

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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EDITORIAL

New things ahead

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



In this first issue of 2019, you'll notice some things are different on the pages of this magazine.

There are changes in the design, thanks to the creative work of designer Betty Avery. After 11 years, it was time to refresh how *CM* looked on paper. Gone are the shaded boxes that strained the eyes of some readers. A whiter paper will—we hope—make the photos brighter and more appealing. A repositioning of the columns and letters gives more prominence to the columnists' opinions and avoids the page turning that bothered some readers of the Readers Write section.

You will also see changes in how the content is organized. While columns and letters remain in the same area, we've taken care to distinguish them more clearly in the newly named "Opinion" section, where other viewpoints and reviews are also gathered. Then comes the "News" section, with reports on events and organizations throughout the church. The "People" section collects stories about people in one large category.

The former categories of "God at work in the world," "God at work in the church," and "God at work in us" are gone, but running through all of the content is our belief that God is in fact acting among and beyond the individuals, congregations and organizations of Mennonite Church Canada. Some things never change: in the coming year, let's keep watching for signs of God at work.

For those who like shorter reading, there's a new section called "Et cetera," a collection of tidbits submitted by our

writers and staff. Other new types of content are in the works.

If your practice was to turn first to the back of the magazine to read the Young Voices section, you'll notice it's no longer there. That section, devoted to content about and by young adults and youth, began in 2011 as an intentional effort to share the activities, viewpoints, dreams and faith of younger Mennonites across Canada. Since then, 445 articles and blog posts appeared under the "Young Voices" label. Launched by Emily Loewen, the section was faithfully sustained and nurtured over the years by Aaron Epp and Rachel Bergen.

Many readers—especially ones with gray hair!—reported that they read Young Voices faithfully. Conversations across the church were enriched by the variety of perspectives that appeared there. On the other hand, there was always the recognition that the people featured in "YV" didn't live in an isolated subsection of the Mennonite community. Having a separate spot for them in the magazine sometimes seemed artificial. As one reader put it, it felt like young adults were being relegated to the children's table at an extended family meal.

Our commitment to hearing young Mennonite voices continues as strong as ever. But, in the future, their stories will appear throughout the entire magazine.

New people: Joining the columnists' bench is Christina Barkman, who writes under the heading "Third Way Family." She and her family served previously with MC Canada Witness in the Philippines, and now make their home in Chilliwack, B.C. In Ontario, Zach Charbonneau is joining the local reporters team and will

write occasionally from the Leamington area. And we are happy to announce the appointment of Janet Bauman as the new Eastern Canada correspondent. You'll read her writing and learn more about her in the next issue.

New delivery: Some of our readers have expressed—loudly and clearly—their hope that *CM* will continue as a print publication. We will honour that request in 2019 by publishing 22 issues on paper. But increasingly, readers come to the content through their desktop computers, tablets and mobile phones. So, in addition to the print issues, *CM* will also publish four digital-only issues, three in the summer and one at the end of the year.

The *CM* team welcomes your thoughts on these new directions. And more changes are coming.

Nurturing worldwide connections

Every January, Mennonite World Conference invites member churches to celebrate World Fellowship Sunday. Today's feature on page 4 tells an inspiring story of peacemaking by Mennonites in Colombia, and on page 25 you'll find a report of a Honduran congregation making a difference in its neighbourhood. To learn about how the worldwide Anabaptist family is growing in numbers, see "May God sustain us together" on page 14.

Correction

Marlene Epp said, "Perhaps we need fewer Mennonite theologians and more Mennonite cookbooks," as a humorous quip during a Q&A session following her keynote address at the "A people of diversity" conference in Winnipeg last November, and not as part of her keynote address, as stated in "Identify, boundaries and new ways of thinking," Dec. 17, 2018, page 13. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error. ❧



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PHOTO: BRENDA JEWITT, TOURMAGINATION LEARNING TOUR PARTICIPANT

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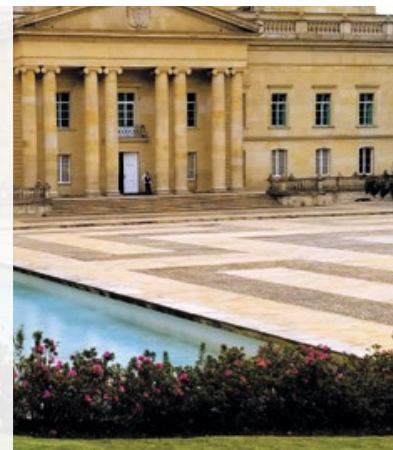
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FEATURE

Holding hands with the FARC

Tour group prays for peace in Colombia with members of the country's revolutionary army

By Robert J. Suderman
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*



PHOTO BY BRENDA JEWITT

Colombian countryside where FARC guerrillas and the military fought for control before the peace accords were signed.

'Our approach to conversation with armed groups is solidly based on the Bible as the Word of God to us. It is there that we learn of our commitment to allow Jesus to be the Lord of our lives as he is the Lord of history.'
(Carlos Sánchez, who facilitated the meeting between the TourMagination learning group and two FARC leaders)

There we were, standing in a prayer circle holding hands. While not really that unusual, what was extraordinary was that some of the hands we were holding were likely bloody. They were the hands of guerrillas—high-ranking, long-time members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

For me, this moment last fall was especially significant. We were standing in a room on the third floor of the Mennonite Centre in Bogotá, the very same room where, 29 years ago, I was asked to teach “Bible foundations of nonviolence,” the inaugural course of the Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Colombia.

About 75 Colombian Mennonite leaders attended that first course, two of whom were in the prayer circle with us now. This prayer circle was the fruit of more than 25 years of patient ministry by Colombian Mennonites who often risked their lives to put their nonviolent faith into action.

Our group was on a “learning tour” organized by TourMagination of Waterloo, Ont., and led by me and my wife Irene. A tour member asked these two FARC representatives, “We are nobodies. Why would you come and meet with us for two hours?”

Good question. As it turned out, in the eyes of FARC leadership, we were more than “nobodies.” We were a group of 11 international visitors from Canada, Japan and the United States who were willing to listen to their story.

For more than 50 years, they said, this was impossible. Indeed, less than two years ago, it would have been criminal to be together. But following the signing of the peace accords in 2016, the laying down of weapons, the re-insertion of insurgents into civil society and the guarantee of participation in the democratic process, it was possible to meet us in a public space. They wanted to be heard, and we wanted to learn.

Jorge Ernesto (no surname) told us a bit of his story. His father was a *campesino* (peasant farmer) and head of his family, whose land had been taken by military action. This was considered “normal.” He, along with 60 other destitute *campesino* families, decided to do what had not been done till then: resist. This was back in 1964.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT J. SUDERMAN

The learning tour members stand for prayer with Robert J. Suderman, in the blue plaid shirt, and two FARC members, Andres Camilo and Jorge Ernesto (no last names), to his left.

They organized into an association of resistance that would eventually grow into an insurgency force of 15,000 well-armed participants. His father became a leader, and for more than four decades he led and participated in the brutality of the revolutionary war in Colombia. He was killed in a bombing raid in 2010.

Jorge was born in the mountains. Both parents were active FARC insurgents. Due to concern for safety, he was raised in Bogotá by surrogate parents. At the age of 16, he, too, joined the revolution on the front lines.

“I participated in the insurgency forces for six years,” he said.

It was clear that he was now struggling to honour the memory of his father—because he was his son. But, at the same time, he was trying to create some distance between his own convictions of democratic participation and the infamous legacy of brutal violence that his father came to be identified with. “My father made war; I signed up for peace,” he said.

The implementation of the peace accords is not going well.

Andres Camilo (no surname), the other FARC leader in the circle, stated that the Colombian government has implemented only 18 percent of what it had promised. When we asked about the FARC’s record of implementation, he replied, “We have

implemented everything we said we would. We have to. We are here. We gave up our weapons. These accords are all we have. They are our lifeline, the only guarantee for the future we want. We would be foolish not to implement what we promised.”

Another tour group member asked if they were hopeful.

Andres said they are assuming that the implementation process will take at least 10 years. There will be many complexities, obstacles and attempts to subvert the process. For instance, when the first peace accord, signed in good faith by both sides, was taken to a plebiscite of the people, the majority voted “no.” “It seems as if Colombians prefer war rather than peace,” Andres said.

Another group member asked how the government could be held to account in this process. Andres replied simply and quietly: “It will need to be the civil and faith communities that exert enough pressure to keep the government to its word.” In other words, ultimately peace depends on common people, not on political parties, armed struggle or carefully designed structures.

I was struck by the common agenda that made this prayer circle possible. Both Mennonites and the FARC speak of a commitment to justice for all and a

(Continued on page 6)

'These accords are all we have. They are our lifeline: the only guarantee for the future we want. We would be foolish not to implement what we promised.'
(Andres Camilo)

(Continued from page 5)

more egalitarian society. Both speak of the critical role of faith communities as the backbone of any promise for implementation. Both understand hope—as a commitment to what is not yet seen—to be a key ingredient for the eventual success of the peace process. Both have demonstrated fierce persistence, patience and commitment in spite of risk, suffering and death. Both cannot help but maintain a long-term view, what in some Christian circles we would call an eschatological foundation.

It was also evident that these commonalities must not obscure some profound differences. The most profound difference, surely, is the strategy needed to move from where we are to where we hope to be. The FARC have been dedicated to decades of armed resistance, killing, massacres, kidnapping and obstruction of truth. Mennonites, in turn, have become ever more convinced of the futility of violence, and that peace as a destination can only be achieved by peace as a journey.

Carlos Sánchez, the Colombian Mennonite who pulled together this encounter, began the meeting with an open Bible. "Our approach to conversation with armed groups," he said, "is solidly based



PHOTO BY BRENDA JEWITT

Congress building in Bogotá, where the peace accords were approved.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT J. SUDERMAN
Len Jewitt hugs FARC member Andres Camilo, at left, while learning tour member Isaías Rodriquez, back to camera, speaks with Jorge Ernesto, another FARC member.

on the Bible as the Word of God to us. It is there that we learn of our commitment to allow Jesus to be the Lord of our lives as he is the Lord of history"

Ricardo Pinzón, the other Mennonite in the group, led us all in the closing circle of prayer. "All our encounters with armed groups, be they guerrilla, paramilitary or military, always end with prayer," he said. He reminded us of the "historic moment" that we were experiencing together. "Seventy years ago," he said, "Mennonites from the north came to share with us their understandings of the gospel. What we are doing today, which would have been impossible a year ago, is fruit of the initiatives taken 70 years ago. And we are grateful."

He then led us in an unforgettable prayer of commitment to the Prince of Peace.

The prayer was followed by hugs and

tears, not customary in our usual experience. Tears flowed from our group and tears were evident in the eyes of Jorge and Andres. It was a moving moment.

Later, in a debriefing session, I asked our group members how they felt about embracing these folks in spite of their violent traditions and involvements. One group member responded, "That's what the early Christians did with the Apostle Paul. Why would we not do the same?" Another said, "An embrace does not mean alignment in all things. But it does signal common humanity"

A "learning tour" indeed. Unexpected evidence of the grace, sovereignty and the love of God. ✎

/// For discussion

1. Have you ever been in a prayer circle with people who made you feel uncomfortable? How much of the discomfort was due to fear? How did praying together affect you or the group? Why might praying together help us be more open to those we don't fully trust?
2. What were the factors that led peasant farmers to take up arms against their government in Colombia? What role do feelings of injustice play in any revolution? If the FARC guerrillas in Colombia continue to feel unjustly treated, how might they respond? Why is justice so hard to achieve?
3. Robert J. Suderman writes, "Both Mennonites and the FARC speak of a commitment to justice for all and a more egalitarian society." What did Jesus teach about equality? What role can faith communities play as Colombia implements its peace process? Is there a role for North American Christians?
4. Suderman says that "peace as a destination can only be achieved by peace as a journey." What does it mean for peace to be a journey? What is the role of prayer and patience on this journey?
5. How effective are learning tours in promoting peace in places like Colombia? What are some other benefits of this type of tourism? What questions would you like to ask church leaders in Colombia?

