.

Garry Janzen has raised a very important point with regard to Christian unity and how to get there. Unfortunately, the baseline he proposes for unity is precisely the cause of disunity. “You can’t get there from here.”

The issue for Mennonites, as he puts forward, is following Jesus faithfully as a community that gathers to learn and internalize the life and teachings of Jesus: “To follow him is to go where he has gone and to go where he continues to be. Walking with Jesus gives the comfort of knowing we are with him but also leads to places where we have never been.” I affirm all that.

But it is precisely the details of following Jesus upon which there is so much disagreement. Does following Jesus include acceptance of gay marriage? Does it require support for the present State of Israel and its policies? Does it mean that we choose missions over Mennonite Central Committee?

The controversy over these and related issues can never achieve unity. There will always be legitimate disagreement over ethical details. Therefore, ethics cannot be the basis for Christian unity.

Why not look for a baseline in what we already agree on? How about: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,” and that this God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whom he has made Lord of all things? No matter how uncompromisingly we disagree on ethical issues, could we, as Christian believers, use that creedal confession as the baseline upon which our unity could grow and expand?

It might even be easier to deal with specific ethical issues if we affirm together, to begin with, our faith in God through Christ.

WALTER KLAASSEN, SASKATOON

✉ Open letter on Syria by MCC leaders

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it”
(I Corinthians 12:26).

IN FEBRUARY, WE were part of a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) delegation to Syria, including Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo. We witnessed the devastation of war and heard testimonies of faith from people who have been living in difficult circumstances now for seven long years.

“You have suffered with us and rejoiced with us,” one of our partners told us. Said another: “Your presence with us is a sign of hope that God is not far from us.”

From our Syrian partners we hear clearly that the horrors of this war are being perpetrated by armed actors on all sides. We strongly decry all violence, including air- and ground-based strikes, shelling and sieges of civilian areas.

We are also keenly aware of our own governments’ roles in the conflict. Canada and the U.S. are part of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS that was formed

in 2014, and the U.S. has carried out thousands of airstrikes, maintains about 2,000 troops in Syria and provides support to various opposition groups.

We call on our governments—and all parts of the international community who are involved in the conflict—to immediately cease all military involvement in Syria.

Rather than fuelling the flames of violence, we call on our governments to urgently support diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the war and to provide generous humanitarian assistance for those who are in need.

MCC is committed to continuing to partner with Syrians as they seek a just and peaceful future. MCC supporters have already been generous, but we ask you not to stop helping now. Contributions can be made at mcccanada.ca/syria-iraq.

And we encourage you to contact your elected officials. More information can be found at mccottawa.ca.

J. RON BYLER AND RICK COBER BAUMAN

J. Ron Byler is MCC U.S. executive director. Rick Cober Bauman is MCC Canada executive director.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Durksen—Zeke Cohen Enns (b. Dec. 25, 2017), to Kari and Brent Enns Durksen, Calgary Inter-Mennonite.

Fleury—Keith Graham (b. March 25, 2018), to Jocelyn and Patrick Fleury, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Peters—Otto Herbert Henry (b. Nov. 24, 2017), to Zack and Julie Peters, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Wilkins—Natalya Willow Lee (b. March 3, 2018), to Adam Wilkins and Maggie DeVries, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Baptisms

Daniel Thiessen—First Mennonite, Calgary, Feb. 11, 2018.

Marriages

Hamm/Youssef—Taylor Hamm and Anthony Youssef, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., March 10, 2018.

Deaths

Bergen—Agathe (nee Friesen), 83 (b. Oct. 21, 1934; d. Dec. 27, 2017), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Clemmer—Beryl (nee Rudy), 88 (b. Sept. 7, 1929; d. March 26, 2018), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Gingrich—Gary Dale, 66 (b. Dec. 18, 1951; d. March 17,

2018), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Giesbrecht—Elisabeth, 71 (b. Feb. 8, 1947; d. March 7, 2018), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Goetz—Frieda, 81 (b. Sept. 24, 1936; d. March 29, 2018), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Klassen—Kathe (nee Winter), 88 (b. Nov. 2, 1929; d. April 2, 2018), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

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

Nickel—John P., 91 (b. Oct. 12, 1926; d. March 14, 2018), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Redekopp—Helen Esther (nee Peters), 92 (b. Oct. 1, 1925; d. March 20, 2018), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Ropp—Annie (nee Brenneman), 88 (b. June 3, 1929; d. March 19, 2018), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Snyder—Alice, 93 (b. Feb. 4, 1925; d. March 15, 2018), Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Thiessen—Erika, 102 (b. Sept. 14, 1915; d. April 12, 2018), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Weber—Vera (nee Martin), 94 (b. Oct. 4, 1923; d. March 18, 2018), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Zehr—Lester Wayne, 91 (b. Sept. 21, 1926; d. March 13, 2018), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

announcements within four months of the event.

Please send Milestones announcements by email to milestones@canadianmennonite.org, including the congregation name and location.



PHOTOS BY HELENA BALL

The 'Blues Sistas' from Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary lip sync to 'Do You Love Me?' by the Blues Brothers during the talent show at this year's MC Alberta women's retreat. Pictured from left to right: LaVerna Elliot, Jenny Hiebert, Linda Bohnet, Charlotte Mikalson and Brenda Tiessen-Wiens.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

'Women's conference'

Laura Wiebe

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Recently I was asked what is so special about the Mennonite Church Alberta women's retreat.

I remember, as a kid, my mom leaving us in my father's care in order to go to "women's conference." We had a big family, and for my mom to take time away for the conference was something unheard of.

Now, many years later, I can only be grateful that the continuing opportunity for women to come together in a spiritual and social venue has stood the test of time. It is still a valuable and worthy event!

I started coming to the retreat only four years ago. I didn't really know what to expect and, never having been to one before, wasn't even sure it was something I should take time away from the home front to do. A couple of ladies from my church were involved in the music portion of the weekend and encouraged me to come along. What I found that weekend was something I had not had in my life for a long time. And people I knew told me that they saw a side to me at the retreat they had never seen before.

It is a place to be:

- **FREE FROM** the daily responsibilities as a mother. It took some planning and some letting go, to make arrangements for the family.
- **FREE TO** be served instead of serving. Meals are provided, and a soft bed with sheets I wouldn't have to launder.
- **FREE TO** laugh without fear of appearing silly. Silliness is embraced.
- **FREE TO** enjoy the part of me that loves learning, with four sessions in three days.
- **FREE TO** be vulnerable with sisters in Christ, by opening up and getting real with each other.

It was the closest thing to what I remembered dorm life at Bible school to be.

I was reunited with a number of ladies I hadn't seen for years, and introduced to many new and wonderful other ladies. Over the years, I've begun to enter into a unique relationship with many of these ladies whom I only see once or twice a year, and we just pick up where we left off. There is something about being together for these three days with common goals that is just so bonding. Even though we come from many different

backgrounds and are of different ages, it just feels so natural and right.

I come away each time feeling a little more comfortable in my own skin and empowered to make life meaningful and purposeful. I'm often invigorated to continue the field of study the guest speaker has introduced.

I encourage anyone to experience whatever it is that God is bringing to you. If you need laughter, you will find much to laugh about and an easy crowd to tell your jokes to. If you need to feel God's love through a sister, there will be someone there who has walked a road similar to you who will feel your pain. If you need to be taken care of, you will not have to cook a meal or clean a toilet. If you need quiet and introspection, you will find a time and place. If you need a creative outlet, there's opportunity provided. If you need spiritual depth, you will not come away empty. If you need fellowship, it will be there in abundance.

While my mom never shared what went on at "women's conference," I'm sure she had many of the same experiences. There really is something special that only happens at our retreat. I encourage you to find out what that something special is for you. ☼

Laura Wiebe attends Trinity Mennonite Church in Calgary. She is serving her second year on the MC Alberta retreat committee.



Liberians Esther Chokpelleh, left, and Theresa Powoe participate in the morning service at the MC Alberta women's retreat.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

I dare you to coach

TROY WATSON

After years of my gym membership not bearing fruit, I switched to a gym where a fitness coach leads each workout. It's been a little over a year now, and I'm in better shape than I've been in 20 years. I had no idea how important a good coach is.

