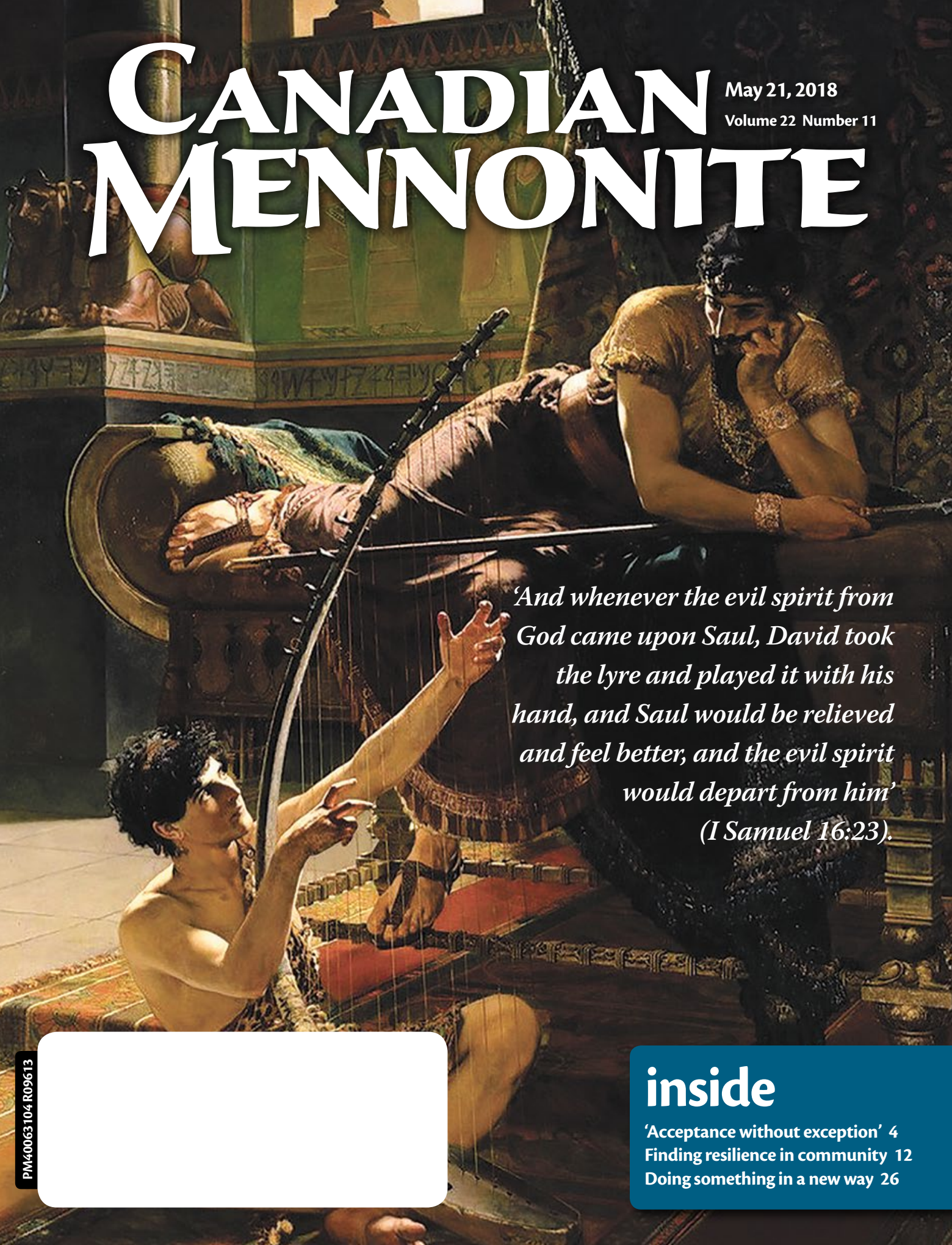


CANADIAN MENNONITE

May 21, 2018

Volume 22 Number 11



'And whenever the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand, and Saul would be relieved and feel better, and the evil spirit would depart from him' (I Samuel 16:23).

inside

'Acceptance without exception' 4
Finding resilience in community 12
Doing something in a new way 26

EDITORIAL

Questions of conscience

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Last month, a Canadian Mennonite was arrested—for following his conscience. In the tradition of our 16th-century Anabaptist ancestors, civil disobedience was an expected path. But nowadays, we don't see things so clearly.

A recent discussion concerns the April protests at the Kinder Morgan pipeline in Burnaby, B.C., where Steve Heinrichs took part in an ecumenical protest against the construction of the pipeline. He was arrested on criminal and civil charges for contempt of an order prohibiting protests at the site. (See "Mennonites arrested in Kinder Morgan pipeline protest," May 7, page 18-19.)

Heinrichs serves as the director of Indigenous-Settler Relations for Mennonite Church Canada. He says he heeded a call from local Indigenous groups to stand with them in protest. In a Facebook post he wrote, "I was arrested today along with fellow spiritual leaders in defence of Indigenous peoples' inherent right to free, prior and informed consent; their right to protect and maintain their relationships to traditional territories and waterscapes . . . ; their right to say no to fossil fuel expansion in this time of ecological crisis."

There are at least two main points of discussion:

1. **IS THE** pipeline the best way to address the country's ongoing demand for fossil fuels? Some local Indigenous communities have signed deals giving

approval for the pipeline, seeing their financial survival closely tied to its success. Other groups see the certain degradation of their lands and fear the risk of disastrous oil spills.

The same disagreement happens within our own circles. That's understandable, since some in our churchwide community work in jobs related to the oil industry while others labour on behalf of environmental concerns.

2. **SHOULD A** person working on behalf of the nationwide church participate in a public protest like this? People have asked whether Heinrichs was representing MC Canada in an official capacity or whether he was there as an individual. A fair question.

Over the past several years, our nationwide body has championed the cause of justice for Indigenous peoples. At the July 2016 assembly, delegates passed a resolution to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, a viewpoint that has long been used to justify dominance over Indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, in the restructuring of MC Canada that happened last fall, delegates affirmed that reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people should be a nationwide priority. The hope was that our denomination would continue speaking nationally on issues related to our Indigenous neighbours. Heinrichs is widely respected, both within our denomination and beyond, for his strong commitment to

justice for First Nations people and for his ability to inspire others to participate in the cause.

At its May 5 and 6 meetings, the MC Canada Joint Council had conversation about the B.C. protest. A written report states, "While there is a difference of opinion regarding the resulting arrest of Heinrichs, the Joint Council remains committed to the ministry and the statements made by the church in the past." This is not quite an endorsement of his civil disobedience, but it is a reminder that we as a church see advocacy as part of our reconciliation efforts.

Where to from here? While we recognize the complexities of this issue, let's take seriously the ones who were in this land before our ancestors got here. Let's keep listening and talking, and taking action as our conscience calls us. And whatever "side" we're on, it is good to remember that our own habits of consumption are part of the problem. Clearly, this conversation is not finished.

Introducing Barb Draper, Editorial Assistant

Barb does some writing as well as proofreading, indexing and compiling the lists of books and resources for *Canadian Mennonite*.

One of her passions is local Mennonite history, and she serves on the board and edits the newsletter of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. As well as writing plays, she has penned a book explaining Old Order and other Mennonites in her community. She lives in Elmira, Ont., with her husband Roy, a retired English teacher, and attends Floradale Mennonite Church. They have two grown-up sons.



ABOUT THE COVER:

'David would play his harp, and Saul would feel better. David would mediate the spirit of life and make the evil spirit depart from Saul,' writes Virginia Gerbrandt Richert in our mental health feature, 'Acceptance without exception,' on page 4.

ARTWORK: 'DAVID AND SAUL,' BY JULIUS KRONBERG, OIL ON CANVAS, 1885

Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Canada

ISSN 1480-042X

CANADIAN MENNONITE

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO:

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

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

Web site: canadianmennonite.org

Facebook.com/Canadian.Mennonite @CanMenno

Please send all material to be considered for publication to:

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Paid obituaries: obituaries@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

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

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

Reprint requests: reprints@canadianmennonite.org

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

Guiding values:

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

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

• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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

Board of Directors (by appointing body):

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

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

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

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

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

Head Office Staff:

Tobi Thiessen, Publisher, publisher@canadianmennonite.org

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

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

Barb Draper, Editorial Assistant, edassist@canadianmennonite.org

Betty Avery, Graphic Designer, designer@canadianmennonite.org

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

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

Advertising Manager: D. Michael Hostetler, advert@canadianmennonite.org,

toll-free voice mail: 1-800-378-2524 ext. 224

Correspondents:

Will Braun, Senior Writer, seniorwriter@canadianmennonite.org

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

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

Donna Schulz, Saskatchewan Correspondent, sk@canadianmennonite.org

Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe, Manitoba Correspondent, mb@canadianmennonite.org

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

One-Year Subscription Rates

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

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

Subscriptions/address changes:

(e-mail) office@canadianmennonite.org

(web) canadianmennonite.org

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

contents

MAY 21, 2018 / VOL. 22, NO. 11



'Acceptance without exception' 4

'Mental illness is a part of God's story and part of our story and our community,' according to **VIRGINIA GERBRANDT RICHERT**, who calls Christians 'to love all as God enables us.'

Focus on Mental Health 16-22

Stories include 'Suicide isn't painless,' by **DONITA WIEBE NEUFELD**; 'Meeting the mental health needs of students,' by **DONNA SCHULZ**; 'Poetry and art for mental health,' by **AMY DUECKMAN**; and 'Resilience Road leads to mental health for women,' by **NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE**.

Process to replace executive director begins 23

WILLARD METZGER will complete eight years of service to Mennonite Church Canada at the end of October. 'We have been blessed by Willard's leadership,' says moderator **CALVIN QUAN**.

MC Canada working groups call for sanctions against Israel 28

The network of regional working groups on Palestine and Israel also asks the Prime Minister to 'condemn Israel's use of lethal force to suppress peaceful protest,' and to bring about a just peace without military intervention.

'Not a mirage' 32

DAVE ROGALSKY's coverage of an exhibition of visual art proves Rockway Mennonite Collegiate is about more than music.

Young Voices 35-37

In 'From church to yoga studio,' **SARAH STEINER** reflects on why she has chosen a mat over the sanctuary. MC Canada Joint Council member **JACQUELYN JANZEN** is profiled by **AARON EPP** in 'Celebrating differences, learning to work together.'

Regular features:

For discussion **6** Readers write **7** Milestones **10**
A moment from yesterday **10** Online NOW! **21**
Service Links **34** Calendar **38** Classifieds **39**

Wis eugue dui 2

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER

The racism around us 7

DONNA ENTZ

Touch for the good 8

MELISSA MILLER

A new view of nature 9

PAMELA MILES



Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



MENTAL HEALTH FEATURE

'Acceptance without exception'

BY VIRGINIA GERBRANDT RICHERT

"And whenever the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand, and Saul would be relieved and feel better, and the evil spirit would depart from him" (1 Samuel 16:23).

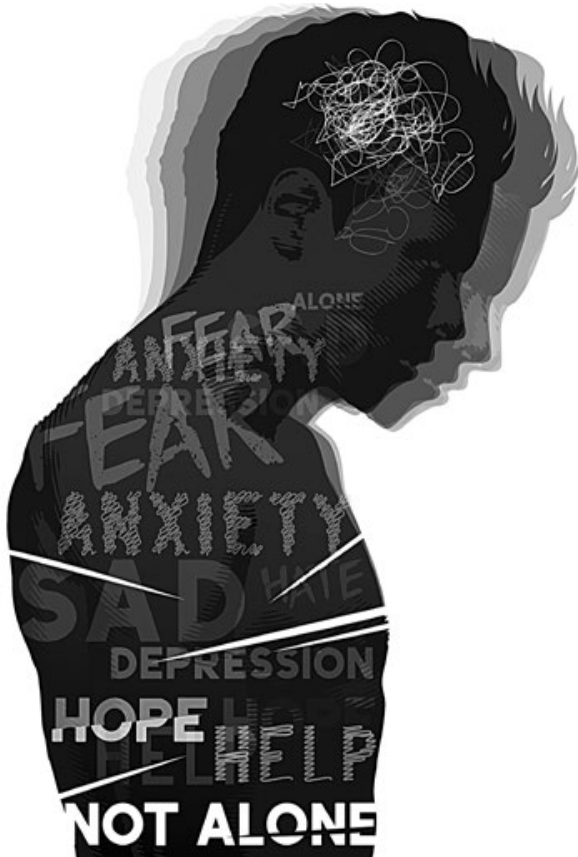


PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/SOLARSERVER

According to recent research by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one adult in four experiences some kind of mental health disorder or illness in a given year.

David would play his harp, and Saul would feel better. David would mediate the spirit of life and make the evil spirit depart from Saul.

We read that the spirit of the Lord departs from Saul. No longer is Saul in the Lord's favour; no longer is he the chosen king, and he feels it. He feels the absence of God's blessings on his actions, he feels the absence of purpose for his life, and he feels the absence of joy.

In today's language we would probably say that he was depressed. He was having more than just a bad day; it was something deeper.

Depression is more than just a "bad day" or feelings of sadness in response to life's struggles. Depression is a mental illness that affects people's moods. Moods impact the way people think about themselves, relate to others and interact with the world around them, according to the Canadian Mental Health Association. Depression can keep people from functioning normally, and includes such things as feeling helpless, hopeless and worthless.

More biblical examples of depression

Saul is not the only person we read about in the Bible who suffered in such a way.

The Psalms are full of cries of anguish and for help from God. Psalm 130 begins with "Out of the depths. I cry to you, O Lord." And Psalm 22 declares: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry to you by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest."

Or the story of the prophet Elijah in I Kings 19. He is fleeing from Queen Jezebel because she is threatening to kill him. During this time Elijah experiences many of the symptoms of depression that are still so common today: he isolates himself from his friends and supports; and he experiences a lack of sleep, physical exhaustion, feelings of rejection and worthlessness, isolation and irrational negative thoughts about his own death.

Then there is the story in Numbers 14. The Israelite people, after God brought them out of the land of slavery in Egypt, cry out to God



'DAVID AND SAUL,' BY ERNST JOSEPHSON, OIL ON CANVAS, 1878

David respects Saul, and also loves him. He mediates the spirit of life to him whenever they are together. And he is simply present whenever he is needed.

that they want to go back to Egypt. They want to go back to slavery because they think that was better than their present situation. They want to go back to the very place where God had rescued them from. And at times they even say that they would have rather died in Egypt than continue following God to the Promised Land.