—BY BARB DRAPER

See related resources at
www.commonword.ca/go/1349

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Bookstore and Resource Centre

/// Readers write

✉ 'There needs to be understanding'

Re: "Worship happened," Nov. 5, 2018, page 8.

Ed Olfert's column left me in tears.

I facilitate many Kairos blanket exercises, where I act out the part of the "grandmother." *Chi miigwech* (thank you) for doing this in your church group! It is my hope that more churches will do this exercise. I often say in the "talking circle" that follows, that until we make friends with our past, we cannot live in a good way in the present and cannot walk into the future together. There is no blame, but there needs to be understanding. We cannot undo the past but we can change the present and teach our young ones the truth, because they are the future.

MIM HARDER, UXBRIDGE, ONT.

✉ CM: A recipe for life-giving bread

Re: Nov. 26, 2018 issue.

It is heartening to read of some faith-generated activities, looking to a future which is being built on a foundation, already in place, while continuing construction on it, in a context of being but a small part of the much larger structure of humanity on the way.

The conclusion of a series of heart-rending reflections, with its near disparaging, compassionate admonishments ("Modern ghosts of a horse-drawn scandal, Pt. IV," page, 18), and reports of hopeful ministry, completed after eight years ("Mennonite Church Canada thanks Willard Metzger," page 29), now embraced by a soon-to-be new nationwide minister ("A deep love for the church," page 28), is a recipe mix not readily recognized as contiguous with life-giving bread—yet it has been that, in my reading.

I wonder what the actual difficulties must be when bombarded from all sorts of angles by individuals, identifiable groups, sojourners on the face of this planet, and impoverished, disempowered people in a context of perpetuated injustice or misguided judgement of people whose names often are listed in Christian church rolls who are seen to be embracing the doctrine of peace and

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.

justice, which is largely focused on oneself.

Is the experienced plight of the ignored, the different or the misjudged any different than that of the one described in a parable by Jesus? That person was lying in the ditch, left for dead, while the recognizable righteous, brilliant-minded leaders of religious society walked on by, while the despised, considered to be unclean and unrighteous, manifested neighbourly presence and became salvific medicine with hope for a future. It would be easy to see the self-help dynamic of the disenfranchised helping the disadvantaged, but is that the meaning to be drawn?

A conundrum surely worthy of consideration and less than quick reflection, as we seek to live not only in peace but by peace.

CLARE NEUFELD, FRENCH CREEK, B.C.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Giesbrecht Schellenberg—Charles Alan (b. Oct. 30, 2018), to Niko Schellenberg and Breanne Giesbrecht, Calgary First Mennonite.

Goertzen—Frank David Schellenberg (b. Nov. 14, 2018), to Chris Goertzen and Annalee Schellenberg, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Harms—Wesley (b. June 19, 2018), to Alex and Amanda (Heidebrecht) Harms, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary, Ont.

Oulahen—George Henry (b. Nov. 1, 2018), to Becky and Greg Oulahen, Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.

Marriages

Bartel/Berscheid—James Bartel (North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.) and Kristen Berscheid, at St. Anne's Parish, Annaheim, Sask., Nov. 10, 2018.

Dick/Matthews—Kelsey Dick and Chelle Matthews, at Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Oct. 6, 2018.

Deaths

Janzen—Dora (Rempel), 89 (b. June 1, 1929; d. Nov. 21, 2018), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Siemens—Mary, 80 (b. July 5, 1938; d. Nov. 12, 2018), Toronto United Mennonite.

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

Come and let your imagination be ignited

Henry Paetkau

“Igniting the imagination of the church.” That’s the theme of Mennonite Church Canada’s Gathering 2019, to be held from June 28 to July 1 in Abbotsford, B.C. Powerful words, those! What might they mean for us as congregations comprising five regional churches and the nationwide church?

In the latest edition of *Anabaptist Witness*, César García, the general secretary of Mennonite World Conference, reminds us that the church is a foretaste of the reign of God. As such, the church does not have a message. It is the message of God’s love and reconciling grace by its very presence in the world. A message proclaimed in word and deed.

The mission of God, García continues, requires a new community that practises an ethic different from that of the world. That community is the church, a community of faith that practises what it preaches and embodies a new way of relating to each other and the world. This is a relationship of sacrificial and unconditional love as lived and taught by Jesus, whose birth we remembered and celebrated with such joy and fervour just a few weeks ago.

Do we still have a sense of that excitement and energy as the new year unfolds and we gather for the annual church

meeting? Will that ethic, that joy and love, hope and peace, be reflected in our meetings? That’s God purpose and promise for the church—each community of faith that gathers in the name of Christ. Despite its flaws and failings, the church as a faithful community remains the best embodiment of God’s love for the world. And that presence has power to change the world.

That’s also the message of Pentecost, when the church was birthed. According to Acts 2, the Holy Spirit hovered as flames of fire over the apostles. And what a fire was lit! There was an ignition, we might say. The original ignition of the church. The movement this outpouring of the Spirit ignited, and the community formed by its powerful presence, embodied and proclaimed the promised reign of God. As the Book of Acts describes it, and those filled with the Spirit experienced it, this community was international, intercultural, inter-generational, invitational and inclusive. Now there’s a promise and a hope to ignite the imagination of the church!

So where does your imagination of the church take you? How do you imagine the church being a foretaste of the reign of God more faithfully in our time? How have you experienced the reign of God being present in and through the church in new and life-giving ways? Where is the Spirit moving in your congregation and community? Where are the flames of faith and faithfulness being ignited?

“Igniting the imagination of the church.” At Gathering 2019 we will share and hear fire-starter stories from across the nationwide church, stories that demonstrate how the Spirit is at work in and through the diverse faith communities in our regional churches. Come and let your imagination be ignited! ✎



Henry Paetkau is the interim executive minister of MC Canada.

According to Acts 2, the Holy Spirit hovered as flames of fire over the apostles. And what a fire was lit! There was an ignition, we might say.

A moment from yesterday



During the Second World War, Canadian conscientious objectors (COs) planted 17 million trees in British Columbia between 1942 and 1944. Some COs questioned the use of working in the “bush.” Pictured from left to right: Frank Dyck, Jacob Wiebe, Menno Wiebe and Rudy Regehr returned to Campbell River, B.C., in 1966 to see the trees that they had planted. In 1995, these trees were estimated to be worth \$1.7 billion. Sometimes it takes decades to see the results of our labours.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Conference of Mennonites in Canada
Photo Collection



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FAMILY TIES

The daily phone-call prayer

Melissa Miller

Over the course of our lives, we likely offer many prayers in a variety of ways. Some are formal, memorized prayers said for specific occasions. A family table grace recited before meals. The comforting words of Psalm 23. The Lord's Prayer spoken as one body during worship.

Author Anne Lamott categorizes "essential" prayers into three areas in her book *Help, Thanks, Wow*. Lamott says that we seek God's intervention and assistance in our lives by praying, "Help!" We pour out our gratitude with the words, "Thank you!" We express our awe and wonder with a simple, heartfelt "Wow!" My prayers often fall into one of those three types.

There are many different ways to pray as well. I have sought and practised a variety of prayer forms. Walking prayers. Breath prayers. Nature prayers. Visually focused prayers. Centring prayers. Kneeling prayers.

Catholic theologian Richard Rohr speaks of prayer as moving us from "being fear-driven to love-drawn" (Online Dec. 12, 2018 devotional). Often my prayers trace this movement, asking God to free me from fear and giving thanks for and being awed by the love that draws me to God.

More recently, I found myself without a specific prayer discipline. After reading

Scripture, I had no response other than to sit wordlessly. I was somewhat surprised by this development. It was as if I was "on pause," waiting for some unformed outcome or direction. Wise spiritual guides have counselled me at such times to simply wait, to accept what is, and to trust God is at work even when we are unable to see such activity. I showed up; I read Scripture; I waited.

Each day I call my mother. Over time, I came to see that my prayer practice was found in the daily phone calls. For the last year-and-a-half, my mother has been a reluctant resident of a nursing home. She had dearly hoped to continue living independently in her cozy country home, but health difficulties precipitated a move to nursing care. The crisis of one family member affects all the others in the family, and such was the case for me.

Since we live far from each other, it is not possible to be physically present. The daily phone calls are a way for me to connect, to share in the challenges and blessings she is experiencing. Our conversations become prayers for me, carrying to God what is said as well as what lies beneath the words. Prayers expressing a need for help, of thanks and of awe weave through these times.

Sometimes my mother is troubled, and we ask God to come to her aid. We pray

together with words, that she would find peace and healing, that she would be comforted in her losses, that she would know her precious worth as God's beloved child.

Sometimes, as I listen to my mother's report of the day, I give thanks. That I can continue to hear her musical voice. That she is safe and well cared for. That she and her friends support each other. That her lively spirit is undiminished as she jokes with the staff, celebrates a family gathering and prepares gifts for loved ones.

Sometimes, when the Spirit is most visible, I breathe, "Wow!" I hear her delight in creating: knitting, watering plants and treasuring their blooms, decorating her room in seasonal colours. I see her resilience in adapting to the dementia that muddles her thinking. And when she voices her sustaining Christian faith, I feel like both of us are wrapped in the Spirit's wings. God is at work in our many ways of praying. ☞



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

Et cetera

In 2018, MennoMedia and its book imprint Herald Press celebrated 110 years of serving the Mennonite church and broader public with magazines, books and curricula. Here is a list of the Top 10 books (by copies sold). (MennoMedia)

HERALD PRESS ALL-TIME TOP TEN TITLES

Revised Oct. 31, 2018

Title	First Published	Author	Approx. Sales To Date
1 The Amish (all editions)	1952	Hostedter, J.	786,124
2 More With Less Cookbook (all editions)	1976	Longacre, D.	770,000
3 Caring Enough to Confront	1973	Augsberger, D.	549,321
4 Meditations for the New Mother (all editions)	1953	Brenneman, H.	537,126
5 Mennonite Community Cookbook (all editions)	1950	Showalter, M.	477,992
6 Rosanna of the Amish (all editions)	1940	Yoder, J.	434,294
7 Favorite Family Recipes	1972	Showalter, M.	258,452
8 Meditations for Expectant Mothers (all editions)	1968	Brenneman, H.	241,840
9 Amish Cooking (all editions)	1982	Various	238,558
10 Simply in Season (all editions)	2005	Hockman-Wert, C. & Lind, M.	169,202

THIRD WAY FAMILY

A 'village' in our home

Christina Bartel Barkman

When our family lived in the Philippines from 2012 to 2018, we hosted our Peace Church community in our home every weekend and opened our doors to countless friends throughout the week.

I remember reading articles about the absence of “the village” in today’s society and how families struggle to feel cared for and connected. Yet, there I was, with a “village” in my home all week! I always made enough dinner for extra people who might join us at the dinner table; we regularly had people staying at our house overnight; and we even had a family of five stay with us the week I gave birth to our fourth child.

Our family back home in British Columbia were often surprised by the number of people coming in and out of our home, and they wondered how I could handle so much activity in the house, especially with four kids in tow. While it is certainly nice to sometimes have a quiet home—like these long winter evenings when the kids are all finally asleep and I can cuddle up with a good book—I love welcoming friends, family and a little extra chaos into my home.