The coach starts each session by demonstrating the proper way to do the exercises. Then he corrects us as we exercise, and challenges us to increase our effort or the level of our workout when appropriate. Finally, he encourages and praises us as we make improvements and try our best.

Many of the people who work out at this gym are extremely athletic, driven and confident. None of them are push-overs. Some of them are downright intimidating. Yet we all let the coach tell us what to do. In fact, we pay him to tell us what to do. We do that because:

1. **HE DEMONSTRATES** a level of physical fitness we want for ourselves.
2. **WE'VE REALIZED** we can't get to the next level of fitness on our own.
3. **HIS COACHING** is practical and applicable.
4. **HIS COACHING** produces results. We can see and feel progress.

There are so many lessons for the church here.

People value good coaching. Canadians hire life coaches, career coaches, transition coaches and nutrition coaches, to name a few. They're also looking for spiritual coaches, which should be good news for the church, because spiritual coaching—what we call discipleship—is the primary activity Jesus calls and empowers us to do. What's concerning is that, while interest in spiritual coaching is on the rise, interest in the church is declining.

Why?

Well, Canadians are looking for a coach who is able to help them increase their level of spiritual fitness. Spiritually hungry people are looking for the same thing in a spiritual coach that I was looking for in a fitness coach. We want to make progress and see results. They aren't looking for a church to assure them they're okay the way they are, because they don't want to stay the way they are.

They want to grow. We're useless as coaches if we don't help them develop spiritually.

Canadians are also looking for coaches who demonstrate a level of spiritual vitality they want for themselves. If a

Spiritually hungry people . . . want to make progress and see results. They aren't looking for a church to assure them they're okay the way they are, because they don't want to stay the way they are.

coach is obviously out of shape, they're not interested. And why should they be? Modelling vulnerability, authenticity and honesty about our imperfections and shortcomings is important, but only if we're demonstrating transformation and progress in these areas as well. Otherwise, why on earth would they want us to coach them?

Jesus says, "Anyone who doesn't keep moving forward, focussing on the goal ahead, isn't fit for the kingdom of God" (My paraphrase of Luke 9:62). This means that without focus and progress we aren't fit—spiritually fit—to be coaches in the kingdom of God.

So how do we become spiritually fit?

By doing what our coach tell us to do. Pentecost, the day we're explicitly reminded that Christ sent the Holy Spirit

to be our coach, is quickly approaching. Christ promises that we will see results if we let the Divine Spirit coach us. Christ also promises us that it won't always be easy, pretty or painless, but if we listen and obey, progress will happen. Growth is guaranteed if we stay connected to the "vine."

In short, we become spiritually fit as we let the Divine Spirit coach us.

We become spiritual coaches as we allow the Divine Spirit to flow through our lives, and demonstrate, instruct, correct, challenge and encourage others to move towards that which is evident in our lives.

Perhaps the key lesson for the church that I've learned from my fitness coach is that we should focus on coaching people who actually desire spiritual fitness. This might mean refusing to keep the spiritual "workouts" we offer undemanding

because certain members desire it.

If I asked my fitness coach to make the workouts easier, he'd try to address what I was struggling with, and scale the exercises to my current abilities and fitness level, if necessary. However, if I was capable of doing the workouts but simply didn't like doing them because they were hard, he'd tell me this probably wasn't the gym for me.

Jesus did the same thing. He consistently let people go who didn't want to do what was necessary to move towards spiritual fitness, which was different for everyone. That's how Jesus coached, and that's how he dares us to coach. ☞

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



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

COVER STORY

Shekinah cabin built off the grid

New timber-frame structure is also flood-resistant

BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
WALDHEIM, SASK.

Shekinah Retreat Centre recently launched an exciting new building project. The first of six planned timber-frame cabins took shape at the Mennonite Church Saskatchewan camp during the first week of April.

Shekinah board member Michael Neufeld, who attends Zoar Mennonite in Langham, designed the cabins together with Charles Olfert of Aodbt architecture + interior design.

“The board wanted these cabins to be off the power grid,” says Neufeld. To that end, cabins will be fitted with solar panels to charge batteries that will run a 12-volt lighting system and a blower fan on the

fireplace. In addition, each concrete slab will contain hydronic lines for possible future heating.

Neufeld, who has experience in timber framing, also says the cabins are designed to withstand flooding. Much of the Shekinah property is situated on a flood plain along the North Saskatchewan River. In July 1986, during the summer camp season, the camp flooded due to mountain run-off. The area flooded again in May 2013, this time due to ice damming up the river. These experiences convinced Shekinah’s board of directors that any new structures would have to be flood-resistant.

At one point, says Neufeld, the board considered erecting cabins on stilts. While this would have kept them away from flood waters, it would have made them inaccessible to people with mobility challenges, and would have elevated them above the trees and bushes that are so much a part of the camping experience.

In the end, the board chose a traditional but flexible design. Each cabin will be built on a concrete pad and will have four timber “bents” (made of structural beams that form a cross section through the building). Structured insulated panels or SIPs will form the walls between the bents. The SIPs will be made of dimensional lumber and plywood, rather than drywall or oriented strand board, which would disintegrate in a flood. Polystyrene sheets will insulate but won’t take on water. The panels will be attached with large lag bolts. In case of a flood, the panels will be removed and allowed to dry or, if necessary, repaired or replaced.

Each cabin will comfortably accommodate eight to 10 people in twin and queen-sized bunks, or up to 14 people if the loft is utilized. Each cabin will also have a fireplace for heating in cooler months. They will replace the camp’s eight aging shanty tents, which are currently used during the summer camp season but are inadequate for year-round programming.

Each cabin will cost about \$30,000, and Shekinah will rely entirely on volunteer labour to construct them.

The first cabin will be completed by early June. Two more will be erected as part of a Mennonite Disaster Service family project between July 29 and Aug. 25. Shekinah is planning to have all six cabins in place by the fall of 2019.

Kirsten Hamm-Epp, Shekinah’s outgoing interim executive director, says the camp is inviting families, groups and congregations to come together to sponsor the building of a cabin. Sponsors will be given the privilege of naming their cabin, but names must be consistent with Shekinah’s use of nature-themed place names, such as Deer Meadow or Rabbit Road.

Referring to the first cabin, she says, “That moment when the first bent went up was pretty exciting. We’re inviting people to be part of [the excitement].” ❧



SHEKINAH RETREAT CENTRE PHOTO

Volunteers raise the first of four timber frame bents into position on the first of six cabins that are expected to be completed by the fall of 2019.

Church workout

Saskatchewan exercise initiative spreads eastward

BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Manitoba Correspondent

WINNIPEG

A ladder made of masking tape sticks to the floor of the foyer of Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. It's not a typical sight in a worship space. Yet every Tuesday and Friday morning, a path is cleared through the chairs in the sanctuary, and a small group of seniors ranging from their 60s to their 90s gather at the church to exercise.

Each workout is an hour long. They start with 20 minutes of walking around the sanctuary and then move their chairs into a circle in the foyer, where they spend 40 minutes doing exercises for strength, balance, flexibility and reaction time, using the chairs for support.

The group started meeting in January under the leadership of Ruth Schroeder, a church member. She is a retired geriatric rehabilitation nurse, who has spent her life helping seniors deal with the effects of aging and illness. Along with an interest in her own fitness and the health of her aging parents, she was motivated to create a space at Charleswood where seniors could have fun working on their fitness.

She is not the first one to initiate an exercise group like this. She got the idea from the Forever in Motion program that runs at Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. Its program, which started in 2011, is one of many in Saskatoon that are supported by the Saskatoon Health Region. It quickly gained popularity, hosting around 30 participants at most sessions.

Although Charleswood's program is smaller and self-supported, it has gained a core group of about eight participants who come to every session, as well as others who come occasionally.

One of the participants is even from outside the congregation. Mildred Schroeder, 93, has only missed one session since the group began. "I want to keep from falling and keep from breaking any bones in my body as long as I can!" she says. "And also

it just makes you feel more alert . . . more in control of your walking." Mildred says that walking in the sanctuary is a lot easier than walking in a house where she always turning corners and having to move stuff out of the way.