These stories are a part of our Scriptures, they are a part of the story of God's people, and they are a part of our story. And they are a part of our experience today. It is a part of the lives of so many people within our world, and within our church and community.

David shows us how to respond

According to recent research by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, one adult in five experiences some kind of mental health disorder or illness in a given year. And this figure is not much different

whether individuals believe in God or not, are a Christian or go to church.

As with all statistics, this figure is a broad average, and we can think it might not be the reality in our community. But then again, it might be. In any case, this statistic can alert us to the fact that mental illness is a reality in our world, one that we can't ignore. For if it is affecting our world and our community, it is affecting us and our faith.

But this is also not something to get discouraged about. It is something to embrace and seek after. It is something that is calling us to respond, calling us to pray, and calling us to seek God's leading.

The stories that we read in the Bible give us examples for us to follow. And they give us insight into how God might be calling us to respond to mental health issues today.

When Saul realized that the spirit of the Lord had left him and that an evil spirit

of the Lord had descended upon him, he sought relief. His servants noticed this and gave him an idea of what he could do, something that would be feasible for him, and something that would help him feel better.

He should find someone skillful in music, and have that person come and play for him. Saul seemed to agree with this idea and asked his servants to give him suggestions. They suggested that David, son of Jesse, come and play for him. So Saul sent for David to come and play for him.

David responded to Saul—no questions asked. When David arrived, he played for Saul, and Saul enjoyed it. So from that time on, whenever the evil spirit came upon Saul, David would play for him and he would feel better, and the evil spirit would depart from him.

David does not seem to do very much in this story. He doesn't have any lines. All

he has to do is play his harp. But his role is vital, and it is just as important to note what he does as well as what doesn't do.

David has been invited into a relationship with Saul in the midst of Saul's illness. When he arrives, he doesn't ask any questions. He doesn't ask why he has been sent for, or why Saul is experiencing an evil spirit. Nor does he need a label or doctor's diagnosis to justify what he is doing. He has simply been asked to come and share his gift of music, and to be present to Saul when he is needed, which he does.

David also does not offer any advice or unsolicited counsel. He is no expert on these things. He is a mere shepherd boy who knows how to lull the sheep to sleep, and so he transfers this knowledge to his present situation.

In this way, David respects Saul, and also loves him. He mediates the spirit of life to him whenever they are together. And he is simply present whenever he is needed. He displays God's love, and shows himself to be worthy of trust and respect in return. And as a result, David finds favour in the sight of Saul, and Saul loved him in return.

An invitation to show God's love

Mental illness is a part of God's story and a part of our story and our community. It is not something that we need to be afraid of or avoid. It has been around for as long as we have records of people and their emotions. It may not be something that will ever completely disappear. As Jesus talked about the poor, that we would always have them with us, there may always be mental struggles for people to deal with, too. But if we see this as an invitation to show God's love, then God's name can continue to be glorified through this.

So David began his interactions with Saul gently. He found a way to accept Saul, even though he was experiencing an evil spirit, even though this spirit was attributed to God, and even though its presence was a result of the actions and disobedience that Saul himself had done. David was able to accept Saul as a beloved child of God without any justification for his illness or exceptions to God's love.

And David did not think of himself more highly than he needed to. He did not need to offer advice or assume the role of

doctor or therapist. He simply did what he was asked. He allowed God's peace to flow through him so God's love and presence could be felt.

And this is our call as Christians and as the church: to follow David's example. We are to show acceptance without question or exception, without diagnosis or label. We are to love all as God enables us, being present to those who are in need, seeking God's Spirit in all that we do. And when we are asked, we are to willingly share our gifts.

Our curiosities may not always be satisfied, nor our fears always held at bay, but no one needs justification to experience God's love or know that they are God's beloved.

When mental illness affects those around us, or even close to us, we are invited to respect them as equal children

And this is our call as Christians and as the church: to follow David's example. We are to show acceptance without question or exception, without diagnosis or label.

of God. We are to love them as ourselves and we are to care for them as if they were God's Son here among us.

Healing may not be within our power. It may not even be easy to diagnose or assess. But love and presence are within our power, and are the greatest gifts that we can give to anyone, especially those troubled and struggling for mental health. ❧

Virginia Gerbrandt Richert is associate pastor of Berghaler Mennonite Church of Altona, Man. Adapted from a sermon she preached on Jan. 18, 2014, based on 1 Samuel 16:14-23.



❧ For discussion

1. Have you ever had prolonged feelings of helplessness, hopelessness or worthlessness? To what extent did these feelings make it difficult to cope with life? How long did it take before you felt healthy again? Why might we try to hide these kinds of feelings? When is it time to be open and honest about our struggles?
2. Research has shown that some measure of mental health disorder or illness affects one in five adults in any given year. Do you find this statistic surprising? What is the difference between having a bad day and poor mental health? How easily do we admit that we are struggling?
3. Virginia Gerbrandt Richert points out that when David played his harp for Saul, he didn't ask questions, diagnose or offer advice, he simply played. Why is this accepting attitude important? How does this show God's love? Is it important to admit that we don't have answers?
4. Richert writes that "love and presence are within our power, and are the greatest gifts that we can give to anyone." Do you agree? Are there other things congregations can do to support those who are struggling?

—BY BARB DRAPER

See related resources at
www.commonword.ca/go/1531

CommonWord
 Bookstore and Resource Centre

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. 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.

✉ 'Just one more example of a privileged western interpretation'

RE: "A PEACE that ignores Jesus' atoning work" review of *A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*, April 9, page 24.

While I have high respect for reviewer Harold Jantz and his work within the Mennonite church, I can't help thinking that he has provided just one more example of a privileged western interpretation of a book that rightly tries to help an oppressed and marginalized people find meaning within Scripture.

We seem to have precious little sympathy for the many stories of Jesus confronting the powers on behalf of, or in contrast to, those who are poor, marginalized

(Continued on page 8)

FROM OUR LEADERS

The racism around us

DONNA ENTZ

I like to think Canada is a progressive country, and discrimination is on the decline, but I've had a reality check.

Recently, a group home caregiver, a Liberian woman, told me of her challenges with a difficult client who often wanders from the home. She has had to run after this client to keep her safe from traffic. Three times, neighbours have called the police to report this black woman running down the street. Many people in Edmonton, including myself, run on the sidewalks. Why is a black woman running a reason for calling the police?

I recently visited a family of Indian-Pakistani background and had some time alone with their junior-high daughter. She told me of the personal, emotional and online bullying she lives with. Her dark skin and the fact she is Muslim make it difficult for her. Last year, she reported the bullying, and that made it worse. This year, she is not reporting them, and is just getting by with support from good friends and family. She would love to respect her mom by wearing a hijab but says the discrimination is



so bad already she doesn't have the nerve to add another layer that could make it even worse. My heart broke for this young woman.

I know from Canadian-born Muslim friends who wear a hijab, that in the last few years they have faced more discrimination and feel uncomfortable in our city. There was alarm and taking of extra precautions, even here in Edmonton, when

Are we . . . able to see the racism around us and in us, and respond as Jesus did, reaching out to the persecuted?

a letter circulated on social media labelling April 3 as "Punish a Muslim Day." The letter detailed a point system, ranging from 25 points for pulling a Muslim woman's hijab to 1,000 points for burning or bombing a mosque.

Julien Hammond, a Roman Catholic colleague, says, "Whenever I attend a presentation by our local hate crimes police, I am always astounded to learn how much energy and planning goes into mobilizing various movements of hatred in our society. They recruit, they train, they fundraise,

they hold rallies—all for the purpose of directing harm toward others, whether physical, mental or otherwise. And I think of all the energy and resources that we, in our respective communities and collaboratively, allocate to mobilizing movements of peace and increased understanding between peoples. Is it comparable? Is it enough? More to the point, do we seek only to offer a counter-narrative to their hatred, or do we go further to pray for these 'enemies' of peace and embrace them with Christian love?"

Are we, in our Mennonite churches, able to see the racism around us and in us, and respond as Jesus did, reaching out to

the persecuted? As Christians, how do we "recruit, train and rally" our people to be allies to all of God's people? Here are some easy first steps: Smile at and greet people of races other than your own. If you see someone being harassed, go stand with them. Listen to those who have stories of racism to tell, and find a way to encourage and support them.

Donna Entz relates to immigrants and refugees in Edmonton for Mennonite Church Alberta.

(Continued from page 7)

and dispossessed. We much prefer to focus on other things, like our individual salvation, God's blessings as evidenced by material wealth, and life in the sweet hereafter.

Whether it is the liberation theology of South and Central America, of the Middle East or of our own Indigenous peoples, we would do ourselves a favour by

trying more to understand why the Jesus of the New Testament has such appeal to people who have been oppressed by colonialism, slavery, economic exploitation and other existential realities that were common during his time.

To me, it has become more important to worry less about a correct hermeneutic than to know that Arab, Egyptian and Palestinian Christians still find

FAMILY TIES

Touch for the good

MELISSA MILLER

I recently visited with my mother in the small room that is now her home. After travelling hours by airplane and car, my foot was swollen and sore. Having few options for relief, I lifted it and placed it beside her. She reached out, softly touched it, and asked how my foot, which had an injury, was healing.

This small, nearly unnoticeable moment was packed with great meaning and warmed tender places inside of me. Mostly it represented healthy touch in a healthy relationship. Odd as the behaviour might have looked to an outsider, it fit the interaction between a particular mother and daughter. Permission was sought and given. I could seek relief from discomfort. I could physically move into my mother's space, nudging my foot alongside her leg. She could reciprocate with a gentle brushing of my skin. She demonstrated care, inquiring about my well-being. So much happening in a 30-second interaction.

What makes touch pleasant and welcome? What turns touch into something that is hurtful and undesirable? I offer a few guidelines, framed as a series of questions. Our perspectives are shaped by culture, personality, community and training, which might lead to different answers.

First, we ask ourselves what level of touch is appropriate given the relationship. The most intimate relationships, those between spouses, within families and in

close friendships, are ones where touch is generally sorted out over time. Experience guides what is offered and received. In more casual relationships, less is known, and therefore more explicit negotiations are warranted.

Another question relates to the power dynamics. Is the power relatively equal in the relationship, or is there a moderate to extreme power imbalance? For example, within a doctor-patient relationship, a doctor has significant power of knowledge, strength and position over the patient. Touch within such a setting should follow careful practice. Recently, I've had interactions with two physiotherapists, both of whom sought permission before touching me, and explained the treatment they offered. I appreciated this sensitivity; it increased my trust.

As a pastor and counsellor, I recognize the vulnerability of those who come to

or has difficulty saying no, it is important to be cautious with one's assumptions. Preferably, the person receiving care initiates the contact.

Finally, how is the touch perceived by the recipient? This is one of the most important questions. Hopefully the touch is intended to be caring and beneficial. When someone signals that touch is not welcome—by verbal refusal, by nonverbal signals such as stepping away or putting hands up in a "stop" gesture, by a stiffening posture—it is necessary to refrain from touching. If the touch is unwanted, it will contaminate the intended care.

As I write, I recall the biblical injunction to "greet each other with a holy kiss." These may or may not be familiar words; they may strike us as strange, or even alarming. Some of us, though, have memories of this church practice, and it is common in many churches today, including those in Anabaptist and Eastern Orthodox traditions. The principles behind the holy



What makes touch pleasant and welcome? What turns touch into something that is hurtful and undesirable?

my office for care. I want to offer touch for the good of others with their explicitly stated permission. This means asking, "Would you like a hug?" And respecting the answer. Even with my best efforts, I know that sometimes I misjudge. My eagerness to embrace can override the other's hesitation. Since we do not always know if an individual has experienced abuse,

kiss—extending the love of Christ, mutual respect and a motivation of wholesome affection—can guide us towards healthy touch.

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

meaning in the Christ of the New Testament. How, after all, will I be able to find meaningful fellowship with Indigenous Christians who will find—and are finding—a truth of their own in the Jesus accounts but who don't necessarily pay enough attention to the "atoning work" noted by Jantz in his review.

If we wish to be honest with ourselves as Anabaptists, I think we need to be ready to listen very

carefully to the voices from the margins. After all, we were there once ourselves, and the 16th century world didn't exactly look too kindly on our disruptive hermeneutic.

PETER ANDRES, CHILLIWACK, B.C.

GOD, MONEY AND ME

A new view of nature

PAMELA MILES

I am so glad that summer is on the horizon. Spending time outdoors was a huge part of my childhood. My family shared many weekends at a small one-room cabin on a river, fishing, swimming, canoeing and just enjoying the beauty around us. We would watch the beavers make their way up and down the river, hope to see a deer come out at dusk for a drink, and listen to the wolves howl at night.

Through those long summer days at the cabin, my parents passed on their values of living contentedly, and taught us to steward nature and share it generously with others. We learned to appreciate what the Lord had given us, including the abundance of natural beauty. I have always found that enjoying God's creation refreshes my soul and helps me keep a healthy mind, body and spirit. Recently, several scientific studies have confirmed that spending time in nature is good for your overall well-being and mental health.

A recent study by Holli-Anne Passmore of the University of British Columbia, published in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* in 2016, examined the connection between personal well-being and taking a moment to look at something from the natural environment. Passmore was "overwhelmed" by the descriptions of emotions submitted by the study's 395 participants: their happiness, sense of elevation and their

level of connectedness to other people. Another study by Andrea Mechelli of Kings College in London, published in the journal *Bioscience* in 2018, concluded that the positive effects of a single exposure to nature—walking the dog, going for a run or spending time in the garden—can last for seven hours after an individual has experienced it. The study also found that individuals at greater risk of developing mental health issues, including anxiety and depression, benefit even more from getting outdoors than others.

This research is compelling, but you don't have to be a scientist to understand the power of spending time in nature. From the very beginning, people have delighted in God's wondrous handiwork. Countless

taking in the serenity, a black bear swam by just a few hundred feet away. My father says he knew that this rare event was a gift from God, a demonstration of his love and generous ways. Framing my own experiences of nature as an extravagant gift that God freely gives has inspired me to deeply appreciate these gifts and to respond by giving generously from the resources God has entrusted to me. Rather than just sharing a snapshot of a pretty view, I am inspired to share the blessings that allowed me to experience that snapshot.