It might seem like more work, but it actually ends up lightening my load, as kids are cared for by those we welcome, and

we all feel a wonderful sense of community. I hardly call it hosting anymore, as that sounds like I’m putting on a big fancy dinner spread. Instead, I’m simply welcoming people into my home regardless of the mess, the fussy kids or the pile of laundry on the couch. Our doors are always open, and we are rich because of it!

It’s upside-down practices like this that best describe my family. We tend to find a third option, one that acknowledges our own culture (Canadian and also Filipino!) and is guided by the example of Jesus to live in a way that’s often unique and always inviting. We make space for the neighbour, the outsider and the children, and we are welcoming, vulnerable and caring to the people in our lives.

When we moved back to Canada last summer, I wondered how I would be able to build that type of community again. We had so many young single adults in our home in Manila, who helped raise our kids. How would I find that in our little rural B.C. town?

I joked to a friend about paying a handful of babysitters to just hang out with us.

And what do you know, not long after, a wonderful friendship with our neighbours evolved, and the after-school hours are now filled with their teenage girls in our home or my kids all down the street at their house. We share meals, baking, babysitting, school pick-up and even our car. And now they’ve joined our church community, too!

When we wholeheartedly welcome people into our lives and into our homes, we can create a “village” of support and love that’s fun, often messy and always life-giving. The small church in our new hometown, where my husband pastors, is a welcoming group of hospitable Jesus-followers, much like my own family strives to be. As a family, I can’t think of a better way to show the love of Jesus than by welcoming people into our home, our lives and our hearts. ❧



Christina Barkman, with her four little ones and her pastor husband, seeks to live out Jesus’ creative and loving “third way” options.

When we moved back to Canada last summer, I wondered how I would be able to build that type of community again.

Et cetera

Missionary down: Three reactions

On Nov. 16, 2018, missionary John Allen Chau approached North Sentinel Island, home to an untouched ethnic group in the Bay of Bengal. After an islander shot an arrow at him, he wrote in his diary: “I hollered, ‘My name is John, I love you and Jesus loves you.’” The next day, a fisherman saw islanders burying Chau’s body.

- **“It takes a lot of arrogance for somebody to blindly intrude on somebody else’s property and think that they need to give them something that they don’t already have.”** (Corey Pigg, host of the *Failed Missionary* podcast)
- **“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”** (Jim Elliot, missionary martyred in Ecuador in 1956)
- **“We forgive those reportedly responsible for his death.”** (The Chau family)

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

The clarity of divine call

Troy Watson

I believe every human being has a divine call. This divine call is more explicit than the generic “call to ministry” associated with the clergy. It’s a specific expectation God has given each person to fulfill.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote: “Over and above the din of desires there is a calling, a demanding, a waiting, an expectation. There is a question that follows me wherever I turn. What is expected of me? . . . With every child born a new expectation enters the world. This is the most important experience in the life of every human being: something is asked of me.”

Most of us don’t know what our divine call is. It’s revealed when we’re ready. Our preparation usually requires a long inner journey of healing and transformation. Some children and teenagers feel a sense of call, but the clarity of our divine call typically comes later in life. (Mine came at the age of 43, after 17 years in pastoral ministry.)

The clarity of divine call deeply and profoundly liberates us. It unleashes us to make a difference in the world without feeling we are responsible to solve all of the world’s problems.

You and I are bombarded with the needs, problems, trauma and pain of others, like never before in history. With 24-hour news cycles, we’re constantly updated on every atrocity, tragedy and injustice that occurs in the world. We’re overwhelmed with requests to give, help and serve. It feels like every 10 minutes we’re invited to contribute to another charity or become involved in another worthy cause.

As a result, many caring people are experiencing compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma and burnout. Many of us tarry on, feeling guilty because we should probably give and help more. Sometimes we numb ourselves to the plight of others and become indifferent to the pain and suffering around us, in order to retain our sanity. We can even become bitter and

resentful when confronted with other people’s problems. After all, we have problems too. We have needs and issues in our own lives, families and local communities that we can barely keep up with. We don’t want to be selfish, but some days we’re

[T]he responsibility to care for the needs of others is also shared by the whole body of Christ, and is not my responsibility alone.

barely holding on and have nothing left to give. Yet so many of us repeatedly fall into the trap of running ourselves ragged trying to save the world while becoming increasingly disconnected from our loved ones and our own souls.

What good is it if you help the whole world and lose your own soul?

You can’t solve all of the world’s problems. You’re not supposed to. But you can help solve one or two problems in the world, and that is where the clarity of divine call comes in. It identifies the one or two particular expectations you’re responsible to fulfill. It also clarifies what you aren’t responsible for, namely, everything else!

It can be difficult to accept that I’m not ultimately responsible for the needs and problems of others. As a Christian, I believe the needs of others are shared with the whole body of Christ, therefore I have a responsibility to help. However, the responsibility to care for the needs of others is also shared by the whole body of Christ, and is not my responsibility alone. It’s my ego-driven individualism that hinders me from focusing on my limited part of the “whole-body solution”. When I see a need, it’s easy to assume that if I don’t do something, nobody will. But I need to remember that every other human being has a divine call, too. Not just me.

There is one body, but many parts. There is one Spirit, but many gifts. There is one solution to the world’s problems and that

solution is everyone fulfilling the unique expectation(s) God has placed upon our lives. I wonder if the same principle applies to churches and denominations.

One of the things that gets me into trouble is running around getting involved

in areas outside of the particular expectations of my divine call. When I do this, I tend to neglect the few things God has specifically called me to do, while becoming a pain in the neck for people who have been called to do the things I keep interfering and messing with. The key is to focus on the unique “specialization” of my call. If we all did that, we’d be the “whole-body solution” that God intends us to be.

Discover your call. Fulfill your call. And trust that God has called others to take care of the problems and needs God hasn’t called you to take care of. ☺



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

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BOOK REVIEW

'Called to be a church for others'

Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change.

By Jim Antal. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, Md., 2018. 221 pages.

Reviewed by Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

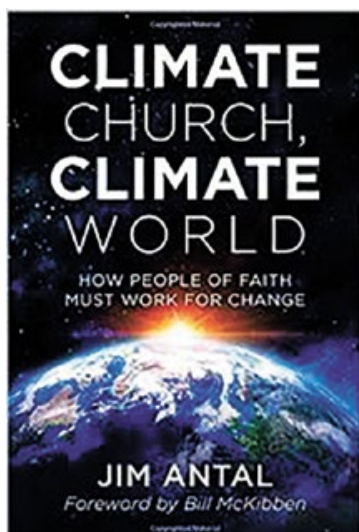
ALBERTA CORRESPONDENT

The August sky was an eerie brownish-orange as the morning news warned Edmontonians not to exert themselves outside. Thick smoke smelling of charred forests blanketed the city, and the air quality was so poor that even healthy young people stayed indoors. On a family vacation, we drove through heavy smoke in southern British Columbia, never able to see the mountains, as the province experienced a second year of record-breaking forest fires.

It was a fitting time to read *Climate Church, Climate World*. Jim Antal's book offers a well-written and well-supported encouragement for individual and communal engagement with the issue of climate change in ways that could lead to positive change. Many of the practical frustrations I hear in Alberta are raised clearly and helpfully in its pages.

One of these—the argument that our necessary use of fuel renders protesting the oil industry hypocritical—is gently and effectively addressed. Quoting an example of how slave owners were not suddenly hypocrites when they joined the abolition movement, Antal points out that “people enmeshed in a flawed system are not exempt from the struggle to transform that system.” He encourages confession of complicity along with active engagement of the theological, social, economic and spiritual work that spurs transformation.

That the needed transformation feels overwhelming, is another common excuse for inaction I hear among Christians. Antal, however, argues that faith communities have a moral imperative to repurpose themselves for this transformation, because it is so important that it cannot be ignored. Instead of



being relegated to just another optional ideology or issue for congregations, he suggests that climate change is the “umbrella issue” under which all others fit.

“If the work of the church is to make God’s love and justice real, and since climate change amplifies every other social justice issue, it falls to the church to create the conditions in which people can face the reality of climate change and respond to God’s call to take action to protect God’s gift of creation,” he writes.

He makes a strong case for preachers and churches to engage hopefully and consistently in the issues of climate change in every aspect of church life and work: “We need to accept that we are not called to be a church for ourselves. We are called to be a church for others.”

This umbrella perspective is helpful.

When I consider even a few of the issues my home church, and others like it, have faced in the last number of years—“greening” our buildings, charitable relief work, responding to disasters, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and our response to it, and learning to communicate across differing opinions—it is quite clear how these can all fit under the umbrella.

“A repurposed church that explicitly values continuity of creation could declare our moral interdependence with our billions of neighbours the world over, as well as our countless yet-to-be-born neighbours,” he writes.

What I appreciate most about *Climate Church, Climate World* is the practicality of Antal’s reasoning and the insistent conviction that the church is a meaningful agent of change. His practical suggestions face the uncomfortable issues of climate change head on, dismantling apathy without inflicting unnecessary guilt.

While I am energized by his belief in the voice of the church and the examples of how this voice is crucial to social change, a needed critique of the church is missing: the rise of populist religion and an oft-repeated history of being resistant to needed social changes. While the church is a catalyst for change, it can also be a formidable obstacle to it, rationalizing and interpreting the Bible to meet its own desires. ❧

Originally published in a longer format in Anabaptist Witness, Vol. 5 No. 2 (October 2018).

The argument that our necessary use of fuel renders protesting the oil industry hypocritical is gently and effectively addressed.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

'I have no say ...'

By Donita Wiebe-Neufeld
ALBERTA CORRESPONDENT

Leah is a lifer, and I like her. She is middle-aged and is at the beginning of her sentence. She is educated and insightful, and has a good sense of humour. But what I am impressed by is her heart. She cares about the young women with whom she shares the crowded maximum-security space in the women's prison. It seems she has become a surrogate mom in that hurting place, someone who helps make a bad situation better. She certainly helps me grow in my own understanding of the justice system and the people incarcerated by it.

One Tuesday night I sat with a few inmates around a table—bolted to the floor—in their “pod.” The pod is a locked living area attached to bunkrooms where prisoners can also be locked in. During our visit, Leah said she hopes to be transferred to medium security, where there is a bit more freedom, better programs and the chance to cook for herself. She longs for the move but, glancing at the young women around us, she said, “I don’t want to go until after Christmas, but I have no say in when it happens.”

“I have no say.” That phrase felt strangely familiar. It niggled at me until the next day, when I moved my horse, named CD, from summer pasture back home for the winter. It occurred to me then, that people in prison are like horses because they have no say in the “where,” “when” and “with whom” questions of life.

This year was hard for CD. The herd he was with for nine years was dispersed. Six of 10 horses, including his constant companion, were taken to new homes. I moved him from pasture to pasture all summer. His companions changed often, creating a constant power struggle in herd hierarchy.

It was stressful. He missed his friends. He was often unfocused, wanting his herd. He resented, and eventually



PHOTO AND VIDEO BY TIM WIEBE-NEUFELD

Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, left, and her son Darian enjoy a sleigh ride. CD, Donita's horse, is happily back with his herd after a summer of being moved from place to place. To watch a video of the ride, visit canadianmennonite.org/sleigh-ride.



destroyed, the grazing muzzle that restricted his food intake. His personality became somewhat grumpy. He spent a lot of time pacing fence lines, looking for a way out.

When I moved him home, his remaining long-time herd mates greeted him enthusiastically. Two days later, when I used him to pull a sleigh, he was content and happy. His world was right again.

If steady relationships are so important to a horse, how important are they for people? What damage is done when people are uprooted repeatedly over many years?

Prisoners are removed from family and friends and confined with an ever-changing mix of volatile strangers. They often do not feel safe. Hierarchies constantly need sorting. Anxiety and grumpiness occur when people have no control over their situations.