"In Winnipeg in wintertime, it's just there's no place for people to get out and walk," says Ruth, noting that for older Mennonites, especially women, going to the gym isn't something that's been emphasized in their lives, and a lot of them may not feel comfortable with it. When she suggested having a group meet at church, a familiar and comfortable place, there was immediate interest.

Laura Friesen, 79, says she appreciates the walking and the exercises for balance the most. "Oh yes, I have noticed that my balance has improved tremendously," she says, adding that everyone has improved over the course of the program, and that Ruth has started incorporating more exercises than when they first started.

Mildred agrees that the program has been a significant benefit for her. "I like to go out every day and do something, and this gives me the energy to do it," she says.

"It's been unbelievably positive," says

Ruth. "Like the people that are participating are just so keen and I think we have a fabulous time, but I've also gotten lots of feedback from other members in the church that are saying what a fabulous thing it is that you're doing."

Turns out that the benefits aren't just physical either. "It connects me with people who are younger than me and older than me, and we get to know each other better," says Friesen. She and her husband used to go walking in the church several times a week, but since he passed away, things have been different. She still exercises at home, but it's not the same doing it alone. "I find that doing exercise together with other people is a lot more fun and interesting than doing it by yourself," she says.

As the leader, Ruth has also felt the benefits of the group. She was noticing she actually knew all the people around her in church the other day, when she realized she was surrounded by her exercise crew! "I feel much more connected to the church, the church community, absolutely," she says. "I wasn't expecting that at all, so that's been really fun."

The group has a really good time together and it's noticeable. "The church, they have expressed to us several times from the office, how happy they are to see us there," says Mildred. "They said that it just feels good to have such an energetic program going." ❧

To view videos of the women exercising, visit canadianmennonite.org/charleswood-fitness.



PHOTO BY MEGAN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Wendy Dueck and Rosanna Kwan engage in full-body exercises.

Is Women's Day still relevant?

Lack of volunteers, appeal to younger generation are factors

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Mennonite women in British Columbia have been coming together each spring since 1939 for Women's Inspirational Day, a time of spiritual encouragement and fellowship. But as the planned date of May 6 approached, still without a coordinator or location for the event, some were questioning whether the annual spring gathering has seen its day.

Waltrude Gortzen, who has acted as Mennonite Church B.C.'s women's coordinator for 10 years, stepped down earlier this year. She had been the driving force behind keeping this annual event going, along with the fall women's retreat.

"I've been asking and asking for new members, and nobody has stepped up," says Gortzen. "This year I said, 'I'm done.' I've been here 10 years. If it falls through the cracks, it falls through the cracks."

Not wishing to see the event die after almost 79 years, Janette Thiessen, MC B.C.'s office administrator, took up the reins herself. She arranged for Elsie Rempel of Winnipeg to speak, found a caterer and contacted four churches to host before getting a successful response from Langley Mennonite Fellowship. She also dropped the word "inspirational" from the event, instead promoting it as simply Women's Day.

"I couldn't see it not happening," says Thiessen. "I'm of the era that says I will keep something going until it doesn't seem practical anymore. Are we flogging a dead horse? When 100 women show up, I think it's worth it."

Times have changed since 1939, when B.C. Women in Mission (BCWM) held its first Inspirational Day. At that event, the offering taken to be used for purchasing sewing materials totalled \$2. Women of the day were gathering regularly to sew materials for overseas relief and missions projects. Modern women who do not sew, who are employed outside the home, or who have other social activities in their



Participants at the 2017 B.C. Women's Day gather to chat outside.

lives, no longer find such a model relevant.

Gortzen says the planning committees don't know how to reach the younger women. "Younger generations are plain not interested; they have no clue to our history," she says. "They say 'It's not for me, it's for the older women.' Or they say, 'We have our care group, why do we need anything else?'"

Thiessen believes there is a tension in trying to find topics and speakers to cater to younger women and satisfying older women who have been coming faithfully for many years. She believes that "younger women aren't so much into conferences. They're more into their blogs and other things."

Sue Kehler, who was BCWM president from 1994 to '96, recalls planning and participating in many Inspirational Days. Now in her 80s, she still enjoys attending. She recalls when Women's Day was up to an entire day or a day-and-a-half long.

"I believe strongly that women should certainly have a voice in the church and do believe [the Women's Days] have been serving a purpose," says Kehler. "It is true that we are struggling, and I think the biggest reason is that younger [women] want to do things together with their husbands."

So far, the fall women's retreat at Camp Squeah has been well attended, but it too is dependent on a volunteer committee. Two committee members are ending their terms this year, so the future of the retreat remains to be seen.

"If we don't have a women's coordinator, I don't know that we can continue," says Thiessen. ❧

/// Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Ontario

• **FRED REDEKOP** began a quarter-time position as pastor of senior ministry at Poole Mennonite Church near Milverton on Feb. 1. He was pastor of Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church from 1991 to 2016. He also works for Mennonite Central Committee Ontario in church relations. He holds a master of divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.



• **CLARE LEBOLD** began as interim supply minister at Listowel Mennonite Church on March 1. He previously served as interim pastor at The Gathering Church in Kitchener, Ont. He holds an honours bachelor of science degree in physics from the University of Waterloo, Ont.



• **KAPILAN SAVARI-MUTHU** has been the lay pastor of the Markham Christian Worship Centre, a Tamil-speaking church whose congregants are mainly from Sri Lanka, for about two years. His educational background is in computer networking and he works full-time outside the church. The congregation worships at Hagerman Mennonite Church. He is the son of Joseph Savarimuthu, the former pastor, who died in July 2017.



• **GEOFF WICHERT** was ordained at Toronto United Mennonite Church on March 18. Since 1999, he has been a campus minister with the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry at the University of Toronto. He studied theology at Mennonite Brethren Bible College (a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg) and MB Biblical Seminary in Fresno, Calif., followed by doctoral studies in history at the University of Toronto.



—BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Humboldt Broncos tragedy has Mennonite connections

Bus driver, broadcasters shared links to Mennonite community

BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

The horrific collision that claimed the lives of 16 people, most of them players and coaches with the Humboldt Broncos hockey team, had several Mennonite connections.

The accident occurred at the intersection of Highways 35 and 335, some 238 kilometres northeast of Saskatoon, when a semi-trailer collided with a chartered bus carrying the hockey team to a playoff game in Nipawin, Sask.

Among the fatalities in the April 7 crash was bus driver **GLEN DOERKSEN** of Carrot River, Sask. A Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) report says that Doerksen worked for Charlie's Charters, based in Tisdale, Sask. He had a passion for hockey and enjoyed driving teams to and from their games.



The CBC report quotes Doerksen's son, Cameron, who said of his father, "He loved us kids, he loved this community. He kept our family always happy and he loved what he did. It wasn't work for him. He loved driving all those boys, all those teams, and he did it with a smile on his face."

Doerksen was a 1977 graduate of Rosthern Junior College. His mother is a member of Carrot River Mennonite Church. Pastor Daniel Janzen of Carrot River Mennonite presided at Doerksen's memorial service on April 13 at the Carrot River Community Hall.

Also among the dead were two employees of Humboldt's 107.5 Bolt FM radio station. **TYLER BIEBER**, age 29, was a play-by-play announcer for the Broncos. He served as the station's morning news announcer as well, according to the CBC report. With a great love for sports, Bieber also coached the Humboldt high school's



basketball and football teams.

BRODY HINZ, an 18-year-old student intern at the radio station, also died in the crash. Hinz compiled statistics and provided colour commentary for the games.



Golden West Broadcasting, based in Altona, Man., owns the Humboldt radio station. Elmer Hildebrand is chief executive officer for Golden West and a member of the Canadian Mennonite Publishing Services board of directors. According to a report by Bill Redekop of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Golden West moved extra staff and grief counsellors to the Humboldt radio station. Redekop cites Hildebrand, who said, "At this point, our aim is to support our employees through this process. We've not had this kind of tragedy in our company before."

Redekop writes that Golden West began with a single radio station in Altona in 1957 and now has 44 radio stations and more than 400 employees across the Prairie provinces. Among those employees are at least 10 teams of announcers who follow junior hockey teams in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, broadcasting home and away games.