Every day we're surrounded by amazing displays of God's creation: a sunset as we drive home from work, birds twittering in the neighbourhood trees, or a weekend hike in the woods. As the weather warms and we start to spend more time outdoors, I hope we all take more notice of these little gifts. Perhaps instead of just captur-



Rather than just sharing a snapshot of a pretty view, I am inspired to share the blessings that allowed me to experience that snapshot.

songs and stories throughout history describe the beauty of the natural world. In Psalm 19:1-3, David writes of how nature reveals God's magnificent beauty and truth: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge."

My father once told me of bringing my ailing grandfather to our cabin to enjoy the pristine wilderness setting he loved for the last time. As they sat on the bench outside,

ing a photo to share this summer, we'll be inspired to respond with renewed gratitude and generosity.

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

✉ Quibbles about covers

RE: “SHEKINAH CABIN built off the grid,” April 23, pages 1 and 14.

The article title is “Shekinah cabin built off the grid,” yet the cover photograph shows a volunteer with an electrical tool with a cord connecting it to the grid. Not sure if the title is appropriate. After reading the article, maybe a more appropriate title would be “Shekinah cabin built to be off the grid.”

VICTOR HUEBERT, KINGSVILLE, ONT.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Andres—Adalynn Amanda (b. Oct. 4, 2017), to Jason and Leanne Andres, Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

Horne—Emberley May (b. March 25, 2018), to Colin and Denise Horne, Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

Minor—Sullivan James (b. April 24, 2018), to Patrick and Becky Minor, Crosshill Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Marriages

Bartel/Schlamp—Erica Bartel and Derek Schlamp, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask., April 14, 2018.

Dossenbach/Driedger—David Dossenbach and Kimberly Driedger, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., April 20, 2018.

Lantz/Ropp—Eric Lantz and Katie Ropp, both of Crosshill

RE: “HIDDEN STORIES of the Holocaust,” April 9, pages 1 and 12.

I was completely disgusted that a Christian magazine would carry such a violent picture on its front page. I am also amazed that these so-called scholars can sit in their comfortable offices and deride the actions of the Mennonites who were in such desperate situations of the day. I assume these scholars think that all Mennonites of the day were strong believers of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

FRED BARTEL, RICHMOND B.C.

Mennonite, Millbank, Ont., at the Butterfly Conservancy, Cambridge, Ont., Feb. 24, 2018.

Deaths

Braun—Margaret (Marge) (nee Dyck), 89 (b. Oct. 10, 1928; d. April 15, 2018), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Erb—Ray, 85 (b. March 21, 1933; d. April 20, 2018), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

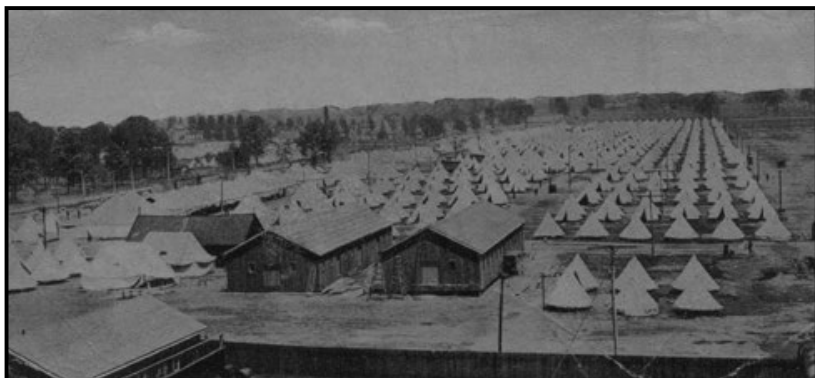
Gerber—Mary Ellen, 79 (b. May 8, 1938; d. April 14, 2018), Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

Schiedel—Cameron, 89 (b. Nov. 19, 1928; d. March 5, 2018), Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

Schultz—Peter Laverne Ray, 39 (b. June 29, 1978; d. March 2, 2018), Poole Mennonite, Ont.

Van Kampen—John, 93 (b. Feb. 25, 1925; d. April 24, 2018), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

A moment from yesterday



This is the view that greeted Amish Mennonite farm boys Dan and Willie Brenneman when they were apprehended by military police and detained at the Carling Heights Military Camp in London, Ont. Despite their conscientious objector status, they were taken while working in a field in East Zorra Township in May 1918. For six weeks the boys endured verbal threats and physical coercion to “put on the uniform.” They resisted, and were eventually released with the help of Mennonite church leaders and sympathetic elected officials.

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing

Photo: Mennonite Archives of Ontario

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Environment matters today and tomorrow

TROY WATSON



I often hear people describe the church as being behind the times. What this means is that by the time the church addresses issues that were important to society last year, or last decade, most people have already moved on to more pressing issues that the church will be sure to deal with in 17 years or so.

At this point, the church should stop trying to catch up. Instead of reacting to yesterday's issues and problems, we should focus now on proactively responding to tomorrow's opportunities. Be ahead of the curve. Pioneer the way. This is actually part of our calling.

We've been empowered by the Holy Spirit to pray the future into existence. We've been commissioned to co-create the future with God in the here and now, in the context of Spirit-filled community. That is what church is supposed to be. The future! Not a relic of the past.

How do we create the future today?

God's creative process in Genesis 1 occurs in two stages. In the first stage, God creates specific environments; this is what God does on days 1, 2 and 3. In the second stage, God creates appropriate forms of life for those environments; this is what God does on days 4, 5 and 6.

On the first day, God creates light and darkness. God calls the light "day" and the darkness "night." In stage 2—the fourth day—God fills those two environments with appropriate forms of life, called celestial bodies. God fills the "day" with the sun and the "night" with the moon and stars.

On the second day, God creates two more environments: the sea and the sky. In stage 2—the fifth day—God fills them with fitting forms of life. He fills the sea with fish

and the sky with birds.

On the third day, God creates dry land. God calls the dry land "earth" and makes it grow vegetation. God does this so it will be the perfect environment for the forms of life God intends to create for it in stage 2—the sixth day—namely, animals and human

beings.

This is a foundational creative pattern that's woven into the very fabric of our

If we desire particular outcomes, or forms of life, we must make sure we create environments conducive to producing them.

universe. The creative process begins by creating the right environment first.

For example, before planting seeds in a field or garden, you must prepare the environment by turning the soil and adding fertilizer. Creating the right environment is essential to growing healthy crops.

So it is with parenting. We must create an empowering, stable, loving, healthy home environment if we want our children to be empowered, stable, loving and healthy. The future is formed in and by the environments of today. If we desire particular outcomes, or forms of life, we must make sure we create environments conducive to producing them.

I believe two very important questions for the church today are:

- 1. WHAT FORMS** and expressions of life is God wanting to create and grow in and through your particular church community?
- 2. WHAT KIND** of environment is most conducive to creating and flourishing those forms of life?

The most important environmental factor for churches is to heed Jesus' initial counsel to the early church. Jesus told these Christians to gather together, pray with one mind and be filled with Divine Spirit. Churches need to pray together in mutual submission to God in a way that leads to a collective consciousness that is saturated and in tune with Divine Spirit. This is the only environment today that will usher in God's future for humanity.

However, there are other things we can, and probably need to, do in order to see our environmental issues for what they are. If we desire our young people to be set on fire for God, for example, we may want to invite some young people who are on fire for God—who have no connections or obligations to our church—and ask them to assess our facilities, media presence, sermons and worship, and tell us what

they observe. I guarantee we'll learn at least three things we can do to make our environment more conducive to setting young people on fire for God.

If we want to reach and engage people in our communities who aren't Christians, then we should invite some of them to evaluate our outreach, buildings, websites, programs and worship gatherings, and have them tell us how hospitable and accessible our church environment is to them.

Until we create the appropriate environment, the intended and desired forms of life will not flourish in our churches. ❧

Troy Watson is one of the pastors at Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ontario.

CANADIAN MENNONITE

Have an employment ad?

For print and online ads, contact:
advert@canadianmennonite.org



MCC PHOTOS BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY

Germaine Habonimona, middle class teacher at the Children's Care Centre in Durban, South Africa, leads her students in group activities.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Finding resilience in community

RACHEL BERGEN

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

More than 70 years ago, my great-grandparents immigrated to British Columbia from the Nieder Chortitza Mennonite colony in the former Soviet Union, now known as Ukraine.

My great-grandparents, and my grandmother and grandfather were part of the first 33 people who received assistance from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) after travelling from their colony to the Netherlands, where they found safety. They went on to farm in Abbotsford, B.C.

For many Mennonites, our story is about persecution, war, hunger and uncertain futures, but also about hope that a foreign land holds the promise of safety and security.

However, this isn't only our story.

Last year, I had the opportunity to visit MCC partners in South Africa who work with refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants from other parts of Africa.

Like my ancestors, the uprooted people MCC supports today are carving

out a life for themselves in sometimes hostile environments. They're banding together and using their collective strength and intelligence to solve

problems to meet the needs of the wider newcomer community.

Petronella Nzirire Mulume is one such person. When she first arrived as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1999, she felt hopeless about her future in the country.

"What's going to be our future in South Africa? In the country there's no social assistance, no refugee camp, no job opportunities, and life was very expensive," she says. "How are we going to survive in this situation?"

Eventually, Mulume became a founding member of the Union of Refugee Women (URW), an MCC partner in



MCC Canada staff writer Rachel Bergen introduces herself to the children who receive care at Durban's Children's Care Centre, an MCC partner.

Durban, which came together to respond to the overwhelming need for affordable childcare in the refugee community.

The group began meeting after one refugee woman's daughter fell out of a third-storey window while the mother was at work and her children were left unsupervised, Mulume says. The girl wasn't seriously injured, but it was only a matter of time.

"We said, 'This is not working for us. We need a safe place to leave our children when we go out to look for jobs,'" she recalls.

Although she didn't have any children of her own at the time, she got involved with a group of other refugee women who were pooling money to pay for a caregiver for their children. Working with other refugees, like the ones she teamed up with to form the URW, re-stored her hope. "It's what made me to be strong enough to say to myself that I can manage," she says.

Their initiative grew over the years, and today Mulume is the program manager for the Children's Care Centre, which provides food, education and after-school care for 124 children, about half of whom are from refugee families.

Germaine Habonimona is a teacher at the centre. She was just 20 years old when she arrived in South Africa as a refugee. Her family fled Burundi after her father, a government official, was murdered. Then her mother died, leaving her to find a new home for her five siblings and provide for them as well.

MCC provided rent and food assistance when the family first arrived in South Africa, helping her make ends meet, and eventually she got a job at the Children's Care Centre. Now a mother herself, she has spent the last 16 years providing quality education for other refugee families and low-income South African families.

The centre also became a safe haven for Habonimona as she dealt with her daughter being diagnosed with autism, and with abuse from her husband. She lived in the centre for several months, and now her children receive after-school care there.

"They were like my family," she says. "All this time they were next to me to help me. . . . My problems were like their problems."



Petronella Nzirire Mulume is the project manager for the Children's Care Centre run by the Union of Refugee Women, an MCC partner. A refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, six years ago she began caring for Moses Radebe, 6, a South African boy whose mother wasn't able to care for him. She has begun the adoption process.

In my interactions with the refugees impacted by MCC's programming, I realized that no matter where one comes from—Ukraine, Burundi or Congo—people thrive

when they're in community with others and can work together to address issues. ▮

"We said, 'This is not working for us. We need a safe place to leave our children when we go out to look for jobs.'"
(Petronella Nzirire Mulume)

Promotional Supplement

On the journey with God

by Angelika Dawson

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.— When Kathleen Monteith reflects back on her life, she can see how God has been with her throughout her life's journey. The poet in her likens it to being on a tandem bicycle with God taking the lead. But as with most journeys, hers has been one of mountain peaks and deep valleys and she didn't always recognize God's presence with her. "There were times where I was really angry with God. I felt like he'd abandoned me," she remembers.

Kathleen has lived with mental illness for more than forty years. She's been diagnosed with depression and anxiety and there have been times when her mental illness has been so severe that it's threatened her life. She still recalls a long-past psychotic episode where she felt like she was being completely controlled.

"My children and I were going camping

and I was driving on the wrong side of the road, frantically asking my children 'who is making me do this?'" she remembers. "If my daughter hadn't grabbed the steering wheel and pulled us over, I would have driven head-on into traffic."

It's hard to imagine this friendly, soft-spoken woman in such a moment of crisis. That is because today, she is in a much better place. Kathleen is committed to taking care of herself and knows what she has to do to maintain good mental health. She has a good relationship with her doctor, her psychiatrist and her case worker at Mission Mental Health. When she needs support, she actively looks for help.

"I call the crisis hotline, they have been a huge help to me," she says. "I practice meditation. I write. I also love the groups I attend at Centennial Place."

Centennial Place is a mental health

clubhouse in Mission, BC that is operated by Communitas Supportive Care Society and funded by Fraser Health. Individuals who choose to attend Centennial Place become members and are able to take part in the abundance of activities and classes that are offered on a regular basis. Staff at the clubhouse support individuals as they engage in their community and learn to develop a healthy social network. Members also have opportunity for support as they seek employment or access to education. Kathleen has been a member here for more than 8 years. She says that Centennial Place has been a place of acceptance.

"I love coming here. The people understand and accept you. The staff are excellent. You really feel like they meet you where you are at," she says. "I also like it that there is something for everyone, no matter what their age."

Dear Abba Father,

You have come into my life to bring joy and hope. I don't know the path which we are taking but You are the leader on the tandem bike that we ride together and the thrill and excitement that I feel shivers me to my core and makes me hold fast. You know all. You know every dip and hill. I ride in anticipation. Sometimes I am afraid but I trust You and I know that these fears are just reminders to hang on. I love You. I want You to search out the path because the trip makes me want to snuggle closer to You. Love is a grand experience. It takes the ordinary out of everyday life. It helps us to see Your Spirit in the tiny flower and the lofty mountain. Take me through my life on your shoulders and teach me to expand my perimeters. Take me through my tears of laughter and sorrow and help me to grow.