In maximum security, prisoners have few choices. Prison walls, locks and fences offer no way out, and there is a lot of pacing and thinking of home. When healthy and meaningful relationships develop between inmates, they can be suddenly severed according to the needs and whims of the correctional system.

Most sentences eventually end. It is hard to imagine that constant relationship stress does anything but make successful and safe release less likely.

Our justice system might be the best society offers right now, but I wonder if there might be other, better ways for people to “serve their time” and work toward healing for themselves, their victims and their communities. I don’t know what the answers might be, but I do know that even my horse deserves to have steady relationships. I have some say in that for him. Who says it for prisoners? ❧

NEWS

'May God sustain us together'

Mennonite World Conference is a growing church

Mennonite World Conference

Uganda is ripe for evangelism, and the church is growing," says Bishop Simon Okoth, national coordinator of Uganda Mennonite Church. The new Mennonite World Conference (MWC) member church, accepted by the Executive Committee in 2017, grew from 310 members in seven congregations in 2015 to 553 members in 18 congregations in 2018.

Every three years, MWC collects information from its members, showing the growth—or decline—of national churches around the world in member churches and those who are not members or are on the path, like Uganda Mennonite Church.

The International Brethren in Christ Association and 107 national churches are MWC members, comprising 69 percent of the total Anabaptist-Mennonite faith family identified.

Overall, Anabaptism worldwide has grown by 1 percent, to 2.13 million baptized members in 86 countries, while MWC member churches have grown by 2 percent. (See map on page 15.)

Much of the growth in Anabaptist-Mennonite congregations can be seen in the Global South, in national churches like Uganda that are springing up in the hinterlands outside cities. Growing greatly in number, Uganda Mennonite Church

congregations face many challenges: buildings with no windows, barely covered by a roof; lack of chairs for church members to sit on during services; pastors who have no formal training and sometimes no paycheque.

MWC member churches in Africa reported 701,814 baptized members in 2015. That increased by 5 percent, to 738,315 baptized members in 2018.

Asia and the Pacific saw a 2 percent growth in baptized members, although the number of baptized MWC members decreased slightly. Greater precision in reporting accounts for some of the decreases reported in countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam. Bharatiya Jukta Christa Prachar Mandli, an Anabaptist church based in Kolkata, India, shows the greatest increase: 36 percent growth, from 2015's 2,725 baptized members to 4,260 in 2018.

Baptized members of MWC member churches in Latin America grew by 6 percent, from 102,377 in 2015 to 109,177 in 2018. Two national churches in Latin America grew by more than 30 percent. New MWC member COBIM, the Mennonite Brethren church in Brazil, grew from 6,960 baptized members in 2015 to 10,400 in 2018. Conferencia Peruana Hermanos Menonitas went from 664



UGANDA MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO

Worship at a Mennonite Church Uganda (MCU) congregation. 'Mennonite Church Uganda is . . . honoured to be a member of the global family of the MWC,' says Bishop Simon Okoth, MCU national coordinator.

members in 2015 to 1,000 in 2018.

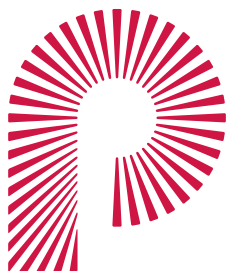
In Venezuela, where economic collapse has made daily life difficult, MWC associate member church Casa de Restauracion y Vida Shalom saw its members fall by more than half, from 250 in 2015 to 120 in 2018.

Europe, cradle to Anabaptist faith, incurred losses in historic areas like the Netherlands, where the Algemene Doopsgezind Sociëteit fell from 7,650 members in 2015 to 5,725 in 2018. However, new expressions of Anabaptism are growing in Albania and Spain. The former grew exponentially, from 30 baptized members in 2015 to 120 in 2018, while Anabautistas, Menonitas y Hermanos en Cristo in Spain increased from 376 to 501, aided by mission work from Amor Viviente of Honduras.

In North America, Mennonite Church U.S.A. reports a 33 percent decrease in baptized members, as Lancaster Mennonite Conference left the alliance to form a separate conference. Several other national churches report slight decreases overall, while the Conservative Mennonite Conference in the United States showed 2 percent growth. The Be in Christ Church of Canada (formerly Brethren in Christ) is growing steadily, with approximately 17,000 attendees in 2018.

Globally, two-thirds of Anabaptists are found in the Global South. Counting only MWC-member churches, that number shifts to 81 percent of members living in the Global South, in places like Uganda.

"Mennonite Church Uganda is quite happy and honoured to be a member of the global family of the MWC," says Okoth. "May God sustain us together." ❧



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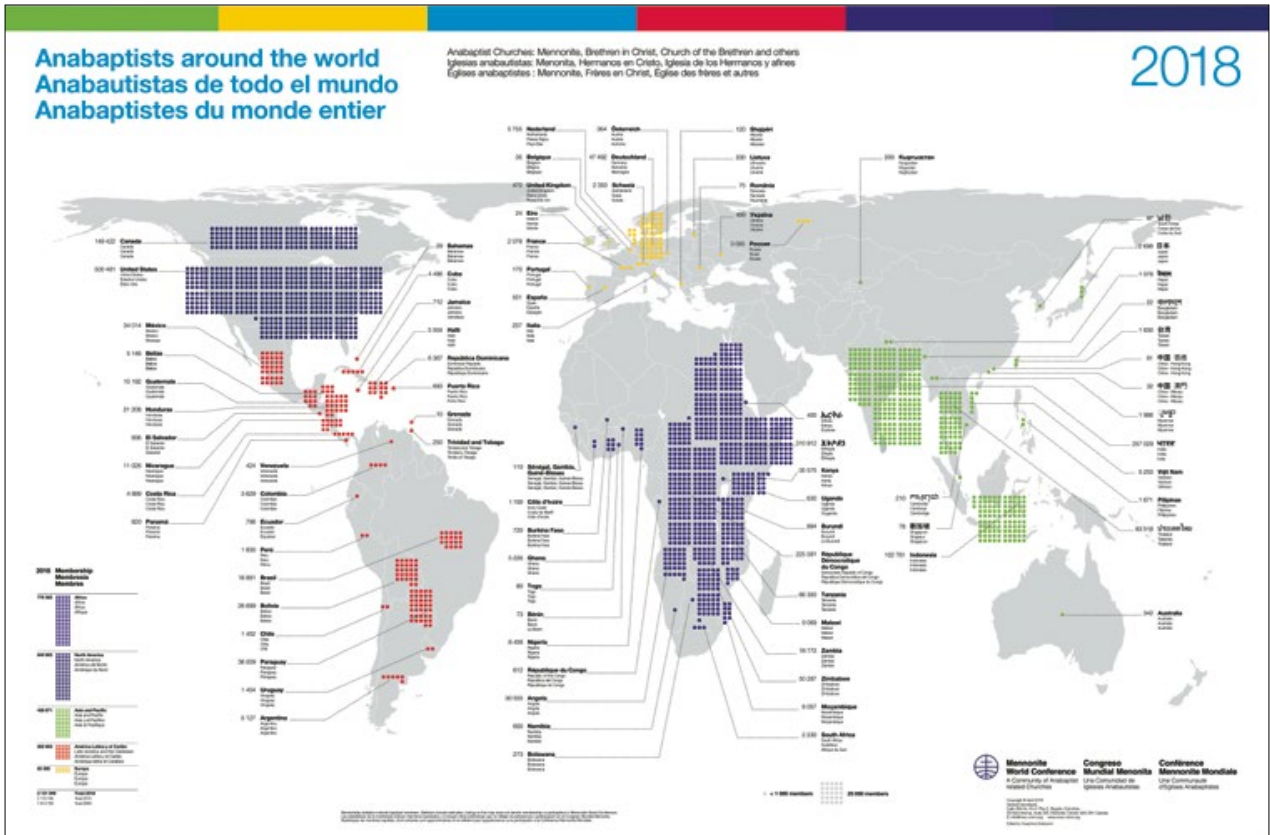
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'ANABAPTISTS AROUND THE WORLD': A 2018 MAP.

A significant contribution by HANS WERNER,
 author of *The Constructed Mennonite*

The Ältester

HERMAN D.W. FRIESEN,
A Mennonite Leader in Changing Times

BRUCE L. GUENTHER
Foreword by Royden Loewen

MENNONITE MAVERICK

The Ältester: Herman D.W. Friesen, A Mennonite Leader in Changing Times by Bruce L. Guenther

"No other book covers Saskatchewan Old Colony Mennonites in such a broad, empathetic, and easy-to-read way. Guenther tells their story in relation to Friesen, who helped them forge a new direction. Instead of separating from 'the world,' whether by migrating again to another remote region or by building mental barriers, they would work at relating constructively to the social and economic context in Saskatchewan." —**Bill Janzen, PhD, Mennonite Central Committee**

University of Regina Press
 UOFRPRESS.CA

Pastors prepare to become climate leaders

Story and Photos by Jennifer Schrock
Mennonite Creation Care Network
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

Hopelessness. Denial. Grief. Guilt. Despair. Pastors face these emotions in their congregations as they walk with people suffering from personal losses.

Through a series of retreats funded by the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions in Harrisonburg, Va., church leaders are beginning to transfer these skills to climate change. The non-profit and its partner, Mennonite Creation Care Network, see faith leaders as having a critical role to bring to the challenge.

Eighteen Mennonite pastors and leaders met at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp in New Hamburg last November for the second of a number of planned “Who cares about climate change?” retreats. Doug Kaufman, who pastors at Benton Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., plans the events and is the primary presenter, but each one also draws on local leadership.

Denial and despair

Kaufman began the retreat by naming the forms of denial human beings use to avoid facing a threat like climate change: from literal denial of the facts, to acknowledging the facts but failing to act. All are attempts

to avoid despair.

“My despair comes from doubting I can do anything effective,” said Michele Rizoli of Toronto United Mennonite Church.

“I haven’t had opportunities to talk about this with other pastors. It doesn’t come up at most pastoral meetings,” observed Glyn Jones of Wanner Mennonite in Cambridge.

“Climate change means poverty will continue,” observed Deus Okong’o, a volunteer with Mennonite Central Committee’s International Volunteer Exchange Program, who provided a Tanzanian perspective.

Worry for grandchildren and other youth topped the list of concerns.

From denial to lament

The retreat offered multiple pathways to help people claim their negative emotions and lament the losses they fear. With the help of Tamara Shantz, a spiritual director and a pastor for young adults with Pastors in Exile, the group reflected on an Ignatian model that acknowledges entering into brokenness as an important part of the spiritual life.

Wendy Janzen, who pastors at St. Jacobs



Warmed by a campfire and the scent of wood smoke, pastors prepare for a forest church experience outdoors.

Mennonite Church, led several outdoor worship services for retreatants, using the forest church model. Worship experiences included time for silence, solitude and lament, including lament for extinct species in Ontario or those threatened with extinction.

Hope and action

Scott Morton Ninomiya, a doctoral student at the University of Waterloo, offered a session entitled “From energy audience to energy authors,” challenging the retreatants to think of themselves as having the agency to determine where energy comes from and providing stories of those who had done this. An entrepreneur who set up a solar farm in the Sahara Desert in 1913, a mother of five who founded Germany’s first green energy supplier, and an Indian woman whose efforts brought solar power to over a thousand villages, were among them.

Steve Dyck, president of Guelph Solar and an advocate for the Citizens Climate Lobby, explained how a carbon tax could rapidly curb emissions, provide stability for businesses and assist the poor.

Pastors spent an evening coaching each other as they planned actions they could take in their own congregations. Laura Enns of Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church imagined how she might link young adults and older adults in a conversation about climate change. Susan Allison-Jones of Wilmot Mennonite Church in New Hamburg talked of leading a Christian education class on climate change. ▮



Wendy Janzen, centre, leads the group’s worship services. Janzen pastors at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, Ont., and leads the Burning Bush Forest Church, which worships outdoors.