In Saskatchewan, writes Redekop, Golden West broadcasts junior hockey games for teams in Estevan, Weyburn, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Kindersley, Rosetown and Humboldt. In Manitoba, the company broadcasts games out of Steinbach, Winkler and Portage la Prairie.

It is not uncommon for broadcasters to accompany teams to their away games. Redekop again cites Hildebrand, who said, "We're involved with all of these hockey teams intimately." And that intimate involvement includes riding the bus together.

In a prepared statement from Golden

/// Briefly noted

U of Saskatchewan appoints new Faith Leaders Council

SASKATOON—Kirsten Hamm-Epp is one of several new faith leaders on the University of Saskatchewan campus. Hamm-Epp, who is Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's regional church minister for youth programming and admin-



Kirsten Hamm-Epp

istration, was appointed to the newly formed Faith Leaders Council late last year. The Council is made up of representatives from a number of Christian denominations, as well as the Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities. The principles of the Council are to "practise the practice of faith leadership by furthering the working and educational relationships with those seeking spiritual care," says Hamm-Epp. "The reason I'm excited [about the Council] is that it shows a willingness and desire to work together," she says. In this way, "as many students as possible can be supported." Hamm-Epp will be spending Tuesday afternoons on campus. She hopes to make connections with students from MC Saskatchewan congregations but doesn't really know what her role will look like yet. One idea she's considering is inviting congregations to bake buns and then serve fasha to students once a month.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

West, company president Lyndon Friesen said, "Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of all the young men we lost, and our own colleagues, whose lives have been cut short by this tragic event." ///

Telling Anabaptist stories old and new

David Weaver-Zercher speaks at Conrad Grebel University College's annual Bechtel Lecture

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

The two nights of the 2018 Bechtel Lecture at Conrad Grebel University College were connected by David Weaver-Zercher and focussed on Mennonite stories and how they are used in the media and elsewhere.

The professor of American religious history at Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pa., is probably best known for explaining to the worldwide media the seemingly quick forgiveness by Amish parents of Charles Carl Roberts IV and his family after Roberts shot eight Amish schoolgirls, killing five, in Nickel Mines, Pa., in 2006. Weaver-Zercher later collaborated with

Donald Kraybill and Steve Nolt on *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* about the event.

His presentation on March 1 focussed on how *Martyrs Mirror* is used by conservative groups of Mennonites to encourage their youth and young adults to remain in the church rather than going out into the world. The stories in the book, particularly those of teenaged Anabaptists who gave up their lives for their faith, are used to favourably compare conservative Mennonites' uniqueness against the pressure to fit in among the non-Mennonites or assimilated Mennonites.

Frequently comparing these Mennonites to "assimilated Mennonites" like himself, he wondered at this "shock and awe pedagogy" that encourages youth with "something to die for" rather than teaching "fidelity, a search for something and someone to be true to."

He quoted Kendra Dean in *Practicing Passion*: "The life of the martyr fascinates adolescents, not because they want to share the martyr's grisly suffering, but because they envy their passion, their purpose and their brazen determination."

He suggested that assimilated Mennonites could use *Martyrs Mirror* to teach "our history," to remind youth "that some Christians experience this today," and that "Christians in the United States feel under threat, they feel pressure to abandon their commitments."

The next night he was part of a panel of Mennonite media communicators moderated by Marlene Epp, Grebel's dean. Included were Sherri Klassen, social media persona and founder of the Mennonite satirical blog, the "Drunken Mennonite," where she satirizes Mennonite themes and offers cocktail recipes; Katie Steckly, who is best known for her satirical videos on YouTube; Sam Steiner, blogger and one of the editors of the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO); and Johnny Wideman, director and one of the chief writers for Theatre of the Beat.

The panel members each use different styles to present their views of Mennonites in the 21st century. While they each spoke to their own media presence, their discussion focussed on how other media looks at Mennonites, including TV shows like *Amish in the City*, and *Pure*, a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation drama about fictional "conservative" Mennonites smuggling drugs from Mexico to Canada.

Many of the panellists said they use humour to get at issues but noted that there are issues they might not address with humour, including Indigenous-Mennonite relations. ☞



Bruce Bechtel, left, and his father Lester, founder of the Bechtel Lecture series at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., chat with David Weaver-Zercher, this year's lecturer. The theme this year was around the topic of how Mennonite stories, old and new, are used in the media and church.



Allan Rudy-Froese, left, associate professor of Christian proclamation at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., leads Pastors in Exile preachers and leaders—Tamara Shantz and Jessica Ressor-Rempel, as well as Benjamin Weber, Kim Rempel and Caleb Redekop—in an exercise to feel their mouths.

‘Preach it!’

Pastors in Exile prepare for the pulpit

STORY AND PHOTOS DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Hands on his stomach, Allan Rudy-Froese walked a group of young preachers through exercises designed to make them feel at home and centred in their bodies by learning to recognize the part their abdominal muscles and their mouths—lips, tongues, palates and jaws—play in the delivery of a sermon.

“Preaching is a physical art,” the associate professor of Christian proclamation at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., told the nine young preachers and leaders gathered at Rockway Mennonite Church in Kitchener on March 17 for a preaching seminar sponsored by Pastors in Exile (PiE).

He gave a short history of the sermon in the past two centuries. In the 1800s,

sermons were often over an hour in length. Since people had a hard time concentrating that long, especially after rigorous work weeks, ushers equipped with long poles would patrol the congregation to awake those who fell asleep. In the 1900s, topical sermons often had three points, while others would move through a biblical passage “verse by verse.”

Rudy-Froese noted that late in the 1900s narrative preaching took hold, in which a conflict is found in the biblical text that needs to be resolved. Various resolutions might be suggested and the best chosen and applied.

In his classes at AMBS he asks each student to use the “four pages of a sermon” technique:

- **PAGE 1** introduces a trouble in the text;
- **PAGE 2** introduces a trouble in the world that connects with the one in the text;
- **PAGE 3** introduces a grace in the text; and
- **PAGE 4** introduces a grace in the world where God is acting now.

Rudy-Froese responded to Caleb Redekop’s contention that “there isn’t always grace in the text,” by quoting Edward Farley: “Preach the gospel, not always the Bible.” He also counselled cutting out the introduction and minimizing the conclusion, in order to let the congregation figure out how the sermon applies to them.

The PiE preachers each have preaching opportunities from April through June, and will receive ongoing mentorship. Either Jessica Reesor Rempel or Tamara Shantz, the two PiE leaders, will accompany the young preachers to the various churches and give them feedback afterwards. In their preparations, there are plans to gather to exchange ideas on the chosen text of the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. A special offering for PiE will be received in each congregation. ☞



Allan Rudy-Froese, left, leads Pastors in Exile preachers—Benjamin Weber, Emily Hunsberger, Jennifer Regehr, Sylvia Hook and Katherine Matthies—in an exercise to get into the biblical text physically.

'For such a time as this'

Pastors and leaders conference models practices for sustaining faith and hope

BY RICH PREHEIM

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
ELKHART, IND.

With contentiousness and fracturing in the body of believers, and hostility and injustice all around, these are difficult days for church leaders, who are supposed to provide guidance for people struggling with the trials of the times while at the same time often wrestling with their own challenges.

"How do we deal with our anxieties and exhaustion? How do we learn to trust God again?" asked Sara Wenger Shenk, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), in her welcome to participants at the seminary's annual Pastors and Leaders Conference on Feb. 26, whose theme was "For such a time as this."

More than 160 registrants from 14 U.S. states and two Canadian provinces—representing 11 denominations—sought renewal through plenary teaching sessions, workshops and worship, as well as fellowship.

Each of the four plenary speakers provided words of encouragement to help participants sustain their faith while facing adversity.

"This is a frightening time," admitted Ben Ollenburger, AMBS professor of biblical theology, during his opening-night presentation. "We have much to be anxious about . . . and we have much to fear."

"But I want to say, 'Fear not, for the Lord is with you,'" he continued. "Nothing is impossible with God."

Drawing from the story of the Israelites exiled in Babylon, he said, "If ever there was a lost cause, it was Israel," adding, though, "that [if] you're defeated doesn't mean God is not sovereign. For Israel to see, they first had to become blind."