-Kathleen Monteith



Promotional Supplement



Kathleen Monteith was one of 14 pairs of poets and artists who took part in *Hear and See: Poetry and Art for Mental Health*. Her poem "Dear Abba Father" was interpreted visually by photographer Krista Petrie and graphic designer Carrie MacKay.



Kathleen Monteith has lived with mental health challenges for 40 years. She finds her church to be a safe and accepting place.

Another place of acceptance for Kathleen is her church, All Saints Anglican. Although she has gone to church her whole life, her faith has become much more personal over the last few months.

"I never really knew the presence of God until recently," she says. "My priest has been a big part of that. He's saved my life many times."

Kathleen records the priest's weekly sermons and listens to them when she's at home. She often repeats an affirmation that she has heard her priest speak, which comes from the prayer of St. Patrick.

"God is before me and behind me and within me," she recites. "This helps me to remember that I am never alone."

Loneliness can be a great struggle for people living with anxiety and depression. Kathleen believes that this is one area where the church can have an impact. Being part of a faith community that is welcoming, accepting and non-judgmental makes an enormous difference.

"There is a strength that comes from knowing that you're not alone," she says.

Singing in the choir and taking weekly communion have been important sources of comfort and encouragement for her. She also appreciates other rituals in worship.

"I love it when we pass the peace," she says with a smile. "The hugs I get are so meaningful. It really feels like I'm part of

community."

Writing is another way for Kathleen to process what is happening within her. She journals and writes poetry and says she often feels that she and God are writing together.

"I treat my writing as a gift from God," she says, adding that she often writes in the evenings. "It is a way for me to let go. I write and then I can rest and go to sleep."

Kathleen was recently part of a poetry and art exhibit presented by Communitas at the Reach Gallery Museum Abbotsford. (see story by Amy Dueckman, page 20) She was one of 14 poet/artist pairs. The poet was asked to write a poem about their experience with mental illness. That poem was then given to an artist who was asked to create a visual interpretation of it. The exhibit was on display for several weeks and culminated with a poetry reading and artist talk. Kathleen was deeply moved by the experience.

"I was so honoured to be included with all of these poets and artists," she says. "I was thrilled to have my poetry be part of something like that."

Her poetry is also included in the recently updated worship resource *God of all Comfort* put together by Communitas and offered as a free download from the Communitas website. Kathleen is grateful for these opportunities to use her creative

gifts to help open the conversation about mental illness and the stigma that still surrounds it.

"I hope it gives people courage," she says. "It takes a lot of courage to take that first step on the journey and talk about mental illness. But the act of seeking help is a sign of strength."

For more information about Communitas Supportive Care Society and its services for people living with mental health challenges, visit CommunitasCare.com.

God of All Comfort
Mental Health Resources for Church Worship

Introduction
Fast Facts about Mental Illness
Materials for Worship
Mental Health Stories and Videos
Bulletin Insert
Resources for Pastors
Feedback

Published by
Communitas
SUPPORTIVE CARE SOCIETY

Download a free copy of "God of all Comfort," a resource focusing on mental health in worship at CommunitasCare.com/about-us/resources.

FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Suicide isn't painless

How the family of Nick Brandt is dealing with his death

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD
Alberta Correspondent

No one saw it coming. Not family, not friends, not anyone at the university he attended. On March 23, after babysitting his nieces and nephews, 18-year-old Nicholas (Nick) Penner Brandt returned to the apartment he shared with an older brother and twin sister, drank poison and died.

In one horrible instant, the entire Brandt family was thrown into a chaos of wrenching grief and unanswerable questions. Nick's father Randy expresses how incomprehensible his son's suicide was: "If the evidence wasn't there, and if he hadn't left a note, I would have looked for a different explanation."

There were no obvious indicators that

Nick was in trouble. No one could have seen it coming, and the questions, "what-ifs" and the resulting unwanted life changes have no visible end.

To all outward appearances, Nick's life was normal, perhaps even charmed. Good looking, intelligent, gentle, funny and uncomplaining, he had many friends and strong family relationships.

In the fall of 2017, he began a computer science program at MacEwan University in Edmonton. His activities included reading, skiing, and playing board and video games. He enjoyed family vacations.

Like many introverted personalities, he was often quiet. There were no changes in behaviour that might have indicated



depression or mental illness. The note he left for his family let them know that he loved them but that his experience of life was too hard to continue. He related not having felt emotions for four years, and that ending his life was not a rash decision but a carefully planned choice. This was no mistake or cry for help. It was a firm and well-researched decision that he did not share with anyone else.

A funeral was held at First Mennonite Church in Edmonton on March 31. In planning for the service, the Brandts were united in their desire to be open about what had happened, for their own coping and to possibly be of help to others. In the days and weeks after the service, many have thanked them for this. It has encouraged conversations and challenged the stigmas and silence that can surround suicide.

"Why? Why didn't he say something?" Randy and his wife Susan have asked this question over and over, knowing there is no answer for them. Their story, however, might give someone else the courage to say something, it may provide the nudge to prevent the tragedy of suicide in another family.

Overcoming the stigma

In the recent past, suicide was regarded as both a crime and a sin, but Randy and Susan never considered trying to hide what had happened. "We didn't know that it was supposed to be secret. . . . I can't imagine



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE BRANDT FAMILY

Nick Brandt, front row second from right, with his family in happier times.

the horror of trying to hide something like that,” Randy says.

Their experience indicates that perhaps past stigmas attached to suicide are changing. “No one has said anything even mildly judgmental,” he says.

“The church was so incredible. We really felt held and loved by them; they embodied love in action. They took such a load off our shoulders. That was huge,” Susan adds.

Even though the stigma may be less powerful than it used to be, there are still negative legacies associated with suicide. While intellectually it is possible to know there is no blame to be had, the heart is not easily convinced.

Susan expresses the struggle, saying: “The feelings of shame do come. It feels like we have been handed the ultimate Worst Parent of the Year Award. . . . Maybe a part of me is embarrassed that we have this in our family. Weirdly, it is a real blow to your ego on top of the tragedy.”

Coping with new realities

The Brandts don’t feel they have gained any special wisdom from their loss. However, they have noticed that many people are awkward around them, and in not knowing what to say, they avoid acknowledging the family’s ongoing loss, or they attempt to cheer the family up. When, for them, every waking moment is a reminder that Nick is gone, avoidance and cheeriness are not helpful.

“In talking to people who deal with tragedy, I have learned not to practise avoidance,” Randy says. “It feels good when people acknowledge the pain.”

Adds Susan, “I crave hearing about Nick.”

Susan shares how Nick’s death has put stress on the whole family system. “It has been really hard on our relationships, even though we haven’t fought,” she says. “We are missing him. He was a ‘middle man’ who could diffuse situations with a joke. The family dynamics are completely different. It puts stress in the whole family system.”

Since each family member might need space, togetherness, tears or laughter at different times, these needs inevitably cause friction when no one has any emotional reserve. Being at a child’s birthday party, as an example, is necessary and joyful, while at the same time it is a painful trigger for

fresh bouts of grief. “Grief is so fragmented,” Susan observes.

In the midst of the pain, some things are sustaining and helpful. Counselling services and a suicide survivors group provide important support, and Susan finds that reading about the aftermath of suicide is helpful in dealing with thoughts and feelings that seem dark and overwhelming. “There is no new thought under the sun. [Knowing this] is very validating,” she says.

Practical help in the form of the old-fashioned bringing of casseroles and numerous small kindnesses have helped

to sustain the Brandts.

“Never minimize what you have to offer,” Susan says. “We have felt support from places we never expected. I hope I never feel that I am not close enough to matter.”

The Brandts’ struggle with the questions and repercussions of Nick’s choice will continue. The same questions will need to be asked over and over in the process of learning to cope with the reality of loss. While no one saw this tragedy coming, perhaps the sharing of their story can bring other silent struggles into the light of hope and help. ☸

Celebrating 35 years of Shalom Counselling Services



Celebrate Shalom’s 35 year commitment to affordable and accessible counselling by supporting Shalom’s

Counselling Care Fund: Shalom Partners for Mental Health

In recognition of Shalom’s 35th anniversary, a lead donor has generously committed \$35,000, and is encouraging supporters to match this gift!

To support visit: www.shalomcounselling.org

START YOUR TOMORROW TODAY

Leave a legacy of hope!

Whether it is a simple or more complex gift, such as stocks or mutual funds, gifts of insurance, gifts in a will or setting up a family foundation, you can entrust Abundance Canada to help make your giving effective and easy to the causes you care about. We can also facilitate anonymous donations.

Personal consultation is free, confidential and with no obligation.
To learn more, call 1.800.772.3257 or visit abundance.ca TODAY.

Abundance Canada is a non-profit, public foundation assisting Canadians with their charitable giving for more than 40 years.



Abundance
CANADA

Because generosity changes everything

1.800.772.3257 | abundance.ca

Meeting the mental health needs of students

Rosthern Junior College staff strive to de-stigmatize mental illness on campus

By DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

Are more students struggling with mental health issues these days, or are they just better able to articulate their struggles than students once were? Jim Epp doesn't know the answer to this question.

As principal of Rosthern Junior College (RJC), one thing he does know is that his students are not immune to mental illness of any kind. The most prevalent, he says, are depression, anxiety and panic attacks.

In his 32 years as a teacher and administrator at the school, Epp has seen students with eating disorders, self-harming behaviours and, very rarely, suicidal tendencies.

But over the span of his teaching career, he has seen an increase in the fragility of students with regard to anxiety and stress.

"Social media is part of it," he says. "The world never leaves them alone." But the issue is complex, and social media isn't the only factor. The world has changed, and so have the realities students face. "The work world is way different," he says, "far less certain."

Through chapel presentations and the Grade 11 Life Transitions class, which includes a unit on mental health, teachers invite students into conversations on the

subject and work to de-stigmatize mental illness.

When students struggle with their mental health, staff direct them to local professionals and, as they seek counselling, staff make sure they get to their appointments. "It's no different than taking them to the dentist," says Epp.

But Epp and his staff can only do so much. As he points out, RJC is a school, not a mental health facility. "If a student presents [symptoms] beyond our capacity to help them, then we're not the place for them," he says. "We have to recognize the limits to what we can do."

One thing RJC can do is to create an environment in which students feel they have a choice. This means being adaptable. For one former student, staying at the residential high school for a full week at a time was too much. Epp encouraged the student to try to stay until Wednesday each week. Eventually, the student was able to stick it out until Thursday and, finally, until Friday before going home for the weekend.

Epp and his colleagues encourage students "to find whichever one of us they



PHOTO BY BEV EPP

RJC students writing final exams in the school's chapel. The pressure of assignments and exams are among the many stresses that can lead to mental health issues for some students.

feel safe with” as someone to talk to or just simply be with. For one student, a chair in Epp’s office is a safe place to sit when she suffers panic attacks. For many students, the residence deans create that safe place.

These days, Myrna Wiebe is RJC’s office administrator, but prior to taking on this role she spent a total of 11 years working as a dean. During those years, says Wiebe, she and her fellow deans maintained an open-door policy, making themselves available to students at all times. Sometimes students would come seeking advice; other times, they just wanted a listening ear.

Over the years, Wiebe has seen many students struggle with mental illness. And many have viewed taking medication for their illness as a source of embarrassment and shame. “Often they would say, ‘It’s not fair that I need to take meds to be normal,’” she says. “So they would stop taking their meds. It was so disheartening.”

Residence life is a double-edged sword for many students. On one hand, being part of a close-knit community can be a source of comfort and strength. On the other, living in close proximity with others can be an added source of stress. Even students who are happy living in the dorm may suffer because they don’t want to miss anything, and therefore don’t get enough sleep. Lack of sleep can significantly impact students’ mental health. “One of our biggest assets is the dorm,” says Wiebe, “and one of our biggest [liabilities] is the dorm.”

Both Wiebe and Epp acknowledge that faith plays a significant role in meeting the mental health needs of students. Wiebe views faith as “a large part of what motivates you to care when you’re very tired.” She recalls spending time in prayer for students before meeting with them. She also says it’s important that students see prayer as part of their coping strategy in dealing with stress.

Epp says, “We need to model for students the truth of God’s love, care and presence,” but he cautions that, while “we look to God for healing—and it’s important for us to model this—we cannot naïvely pray and [assume] the mental illness will go away.” ☞

Dealing with mental health challenges at summer camp

BY KAREN CORNIES

Silver Lake Mennonite Camp
SAUBLE BEACH, ONT.

Mental health affects everyone, and Silver Lake Mennonite Camp recognizes how important it is to support its 60 staff and 850 child and youth campers with mental health resources.

Transitions can bring out mental health concerns. To help strengthen transitional moments, Silver Lake offers orientation sessions for all staff on a broad range of topics. Mental health concerns and self-care are emphasized, with sessions on those topics led by a clinical social worker.

Family Camp weekend is set up to help ease transitions for campers and their families. During the summer, each time a new session of camp starts, campers experience a campfire circle to orient them to the surroundings and increase their sense of ease at camp.

When relationships experience difficulty, mental health can be affected. Staff are given tools to find healthy pathways through conflict, and are encouraged to work through conflict with campers. Last year, a conflict management specialist led a workshop for staff, emphasizing the need to stay focussed on the problem and sharing tools to help facilitate that goal.

Silver Lake intentionally connects with mental health services to advise and coach through challenging situations, particularly as staff respond to critical incidents that concern diagnosed mental health concerns. In addition, staff directly impacted receive tips and tools at the beginning of each session for any camper known to be living with mental health challenges.

Last year at Silver Lake, a session for staff on awareness of sexual violence and responding to disclosures of sexual violence was implemented. By growing capacity to understand and respond to critical incidents like this well, the goal is to reduce the negative mental health impacts that can result from this type of situation.

In addition to general orientation sessions, staff receive training on many other



SILVER LAKE PHOTO

Giving staff the spiritual tools to ground the work that is happening at Silver Lake is an essential part of the camp community.

specific qualifications and skills, to build a positive sense of identity as a leader. This summer, staff will be given flashcard resources to work through a variety of challenging situations.