Reaching out together

Muslims, Mennonites join hands and hearts to bring Syrian families to Canada

By Maria Klassen
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Many people will remember seeing the picture in September 2015 of the three-year-old Syrian refugee, Alan Kurdi, whose body was washed up on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. And for a minute, or maybe two, many wondered what they could do.

Three years later, the work of several people, churches and organizations has resulted in the resettlement of five Syrian families in St. Catharines.

The first family of four came in October 2016. The father is now employed full-time in a grocery store, while his wife continues with English classes. The children are in school or daycare.

Between May and November 2018, four more families arrived, consisting of a total of 21 people. All adults are in yearlong English classes, and the children attend college, high school or elementary school, depending on their ages.

“All are advancing steadily,” says

Doug Schulz, outreach pastor of Grace Mennonite Church, one of the supporting congregations. Volunteer tutors visit their homes after the students’ classes are done.

Nineteen-year-old Ahmed, who arrived on May 27, 2018, attends high school full time, then works up to 20 hours a week at a café, according to Schulz. Ahmed started as a line cook, but his English is advancing so rapidly that he has begun to work at the cash register as well. His goal is to visit his “intended” next summer, who is also a refugee from his Syrian community, now living in Paris.

Those who wondered what they could do back in 2015 included Moses Moini, refugee program coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee; Ezeldin Ebadalla, president of the Islamic Society in St. Catharines; David Brubacher, lead minister of Grace Mennonite; Schulz; and Grace Mennonite congregants.

A formal meeting was held in November 2015 with five members each from Grace

Mennonite and the Islamic Society. Their common goal was an opportunity to partner together to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis. From that meeting, Bridge of Hope Community, a multi-faith, not-for-profit organization was born.

Zakira Hamdani, a Syrian born in Ontario who speaks Arabic and English fluently, was asked to join. She has been invaluable in helping break the language barrier between the newcomers and Bridge of Hope members and volunteers. Since this first meeting, the United church in Beamsville and the Pelham Friends, a Quaker community, have joined.

Besides fundraising and finding housing and furniture, Bridge of Hope members have arranged transportation for the newcomers from the airport and around the city, and helped them apply for government documents. Health issues have been addressed and medical appointments made, including suitable means of transportation.

Orientation support for the Syrian families is ongoing, including learning to navigate bus routes to get to library programs and YMCA services, to name a few. Weather, winter, clothing and chores are different in Canada. Mentoring is ongoing, to ensure that families integrate well.

According to Moini, the members of Bridge of Hope are to be the hands and feet of Jesus, as Canadians and Syrians journey together.

Activities, like a summer picnic for up to 85 people, have been planned. Socials have been held at the masjid, Grace Mennonite and in the homes of individual families.

Of the five Syrian families that have been helped by Bridge of Hope, two were sponsored by the federal government and three were sponsored by individuals or groups.

The committee members have learned a lot about cultural and religious differences over the past three years, and have found it an enriching experience to reach out in this way. Although it can be intense when a lot of people arrive in a short period of time, they have found it rewarding to develop a level of personal care for families and for each other, and to bond through camaraderie and mutual encouragement. ❧



PHOTO BY DAVID BRUBACHER

Family and friends gather together to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the Alkhanous family’s arrival in Canada, at the home of Zakia Hamdani.

Historical Society quietly contributes to national identity

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

Historian Laureen Harder-Gissing does not want to be heard saying, “You should know your history,” the way someone might say, “You should eat your vegetables.”

She does not want people to feel badly if they do not know their history; she just wants it to be available at those “points in our lives when the past will suddenly matter,” and we want to know the larger story we fit into.

Harder-Gissing, who directs the Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., is the new president of the not-so-new Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, a modest but accomplished organization that has been collecting, curating, interpreting and sharing the collective stories of Canadian Mennonites for 50 years.

The underpinning goal of the Society, according to Royden Loewen, has been to create a sense of Mennonite identity. To illustrate the value of common identity, Loewen—Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg and longtime Society participant—highlights the role of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a key funder of the Society throughout its history. Loewen says MCC recognized that, in order to undertake collective projects, a collective identity is essential, and “historical narrative” provides the foundation for such a shared ethos and sense of peoplehood.

The Society started largely with Ted Friesen’s vision for a book that would provide a general history of Mennonites in Canada. Friesen, of Altona, Man., was involved in various Mennonite organizations, including MCC. He recruited, among others, Winfield Fretz and Frank H. Epp.

According to a history of the Society, presented by Sam Steiner at a November 2018 conference in Winnipeg that marked



CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PHOTO
Laureen Harder-Gissing, archiviste at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., is the new president of the not-so-new Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.

its 50th anniversary, Epp was initially resistant to Friesen’s book idea. He worried that it would contribute to “Mennonite ethnocentrism,” which he considered “already excessive.”

Epp changed his mind. The first *Mennonites in Canada* volume, published in 1974, bears his name as author. His wife Helen provided considerable assistance but, according to Steiner, did not want her name on the cover.

The second volume followed in 1982. It covered 1920 to 1940 and focused on the Mennonite “struggle for survival,” as opposed to the first book, which focused on separation.

Epp died in 1986, and Ted Regehr completed work on the third volume in the series, which was published in 1996. The three landmark works total a combined 1,683 pages.

At this stage in the Society’s work, Harder-Gissing was invited to their meeting. She was in her 20s and excited to see academics and others passionately discussing issues in their communities and the responsibility to draw on history. The Society, she says, was at a stage of figuring out what would come next.

What came next was a new partnership

with MCC to present a series of Divergent Voices conferences. Loewen recalls topics that included “Melancholy and mental health,” “Mennonites and money,” Kanadier Mennonites, Aboriginal-Mennonite relations, sexuality and human rights. Those conferences continue.

Over the years, the Society also worked on other projects, including the Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, which eventually expanded, with various collaborating parties, into the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (gameo.org). And in 2015, the Society launched the Mennonite Archival Image Database, which includes more than 38,000 scanned images.

The Divergent Voices work also led the Society to commission two further books. *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*, written by Marlene Epp, daughter of Frank and Helen, came out in 2008. In 2013, Marlene’s sister, Esther Epp-Tiessen, wrote *Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: A History*, with financial backing from MCC.

Loewen says he thinks that Mennonites value what the Society has done, but people often do not know who is behind the publications or conferences. The Society is “not recognized for what it does,” he says, “but that’s also its [modus operandi].” Its energy arises from creative collaboration, not public profile.

And it appears to be going strong into its sixth decade. On the horizon for the Society is a possible fourth *Mennonites in Canada* volume, focused on diversity, as well as potential ventures into podcasting, story mapping and other digital media possibilities. The anniversaries of the 1923 migration out of Russia and the 1922 migration from Canada to Mexico may also provide focus for its next steps. ▮

/// News brief

History scholars honoured for their research and writing

WINNIPEG—At the 50th anniversary of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada held on Nov. 15, 2018 Awards of Excellence were presented to three scholars who have made a significant contribution to the advancement of Canadian Mennonite history. Pictured from left to right:



PHOTO BY CONRAD STOESZ

- **John J. Friesen** served as Mennonite history professor from 1970 to 2000 at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) and Canadian Mennonite University from 2000 to 2010. His most noted monograph, *Building Communities: The Changing Face of Manitoba Mennonites*, was published in 2007.

- **Abe J. Dueck** began teaching at Mennonite Brethren Bible College in 1971 and played an integral role throughout his career in gathering, preserving and telling the Mennonite Brethren story to both college students and the public at large. From 1991 to 2003, he served as the director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, during which time he wrote numerous periodical articles for the *Mennonite Historian*.

- **Adolf Ens** began his teaching career at CMBC in 1970. He was a key player in the publication of many Mennonite history books via CMBC Publications and is best remembered for his 2004 history of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada entitled *Becoming a National Church: A History of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada*, and a number of volumes that focus on the local history of the Mennonite West Reserve in Manitoba.

—Mennonite Historical Society of Canada

/// News brief

Soup and service at Grace Mennonite

ST. CATHARINES, ONT.—For a tasty soup dinner on a cold day, come to Grace Mennonite Church on the first Thursday of the month from now until March. Dinner includes a variety of different soups, an assortment of breads and many delicious desserts served with tea or coffee. All food is donated by church members and some local regular congregants. There is no charge for the supper, but donations of any amount are welcome. This tradition started in 2003 at the suggestion of Co-pastor Wanda Roth Amstutz, who felt that eating together once a week would foster a sense of community among the church members. Elizabeth Janzen, Lyn Beckett and Clara Kornelsen, who were part of the initial soup supper, are still serving at the present-day meals. Weekly suppers took a lot of work and energy, and as the congregation has aged these suppers are now once a month, without a formal program anymore. And the doors have been opened to anyone in the community. In the last few years, these evenings have become a way of fundraising for various projects such as Community Care, Westview Centre4Women, the local Out of the Cold program and the Brock University Indigenous Students Emergency Fund.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY MARIA H. KLASSEN



Borscht is a big hit with the supper community.

/// News brief

DNA testing encouraged for Low German and Russian Mennonites

EDMONTON—"DNA and genealogy" was the theme of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta's fall meeting, held at Lendrum Mennonite Church on Nov. 24, 2018. Timothy Janzen, a family physician from Portland, Ore., is a keen and prolific contributor to the Mennonite and Germans-from-Russia family history community. In two sessions, he presented an astounding amount of information and traced specific names to illustrate his research techniques. He provided the 68 registered participants with a 29-page listing of where to find genealogical resources, including immigration records, church records, family and village registers, census data, cemetery records and more. A discussion of three types of DNA analysis, plus the pros and cons of popular DNA testing companies, rounded out the workshop. At the end of his presentation, Janzen remarked, "Hopefully you've gotten at least a little drink out of the fire-hydrant today!" He encourages those with Low German and Russian Mennonite backgrounds to have their DNA tested as a way of adding more information to the available data base.

—BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD



Timothy Janzen

Training peacemakers through 'Tough talk'

RJC students explore difficult issues during Deeper Life Days

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

"It's called Deeper Life Days for a reason," says Grade 11 student Shaelyn Nordmarken. Deeper Life Days give Rosthern Junior College (RJC) students opportunity to engage with challenging topics.

The topic was "Tough talk: Conversations about the Bible, peace and violence." The event was held over four days in late October and early November 2018.

Planned in part by the student Faith and Life Committee, the event was designed to help students grapple with the difficult issues of sexual violence, international conflict and how to respond to problematic passages in the Bible.

It began with conversation circles focussed on the theme, "Seeking peace around us." Students were asked to think about their own experiences and the examples of parents, grandparents and other role models to answer questions such as:

- **What does it** mean to promote peace in our everyday life?
- **Can you share** about a time when you witnessed love overcoming violence?
- **What does it** mean to forgive? How does forgiveness fit with peacemaking?
- **What would a** truly peaceful community look like?

Shyanne Case-Skulbly said she found the conversation "hard because the questions were very, very deep."

Nordmarken agreed. "It took some thinking to answer them," she said.

The activity "grew out of students identifying that this practice of peace doesn't only exist outside of the walls of school," said teacher David Epp, "but rather is an integral part of our experience as a community living together."

Kylee Warkentin also recognized that

living in community makes difficult conversations possible. "I think the fact that we're a community makes us all closer and more comfortable with each other, and it's easier to talk about all that stuff because we live with each other," she said.

To which Case-Skulbly added, "There has to be trust in a small community like this."

In addition to these conversations around seeking peace, RJC also hosted several guest presenters whose input sparked further dialogue.

Theatre of the Beat presented its latest production, *#ChurchToo*, along with a 25-minute talk-back session, helping students discuss issues related to sexual violence.