Janna Hunter-Bowman, AMBS assistant professor of peace studies and Christian social ethics, shared from her time as a peace worker with Pentecostal congregations in violence-wracked Colombia. She

emphasized the possibilities for faithfulness during anxious times, telling of one community that intervened to save a member targeted for assassination by paramilitary forces by smuggling him away. When asked why they did so, the local pastor said, "We had nowhere else to go and no one to turn to but God."

"Such participation with ultimate power allows them . . . a sense of agency in a situation of terror and chaos," she said. "New avenues of response open up because of the knowledge they possess . . . of the active working of the Spirit."

In such situations, the church can be a "point of reference" for others in the community, she said. Because the church members didn't flee in the face of the paramilitary, others didn't, either. She called it "theopolitical power," independent of state forms of politics. It's something she wants to see replicated in the North American church. But it requires becoming part of the politically and socially marginalized. "The state has absorbed so much of our imagination of how change happens," she said. "That's what I want to disabuse."

Dan Schrock, a spiritual director, pastor and AMBS sessional instructor, introduced "prayer of beholding" as a way to reduce anxiety. He said it employs both one's physical eyes and the "inner eyes of our spiritual imagination."

He defined "beholding" as "paying attention." In practising such prayers, he said, "we are caught up into something else; it might be a delightful child, a dear friend, an exquisite flower or a prairie that stretches on for miles until it kisses the sky. To say it more theologically, in the prayer of beholding, we are transfixed by the glory of God, which is constantly being refracted into the world around us."



AMBS PHOTO BY JASON BRYANT

Daily opportunities for worship are an integral part of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's annual Pastors and Leaders Conference.

"In moments of beholding, we forget our agenda . . . pulled toward awe and wonder and delight in the resplendence of God," he said, cautioning, though, that prayers of beholding don't resolve or eliminate the issues causing stress.

Rebecca Slough, AMBS academic dean, shared about several "roots" that nourish her mind and spirit, such as trust, discernment, hope and the invitation to confront truth, and led the group in singing a hymn connected with each one. She encouraged her listeners to consider which practices nourish them.

She encouraged those present to learn from people on society's margins to have hope in the Lord. "They know how to hang on, especially to the hope for justice, that many of us have never needed to develop," she said.

Christians need to challenge the conventional and take risks, she said, just like Jesus Christ, Anabaptist martyr Dirk Willems and religious leaders Martin Luther King Jr. and Desmond Tutu did.

Slough also called for more celebrations of the Lord's Supper, calling it a ceremony of hope. "[Jesus Christ] is our hope until the kingdom comes," she said. ☿

‘Where is the word of God?’

Grebel profs lead Eastern Canada ministers in digging around this central question

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

When the baby Jesus in the manger on Christmas Eve is dressed in a Santa suit, where is the word of God? Where is the word of God when your father is torn from your family and you don't know if he's alive or dead and buried, or when it happened? Where is the word of God when you can't read but are called on by the authorities to defend your faith against the power of the state church? Where is the word of God, or is it the word of the Lord? Is it written, or is it the spoken word of the prophet? Where is the word of the Lord when the interpretation of Scripture has been in the hands of the oppressive over-class of invaders?

Each of these scenarios was part of the 41st annual School for Ministers, jointly sponsored by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, from Feb. 21 to 23, at Grebel. Eschewing a big name guest speaker, the planners depended on local leaders, including a number of Grebel professors, to dig into the ideas around the central question.

Carol Penner, assistant pastor of applied studies, brought questions of the word to

the vocation of pastoring, be it in preaching, telling a children's story, performing a wedding or funeral, or caring for neighbours. Telling her own story, from Sunday school teachers to the present, she encouraged pastors to speak the word of God “with humility and daring.”

Derek Suderman, an associate professor of religious studies and theological studies, looked at how the word of God is sought after in the story of God's people, a word looked for in the Scriptures sometimes also called the Word. He challenged participants to engage in community interpretation of the Scriptures, since they sometimes contain contradictory or balancing words, like the inclusion or exclusion of Moabites in Ruth and Deuteronomy.

Alicia Batten, an associate professor of religious studies and theological studies, focussed on the Luke/Acts telling of the story of Jesus and the early church. She noted that these materials seem to cross boundaries of ancient literature types, with Luke fitting—and not fitting—the model of biographies from that time. The phrase “the word of God” appears most often in these two books of the New Testament,

with a variety of meanings ranging from the Old Testament to the gospel message about Jesus and even to the church.

Troy Osborne, associate professor of history, looked at the use of the word of God in the Middle Ages, the non-Anabaptist Reformation, and among the early Anabaptists and Mennonites since then. He wondered aloud about the use of the Bible outside of Europe and North America, and what could be learned from those who might be closer to the 16th century in spirit and in using Scripture in spiritual ways. Although there is no written word about communal interpretation in 16th-century writings, Anabaptists did interpret it communally, but soon it became the responsibility of leaders to give the word to the people. After moving toward a fundamentalist view of Scripture in the early 20th century, Mennonites have moved away from words like “inerrant” in their understanding of the word.

Jeremy Bergen, an associate professor of religious studies and theological studies, took a very different direction by looking at “trauma and resurrection” by remembering the story of his great-grandfather who was taken by the Bolsheviks and killed, with his family not knowing when or where he had died. Bergen's grandfather grieved this, not finding some measure of relief until the post-communist fall in Russia, when old records gave the date and location of the death. Looking at Thomas, especially as rendered in Caravaggio's 1602 painting, Bergen thought about untransformed pain that can be transmitted from generation to generation. He noted that the word of God bears witness to wounds, to the wounded and to potential healing.

These plenary presentations were accompanied by four workshops, including one by Canadian Bible Society workers who gave a behind-the-scenes look at Bible publishing, and another by Sarah Travis from the Toronto School of Theology, who spoke on “Decolonizing preaching: The pulpit as postcolonial space.” She was surprised at the number of new-Canadian pastors who came to her workshop.

The School for Ministers ended with communion, led by Henry Paetkau, regional church minister, who preached about the word becoming flesh and living among humanity in Jesus. ☞



Carol Penner, left, an assistant pastor of applied studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., takes part in an Annual School for Ministers ‘buzz group’ with Brian Quan, pastor of Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church; Jan Harris from Nairn Mennonite Church; and Colin Friesen, a master of theological studies student at Grebel, in late February.

MC Alberta appoints two new Joint Council members

Mennonite Church Alberta

At Mennonite Church Alberta's annual delegate sessions last month, Brenda Tiessen-Wiens and Margaret Kruger-Harder were appointed to represent the regional church on MC Canada's Joint Council, which was created following the restructuring of the nationwide church last October.

Brenda Tiessen-Wiens



"It's an exciting time to be a part of Mennonite Church Alberta!" says Tiessen-Wiens, who replaces moderator Paul Neufeldt on the Joint Council. "After

several years of anticipating changes to our regional and national church bodies, we are now realizing the opportunities that these changes will bring."

As a member of Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary, she is inspired by

connecting with women in the congregation's women's theology class. Her volunteer time is spent teaching English with people from the Chin church, and serving on the mission and service committee, "both of which provide a taste of the richness and diversity of our congregations," she says. "Over the next two years, I look forward to meeting more people in each of our church homes, as we grow together!"

Margaret Kruger-Harder



Also a member of Foothills Mennonite Church, Kruger-Harder has lived in Calgary since 1987, when she moved from her teaching job in Mississauga, Ont., to teach at

Menno Simons Christian School. She replaces Vince Friesen as MC Alberta's member-at-large on the Joint Council.

During her teaching years, she took a two-year sabbatical to attend Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., graduating with a master of theology and ethics degree and a certificate in conflict mediation.

She was involved with the Alberta Conference of Mennonites as education representative and on the Community Building Committee.

At Foothills, she has served on the board as education trustee and taught Sunday school for many years. Currently, she is on the worship committee, leads worship and preaches sermons.