Giving staff the spiritual tools to ground the work that is happening at Silver Lake is an essential part of the camp community. Last summer, a chaplain connected with staff and shared insight into the summer’s “Digging for treasure” theme. This year, a chaplain will also connect mid-summer with staff. ☞

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Bearing witness to human resilience

SUSAN SCHWARTZENTRUBER

SHALOM COUNSELLING SERVICES

Helping people grow toward peace and wholeness has been the motivation behind 35 years of counselling at Shalom Counselling Services in Waterloo, Ont. Functioning as a resource to congregations and the community, Shalom provides mental health supports to people from all walks of life.

Perhaps at the encouragement of a family member or friend; through the referral of a pastor, doctor or community agency; or a personal sense of need, the counselling journey at Shalom begins with acknowledging struggle and reaching out for support.

Then comes the important process of finding an appropriate counsellor match. At its heart, the intake conversation explores why people are seeking support at Shalom. What is happening in their lives? Why Shalom? Why now? The reasons for reaching out are varied, but most

commonly people name symptoms of depression, anxiety, relationship concerns, grief and loss, and trauma. It is through this conversation that I develop a sense of which one of our therapists would be the best fit for their needs.

Counsellors at Shalom typically see five to six individuals, couples or families every day. In any given day, a counsellor might see:

- **A SENIOR** who has lived with depressive episodes her whole life and is experiencing one in response to her physical aging and anticipation of moving to a long-term care facility.
- **A COUPLE** seeking support to improve their communication and conflict patterns.
- **A YOUNG** adult coming to counselling since she was 15, who has learned to manage her symptoms of depression

and anxiety, who had several suicide attempts, and is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. Her mental illness no longer defines her, and she is successfully completing her undergraduate degree.

- **A MIDDLE-AGED** man who acknowledged an addiction and wanted to change this part of his life to be a stronger father, husband and employee. This change was frightening, tough and overwhelming, and yet he has maintained sobriety for over a year.

- **SUPPORTING PARENTS** through the grief of losing their son five years ago.

In the heaviness and sacredness of walking with people, we are energized and inspired by the lived experiences of watching people change and heal. In times of distress, we hold the hope for people, and equip them with knowledge, skills and strategies to help them navigate the way forward. As therapists, we bear witness to the tremendous resilience in the human spirit, and this motivates us to continue in this work. ❧



Susan Schwartzentruber is Shalom's clinical director.

'Poetry and art for mental health'

Exhibit gives face, voice to mental health issues

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and eating disorders may not sound like subjects for art, but a recent exhibit at the Reach gallery proved that art is a powerful medium for educating and talking about mental illness.

Hear and See: Poetry and Art for

Mental Health featured the work of 14 poets and the same number of artists at the Abbotsford gallery from March to early May. The exhibit was facilitated by the Communitas Supportive Care Society, which supports people who live with mental health challenges. Each of the artists

and poets had some experience with mental health challenges, either personally or through someone close to them, or had some connection with Communitas.

Angelika Dawson, the communications coordinator for Communitas who spearheaded the exhibit, explained, "We wanted to start a conversation, to safely talk about mental illness. People who live with mental illnesses are just like anyone else."

First, 14 writers expressed themselves using whatever form of poetry they chose, including rap, sonnet, haiku and free verse. Each work was then given to an artist, who interpreted it using such varied media as sculpture, painting, drawing or photography.

The Reach gallery granted permission



Poet Robert Martens shares his work at the *Hear and See: Art and Poetry for Mental Health* event in Abbotsford, B.C., on May 3. The exhibit, sponsored by the *Communitas Supportive Care Society*, gave voice to mental health issues.

to display the works in its community art space. Each of the poems was displayed alongside its accompanying work of art. Hundreds of people, including school groups, came to view the works in the seven weeks of the gallery display.

At a public reception and program on May 3, most of the poets were present to read their own works, and the artists talked about how they had interpreted the poems. It was the first time some of the artists and poets had met each other. Many in the audience said they were moved to hear such deep emotional sharing from the exhibitors, and the poets and artists in turn said they felt validated to have their works viewed and appreciated by the public.

"It was so interesting to hear the poets in their own voice, and the artists, too," said Dawson, who added that the exhibit far exceeded her expectations. "A number of people said they were so grateful that we had given a voice to people with mental health issues."

She said she would like to see mental illness lose some of its stigma, and believes that Christians have a role to play in helping do this. "In a church context, it's important for us to have that conversation, so that we realize it's an illness like anything else. It's an opportunity for us to give care to one another."

The exhibit will again be on display in December at the O'Connor Gallery at the Chilliwack Cultural Centre. Dawson said that a display focussing on mental health will be especially appropriate at that time of year, as many people experience increased depression and anxiety around the Christmas holidays. ❧



ONLINE NOW!

at canadianmennonite.org

A-ha moments in the Holy Land

Two participants of an MCC learning tour tell about their changed perspectives.

canadianmennonite.org/a-ha-holy-land



Global Anabaptist family celebrates the Holy Spirit

Members of Mennonite World Conference shared songs, dances and testimonies at the Renewal 2027 event in Kenya.

canadianmennonite.org/celebrate-holy-spirit



AMBS recognizes alumnus Palmer Becker for ministry and service

Special recognition was given to the long-time church leader, pastor, missionary, church planter, author and educator.

canadianmennonite.org/becker-award



CM honoured by national church press association

At the annual Canadian Church Press conference, Canadian Mennonite received five awards for work published in 2017.

canadianmennonite.org/cm-awards-2017



CANADIAN
MENNONITE



Do you have stories to tell
of food as the star of the show?

Canadian Mennonite is looking for stories and photos
of how food has helped build your community.

Contact us at edassist@canadianmennonite.org.

Resilience Road leads to mental health for women

Mennonite Women Manitoba hosts conference on 'resilience'

STORY AND PHOTO BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Society is witnessing mental health struggles increase at an alarming rate, and the push for women's voices to be heard grows stronger. At the same time, Mennonite Women Manitoba decided to travel the "road to resilience" this year for their annual retreat.

The committee chose the topic of resilience because, when they asked participants at the last retreat what topic they'd like to discuss next, mental health was a common theme, according to Elsie Rempel, a committee member, who said that women have very high expectations of themselves, which can leave them exhausted. "There are issues that drain our feeling of resilience, and we often just feel we should be better than we are," she said. "And younger people, I hear there's an epidemic of anxiety going on, because life is changing so quickly, and anything you prepare for, well will it last?"

Around 65 women attended the event, entitled Resilience Road: Struggle, Steps and Strategies, at Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg on April 28. Dr. Moira Somers was the speaker for the day. She is a clinical neuropsychologist and teaches in the University of Manitoba's department of Clinical Health Psychology; she also attends Charleswood Mennonite.

Somers agreed that mental health struggles are becoming more and more prominent. "My belief is that we need to cultivate resilience and psychological hardiness,

not because it will be a release from any of those things, but rather because . . . we can get to the other side of the struggle and experience wellness again," she said.

She identified three ingredients for resilience: hardship, positivity and resources. Each ingredient had corresponding insight from Somers, followed by activities.

Laura Funk, another MW Manitoba committee member, made scripture come alive in a monologue, in which she portrayed a woman in the gospels who experiences a lot of suffering, haemorrhaging for 12 years before being healed by Jesus.

Laughter filled the sanctuary as women participated in a "human knot," during which a group of people stand in a circle, grab other people's hands at random, and try to untangle themselves without letting go. Afterward, they reflected on the struggles in their own lives that the knot represented.

Somers said that hardship can come from factors that are out of people's control, mistakes they make, feeling like they are not good enough, losing their sense of self, or having a mid-life crisis.

She explained that resilient people don't need struggles and negative feelings to pass in order to feel positive emotions. They keep looking for the good, because positive emotions broaden perspective, whereas negative emotions narrow the focus. She recommended conducting a negativity audit to get rid of unnecessary negativity by asking, "What parts of my day are consistently associated with stress or unhappiness?"

Participants each got a small, 50-paged notepad and were encouraged to fill as many pages as they could with things they were grateful for.

Throughout the day, women wrote



Signs outside the sanctuary of Charleswood Mennonite Church, where the Resilience Road retreat was held.

services, things they needed and prayer requests on big sheets of paper on the wall, as a way for them to know each other's needs and support each other. They also shared with each other their resources for dealing with struggles, such as friendship, being outside, exercising, meditation and music.

Somers said those tactics help remove people from their struggles, even if for a short while. She also recommended that women get out of their comfort zone and do things that excite them and make them learn something new.

Community is an important resource to strengthening resilience.

Rempel said there are opportunities for women to talk about mental health in the church, but not so many where urban and rural churches can meet together. She said that building community is especially important now: "We're in a time where there's a lot of change going on in the church, and when we . . . do this kind of connecting with each other, it isn't just personally beneficial, it really builds the health of the church. . . . [It] is one of the gifts that women add to the body of Christ."

Somers agreed that church community and faith allow Christians to tap into a bigger source of strength than just themselves, and gives them hope, which is part of the recipe for resilience. "I think our faith and our community sometimes gives us a way out of the darkness," she concluded. ▄

CANADIAN MENNONITE Your print subscription includes a digital version.

Sign up at canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Process to replace executive director begins

Joint Council lauds Willard Metzger for his eight years at the helm of MC Canada

Mennonite Church Canada
TORONTO

After careful consideration and prayer during meetings in Toronto on May 5 and 6, the Joint Council of Mennonite Church Canada discerned with executive director Willard Metzger that it was time to seek new leadership for the nationwide church. The Joint Council has appointed a search committee, chaired by Geraldine Balzer, to determine leadership needs and to find Metzger's successor.

"Since the beginning of his tenure in November 2010, Willard has continued to express a deep commitment to Christ and a love for the church," says Calvin Quan, moderator of MC Canada. "We have been blessed by Willard's leadership, which many have described as being approachable, pastoral and articulate. He has a gift for connecting the diversity of cultures and generations reflected in our congregations across the country. This has served us well in light of the major shifts experienced by the broader church and society over the recent years."

"These years have included difficult but needed conversations," says Metzger. "I feel honoured to have been part of the leadership entrusted with these processes. . . . My time with MC Canada has marked me, and I am a better leader and stronger person because of it. I thank God for this gift."

In his eighth year of leadership, Metzger is the longest-serving executive director in MC Canada's history. He is deeply respected for his ecumenical work, representing MC Canada in the Canadian Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, in addition to nurturing strong relationships with MC U.S.A. and Mennonite World Conference.

Given the strong mandate from delegates in the Future Directions process, Metzger also led a challenging structural transition that positions MC Canada well for its future together as a nationwide church.

"While we are still in transition, the appreciation expressed about the



Willard Metzger

collaboration felt between executive ministers and leaders across the regional churches is encouraging," says Quan. "My hope is that the excitement we feel as the Joint Council, the possibilities we see for the future would be felt and experienced by people in all our local congregations across the country. We're thankful for Willard's vision that brings us closer together as a nationwide community of faith, and we wish him the very best as he starts the next chapter of his ministry."

Metzger will continue with MC Canada until the end of October. ❧



PHOTO BY ANITA LUNDEN

On April 17, Ten Thousand Villages (TTV) burned its \$700,000 mortgage on its trendy million-dollar Whyte Avenue location in Edmonton, 10 years after purchasing the building. Doing the honours are long-time treasurer Kurt Sawatsky and former board chair Irene Enns. The mortgage-burning ceremony took place at Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church in Edmonton. Adrienne Wiebe, a board member, noted in a press release that TTV will need to make some changes in order to survive changing consumer habits and financial pressures that have resulted in a lack of profitability. 'Fortunately, with a paid-off building, we are in a position to try some new things,' she wrote.

'Connected: Striving side by side with one mind'

STORY AND PHOTO DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
ANCASTER, ONT.

The theme of this year's Mennonite Church Eastern Canada annual church gathering—stated in the headline—had many facets, both inspiring and challenging, for those gathered at Redeemer College in Ancaster on April 27 and 28.

Impassioned plea to stay connected

Executive minister David Martin urged four congregations considering leaving the regional church—Milverton; Maple

View, Wellesley; Living Water, New Hamburg; and the “family of congregations” Kingsfield Zurich and Kingsfield Clinton—to stay.

He noted that their concerns are about more than the same-sex debate, but also about the authority of Scripture in the life of the church, how to understand salvation and the mission of the church, the importance of a strong Christology, the centrality of the resurrection, and the work of the

Holy Spirit.

“I am aware that at times you feel judged and sidelined by your peers and others for your theological perspectives,” he told these churches' delegates. “I know that the eye-rolling and barbed comments that you have experienced at times have been hurtful. I understand that, at times, our common worship has not felt like it has made space for the kind of worship that you find nourishing and meaningful. Some of you have had hurtful experiences with [MC Eastern Canada]. I am sorry. I say that for myself and I hope I say that for all of us.”

He called on “conservative friends and colleagues” to meet and work at the issues, to have “genuine dialogue that gets us out of a cycle of accusation and defensiveness, and instead moves us into substantial conversation. . . . I pray that we will allow the

MC Eastern Canada welcomes two new congregations

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
ANCASTER, ONT.

Two new congregations were welcomed into emerging membership during Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's annual church gathering at Redeemer College last month:

• **THE ASSEMBLÉE DE LA GRÂCE** is a Créole-speaking congregation made up of Haitian refugees, located in Montreal. Pastor Westernne Joseph hopes to invite many more Haitian diaspora congregations into the regional church. Two—one from Montreal, and the other from the Caribbean island of Aruba—were at the

gathering checking out MC Eastern Canada. Mission associate Michel Monette from Église Hochma in Montreal is making contact with the many new congregations springing up in Quebec.

• **THE MATU-CHIN CHRISTIAN CHURCH** is a Matu-Chin-speaking congregation made up of refugees from Myanmar that meets at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont. This new Chin congregation joins three others in the regional church, but is the first speaking the Matu dialect. Pastor Jehu Lian, formerly of the Chin Christian Church in Kitchener, continues to make contact with Chin congregations across Canada. As part of Myanmar Missions International, he is also helping MC Eastern Canada make contact with the Mission Ana Baptist Church in Chin State in Myanmar.



Members of the *Assemblée de la Grâce* and the *Matu-Chin Christian Church* are welcomed into emerging church membership by Brian Bauman, mission minister, at the 31st Mennonite Church Eastern Canada annual church gathering.

Spirit to bring healing to our wounds. May that healing spirit bind us together in our common faith in Jesus Christ, so that we can truly and genuinely strive side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.”