Megan Brendle appreciated the honesty of the performance. "It didn't try to shadow over the bad parts of what has happened in history and with the church," she said. "They didn't try to pretend that it was good when it wasn't."

Case-Skulbly acknowledged that tough talk like *#ChurchToo* can create discomfort. "They just threw it all out there on the table," she said, "and it made us uncomfortable, but it was good to make us uncomfortable."

The second presenter was Tarek Al-Zoughbi, a Palestinian Christian activist, who told students about his life in Israeli-occupied Palestine. His presentation was eye opening for many students.

"It's hard to think that there are so many people living in that kind of lifestyle around the world," Jenna Buryniuk said. "It's interesting to hear from someone who's actually going through something like that."

Brendle added, "[Al-Zoughbi] just seemed like a normal guy. Even though he goes through tear gas and riots and



ROSTHERN JUNIOR COLLEGE PHOTO

Rosthern Junior College held its fall Deeper Life Days in late October and early November. The topic was 'Tough talk: Conversations about the Bible, peace and violence.'

gunshots, we have the same beliefs as him."

Finally, students heard from Ryan Dueck, pastor of Lethbridge Mennonite Church, who talked about a Christ-centred approach to reading the Bible. Dueck encouraged students to measure everything they read in the Bible against the life and teachings of Jesus, saying, "If a verse or passage doesn't square with the words and example of Christ, then all the worse for that verse."

Case-Skulbly found Dueck's presentation helpful, especially in understanding violence in the Bible. "You're supposed to follow the Bible, and it's supposed to help you be good in life, but when there's stuff like that in it, it's like you don't know what to do with it," she said. "I liked how he said, if you just focus on Jesus, what Jesus was all about, then you'll be good."

Epp noted that these tough conversations are necessary in training students as peacemakers. "At RJC, one of our stated goals is to develop leaders of faith, service and peacemaking," he said. But discussions of conscientious objection and non-participation in the military aren't all that relevant to his students.

Rather, the "Tough talk" theme was aimed at helping them to discern how to be peacemakers in their world. "What does it mean to respond to Christ's call to be peacemakers in a context where the forms of violence that we see are maybe more nuanced, maybe more insidious?" he said, adding, "What we're looking to develop is a greater awareness for a 21st-century peace stance that is robust and rooted in biblical perspective." ❧

Three little words that open doors

Owning his pastoral role leads to interesting conversations for Saskatchewan pastor

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

A standing joke among pastors is that if they want to end a conversation, they only need to tell the other person they are a pastor. But this hasn't been Ric Driediger's experience.

Driediger, who lives in Rosthern, is pastor of Langham Mennonite Fellowship during the winter months. From May to the middle of October, he operates Churchill River Canoe Outfitters some 470 kilometres north of Langham in Missinipe.

Every summer, his clients ask him what he does all winter. He says he used to tell them, "I keep myself busy." But now that he has a contract with Langham Mennonite Fellowship, he thought it was time to own up to his other vocation.

"I was shocked at the response," he confesses. While time doesn't always allow for in-depth conversations, he finds that "I'm a pastor" often elicits a lot of questions.

"What church do you pastor?" they most often ask. When told, they often respond with, "What do Mennonites believe?" And when Driediger goes on to explain about Mennonites' emphasis on nonviolence, Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount, they sometimes further respond with questions like, "How is that different than anybody else?"

One man asked him, "What kind of Christian are you?" He seemed mistrustful and angry, says Driediger, although "he was not taking his anger out on me." The man told Driediger about his mother and how she frequently told him he was going to hell, and that his children, likewise, were going to hell. If that was the kind of Christian Driediger was, this man wanted nothing to do with him.

"How do you answer that?" Driediger pondered. He assured the man that he wasn't that kind of Christian, but he also gave him an invitation: "You're going to be around for a while this summer. Why don't



PHOTO COURTESY OF RIC DRIEDIGER

Ric Driediger has found that telling people he's a pastor often opens the door to conversations about faith and spirituality.

you watch me?"

In September, Driediger had another conversation with the man, who told him, "The Christians here are different than the ones I've met [where I come from]. If all Christians were like the ones I've met here, I would be interested."

Another asked Driediger, "Why do you believe?" He explained that he'd been brought up in the church and that he had come to believe because he'd been taught from his childhood to have faith. The man replied, "I refuse to believe. It sounds like stupidity to me." When Driediger asked him, "What would it take for you to believe?" the man replied, "I just wouldn't."

Once, when a family came into his office, and the mother learned that Driediger is a pastor, she responded, "There are so many things I'd like to talk to you about. Can we come over for dinner?" The woman and her

family not only came for dinner but they also prepared the meal. When they gathered around the table, Driediger says that she asked if she could say the blessing. And looking around the table, she said, "Many hundreds of events have happened to bring us together here at this time. I can't believe it was an accident. I attribute it to God and I thank God for that. Let's eat."

Driediger also established an interesting relationship with a Jewish woman. Once she learned he was a pastor, she shared with him about her struggles in the Jewish faith. "We had incredible conversations about Judaism and Christianity, and it only started once she found out that I'm a pastor," he says.

He has also noticed that people talk about their canoeing experiences differently than they once did. "Their stories are much more pointed because they see me as someone who understands spirituality," he says. "They either feel free to use that language because [they know] I'm a pastor, or they feel they have to. I hope it's the former and not the latter."

Instead of shutting down conversation, the three little words, "I'm a pastor," have opened doors for Driediger. He wonders why this is so: "Is it the fact that I'm renting canoes to them, and so they don't find me threatening?"

One of his Missinipe clients has visited his church in Langham. Driediger sees this as a good thing. This person "felt like there was a connection beyond what happened in Missinipe," he says.

When asked how these conversations have informed his ministry, he says, "It reminds me of the need to be real. I can't use language that's so Christianly that nobody really knows what I mean. . . . I try not to be a different person when standing behind the counter in Missinipe than I am when standing behind the pulpit." ❧

Band of brothers

Young men at Canadian Mennonite University form deeper relationships through Boy Talk

By Aaron Epp

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

When Isaac Schlegel and Nathan Rogalsky noticed that their friendships with men lacked the same depth as their friendships with women, they decided to do something about it.

Last March, they gathered a group of men together with the purpose of fostering deeper friendships by intentionally talking openly and honestly with each other. The group has since come to be known as Boy Talk—a play on the phrase “girl talk.” Today, it consists of 11 students at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg.

“There wasn’t a lot of thought put into it, really,” says Schlegel, 20, a third-year philosophy and theology student from Morden, Man. “We thought, let’s just invite a bunch of people we know and are, to a degree, friends with, and would like to get to know better.”

The group usually meets every Friday. Sometimes there’s a serious topic on someone’s mind that the group discusses, and sometimes they just have fun together playing board games.

Discussion topics have included the strengths and dangers of political correctness, what it looks like to have healthy relationships, mental health in the context of a university setting in which workloads can be taxing, career aspirations, faith, and making a difference in the world.

Zachary Stefaniuk, 20, a third-year biblical and theological studies major from Hague, Sask., says, “We are in a very individualistic world, where you are almost forced to keep all your problems to yourself unless you’re about to explode, and only then are you allowed to talk to someone.”

“It’s taking the time for intentional bonding, intentional community,” says Darian Neufeld, 20, a third-year communications student from Edmonton. The point is not to be a “no-girls-allowed” space, he says, but rather to foster male friendships in a



PHOTO BY AARON EPP

Darian Neufeld, Isaac Schlegel and Zachary Stefaniuk are members of Boy Talk, a group that fosters deep friendship and honest discussion.



PHOTO BY KENJI DYCK

The members of Boy Talk meet every Friday for serious discussion or just to have fun together.

culture that champions male toughness over everything else. Showing vulnerability and emotion in today’s society is typically feminized and equated with weakness, he adds, a viewpoint that Boy Talk is trying to work against.

“The baggage of patriarchy, and this idea of strength at the expense of any sort of vulnerability . . . is something that affects us all negatively, and overcoming that needs to be worked out on multiple fronts,” Schlegel says.

For the members of Boy Talk, meeting together has a number of benefits.

Schlegel appreciates being able to put his trust in other people and receiving the trust of others in return. “I get a sense of self-worth out of having relationships with people who see me as a valid person with whom to share something about themselves and things they’re struggling with,” he says. “That gives me a fuller picture of who I am—both someone who needs care and can care for others.”

Neufeld says that being a part of the group has taught him the value of respectfully disagreeing with someone. “The fact that I think differently than someone else doesn’t make friendship impossible and it doesn’t devalue either of us as people,” he says. “It also doesn’t need to go unaddressed. You can have these [disagreements] and come out the other side still friends.”

“It’s also just fun,” he adds, when talking about what he appreciates about Boy Talk. “I have a good time.”

The members of Boy Talk aren’t sure what the future holds for the group. They don’t want to be exclusive but they also don’t want to grow too large.

Stefaniuk hopes Boy Talk inspires men to start groups of their own. “Something we want to do is say it’s important to build relationships,” he says. “It may be hard to build stronger relationships, but [they] can

help you a lot in times of struggle.”

The members of Boy Talk aren't alone in their desire to connect with their emotions and their fellow men. In November, MensHealth.com reported on Evryman, an organization in the United States that offers weekend retreats and weeklong expeditions for men who want to access their emotions and connect “more deeply to their loved ones, their life's work and

themselves.”

Closer to home, there's Mennonite Men, a men's organization for Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. with a mission of “engaging men to grow, give and serve as followers of Jesus.” In the past year, Mennonite Men has started offering retreats related to healthy masculinity.

Men must rise to embrace healthy masculinity, leaders from the organization

wrote in a statement released last February: “As we recognize that masculinity too often falls prey to baser impulses, we can begin to redeem our own masculinity and envision healthier expressions. As men committed to our personal journeys of healing we must join the critical work of dismantling oppressive systems and reconstructing ways of living that serve the well-being of all people.” ❧

First-fruits giving

Challenging weather doesn't stop Saskatchewan farmers from harvesting 1,200 hectares to help people around the world struggling to get enough to eat

By Shaylyn McMahon
Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Darryl Reimer and his father Dennis have been farming and selling crops for the last 14 years to help hungry people in developing countries. And while their efforts have touched the lives of countless people around the world, they consider themselves to be the lucky ones.

“We're blessed in this country,” says Darryl. “We have far more than what most people have. And the promises in the Bible say give and you shall receive. Dad has noticed this in farming, and I believe it to be true.”

Darryl and Dennis, alongside their wives Sherry and Ruth, provide leadership to the Hudson Bay Rotary growing project in Saskatchewan. Each year, they plant, tend and harvest a crop. Once sold, they donate the proceeds to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, which uses it to help people who are hungry.

Cooler-than-normal weather in the Hudson Bay area proved for a more challenging growing season for them in 2018, though.

Darryl says the growing project's 60-hectare field of canola still had a decent harvest despite the weather. “It ended up actually being quite good,” he says of the 112-bushels-a-hectare harvest.

In southwestern Saskatchewan,

members of the Grasslands growing project near Swift Current were also pleasantly surprised at their yields.

“We had below-average rainfall, about three or four inches of rain altogether,” says project coordinator Bruce Pate.

The project harvested a 54-hectare field of durum wheat and a 63-hectare field of canola. The fields are about a 30-minute drive apart, but they experienced the same growing conditions—poor moisture levels

and spotty rains, which resulted in lower yields than normal.

Pate isn't letting the below-average yields get him down, though. “I believe God encourages us to give back, and we have lots to be grateful for,” he says. “So we like to give back, even in tough years.”

Further east in Moosomin, Kyle Penner, coordinator of the Harvest of Hope growing project, is also glad to help hungry people through farming.