She is excited about being part of the Joint Council to help set priorities and to represent the needs and gifts of the five new regional churches that, together, she envisions being a continual presence of God's love in the world. ✻

/// Briefly noted

Sam's Place café and bookstore hosts grand reopening

WINNIPEG—Sam's Place hosted a grand reopening on April 7 following renovations to the café's kitchen and front-of-house areas, with about 50 people in attendance. Run by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba, Sam's Place is a café and used bookstore where youth find community as they develop employable skills and gain experience among volunteers. The recent renovations have increased the café and bookstore's capacity to prepare youth for employment and meet needs in Winnipeg's Elmwood neighbourhood. The reopening celebrated accomplishments already realized at Sam's Place and provided an exciting look into its future. Live music by Joe Cote was interspersed with stories and speeches by community members, Sam's Place youth volunteers and staff, and Darryl Loewen, executive director of MCC Manitoba. Abyssinia Bogale, 17, shared about her volunteer experience, saying, "The Sam's Place community was so welcoming it shocked me. . . . Not only have I made lots of wonderful friends and am now better equipped with skills to help me along in the future, I can also make a mean latte."

—BY NIKKI HAMM



PHOTO BY VINIECE BLAIN

Volunteer and youth engagement coordinator Alex Strange, left, café manager Rachel Isaak, and IVEP volunteer Julia Khair serve guests cupcakes and appetizers, inspired by a new menu, at the grand reopening of Sam's Place in Winnipeg on April 7.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Selling thrift by the pound

Mennonite Central Committee opens new rePurpose store

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

ELMIRA, ONT.

Volunteers who work at any of the many Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) thrift stores know the sorrow of unsold goods: clothing that hangs around for more than a month or dishes that don't move out the door to grace someone's table.

The Generations Store in Waterloo, Ont., had a "We want your quality thrift goods, not your garage sale leftovers" sign, because management knew that if it hadn't sold at the home sale, it was destined for the garbage bin at the thrift store.

But other problems present themselves as well:

- **WHAT TO** do with large lots of goods, like the T-shirts that proclaim the wrong winning team after a championship game?
- **WHAT TO** do if some goods sell well in one store, but another store has an oversupply?
- **WHAT TO** do with Christmas decorations donated in January and the store is too small for storage?

Meet the new MCC rePurpose Store in Elmira, which opened on March 1.

Located in a former grocery store, but most recently used as a Mennonite Disaster Service depot for housewares and clothes for the Syrian refugee campaign of 2016-17, the store has 7,900 square metres of space, including 2,700 square metres for retail, with the rest for processing and storage. The seven MCC-owned shops, three associate stores and another more loosely connected one send materials they can't sell or that they want stored for another season.

At rePurpose, materials are sorted, with some being sent out to other stores—the Leamington thrift store needs many pairs of men's trousers for the seasonal workers

there—and much is put out on the floor, where it is sold by the pound:

- **CLOTHING, FASHION** accessories, footwear, bags, fabric, linens and craft supplies sell for \$1.88 a pound.
- **BOOKS, HOUSEWARES**, sporting goods, clocks, pictures, frames, toys, media, hardware and pet goods go for 88 cents a pound.
- **JEWELLERY, GLASSES** and watches are priced at \$5.88 per pound.

All kinds of customers come in to shop. Young parents with kids go through the clothes. Crafters discover "found items" and turn them into art or other products. Resellers stock their own stores. Grandparents are amazed at what a looney will buy in costume jewellery for a granddaughter.

The goal is a dignified shopping experience, with an environmental component, and proceeds to MCC's larger work.

Karla Richards, MCC Ontario's social enterprise operations manager, notes that the store honours the donors' intentions. The store also supports MCC's intention to not market used North American goods overseas. If it doesn't sell, says Richards, then

some of it goes bulk to other sellers or is turned into rags or textiles for other uses. Bulk vases are being sorted and sold back to florists. Some will go to the dump, but some will be turned into other products onsite as projects are begun. In its first month, the store diverted nearly 77 tonnes from the landfill.

After one month,



MCC's new rePurpose Store is located in Elmira, Ont.

Richards, and Jan Martens Janzen, MCC Ontario's director of social enterprise, note that they need more staff than expected, and also more change rooms. Volunteers include high school students who need volunteer hours to graduate, as well as seniors.

MCC has supported the project with research and a five-year budget. "There is no reason to believe it won't work," says Martens Janzen. ❧



Staff member Barrett Bender, left, and volunteer Virginia Kreitz sort clothing that has been shipped from another thrift store to MCC's new rePurpose store in Elmira, Ont., where it is sold by the pound.

GOD AT WORK IN US

CPTer receives peace activism award

STORY AND PHOTO BY MURRAY LUMLEY

Christian Peacemaker Teams
TORONTO

Esther Kern, a former Canada coordinator of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), received the Muriel Duckworth Award

for Peace Activism at the Voice of Women for Peace International Women's Day dinner held at Friend's (Quaker) House in Toronto on March 8.

In her remarks upon receiving her award, Kern, a member of Valleyview Mennonite Church in London, Ont., recalled the reasons she chose to become a CPTer. She referred to *The Comfortable Pew: A Critical Look at Christianity and*

the Religious Establishment in the New Age, a 1965 book by the late Canadian journalist Pierre Burton; she said she had heard sermons all her life about justice and mercy in her Mennonite churches but didn't see anyone acting on these great themes.

Kern had a career as an operating room nurse and a nurse educator but felt that she needed to act on her conviction. She volunteered for CPT training in Toronto in 2004. Then, as a CPT reservist, she served in Palestine, Colombia and northern Iraq, as well as along the U.S.-Mexico border, and at several sites in North America with Indigenous Peoples Solidarity, as an ally

of First Nations people struggling against illegal resource extractions on their traditional territories. She led many CPT learning delegations to every team site.

Kern later served in an administrative capacity at the Toronto CPT office as the Canada coordinator, retiring from that position in 2016. As a CPT administrator, she contributed to the shaping of present-day CPT, particularly Indigenous Peoples Solidarity in Canada.

She still found time to work with the War Resisters Support Campaign in London and Toronto, as well as with refugee support groups in London. She has also been active in creating connections between Muslim and Christian communities in London and elsewhere.

Kern continues to travel more than once a year on medical missions to Cuba and Honduras, and has continued to lead CPT delegations. ❧



PHOTO BY KAREN JANZ

Calgary First Mennonite Church said farewell to Pastor Ed Kauffman and his wife Gay on April 8. Kauffman preached his last sermon and officially retired on April 1 after serving the congregation as pastor since September 2010. The Kauffmans have moved to Elkhart, Ind., where they will be volunteer coordinators at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

/// Staff change

New CEO for Fairview, Parkwood Mennonite homes



• **ELAINE SHANTZ** has been hired as the new chief executive officer of Fairview and Parkwood Mennonite homes in Ontario, effective March

5. She previously worked for peopleCare Communities Inc., where she served as president and chief operative officer. In her more-than-15 years of experience in the senior care sector, Shantz led the development, re-development and opening of multiple long-term-care and retirement homes. She is currently chair of the Max Canada board and sits on the advocacy committee with the Ontario Long Term Care Association.

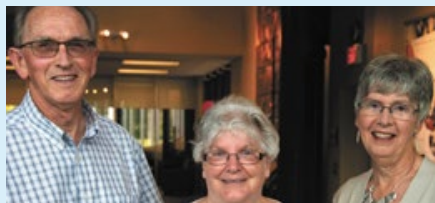
—Fairview/Parkwood Mennonite Homes

/// Briefly noted

Dyck family supports student volunteerism

WATERLOO, ONT.—Richard and Betty Dyck have a long history of church involvement and volunteerism in the community. As teachers in Elmira, Ont., they were very involved in their school community. And as members of Elmira Mennonite Church, they have also served as volunteers in various roles and engaged as board members at church-related organizations like the House of Friendship and Conrad Grebel University College. Richard's sister Judy has been part of the Grebel kitchen staff since 1984 and has become a fixture in the Grebel community. One of the important roles Judy has taken on at Grebel is volunteering to usher at almost every music department concert. The family has made two generous gifts to establish two endowed scholarships at Grebel. The Richard and Betty Dyck Volunteerism Entrance Award is for two students joining the residence program who illustrate extensive volunteer experience. The Judy Dyck Music Volunteerism Award is for a student majoring or minoring in music who exhibits an active engagement in volunteering for music department programs and is involved in the music society or the Music Living-Learning Community. The awards will be added to Grebel's growing list of scholarship and bursary awards, which last year provided more than \$425,000 in support to students.