During a time of response that followed, Steve Drudge, pastor of Steinmann Mennonite in Baden, noted the continued use of “us and them” language in Martin’s comments.

Dave Tiessen, a self-identified “conservative evangelical” and pastor of Bethel Mennonite near Elora, drew attention to the lack of response to the negative comments online and in *Canadian Mennonite* about Maple View Mennonite Church’s paid insert in *CM* last fall. He said that it felt to “conservatives” that the Being a Faithful Church resolution “to live and let live” was only meant for “liberals,” and no leaders came out to condemn the hurtful comments made by “liberals” toward “conservatives.”

Kevin Peters Unrau, one of the pastors of Hillcrest Mennonite in New Hamburg, noted that this healing was not up to the regional church leadership, but belonged to “all of us out here.”

Positive examples of being connected

Mission minister Brian Bauman and mission engagement minister Norm Dyck highlighted the stronger connections between local congregations and Witness workers following the nationwide and regional church restructuring, and in places where MC Eastern Canada might have future connections, including Laos and Ethiopia.

Pastor Fanosie Legesse of Zion Mennonite in Elmira, spoke of how he had been mentored by Temiru Urgessa of Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia, where church members are expected to give two hours a week to the church, one for intensive prayer and one for discipleship training. This is on top of the half day on Sunday that is committed to worship.

Informed Conversations, a tool developed by the regional church, local congregations and consultant Betty Pries, is helping congregations discover their strengths and areas of need.

Louise Wideman, pastor of Vineland United Mennonite, reminded the delegates



Ellen Kim and Nick Hamm take part in an Anabaptist Learning Workshop exercise led by coordinator Matthew Bailey-Dyck at the 31st annual MC Eastern Canada church gathering at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont. The purpose of the exercise was to write and draw together, and then reflect on the experience.

that “one size fits all, not,” pointing out how her congregants helped people who are not particularly internet-friendly to use the tool.

Deficits covered by large bequests

The 2017-18 financial statements showed a deficit of almost \$106,000, smaller than had been expected. The 2018-19 budget projects a deficit of more than \$207,000. In both cases, the deficits are covered by the Faithful Steward Fund, which is made

up of large bequests. Giving to all partner agencies is being maintained.

Sean East, the regional church’s financial manager, noted that such deficits cannot be maintained over the long term, but that staff and the boards decided that in this first year of the new MC Canada structure they would not attempt to make more changes to the regional church’s programs and commitments. ❧

❧ Staff changes

Shekinah Retreat Centre has new co-executive directors, program director

• **RON AND SUE SCHELLENBERG** have been hired as co-executive directors for Shekinah Retreat Centre effective March 20. The Schellenbergs replace Kirsten Hamm-Epp, who has served as interim executive director for the past six months.

Hamm-Epp returns to her position as regional church minister of youth programming and administration for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

• **CRAIG FRIESEN** has also joined the Shekinah staff as program director, effective March 19. He replaces Andrea Enns-Gooding.



—BY DONNA SCHULZ

Doing something in a new way

New Centre for Resilience now open for business at CMU

Canadian Mennonite University
WINNIPEG

Faculty, students and staff celebrated the grand opening of the \$1.7-million Centre for Resilience (CFR)—a co-working lab that will incubate and nurture social enterprises—on April 13.

“We’re thankful for the opportunity to create a space designed to meet the needs of the 21st century,” said James Magnus-Johnston, director of the centre. “The CFR will maximize the impact of social entrepreneurs, and allow students to work on complex, real-world problems.”

The Centre’s work links with CMU’s teaching, scholarship and other activities, said Cheryl Pauls, the university’s president. These links will be found in many areas of study, including environmental studies, business and social innovation. “Our hope is that the CFR will inspire students, faculty and others who connect through CMU to

be good stewards of God’s creation, competent and willing to blend patience and urgency, courage and inventiveness, in all we are and do,” she added.

A handful of organizations have already signed on to join the Centre.

Magnus-Johnston is excited about the possibilities for the Centre, where businesses and non-profit organizations can work together at social and ecological challenges.

“That’s where the joy is,” he said of the interplay that can happen between the Centre’s stakeholders. “As a university, we should be able to experiment with new ideas, and if you think of faith as action in spite of the completely knowable—action in spite of uncertainty—all of these things are acts of faith in that regard.”

The Centre’s goal is to develop policy,

design and enterprise innovations for a resilient economy that improves social equity and environmental protection.

“I have a love/hate relationship with the word ‘innovation,’” he said. In trying to make sense of how the Centre will be innovative, he went back to the Latin meaning of the word: To be “innovative” means to do something in a new way.

Social and ecological problems like climate change, social inequality, the emergence of a new kind of radicalism and fundamentalism in mainstream culture, and First Nations’ water scarcity all put constraints on the way society needs to move forward, according to Magnus-Johnston, who said, “What’s beautiful about this is, when you recognize the constraints as real problems, then you start to work at them in new ways—in innovative ways.”

He added that CMU has the potential to make an impact on the church and community with the Centre. As a community of followers of Christ, people at CMU aren’t afraid to look at the problems facing the planet, imagine a better world, take a risk, trust in something greater than themselves and work toward solutions. “We’re not afraid of putting things back together again,” he said.

Pauls agrees. At its core, she said that the Centre is committed to nurturing resilience—the capacity of social and ecological systems to absorb disturbance, undergo change, reorganize, and all the while retain health of centred purpose and presence.

“Resilience is about remaining true to what matters most, even when various aspects of an organization or activity take on new forms and look very different from before,” she said. “In theological terms, resilience is a way to talk about faithfulness before God through a time of disruption and change in the church, and also in other spheres of our lives.”

Attending to the word innovation gives voice to yearnings that disruptions and changes will not lead to despair and destruction, but rather to new manners of flourishing.

“At CMU, a university moved and transformed by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, innovation is about new ways of being present to God’s ongoing transformation of the world,” Pauls concluded. ☸



CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY PHOTO

From left to right: Heather Stephanson, Manitoba’s minister of justice and attorney general; Cheryl Pauls, CMU’s president; Ian Wishart, Manitoba’s education and training minister; Doug Eyonlfson, MP for Charleswood-St. James-Assiniboia-Headingley; and James Magnus-Johnston, director of the Centre for Resilience, cut the ribbon at the April 13 grand opening ceremony.

Squeah paddle-a-thon marks 20 years

Weather uncooperative, but event still successful

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

For 20 years, enthusiastic participants have been paddling down the Fraser River each spring in a unique fundraising event for Camp Squeah's staff bursary fund.

Organizers planned this year's 20th anniversary paddle-a-thon, held on April 21, to be shorter, but it proved to be much shorter than planned. Usually participants make the two-day voyage from Hope to Ft. Langley, but this year decided to return to the original route, a one-day journey from Harrison to Island 22 in Chilliwack. But fierce headwinds on Harrison Lake, preventing the paddlers from travelling more than 200 metres in 45 minutes, forced them out of the water after barely two hours.

It was only the second time in 20 years that paddle-a-thon vessels didn't complete the journey.

"We would have gotten tired pretty quickly," said Rob Tiessen, the camp's executive director, who has taken part in the paddle-a-thon every year since its inception. "It would have been a long day fraught with lots of rescues. We're thankful

we chose what we did."

The ground crew that was organizing a late afternoon welcome meal for the group had to adjust its plans, but came through with a barbecue at the final location of Island 22, where the paddlers were transported to.

The closing program focussed on the many people who have taken part in the event over the years, either through paddling, financial support or ground support. Funds raised have helped summer volunteer staff continue their post-secondary education.

From the start, 10 percent of the money raised annually has been set aside for an endowment. This year's funds came to \$79,000, a record for a single year.

"The vision over 20 years ago has grown over the years to where it's sustainably encouraging," says Tiessen. "The community built over the years is something special."

Organizers hope to attempt the Harrison Lake route again next year. ☘



PHOTO BY CHRIS EPP

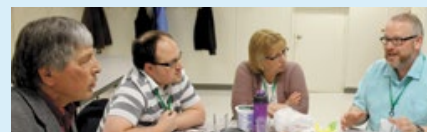
Paddle-a-thon paddlers, Camp Squeah staff and volunteers gather for a group photo at the end of this year's shortened fundraiser that still raised \$79,000 for the MC B.C. camp.

☘ Briefly noted

ReLearning program brought to Saskatchewan

SASKATOON—About 35 people from across Mennonite Church Saskatchewan gathered at Saskatoon First Mennonite Church for a ReLearning Community "taster day." Norm Dyck, missional engagement minister for MC Eastern Canada, presented the April 21 workshop together with Sean East, pastor of West Hills Fellowship and MC Eastern Canada's financial manager. Dyck said ReLearning Community is a two-year journey during which congregations build a discipling culture, learning what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and to make disciples as Jesus commanded. Discipleship, said East, consists of living "up" with God, "in" with fellow disciples, and "out" with the surrounding world. All are needed for a disciple's life to be in balance. Following MC Canada's Special Assembly 2017 last fall, at which MC Eastern Canada showed a video about ReLearning Community, several Saskatchewan pastors urged their executive minister, Ryan Siemens, to approach MC Eastern Canada about the possibility of sharing the process with MC Saskatchewan. The response was enthusiastic. "Because we've been blessed to engage in this unique way," said Dyck, "we feel this is an opportunity to bless the rest of the church. . . . We see this as good stewardship of the resources we've been given." "This is a good example of how we can work together across MC Canada," said Siemens.

—STORY AND PHOTO
BY DONNA SCHULZ



Norm Dyck, right, explains to pastors Bruce Jantzen of Laird Mennonite, Seth Freeman of Eyebrow Free Methodist Church, and Sharon Schultz of Eyebrow Mennonite, how the ReLearning Community process can work in small, rural congregations.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

OPEN LETTER

✉ MC Canada working groups call for sanctions against Israel

The following letter was drafted by representatives of the Mennonite Church Canada network of regional working groups on Palestine and Israel, and sent to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Chrystia Freeland, Canada's foreign affairs minister, on May 2. It is being published in Canadian Mennonite at the request of the working groups.

IN JULY 2016, Mennonite Church Canada passed a resolution regarding Palestine-Israel. The resolution was brought forth after more than 60 years of Mennonite service in the region and in response to the calls for justice from our Palestinian Christian brothers and sisters through the 2000 Kairos Palestine Document, "A moment of truth," to end Israel's illegal occupation.

As a people rooted in Anabaptism, we remain committed to peace and living in right relationships with all of humanity. Our peace witness requires accountability, and therefore we write this statement with grave concern over the situation in Gaza, in particular within the last three weeks.

On March 30, 2018, on the commemoration of Land Day (the 42nd anniversary of the 1976 protest by Palestinian citizens of Israel against the expropriation of their land in Galilee, during which protesters were met with the military, who killed six unarmed protesters and injured 100), tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza embarked on a nonviolent protest to enact their right of return, which is part of a larger campaign called the Great March of Return. (In accordance with UN Resolution No. 194, passed after the war of 1948, Palestinians have the inalienable right to return to their home and their lands taken in 1948. Israel has denied them this right, resulting in millions of Palestinians living in refugee camps until this day.)

As protesters marched toward the border, they were met with severe repression from the Israeli military. Protesters faced tear gas shot from drones, rubber-coated steel bullets, and live ammunition from snipers. Twenty-one unarmed protesters were killed and more than 1,200 wounded, causing a state of emergency to be declared in Gaza hospitals.

One week later, in a follow-up action, Palestinian protesters marched to the border. Again, they were faced with excessive violence from the Israeli military. Eight unarmed protesters were killed. Included in the deaths is local journalist, Yaser Murtaja. Murtaja, who was covering the protest wearing a vest with "Press" written in large letters across the front and back. Murtaja was killed by a bullet

from a sniper. The targeting of journalists is in contravention of international law.

We support and stand in solidarity with the nonviolent protesters in Gaza. In response, we condemn the Israeli military's actions in killing unarmed protesters and targeting journalists. We express grave concern over statements by Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who stated to the press, "There are no innocents in Gaza."

While we express our concern over the events of the last few weeks, we recognize that Gaza has been in crisis for far longer. In 2007, Israel imposed a blockade on Gaza, forbidding the entry and exit of certain products, as well as imprisoning the entire population. Due to the blockade, Gazans have not been able to rebuild most of what was destroyed during the three wars on Gaza. Without adequate electricity, hospitals have been unable to run at full capacity, while medical workers say they are quickly running out of medical supplies. Meanwhile, Gaza's water table has been destroyed. The United Nations has stated that if the blockade continues, Gaza will be unlivable by 2020.

MC Canada is committed to peace, and we yearn to see a peaceful and just solution to what is happening in Palestine and Israel. Because we believe in nonviolence and are committed to the values of Jesus, we love and are in relationship with both Palestinians and Israelis, and are committed to the safety and security of both. However, part of love and being in authentic relationship is accountability.

MC Canada's resolution on Palestine and Israel states: "We encourage the government of Canada to support measures that put pressure on Israel (including through economic sanctions) to end the occupation and work for a just peace, in accordance with international law."

To implement this call, and in the necessity of accountability, we call upon the Government of Canada to put pressure on Israel to abide by international law through economic sanctions. As a peace church, we do not advocate for military intervention. However, the violence that Israel is imposing needs to end; through sanctions, this accountability can be carried out nonviolently.

Accordingly, we call upon the Government of Canada and all political parties having representation in Parliament to:

- **CONDEMN ISRAEL'S USE** of lethal force to suppress peaceful protest.
- **DEMAND AN INDEPENDENT** and transparent investigation into the killing and wounding of unarmed Land Day protesters by Israeli forces.
- **WORK FOR A SUSTAINABLE PEACE** for both Israelis and Palestinians.
- **CALL FOR ECONOMIC SANCTIONS** by the Canadian government and the United Nations until the siege is lifted and a comprehensive solution is found. ☸

'We have to begin by crying out for justice'

Palestinian author launches new book on cross-Canada tour

STORY AND PHOTO BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Manitoba Correspondent

WINNIPEG

“We have to begin by crying out for justice. You build peace on justice.”

Naim Ateek uttered this plea on April 25 before more than 150 people gathered at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg to hear him speak about his new book, *A Palestinian Theology of Liberation: The Bible, Justice, and the Palestine-Israel Conflict*.