“There are a lot of hungry people in this world, and we're very blessed in Canada,” says Penner. “God has been good to us with a lot of available finances, great ground to grow food and governance that has given us the opportunity to prosper. Not everyone in the world is so lucky.”

Darryl and Dennis Reimer agree. “This project isn't just an afterthought, and we say, ‘Oh we'll get it seeded at the end,’” says Darryl. “We pencil it in whenever we're seeding. It gets seeded at the same time as everything else. It gets sprayed at the same time as the rest of everything. We treat it like our own. . . . God wants our first fruit. And when you give your first fruit, you get it back in spades. And we feel very strongly that we have been.” ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF DARRYL REIMER

Darryl Reimer helps harvest a 60-hectare field of canola as part of the Hudson Bay Rotary growing project.

'A picture of his grandmother'

Archival photographs create link to Indigenous oral history

Story and Photo by Gladys Terichow

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

WINNIPEG

Gerald Neufeld and his father Henry share a passion for linking families from First Nation communities within the Berens River watershed in Manitoba and northwestern Ontario with archival photographs of their ancestors.

Their collection of about a thousand digitized pictures includes photographs from the University of Philadelphia archives that were taken in the summer of 1933 by Alfred Irving Hallowell, an American anthropologist.

"It is all about the kids," explains Gerald. "We have the names and pictures of their relatives. It is their family lineage. Their forefathers walked the land before they were a twinkle in the eye."

The Neufelds' interest in sharing archival photographs started in Pauingassi, about 280 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg, on a warm sunny day in June 12 years ago, when students were more interested in spending the day outside than in Gerald's workshop on employment opportunities and jobs.

Anticipating this might happen; Gerald had prepared a video of photographs that his father had taken in the 1950s and 1960s, when they lived in Pauingassi.

"They were mesmerized by that," recalls Gerald. "Kids who weren't interested in the 'hot jobs' video—which was a cool thing back then—were mesmerized by Dad's pictures. They were asking, who is this, who is that? By the end of the class, I had more kids in my class than when I began." Students had been surprised when he answered their questions in Ojibwe.

The Neufeld family's close relationship with Pauingassi and other First Nation communities within the Berens River watershed goes back to the early 1950s, when Henry and his late wife, Elna, served

as teachers in Moose Lake and Little Grand Rapids.

In 1955, they accepted an invitation to start a school and church in Pauingassi. "The elders said, 'Come and set up your tent with us,' and that's what we did," recalls Henry, 89. They moved to this isolated community with a young daughter and had four more children while living in Pauingassi.

The Neufeld family lived in the community for 15 years. With prayer and financial support from Mennonite churches in southern Manitoba, Henry bought a sawmill and helped the community build a school and church and upgrade their houses.

The family learned the Ojibwe language, developed close friendships and gained a greater understanding of the legacy of colonization. Since leaving Pauingassi in 1970, Henry has returned 176 times to the community. "I want to support and encourage them," he says.

He now travels to Pauingassi and other communities in the heartland of the newest UNESCO World Heritage Site with Gerald. In 2018, they visited Pauingassi twice and also visited Pikangikum, Poplar Hill and Little Grand Rapids.

"Typically we go Monday and come back Friday," says Gerald, an electrical engineer with Manitoba Hydro, who uses his vacations for these travels. "We have about 10 PowerPoint presentations in each community. We show the pictures in every classroom, and in the evenings in the community hall for adults."

Henry begins these presentations with singing and drumming a song and an opening prayer. "Dad is a great travel companion. He brings magic to our presentations," says Gerald.



Henry and Gerald Neufeld have assembled a collection of about a thousand archival photographs of First Nation communities in the Berens River watershed. They are holding a photograph of Miskwaatesi 'oskiisik and his wife Kihcimoohkomaan from Pauingassi.

They have given the band council, school and church in Pauingassi 360-page albums of some of the photographs that Henry had taken in the 1950s and 1960s. They have also shared archival photographs with the band councils, schools and churches in Little Grand Rapids, Poplar Hill and Pikangikum, and with individuals in the Berens River community.

Gerald says the archival photographs show that historically the communities within the Berens River watershed were one nation. The next step in this project is working with elders and school boards to increase awareness of the region's oral history through displaying photographs in schools.

Interest in learning more about family histories and lineage is growing, as people become more aware that these photographs exist. "It is just mushrooming," says Gerald.

A few weeks ago, at a meeting with elders in Winnipeg, Gerald met an elder from a community along the Berens River. He had asked the elder for the name of his parents. "When I heard the names, I asked him if he would be interested in seeing a picture of his grandmother. He couldn't believe it that I had a picture of his grandmother. I gave him a memory stick of the pictures, so that he could take them home to his community." ❧

'God music' drowns out the sound of violence

Mennonite World Conference

For more than 20 years, gangs clashed in the Chamelecón neighbourhood in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. The main street served as an invisible border, marking off the territory of the two dominant gangs.

This neighbourhood is home to Vida en Abundancia, a Mennonite church. In 2008, the congregation felt called to start a primary school to shield the children from the influence of the gangs. However, the violence continued. Police and gangs fought in front of the school, and even once inside the school before classes began. In 2013, threats to the security of the teachers and students was so great that the school had to close. The church accompanied its 38 students in the process of changing to schools outside of the community.

In spite of all the fear in the community and the reduced size of their own congregation, the church was determined to spread hope. Unable to influence the school anymore, the remaining members went beyond the safety of the church building to carry out activities in all corners of the neighbourhood, making "God music" stronger than the sound of weapons.

The leader of the gang that controlled the territory heard the song and was drawn to seek out the pastor. With some trepidation, Pastor José Fernández presented himself as the person the gang leader was looking for. "No one touches this pastor," the gang leader instructed his followers.

That moment strengthened the church's resolve. Little by little, young people began



PHOTO BY OSCAR SUÁREZ

Pastor José Fernández of the Mennonite church Vida en Abundancia in Honduras.

to arrive at the church, fleeing the horror of that world of violence and resentment. Hope began to grow again. People began to return. Last year, the school reopened. Adolescents being developed in a mission program also contribute to the community.

The little church that remained steadfast in spite of hardship is flourishing, trumpeting out a song of hope to drown out the sound of violence. ☸

As told to Oscar Suárez, Young AnaBaptist Committee member for Latin America.

/// Briefly noted

Stitching up something meaningful and lasting

Against the background of whirring sewing machines and the staccato of needles are the sounds of laughter, and snatches of Arabic, Urdu, Spanish and English. Each Tuesday morning at the Cross Cultural Learner Centre in London, Ont., up to five or six newcomer women gather to learn basic sewing skills and to practise their limited English. Esther Kern, a member of Valleyview Mennonite Church in London, delights in teaching these women under the supervision of Wafa Dawoud, a Learner Centre employee, who initially organized the sewing class and provides ongoing interpretation. According to Dawoud, "The women are eager to come because of Esther. They feel connected to her with the words she uses, and the background of experiences she brings. The women feel it is worthwhile to come, because they are making Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) school kits for children in refugee camps." After completing 33 school kits and an additional 15 kit bags, the women travelled to Kitchener, Ont., to deliver them to the MCC Ontario warehouse, where Jon Lebold, the material resources coordinator, said, "We are so grateful for kit bags! Often the kit bag becomes the most treasured part of an entire kit. Where items like pencils or paper may last several months, the kit bags can be useful for many years."

—SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE



PHOTO COURTESY OF ESTHER KERN

Shagufta and Manal, two members of a sewing class at the Cross Cultural Learner Centre in London, Ont., make school kit bags for Mennonite Central Committee Ontario.



CROSSROADS COMMUNITY CHURCH PHOTO /

TEXT BY KEVIN BARKOWSKY

Crossroads Community Church in Chilliwack, B.C., hosted 'Meet Your Neighbours,' a family outreach block party that helped the congregation get to know people in the neighbourhood, on Oct. 14, 2018. 'It was very well received by the neighbourhood,' says Janette Thiessen. 'It was also great to see a lot of visitors, some having no previous connection to the church.' Activities included pumpkin carving (pictured), pony and train rides, a homemade-ice-cream-tractor-contraption, an illusionist and more.

OBITUARY

Conductor. Father. Farmer. Christian.

Abner Martin
Oct. 7, 1934 - Nov. 23, 2018

By Kevin Martin

Abner Martin was born at his parents' farm in Waterloo Township, Ont., the seventh surviving child of Annanias and Susannah (Steckle) Martin. His family, until the time of Abner's birth, were members of the Old Order Mennonites that met at Martin's Meeting House. Later, they attended St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, and Abner had opportunities to develop music leadership skills as a song leader and a junior choir director when he was 15. But his first foray into conducting was actually at Martin's Schoolhouse, where, in Grade 2, he lobbied hard to be given the baton to lead the school rhythm band.

Annanias and Susannah sent their three youngest children to Rockway Mennonite High School in Kitchener, where Abner participated in the male quartet, mixed octet and choirs. Of course, the most important accomplishment of his Rockway years was meeting and falling in love with Shirley Steckle.

After Rockway, he headed to Goshen College in Indiana. It made news back home in Waterloo County when he was selected, in his freshman year, as the baritone soloist with the Elkhart Symphony's performance of Brahms's "Requiem." After two years at Goshen, love called him home, and he and Shirley were married in July 1955.

That same year, he had an idea to start a choir that would sing sacred music not "usually covered" in the Ontario Mennonite churches. Shirley suggested they could be called Menno Singers. He led the choir while completing degrees at the University of Toronto. By the time he was 24, he had two children, a high school teaching job and had purchased a house in Tillsonburg, Ont. A few years later, it was back to Waterloo to teach at Waterloo



1975 WATERLOO REGION RECORD FILE PHOTO

Abner Martin conducts the Mennonite Mass Choir's performance of Haydn's 'Creation.'

Collegiate, and then to the home farm.

My father and I farmed together for about 40 years; we started when I was 7. We would buy beef calves from the West and feed them over the autumn and winter months in the old dairy barn and sell them in the spring. During those summers, Abner studied for a master's degree at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y.

One of his professors at Eastman, George Proctor, who had become head of music at Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B., invited Abner to apply for a position there. He interviewed, accepted the job offer, and bought a house, sight unseen by Mom, and moved his family east.

During our Maritime sojourn, we can also see another example of Abner's boundless courage; in the summer of 1972, Dad was studying with some eminent

conductors in Europe and took our entire family with him for three months. We travelled with an early version of TourMagination and learned about our Anabaptist roots.

In 1973, Abner decided that if he was ever to realize his childhood dream of raising Holstein cows, it was time to make another move, this time to a beautiful farm near Atwood, Ont. It helped that he had a captive workforce of teenagers.

During the next 23 years, he took great satisfaction from working the land and raising dairy cows. Dad took delight in coaching his grandkids to show their 4H calves and supporting another generation of musical talent.

The early years on the farm were also the Mennonite Mass Choir years. Dad had come back from the East Coast with a great vision for spreading good choral practice throughout the community. After the concerts, we would make our way home, and Dad would head out to the barn in his formal conducting wear to make a last check on the cows.

Due to his health problems, he gave up leadership of Menno Singers and the Mass Choir in 1979. His professional musical accomplishments were done at age 44. In 2017, he was inducted into the Waterloo Region Hall of Fame.

Finally, a few words about Abner's Christian faith. Over the years, he held membership in Mennonite churches at St. Jacobs, Listowel and Waterloo North. He valued the community he experienced in each place.

He served the wider Mennonite church as a member of the Binational Commission on Christian Education in the 1960s and trained up a good many congregational song leaders. He also taught Sunday school lessons.

In his personal faith, though, he could be inscrutable and oblique. In family discussions he might say, "I'm not telling you what you have to believe," and, when pressed, he might give examples of how the church's understanding of a faith concept had changed and evolved. And finally, when there was no way out, he could say, "I'll keep with those who search for truth and be careful of those who have found it."