—Conrad Grebel University College



Richard, left, Judy and Betty Dyck have made two generous gifts to establish the Richard and Betty Dyck Volunteerism Entrance Award and the Judy Dyck Music Volunteerism Award at Conrad Grebel University College.



ONLINE NOW!

at canadianmennonite.org

Supplying food to people displaced by violence

Three Congolese Mennonite denominations are working in partnership with MCC to carry out distributions in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

canadianmennonite.org/food-congo



Building shalom in the Philippines

International Witness worker Joji Pantoja reports on the peacebuilding ministry in the Philippines.

canadianmennonite.org/shalom-philippines



New network to encourage, support and connect peacebuilders

A new Global Anabaptist Peace Network is emerging through the efforts of Mennonite World Conference.

canadianmennonite.org/mwc-peace-network



European Mennonites anticipate diverse gathering

In May about 1,500 Mennonites from across Europe will gather in Montbéliard, France, for worship and fellowship.

canadianmennonite.org/european-mennonites-gather



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/// Staff changes

New communications coordinator in B.C.

• **KEVIN BARKOWSKY** is the new communications coordinator and administrative assistant for Mennonite Church B.C., as of April 1. He replaces Sarah Symons, who has been filling the position for the past seven months. Barkowsky is the former pastor of First Mennonite Church in Kelowna. He and his wife Deborah live in the First Nations community of Gingolx, where she is a village counsellor. Barkowsky will be doing his work remotely from Gingolx.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN



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young
voices 

Studying the Bible through a feminist lens

A weekly feminist Bible study in Waterloo, Ont., is helping women rethink their faith

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Around 10 women and female-identifying people sit in a circle at Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo, every week, drinking tea and discussing biblical texts through a feminist lens.

Jessica Reesor Rempel, 29, a member of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, started Feminist Bible Study to create a space for women to discuss issues of power, privilege and the role of women in the Bible.

Reesor Rempel is a community pastor for Pastors in Exile (PiE), an Anabaptist-rooted movement seeking to connect young people in Waterloo Region with vibrant faith experiences outside of church walls. PiE started the study in 2015, and Reesor Rempel says this is one such way the movement is helping facilitate these faith experiences.

She says the Bible study started as a response to gender inequality in the Bible, but also within church structures. “I haven’t always been impressed with the structures of the Mennonite church in terms of gender balance,” she says. “One of the reasons to start Feminist Bible Study was to have a space to talk about gender inequality in our church structures both locally and at a larger level.”

In their readings of the books of Ruth, Luke, Esther, Song of Solomon and Genesis, and non-canonical books like the “Gospel according to Mary Magdalene,” many participants are seeing their faith and social justice ideologies come closer together.

For some, Christianity and feminism—the belief that women and men of any race, sexual orientation, ability, gender identity and religion should have equal rights and opportunities—previously seemed mutually exclusive.

Caitie Walker, 22, is in her final year at the University of Waterloo. She attends Nexus Church in downtown Kitchener and has been attending the study since it began. She grew up in a traditional Christian home where women in the Bible weren’t discussed very often.

“In the framework of my churches that I was at growing up, women weren’t portrayed as powerful people God worked through, especially because there are so few examples of women,” she says.

At Bible study, though, the group looks at important women in the Bible and explores the historical context relating to why their roles are silenced.

“I’m learning that even though they might not be mentioned in a ton of detail, women were still instrumental, important and hung out with Jesus all the time,” she says.

Walker thinks the Bible study has allowed her to appreciate her conservative upbringing. “I think it’s helped me to kind of create a link between this conservative Christian background that I have and the more liberal beliefs that I’ve grown into,” she says. “My faith is still really important to me, but [the study] helped me change the framework I view it through.”

(Continued on page 28)



PHOTO BY JESSICA REESOR REMPEL

Around 10 women and female-identifying people meet weekly at Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont., for Feminist Bible Study, an initiative supported by Pastors in Exile.



PHOTO BY JESSICA REESOR REMPEL

‘In the framework of my churches that I was at growing up, women weren’t portrayed as powerful people God worked through,’ says Caitie Walker, left, pictured with fellow Feminist Bible Study participant Emily Leyland.



PHOTO BY EMILY LEYLAND

‘Feminist Bible Study has helped me connect with my faith,’ says Katie Steckly, right, pictured with Caitie Walker, left, and Jessica Reesor Rempel, centre.



PHOTO BY JESSICA REESOR REMPEL

Kim Rempel, a Feminist Bible Study participant, takes part in a March 22 discussion about the 'Gospel according to Mary Magdalene.'

(Continued from page 27)

Reesor Rempel says others have been able to reconcile their faith and feminism. "It's fun to see people open the Bible who haven't opened it in 10 years or something because they've been turned off by the patriarchy of the Bible," she says. "We're not denying there's patriarchy in the Bible, but what are the lessons there? How can we reclaim it, pick it up again and find it meaningful?"

Many of the Bible study participants are busy students.

Katie Steckly, 21, a fourth-year University of Waterloo student who attends Stirling Avenue, says the study has provided her a time and space to be more intentional about her faith in God: "I found being busy with homework and all the things that go along with school, it's difficult to find the time to go to church or a space to connect with my faith individually. I think when you're a student, it's so easy to see any time you have to yourself to spend it studying. Having that time carved out of my week for Feminist Bible Study has helped me connect with my faith."

It isn't necessarily just about discussing the texts, but more importantly about

how they're discussed. Reesor Rempel, who often facilitates the discussion, says the group uses a talking piece—a ball they pass around to make sure everyone has a chance to speak and be heard.

"We've been taught, especially in academia, that you have to be loud and assertive, and get your voices in there quickly," she says. "It's easy for dominant voices to be heard and for people to jump on top of each other. We're finding ways for more voices to share and be heard. The way we're together is just as important as what we're studying."

Reading the Bible in a community of other social-minded individuals is something that's become very important to the participants.

"There's something very Anabaptist in it," Reesor Rempel says. "To be reading in community is really essential. I have a sense that, if the Bible is going to continue to be important in my life, I'm going to have to read it in community." ❧

To join the Bible study, visit facebook.com/pastorsinexile for more information.



'Just doing my best'

Winnipeg artist Grace Kang uses her work to explore suffering and hope

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

Grace Kang can't remember a time when she wasn't making art.

As a child, "I was always drawing, I was always writing stories," the 22-year-old says. When she learned that art is not something everyone does or is interested in, "I realized it was a unique way I could contribute to the world."

One of Kang's most recent works is an installation that was unveiled on Palm Sunday at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, where she currently serves as artist-in-residence. Based on the theme of foot washing, the project consisted of 400 prints depicting different pairs of feet

suspended in the air using twine and surrounding a large ceramic bowl.

"All the feet were unique and had little stories. Some had Band-Aids®, some were dirty, some were in high heels," she says. "I wanted people to face the places they had been and realize it was okay, and that Jesus wants to meet us where we're at."

Two weeks prior, Kang preached a deeply personal sermon at Bethel about hope and lament that outlined some of her story. Born in South Korea, she immigrated to Canada with her family when she was very young. The family eventually settled three hours west of Winnipeg in Strathclair,



Grace Kang has made art since she was a child.

Man., and faced many challenges along the way.

In 2000, her family was homeless for a time. The next year, her father impaled his hand, leaving him unable to work. A year after that, the youngest of her two siblings was hospitalized with an unexplainable and incurable illness that caused him to have seizures and constant pain.

In 2005, Kang developed clinical depression, which she struggles with to this day. “I wanted people to know where I was coming from, so they could understand where my art was coming from,” she says of why she chose to share the things she did in her sermon.

Suffering often doesn’t have an easy solution and must be contended with in its fullness, she said in her sermon: “This begins by looking it square in the eye and acknowledging it for what it is—messy, uncomfortable and terribly, terribly hard. . . . Whether God is the bad guy or the hero in your life, look God exactly in the face today and tell him who he is to you and what exactly is going on. This is called lament, a practice that is integral to our Judeo-Christian roots. This is the acknowledgment that life is insanely hard and broken and messed up, and not diminishing that.”