Ateek was born in 1937 in Beisan, a Palestinian village that was forced to evacuate when Zionist troops occupied it in 1948. He was an early leader in the Palestinian liberation theology movement and co-founder of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre in Jerusalem.

Liberation theology looks at the Bible and theology through the lenses of love and justice, to make them life-giving sources of hope for all. “From our perspective, liberation theology is the heart of all theology because it involves and concerns people’s everyday life,” said Ateek. He has written several books on the topic.

Winnipeg was just one stop on his cross-Canada tour that began in Kelowna, B.C., and ended with a course on Palestinian liberation theology taught by Ateek and Professor Magi Abdul-Masih in Toronto.

The tour took place at an especially opportune time, while the Israeli military was shooting unarmed Palestinian protesters and Donald Trump was preparing to move the American embassy to Jerusalem.

This year also marks the 70th anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel. Many call this the *nakba*, which means

“catastrophe” in Arabic, because more than 700,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes and became refugees. Later in 1948, Israel was allowed to join the United Nations on the condition that it implement Resolution 194, which stated that Palestinian refugees must be allowed to return to their homes. Israel joined, but the condition was never met.

Ateek’s book is one of theology and politics intertwined. He writes that Christians have to engage with politics if they are to be faithful to God, because it is an unavoidable part of daily life. He identified Numbers 33:50-56 and Deuteronomy 7:1-7 as passages that Zionists use against Palestinians, comparing them to the original nations of the land that God drove out.

Yet he also points to Leviticus 19:33-34 and Ezekiel 47:21-33 as redeeming texts for Palestinians, because God tells the Israelites to consider the alien a citizen of Israel and to love the alien as they love themselves.

Ultimately, Ateek always asks, “Does [a biblical] text reflect the love of God that I have seen in Jesus Christ?” For him, that is essential to discerning a Bible verse’s value.

CMU, Mennonite Central Committee, the Mennonite Church Manitoba Working Group on Palestine and Israel, the Canadian Friends of Sabeel, Independent Jewish Voices Winnipeg and the United Church of Canada sponsored the event in Winnipeg.

But not everyone supported Ateek’s presence at CMU. Several articles written

(Continued on page 30)

Naim Ateek speaks to an audience at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and his new book on Palestinian liberation theology.



(Continued from page 29)

by the *Jewish Post & News*, a Jewish newspaper in Winnipeg, expressed strong opposition to the event, calling it “anti-Israel.” The paper also accused Mennonites of following a pattern of supporting events that criticize Israel. The editor of the paper, and the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg wrote to CMU expressing their concerns.

Terry Schellenberg, CMU’s external vice-president, said the university connected with members of the local Jewish community who voiced concerns both before and after the event in order to listen and seek understanding. “Representatives from the Jewish community have expressed gratitude for CMU’s initiative and willingness to engage with them,” he said. “Inevitably, these are complex, helpful and revealing conversations which [perhaps and we trust] will also bear the seeds of renewed understanding and relationship.”

Esther Epp-Tiessen, public engagement coordinator for MCC’s Ottawa Office, said that MCC sponsored the event because it has worked in Palestine and Israel since 1949, when it responded to the refugee crisis, and it has been a long-time partner of Sabeel, which she calls an important voice of nonviolence that calls for an end to injustice. MCC also strives to highlight the voices of Palestinian Christians, whose numbers are diminishing because of the emigration caused in part by the duress of living under occupation.” She added that MCC yearns for “peace with justice for all peoples, and a shared life in the land for both Israelis and Palestinians.”

The complexities of the conflict, and differing opinions on Ateek’s stance, came up during the question-and-answer period at the Winnipeg event. Audience members asked him how he deals with the accusation of being an anti-Semite, to which he responded that critiquing the State of Israel and its policy is not the same thing as being against the Jewish people. When asked why he targets only Israel, and not problems in other Arab countries, he said he has a responsibility to work for justice in his own country. He told audience members that they are responsible for standing up to the injustices happening in Canada. ❧

UWinnipeg Fellowship to crack open KGB archives

University of Winnipeg
WINNIPEG

In the 1930s, thousands of Mennonites disappeared in the Soviet Union without a trace. The KGB archive in Ukraine has thousands of files on these missing Mennonites, and a newly announced University of Winnipeg Fellowship wants to crack into these files to uncover the stories of lost relatives, ancestors and much more.

Through the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies at UWinnipeg, the newly created Paul Toews Fellowship in Russian Mennonite History will help mine these archival materials.

Aileen Friesen, a recent postdoctoral fellow at the Centre, who has undertaken extensive archival research in Russia, notes that there is an urgency to access these KGB files. “These records are now fully open, but they stand the chance of being closed once again should the political



Paul Toews

over the past two decades. He was professor of Mennonite and U.S. history at Fresno Pacific University in California, and an active participant in the Mennonite Studies program at UWinnipeg, having co-chaired the Mennonites in Siberia conference with Royden Loewen in Omsk in 2010.

The Fellowship is based on a \$450,000 endowment fund that has been pledged or donated to date. It is part of the broader campaign goal of raising \$3 million for the establishment of a Professorship in Russian Mennonite History.

While the broader fundraising campaign continues, the Paul Toews Fellowship will guarantee that earnings from monies donated to the campaign will go to work at once. It is estimated that the Fellowship will eventually provide some \$20,000 per

The Paul Toews Fellowship will fund researchers in recording, translating and archiving... KGB materials in the Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg.

situation in Ukraine change,” she says.

The Paul Toews Fellowship will fund researchers in recording, translating and archiving these KGB materials in the Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg.

The Fellowship will also support other research programs, including history conferences, graduate and post-doctoral fellowships on Russian Mennonite history, funds for visiting scholarships, and other archival research in both Ukraine and Russia.

The Fellowship is named in honour of the late Paul Toews, who was the resident historian of the Mennonite Heritage Cruise that took thousands of Mennonite “pilgrims” on a journey back to Ukraine

year in the support of numerous research programs.

Royden Loewen, Chair in Mennonite Studies and director of the Centre, says, “It is great to reach this significant milestone in the campaign, and as a Centre we are deeply grateful to the fundraising committee for their work in recognizing the significance and timeliness of this initiative.”

The Centre is very pleased to be working closely on this project with the Winnipeg-based Mennonite Heritage Archives, which the Centre co-owns with Canadian Mennonite University and Mennonite Church Canada. ❧

/// Briefly noted

'Business solutions to poverty'

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) work in Myanmar began in 2015, aided by funding from the Canadian government. Covelle Dove, MEDA's country project manager in Myanmar, accompanied by Michael White from MEDA's Waterloo, Ont., office, recently reported on work there to supporters in Manitoba and B.C. Myanmar, with a population of 54 million, has about 60,000 villages, each one with a chief. At present, MEDA works in about 180 villages, assisting in water management to facilitate sprinkler systems, which are much needed during the dry season. "We provide subsidies to help families access water," Dove said at the Abbotsford luncheon. She described MEDA's work in Myanmar as "providing business solutions to poverty." MEDA focusses on partnering with the poor to start or grow small- and medium-sized businesses in developing countries like Myanmar. With multi-ethnic and tribal diversity, Myanmar consists of 14 states. "Sometimes it feels like 14 different countries," she said. Much of MEDA's focus is on empowering women to become farm entrepreneurs. "We know that women will spend the money they earn on nutrition and on the family," Covelle said. One of MEDA's projects is to set up "lead women" in the villages to teach others about composting, plant spacing and fertilizers, she explained. These women are then able to demonstrate improved farming techniques and improved productivity.

—STORY AND PHOTO
BY HENRY NEUFELD



MEDA representatives Michael White and Covelle Dove spoke to supporters in Abbotsford, B.C., about the organization's work in Myanmar.

/// Briefly noted

Syrians create ties with First Mennonite to help others

KITCHENER, ONT.—As the accompanying picture illustrates, the basement of First Mennonite Church in Kitchener was transformed over March break into a multicultural gathering, as 81 adults, teens and children from eight countries prepared blankets for Mennonite Central



Committee's work with displaced people around the world. A young Syrian mother, who has been in Canada for just over a year, brought her husband, English teacher and four children to help with the effort. She had created two comforter tops at home to prepare for the event. This was also an occasion for her family to meet other Syrians the church had sponsored for two years. Others present included South Sudanese families who have been part of the congregation for more than a decade, and a larger contingent of Hispanics from Colombia and Central America who had to make many heart-wrenching decisions in leaving their home countries. Rounding out the group were a Korean member and those whose connection to Canada goes back generations. Each knot tied those working to those around the world who will be warmed and encouraged by receiving the 15 completed comforters.

—Story and Photo by First Mennonite Church

Walking the runway in thrift store threads

ROSTHERN, SASK.—It wasn't exactly *haute couture*, but a recent fashion show in Rosthern helped raise the profile of the Clothes Basket, a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) thrift store located there. Manager Dianne Epp said that since the thrift store sends upwards of \$100,000 annually to MCC for relief projects overseas, it didn't need to raise funds for itself. Rather, organizers designated monies raised toward the local hospital foundation, as this would benefit everyone in the community. Admission fees and the silent auction of about 40 donated items raised a total of \$2,500 for the foundation at the April 27 event. Emcee Diane Fehr, a thrift store volunteer, paid tribute to the store's three founders: Linda Riekman, Melita Penner and Mary Krause. Models wearing thrift store fashions included members of Riekman's family and Krause's granddaughter. Although not in attendance at the fashion show, Krause, at 91, still volunteers regularly at the Clothes Basket.

—STORY AND PHOTO
BY DONNA SCHULZ



Satisa Schapansky, left, and Jocelyn Britton model in the Clothes Basket's fashion show on April 27. Britton's grandmother, Mary Krause, founded the MCC thrift store with her friends, Linda Riekman and Melita Penner.

ARTBEAT

Not a 'mirage'

Exhibition of visual art proves Rockway Mennonite Collegiate is about more than music

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

KITCHENER, ONT.

Karen Scott Booth, head of Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's Grade 10-12 visual arts program, exudes pride in the work of her students.

"Mirage: An exhibition of visual art," held at the school on April 24, showed why.

Working in many media—acrylic on canvas, watercolour, printmaking of many kinds, multimedia, industrial design and drama—the evening was a feast for the senses. Visual arts predominated, but music and food made the café memorable as well.

Proceeds from the café go to an award for a senior student each year.

Students are not aiming low, as a number applied to Sheridan College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in animation, and international student Lei Tian was accepted at Central Saint Martins, a constituent college of the University of the Arts in London, England. ❧



David MacGregor, a Grade 11 student in Alan Sapp's drama class, performs his version of 'The Shoes.' Multiple performances were offered by different students, each one a different interpretation using only the same pair of boots.



Lei Tian, an international student from China, shows off his industrial design project. Using parts ordered online and a 3D printer, his project is for a face recognition bike locking station. A Grade 12 student, Tian has been accepted into the prestigious Central Saint Martins, a constituent college of the University of the Arts in London, England.



The works of Grace Kim (at left and above) focusses on the theme of perceptions, using reflections to explore reality. Notice that in the painting of puddles on page 32, the figure only appears in the reflection, not in reality. The artist is the daughter of Kyong-Jung Kim, the former director of the Korean Anabaptist Center who is now studying at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, and Ellen Kim.



/// Staff change

New conductor named for Winnipeg community orchestra

• **ANDREA BELL** has been appointed as the Mennonite Community Orchestra's new conductor for the 2018-19 season. Born in Winnipeg, Bell holds bachelor's degrees in music and education from the University of Manitoba and a master's degree in cello performance from the University of British

Columbia. She is the founding member and cellist of the Rembrandt String Quartet, and director of the string orchestra program at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate.



This year she is celebrating her 20th season as conductor of the Winnipeg Youth Concert Orchestra. She has taught cello, conducted youth and adult amateur orchestras, and adjudicated music festivals across Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and in Perth, Australia. —Mennonite Community Orchestra

ServiceLinks

Advertisers on this page may designate a 1/6 page ad to a charity of their choice. To learn more, email: advert@canadianmennonite.org

sutherlandmark
LAWYERS

Russel Snyder-Penner, LL.B., M.A., Trade-mark Agent

Business Law, Charities Law,
Wills and Estate Planning

519.725.2500 russ@sutherlandmark.com



Mennonite Disaster Service

HOW YOU CAN VOLUNTEER WITH MDS:

- Short-term (1—3 weeks): 800-241-8111
- Long-term (1 month+): 866-261-1274
- RV Program volunteers
- Youth volunteers

Volunteers needed for summer 2018:

- Williams Lake, B.C.
- Pine Ridge, South Dakota
- Puerto Rico

HELP RESTORE HOPE!
mds.mennonite.net

Honesty, Integrity and Good Judgement

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

Roth Nowak
INSURANCE BROKERS

AUTO | PROPERTY | BUSINESS

novex

Contact us for a quote:
519-746-1151
service@rothnowak.com
rothnowak.com
119 University Ave. E., Waterloo, ON N2J 2W1

SERVING ONTARIO SINCE 1983

You Value Options in All Other Aspects of Your Life.

WHY NOT WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE?

INVESTMENTS | INSURANCE | ESTATE TAX | RETIREMENT | PHILANTHROPIC



EBY FINANCIAL GROUP

CONTACT US FOR A FREE SECOND OPINION

519.725.2006
contact@ebyfinancial.com
www.ebyfinancial.com

Serving Communities Across Canada for 35 Years

Student residence Montréal



Summer guest rooms May-Aug



maison de l'amitié

maisondelamitie.ca
experience@maisondelamitie.ca



MDS values partnering with the local community. This summer we are blessed by the enthusiasm of Cariboo Bethel Church (Mennonite Brethren) as they host our volunteers in BC.

mds.mennonite.net

FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH REFLECTION

From church to yoga studio

'I chose a mat over the sanctuary, but I'm still searching'

SARAH STEINER

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

For many years the church provided me with a place where I felt like I belonged.

I was 14 years old when I “decided” to get baptized. Coming from a Mennonite/Anabaptist background, I always respected the time in people’s lives when they would announce their dedication to the Christian faith and get aligned into a seemingly perfect life of servanthood, humility and significant personal integrity.

That said, are most teenagers ready to align themselves to one moral philosophy for the rest of their lives while navigating puberty, part-time jobs, relationships and finding their identity?

One November evening around my 13th birthday, my pastor visited our house and asked if I was interested in attending baptismal classes. I said yes, and six months later I was professing my commitment to the Mennonite faith in front of my dear congregation.

It was a good choice. My congregation nurtures many progressive Christians who walk the talk and demonstrate a kind faith built on love. They embrace many values I align with: authentically welcoming the LGBTQ community in church, recognizing the ecological crisis, acknowledging their role as settlers in European colonialism and actively looking for ways to promote peace in our local community.

I can credit my 14-year-old self on having wisely shared in my testimony: “This

decision doesn’t mark the pinnacle of my faith, but rather the beginning of a lifelong journey.” Looking back, it was a great life path to take to get through those tricky years of “teenagehood” mostly unscathed, full of sunny experiences that when dwelled upon make me question why I don’t attend church anymore.

Matthew Remski, a prophetic, social justice-oriented yogi, relates to this feeling in his essay in *21st Century Yoga: Culture, Politics, & Practice*. Remski describes a “church relapse.” After attending a moving service where he was struck by the generosity, support, sacrifice and social capital of his old congregation, he asked himself, “Was this the church I’d left so many years before in a storm of disillusionment and cynicism? A place with such kindness, such organized empathy? What had I replaced it with? A solitary, countercultural path. I’d developed my breath, my internal observer, powers of inquiry. But now I should probably get in line for the Tuesday blanket,” referring to a program at his former church.

When high school finished, I entered young adulthood: travelling, working, learning, moving. Suddenly, attending a church became a choice to make. It was no longer the default place to be on a Sunday morning, no longer a default congregation with familiar friends and families. I found myself wondering, is the investment involved in dedicating myself to a new

(Continued on page 36)



PHOTO BY MICHELLE KAUNTZ

Yoga has become more than simply an athletic pursuit for Sarah Steiner.



PHOTO BY AARON EPP

'As I encountered contradictions to my teenage understanding of faith, yoga offered a contemplative approach to spirituality,' Sarah Steiner writes.

(Continued from page 35)

church community really worth it?

While yoga first emerged in a purely athletic form for me, it didn't take long for it to turn into more than just exercise. While developing a basic sense of strength and ease in my physical being, it also helped me develop a stronger, more relaxed emotional and mental quality. As I explored positions of courage, curiosity and grace on the mat, I experimented in how to posture those same traits in my life off the mat.

Somewhere along the way, the words of peace activists like Thich Nhat Hanh and mystics like Richard Rohr, as well as ancient and modern-day yogis, began to enrich my understanding of spirituality more than verses in the Bible. Life experiences, both terrible and wonderful, caused me to cultivate gratitude towards the Creator, but at the same time to be driven into scepticism towards a patriarchal, dogmatic, fear-loving Lord.

As I encountered contradictions to my teenage understanding of faith, yoga offered a contemplative approach to spirituality. This was a welcome practice when compared to the black-and-white rules of traditional Christianity.

I found new solace in my yoga practice. However, no spiritual community is perfect. While my yoga practice has nurtured

me as an individual, it does not fill the void that a strong church community can provide. And rest assured, the maturing western yoga establishment has familiar faults as an institution. It has tainted reputations, leaders who transgress in the public eye, masses who feel excluded by high standards and a clique-like community. There are many camps with opposing beliefs and unwavering principles that create a divide among yoga's practitioners. After class there is little fellowship in the studio, rarely a potluck or coffee time.

It's hard to foster spiritual communities in which people can show up, as they are, and be authentically seen. What I like about my pursuit of yoga is that I am more kind to myself and more kind to others. It fills my cup so that it might overflow.

Today I look for a spiritual community that has some theological range of motion and flexibility. A place that lives, speaks and acts from its heart as much as its head. A place where you can belong in mind, spirit and body. ☸

Sarah Steiner, 26, works at a software start-up by day and is a registered yoga teacher by night. She lives in Kitchener, Ont., with her husband, Jono Cullar. A longer version of this article originally appeared on pastorsinexile.org.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACQUELYN JANZEN

Jacquelyn Janzen is one of two representatives appointed by MC Saskatchewan to sit on MC Canada's Joint Council.

Celebrating differences, learning to work together

MC Canada Joint Council member Jacquelyn Janzen talks about her passion for the nationwide church

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

When someone suggested to Jacquelyn Janzen that she get involved with the new Joint Council of Mennonite Church Canada, she knew it was something she wanted to do.

"Being involved in the larger church is something that's interested me for a while," says Janzen, 28, who lives in Prince Albert, Sask. "My congregation's small, so I think

it's important for us to be connected to other congregations, so [we] don't forget who we are and why it is we do what we do."

She is one of two representatives appointed by MC Saskatchewan to sit on the Joint Council, the group that replaced the former General Board and commissions following the restructuring of MC Canada

last fall. As part of the 13-member group, Janzen helps determine nationwide priorities for MC Canada.

“I see Joint Council and the new national model as a really positive thing, and a really good way for everyone to be connected all across the country,” she says.

She’s no stranger to participating in the nationwide church, having grown up at Grace Mennonite Church, where she began taking an active role when she was 12, the same year she started fundraising to attend the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Zimbabwe.

“That was very exciting, to see Mennonites from all over the world, and to see again how different but similar we are,” she says of her time in Zimbabwe.

The trip sparked her passion for the global church. She continued participating in the church locally and beyond by joining the Saskatchewan Mennonite

offenders who have been released from prison, she was happy to say yes.

“I’m a strong believer in no person [being] left behind,” says Janzen, who currently chairs Parkland’s board. “People are not disposable. People can change.”

“I think there are a lot of people in our corrections system that have come from trauma and come from addictions, and they just need to be treated like people—they need to be shown [kindness],” she says. “I think, as a church . . . we need to do that. It creates safer communities for everyone.”

Janzen’s worldview has been shaped in part by the extensive travelling she’s done. She’s travelled throughout the United States, Central America and Europe. “I’ve kind of prioritized travel,” she says. “I like experiencing other people’s cultures, and finding out what is going on that we don’t see on the news.”

*‘I see Joint Council and the new national model as a really positive thing, and a really good way for everyone to be connected all across the country.’
(Jacquelyn Janzen)*

Youth Organization committee, travelling to the youth assembly in Charlotte, N.C., in 2005, and volunteering at Shekinah Retreat Centre in various roles.

Janzen teaches Sunday school at Grace Mennonite, where she was baptized and became a member on Easter Sunday three years ago.

Located 140 kilometres north of Saskatoon, Prince Albert is home to six provincial and federal correctional institutions. Corrections, as a result, is a topic that is hard to escape in the city. Grace Mennonite has long been involved with the justice system through things like prison visitation programs.

“It was just normal,” she says of the attitude toward prison visitation that she witnessed in her congregation when she was growing up. “It was just something you did.”

So when Janzen was asked to join the board of Parkland Restorative Justice, a faith-based charitable organization that runs a prison visitation program as well as a support program for high-risk sexual

When she isn’t working at her day job as an automotive service advisor, she enjoys being outdoors. She lives on an acreage outside of Prince Albert, where there are plenty of trails to walk along with her dog, and she likes to spend summers camping, canoeing and fishing.

Janzen says she is enjoying her work with the Joint Council, which has met three times so far.

She recognizes the diversity of people and congregations that make up MC Canada, and hopes the nationwide church can stay united no matter what it faces. “I hope that . . . we can get comfortable with being uncomfortable,” she says. “Even though we’re different and we may have different views . . . [I hope] we can still come together for the greater good, to do service work in our country and around the world.”

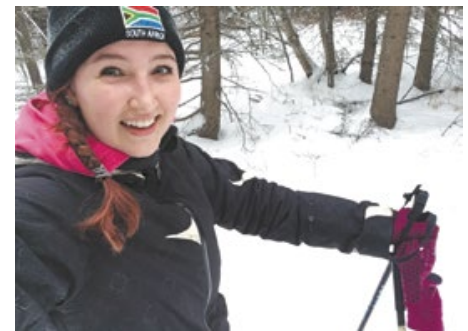
“Let’s work on what keeps us together,” she concludes. “[Let’s] celebrate our differences and just learn to work through them together.” ❧



Jacquelyn Janzen, pictured second from right with Brad Taylor, Heather Driedger and Dave Whalley, volunteers on the board of Parkland Restorative Justice, a faith-based organization that supports prisoners and people who have been released from prison.



Travelling to places like Honduras has shaped Jacquelyn Janzen’s worldview.



‘[I hope] that we can still come together for the greater good,’ Jacquelyn Janzen says of the churches that make up MC Canada.



WE ARE HIRING

We are looking for candidates to support and develop our base of supporters from BC to the Ontario border.

Are you looking to make a lasting positive impact on our world?

Do you like the idea of working with caring, generous supporters and passionate, professional coworkers who share your values?

Then please consider this opportunity!

Act now!

www.meda.org/careers

Creating business solutions to poverty

Mennonite Economic Development Associates
1.800. 665.7026

Calendar

Alberta

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 13: Heritage retreat at Camp Valaqua, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Theme: "Perception in our calling, service and every day." Speaker: Thomas Coldwell, MCC Alberta executive director. For more information, visit mennonitechurch.ab.ca/.

June 16: Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon. For more information, call 403-637-2510.

June 17: Camp Valaqua garden party. For more information, call 403-637-2510.

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

July 26: Ted & Co. presents "Discovery: A Comic Lament."

Aug. 11: Ninth annual Spruce River Folk Festival at Spruce River Farm.

Oct. 12-13: Women's retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

Oct. 27: MC Saskatchewan Equipping Day.

Manitoba

June 9: Tractor Trek 2018 fundraiser in support of Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, and the Eden Foundation. For more information, call 204-326-9661.

Aug. 21: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate annual fundraising golf tournament, at Bridges Golf Course, Starbuck. For more information, visit westgatemennonite.ca.

Ontario

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.

June 12: 52nd annual chicken barbecue and pie auction fundraiser, at Hidden Acres Camp, New Hamburg, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Advance tickets required. To reserve a ticket, email info@hiddenacres.ca.

Want to make a difference in lives around the world?

MCC CANADA IS SEEKING BOARD MEMBERS

We need your vision, governance expertise and commitment to excellence.

To apply, please contact Joni Sawatzky at JoniSawatzky@mcccanada.ca

All board members exhibit a commitment to Christian faith, active church membership and biblical peacemaking.

 **MCC** mcccanada.ca
Relief, development and peace in the name of Christ

June 23: New Hamburg Nithview annual community strawberry social, from 2 to 4 p.m., and from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

June 23: MennoHomes' Out-spok'n for Affordable Housing bike-a-thon, beginning at Elmira Mennonite Church. Options for hikers, cyclists and motorcyclists. For more information, call Dan Driedger at 226-476-2535.

June 24: Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, hosts the Fair Wind, who will perform traditional music of the British Isles, at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call Laurence Martin at 519-208-4591.

June 30-July 1: 70th anniversary celebration of Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig. Weekend activities culminate with a worship service of praise and thanksgiving on July 1 at 10:45 a.m. Those planning to attend are asked to let the church know at 519-232-4425.

July 21: Willowgrove 50th anniversary open house, in Stouffville, beginning at 11 a.m. Willowgrove's former staff, school families, volunteers, campers and church constituency are invited. Events include the final public

performance of the Rouge River Connection. For more information, email info@willowgrove.ca.

July 22: Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, hosts "Folk and gospel songs," led by Mike and Diana Erb (Twas Now), at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call Laurence Martin at 519-208-4591.

U.S.A.

June 22-24: Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship annual gathering, at Bluffton (Ohio) University. Theme: "Stories of healing." For more information, or to register, visit mennohealth.org/gathering.

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

Advertising Information

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

Employment Opportunities



Conrad Grebel University College | **COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT**

Conrad Grebel University College seeks a **Communications Assistant** to help promote the College's programs and events. This role includes the creation of visual content through design, layout, and coordination of print materials and web pages, as well as photography and photo editing. 32 hours per week. Application deadline is June 8, 2018. Start date is July 16, 2018.

Full details at: grebel.ca/positions



Wildwood Mennonite Church

**Employment opportunity
Half-time pastor**

Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon invites applications for a half-time co-pastor. The successful candidate will work closely with our current co-pastor (who will also be half-time). Ideal start date is early summer 2018. Learn about us at wildwoodmennonite.org

Please email applications to Glade Penner searchchair@wildwoodmennonite.org

Or to Ryan Siemens, MCSask Executive Minister minister@mcsask.ca



**Employment opportunity
MUSEUM DIRECTOR**

Kauffman Museum, an affiliate of Bethel College, North Newton, KS seeks an inter-disciplinary, entrepreneurial full-time director. Non-profit or private sector leadership experience required, museum and/or appropriate teaching, library or business experience preferred. Minimum Masters degree in related field. Reviews begin May 8 and continue until position filled.

For job description and application go to: <https://kauffman.bethelks.edu/Director-Search-2018>



**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 and 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



CANADIAN MENNONITE PHOTO BY D. MICHAEL HOSTETLER

*On April 13, 14 and 22, Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church performed the play **Family Ties Through Thick and Thin** written by Barb Draper. Pictured, the family gathers at Ed Snyder's house after his funeral. From left, daughter Lisa (Mary Frey Martin) expresses her exhaustion while daughter Anna (Sherri Martin-Carman) explains to her Aunt Lillian (Joan Martin) why she can't just take things from Ed's house. Meanwhile, the granddaughters (Julia Bowman, Shirley Redekop and Ashley Albrecht) smile at Aunt Lillian's antics. The Sunday matinee was planned for April 15, but an ice storm caused it to be postponed. The play and accompanying dinners raised about \$10,000, to be divided between the local food bank and the Global Church Sharing Fund of Mennonite World Conference.*

Artbeat Snapshots

PHOTO BY ANDREW STACK

*The UMEI Christian High School Choir in Leamington, Ont., and Rockway Mennonite Collegiate Senior Choir in Kitchener, Ont., were among 13 Mennonite School Council (MSC) high school choirs from the United States and Canada that converged on Eastern Mennonite School and Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., for the annual MSC Choral Festival on April 6-8. The three-day event included five rehearsals and a Sunday afternoon performance that featured individual choir performances as well as a joint mass choir of more than 400 choristers. The April 8 concert, entitled *God Within Us*, drew a large crowd to Yoder Arena.*