For her, making art is a way of working through her suffering.

“As I’ve been drawing and trying to figure out what the heck my life is, I realized that suffering is a really large part of my story and I think it always will be,” she says. “I’ve realized that it doesn’t get better, it’s hard all the way through. And that’s okay. So I think suffering will always be a part of my art, because it’s such a big part of being human. . . . Art is about making meaning. [It’s about asking questions like], ‘Why is there suffering? What is God doing about it and how do I fit into that?’”

At the same time, in her sermon Kang encouraged the congregation to hold onto hope. “Yes, suffering is real, but healing is real, too,” she said.

In 2003, her brother was miraculously healed of his unknown illness. Today, her parents have paid off their debts, and they own and operate three grocery stores. Kang still suffers from clinical depression, but her medications are well balanced and she has a community of people to support her.

Her work at Bethel has elicited a variety of responses, from wonderment to enjoyment to uncertainty, says Darrel Toews, the church’s lead pastor. He adds that Bethel’s vision statement is, “Loving God, each other and our neighbours,” and that the artist-in-residence is invited to express that vision creatively.

“Grace has been doing that. She’s fulfilling exactly those expectations,” he says. “She’s a very dedicated follower of God.”

Kang is currently pursuing a master’s degree in Christian ministry at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg and has many ambitions for her future.

“I want to do my master of marriage and family therapy [degree] at the University of Winnipeg so I can be a therapist, [and] I want to travel,” she says. “I want to do my PhD in theology, and I think art will be a large part of that throughout. I haven’t done a lot of art therapy but I find it very helpful, and I want to incorporate that when I do therapy. I’d also like to be involved in pastoral care and enriching the life of a church through art.”

She’s not sure which path she’ll take, and that’s all right.

“I’m 22,” she says. “I don’t know what I’m doing. Just doing my best.” ☞



“I wanted people to face the places they had been and realize . . . Jesus wants to meet us where we’re at,” Grace Kang says of her installation at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.



Grace Kang’s installation at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg consisted of 400 prints depicting different pairs of feet suspended in the air using twine and surrounding a large ceramic bowl.

Calendar

British Columbia

May 12,13: Valley Festival Singers present Songs of Strength and Beauty in Abbotsford: (12) at Bakerview MB Church, at 7 p.m.; (13) at Calvin Presbyterian Church, at 3 p.m.

Alberta

June 1-2: MCC Alberta charity auction and sale, in Didsbury. For more information, visit mccreliefsale.com.

June 8-10: MC Alberta women's retreat at Sunnyside Retreat Centre, Sylvan Lake. Speaker: Rachel Miller Jacobs of AMBS. Theme: "Ordinary forgiveness." To register, visit mcawomen.com.

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

Saskatchewan

May 25-27: SMYO junior high retreat.

Manitoba

May 10: New exhibits by Danielle Fontaine Koslowsky, Reymond Pagé and Jeff Chester open at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

May 11: Opening of an exhibit by Gabriella Aguerro at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit gallery.mennonitechurch.ca.

May 12: Manitoba Day ceremony at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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

May 16: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate work day.

May 25-26: MCC Manitoba hosts its annual SpringFest at its Winnipeg office, starting at 10 a.m. each day. Includes plant sale, quilt show and sale, relief kit packing and barbecue lunch. For more information, visit mccmb.ca/springfest.

May 30: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate junior-high spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

May 31: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate senior-high spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Ontario

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

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.

May 5,6: The Soli Deo Gloria Singers present

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their spring concert, Beauty is God's Handwriting; (5) at UMEI, at 7:30 p.m.; (6) at Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For tickets, call UMEI at 519-326-7448.

May 12: "Paddle the Grand" fundraising event in support of Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, at 3 p.m. For more information, or to register, visit slmc.ca.

May 12: Silver Lake Mennonite Camp annual general meeting, at Wagler-Carr Farm in West Montrose, at 6 p.m. For more information, or to register, email the camp at fun@slmc.ca.

May 12: Silver Lake Mennonite Camp fundraising concert, featuring Rescue Junction and the Little Mannheim Band, at Mannheim Mennonite Church, Petersburg, at 7 p.m. For more information, call 519-634-5551.

May 18-20: Family camp at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, with special guests Bryan and Julie Moyer Suderman. For more information, or to register, visit slmc.ca.

May 25-26: New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale, at the New Hamburg fairgrounds. Featuring the largest charity quilt sale in Canada. For more information, visit nhmrs.com.

May 31-June 3: "Discovery: A Comic Lament," a show about land, love and loss, starring Ted Swartz and Michelle Milne: (31) at Rockway Mennonite

Collegiate, Kitchener; (1) at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo; (2) at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cambridge; (3) at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden. All shows at 7:30 p.m. For advance tickets, visit uwaterloo.ca/grebel/discovery.

Nova Scotia

June 7-9: Mennonite Church Canada is looking to help sponsor women and men from across the nationwide church to attend this year's North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies' symposium, White Supremacy, Racial Conflict and Indigeneity: Toward Right Relationship, at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville. For those interested in attending, email Steve Heinrichs at sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca.

To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by email to calendar@canadianmennonite.org. For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



/// Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

Carman Mennonite Church

Employment opportunity

Carman Mennonite Church in Carman, Manitoba, invites applications for a **full time-lead pastor**. Start time is negotiable.

We are a multi-generational congregation with an average of 120 attending worship services. We seek a pastor to lead in helping us grow as followers of Jesus Christ and who is committed to Anabaptist theology. Strengths in leadership, preaching, and pastoral care are essential.

All inquiries may be directed to muefeld@mennochurch.mb.ca Church profile and job duties are available from the same contact.

The search committee will review and process candidates as they come forward until the position is filled.

<http://goldenwestsites.com/carmanmennonitechurch>

AMBS

Employment opportunity

Institute of Mennonite Studies (IMS) of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary is hiring a **part-time managing editor** to start August 1, 2018.

The managing editor provides day-to-day management of the planning, production, promotion, and distribution of IMS print and digital publications. See a full job description at www.ambs.edu/jobs.

Willowgrove

Employment opportunity

Willowgrove is very grateful for the five years of strong and passionate leadership director Kristen Berg brought to **Fraser Lake Camp**. We are **currently inviting FLC Director applications** to carry this leadership forward for the 2019 season and beyond.

The position will begin in **September 2018** and is 80%, with the possibility for full time, depending on the candidate's availability and skill set. The position is based out of the Willowgrove office in Stouffville, Ont., for the off-season and at the Fraser Lake Camp site in Bancroft, Ont., during the camp season. Rental accommodation is available on the Willowgrove property.

We are seeking a person with strong relational and organizational skills, who has a passion for working with youth and children in an outdoor faith-building context.

For more information and/or to send an application, contact Miriam Reesor, Miriam@willowgrove.ca. Application deadline is May 18, 2018.

First Mennonite Church Edmonton

**Inviting applications:
Full-time pastor**

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



PHOTO COURTESY OF RYAN SIEMENS

Lois Bukar, right, pastor of Zion Mennonite Church, Swift Current, Sask., was ordained on March 11. She is pictured with her husband Tromhan.

God at Work in the Church

Snapshots

PHOTO BY MICHAEL NEWARK

With a 2017 net surplus of \$15,000, Wellesley (Ont.) Mennonite Church decided to put Abundance Canada's 'save, spend, share' motto into action.

After giving \$5,000 to Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, it divided the rest between five ministries: mission families Greg and Tracy McLean with Wycliffe Bible Translators and Mike and Cheryl Nimz with Mennonite Church Canada Witness; Mennonite Central Committee's clean water project; the congregation's property maintenance fund; the church benevolent fund; and Hidden Acres' single moms camp. Jordan VanHouwelingen, pictured, and the rest of the congregants were given tokens on Palm Sunday to place in one or more of the five ministry bags of their choosing. 'We give thanks for God's abundance and for this opportunity to be generous,' said Pastor Kara Carter.