✎

News brief

Stringer, Boutda share 2018-19 Abner Martin Music Scholarship

Allison Stringer of Kitchener, Ont., and Matthew Boutda of Toronto have been named co-recipients of the 2018-19 Abner Martin Music Scholarship; they each receive \$2,000.



• **Allison Stringer** is currently beginning a doctoral program, studying the composer Alexander Campbell Mackenzie at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow. She is affiliated with Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, where she regularly participates in the music program when she is in the area. During the past year, she has been working professionally in the Netherlands with the Doelen Ensemble, a small chamber ensemble that performs new compositions, and in the Celtic fusion duo Filidhean with cellist Elena Kopteva.



• **Matthew Boutda** is currently completing a master's degree in sacred music at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto. He is affiliated with the Lao Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Church in Toronto, where he accompanied congregational singing from 2009 to 2016. Beginning this month, he will take on the position of interim music director at Leaside United Church in Toronto. With the Pax Christi Chorale in Toronto, he has been the choral scholar and is currently its assistant conductor.

The Abner Martin Music Scholarship is awarded annually by the Menno Singers to a deserving student who is affiliated with a congregation in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and is a full-time student in a graduate or undergraduate music program.

—BY LEWIS BRUBACHER



ONLINE NOW!

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Experiencing Christmas by lamplight

The Mennonite Heritage Museum and Interpretive Centre in Rosthern hosted a festive event in a historic church building. canadianmennonite.org/lamplight-christmas



How steam wells work to relieve droughts in Ethiopia

MCC supports innovative projects to improve access to water for pastoralist communities. canadianmennonite.org/steam-wells-ethiopia



MEDAx 2018: Creating pathways for future innovators

A team of students from Conrad Grebel University College participated in a competition for emerging social entrepreneurs. canadianmennonite.org/meda-future-innovators



World Fellowship Sunday: A communion of 500 years

A leader within Mennonite World Conference considers the question of beginnings and anniversaries in global Anabaptism. canadianmennonite.org/communion-500-years



ONCE ROUND THE BARN PAT-ON-THE-BACK EDITION

Stroll through the moral maze of Mennonite generosity with Will Braun. Watch it now:

canadianmennonite.org/stories/once-round-barn-pat-back-edition

CANADIAN
MENNONITE

From anger to action

Winnipegger partners with American permaculture expert to co-author book about building a better world

Story and Photo by Aaron Epp
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Shawn Klassen-Koop never thought he would write a book before his 30th birthday but that's exactly what he's done.

The Winnipegger is the co-author, with Montana-based permaculture expert Paul Wheaton, of *How to Build a Better World in Your Backyard Instead of Being Angry at Bad Guys*. Due out later this year, the 200-page book offers practical advice anyone can use to significantly decrease their environmental impact while saving money and living a more enjoyable life.

"I've thought about writing a book for a long time but thought it wasn't something I would do until my 50s or 60s," says Klassen-Koop, who is 27. "To have this opportunity come up is pretty cool."



Shawn Klassen-Koop is the co-author of *How to Build a Better World in Your Backyard Instead of Being Angry at Bad Guys*.

About 70 percent of the book is drawn from articles Wheaton has written, as well as podcasts he's hosted and presentations and interviews he's given. Wheaton, a former software engineer, is an advocate for permaculture—a set of design principles inspired by natural systems that can help people take care of the earth and take care of each other. He is the creator of Permies.com, an online community with more than a million visitors each month who are dedicated to building a better world

through permaculture.

Committed to educating people, Wheaton has produced more than 200 videos and more than 400 podcasts about permaculture; 76,000 people are subscribed to his YouTube channel, and he commands \$4,000 a day—plus expenses—for individual consultations and speaking appearances.

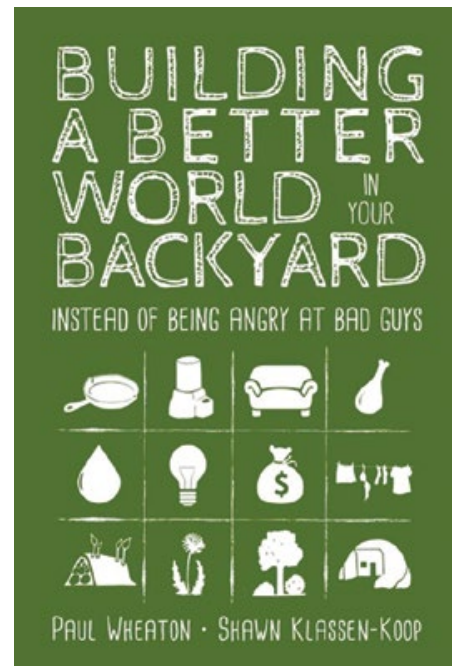
Klassen-Koop had never written a book prior to *How to Build a Better World in Your Backyard*. He has followed Wheaton's work for a number of years. When Wheaton mused on one of his podcasts that he wished someone would help him take the things he had already written and turn them into a book, Klassen-Koop figured he meant he wanted a friend or fellow expert to help him.

Still, he thought that sending Wheaton an email offering his services couldn't hurt. "I didn't think I'd ever hear back from him," Klassen-Koop recalls. "I heard back the next day, and he said yeah, let's write a book. For me, it's been pretty amazing—just the trust that that involves on his part. I'm just some random guy. So, that was really cool."

The pair started working on the book last February. They initially thought it would be a six-week project but soon decided to spend more time on it to ensure the book's quality. They spent the rest of 2018 meeting two to five times a week over the internet to work on the book. They will launch a Kickstarter campaign this month to raise the funds needed to publish it.

The goal of the book is to motivate people who are angry about the world's problems, to take action. It's aimed at everyone, from environmentalists to money savers to entrepreneurs, and it includes advice for people living in apartments, on city lots and on rural homesteads.

"I think the reason we see so many



people angry is because they authentically care but they seem to get stuck at being angry," Wheaton and Klassen-Koop write in the book's introduction. "Some people spend 100 hours a week for 20 years being angry, and not much changes, but I think if you spend a tiny fraction of that time doing the things in this book, your global positive impact will be 1,000 times greater."

Koop, a member of Hope Mennonite Church, is motivated in part by his faith. He fell in love with nature as a teenager while working at Mennonite Church Manitoba's Camps With Meaning.

In his view, taking environmental stewardship seriously is a way of living out the Christian call to care for one's neighbour. His definition of "neighbour" includes more than just the people in his immediate surroundings. "Often we think very narrowly in our concept of who our neighbour is," he says. "I think, by broadening that to include others throughout the world and in the future, it gives us a better perspective to live our lives."

Klassen-Koop is looking forward to finishing the book. "I'm really excited to get this out there and to share it with people," he says.

Learn more at:
buildingabetterworldbook.com.





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Calendar

British Columbia

Until March 31: "Mennonite churches of the Fraser Valley" exhibit, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum Gallery, Abbotsford.

Jan. 31: "How to keep young adults engaged in the local church" event to discuss insights from the Renegotiating Faith Study, at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, from 7 to 9 p.m. Panel discussion with EFC researcher Rick Hiemstra.

Feb. 22: LEAD conference, at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond.

Feb. 23: MC B.C. annual general meeting, at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond.

June 28-July 1: "Igniting the imagination of the church" MC Canada delegate assembly, at the Quality Hotel and Conference Centre, Abbotsford: (28) leaders assembly; (29) business/delegate meeting; (29-1) inspirational conference. Special events for youth and children.

Alberta

Feb. 8-10: Portable CMU class—"Surviving and thriving despite cancer"—at Trinity Mennonite Church, DeWinton. Teacher: Dan Epp-Tiessen, CMU associate professor of Bible.

March 15-16: MC Alberta annual delegate sessions, at Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury. Theme: "Vision 2020: God's leading."

Saskatchewan

Jan. 26: Sip and socialize with the MC Canada Joint Council, at the MCC Saskatchewan Centre, Saskatoon, at 7 p.m. Hymn sing led by Sparky and the Plugs.

Feb. 1-3: Senior-high retreat, at Shekinah.

March 8-9: MC Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions, "Deepening our walk with Christ," at Zoar Mennonite Church, Waldheim. Plenary speaker: David E. Fitch of Northern Seminary.

March 22-23: Women's retreat, at Shekinah.

July 28-Aug. 1: Prairie Youth Gathering, at Shekinah Summer Camp. Theme: "Shake: Rattled by the Radical (Jesus)." Open to students from across Canada entering grades 6 to 12 in the 2018-19 school year. Hosted by MC Saskatchewan and MC Manitoba. Information coming soon to prairieyouth.ca. Follow on Instagram @prairieyouth.ca for the latest updates.

Manitoba

Jan. 25: Exhibitions by Winnipeg artists Anita Kroeger and Michael Boss open at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg. Runs until March 9.

Jan. 25-27: MC Manitoba senior-high youth retreat, at Camp Assiniboia.

Jan. 31-Feb. 1: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate presents three one-act plays by its junior-high students; at Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre, Winnipeg.

Feb. 1: CMU campus visit day begins at 9 a.m.

Feb. 7: Opera workshop, at CMU's Laudamus Auditorium, at 7 p.m.

Feb. 9: Discover Outtatown, at CMU,

at 9 a.m.

Feb. 11: "A matter of life and death," a Face2Face discussion at CMU's Marpeck Commons, at 7 p.m.

Feb. 12-13: ReNew 2019: Resourcing pastors for ministry (Death, funerals and the Christian Hope), at CMU, Winnipeg. Keynote speaker: Thomas Long.

Feb. 13: Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition, at CMU's Laudamus Auditorium, at 7 p.m.

March 1: Music Therapy coffeehouse, at CMU's Marpeck Commons, at 7 p.m.

March 8-10: MC Manitoba junior-high youth retreat, at Camp Assiniboia.

March 10: Mennonite Community Orchestra, performs at CMU, Winnipeg, at 3 p.m. Featuring CMU student pianist Emma Heinrichs.

March 15: Exhibitions by Melissa Coyle and Sandra Campbell open at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg. Runs until April 27.

March 15: CMU Festival Chorus and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra perform Verdi's "Requiem," at Winnipeg's Centennial Concert Hall, at 8 p.m.

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Ontario

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

Jan. 19: Anabaptist Learning Workshop for MC Eastern Canada pastors, chaplains and congregational leaders, at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, beginning at 8:15 a.m. Topic: "Caregiving in a #ChurchToo world." Keynote speaker: Marie Fortune.

Jan. 24: Anabaptist Learning Workshop—Bible caucus (Toronto region)—at Danforth Mennonite Church, Toronto

Jan. 30: MennoHomes' annual general meeting, at 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, at 2 p.m. For more information, call 226-476-2535.

Jan. 31-Feb. 2: Breslau Mennonite Church presents "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat"; (31 and 1) at 7:30 p.m., (2) at 2 and 7:30 p.m. For tickets online, visit breslaumc

.ca.
Feb. 1-3: Youth winter retreat, at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. Theme: "Music: Voices together." Join youth from across MC Eastern Canada to learn some new songs, talk about worship and create worship materials.

Feb. 2: "Leading council, committee and congregational meetings," at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Speaker: Betty Pries of Credence & Co.

Feb. 8-9: "For the journey: Refreshing Christian faith and spiritual tradition for the weary and wary" retreat with Steve Bell, at St. James Anglican Church, Dundas. (8) 7:30 to 9 p.m., (9) 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. To register, visit bit.ly/on-the-journey- Dundas.

Feb. 9: Anabaptist Learning Workshop, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Topic: "Shacking up: Sex, love and church commitment." Speaker: Irma Fast Dueck.

Feb. 14-16: "People on the move: Human rights and global migration," MCC Ottawa Office's student seminar. For more information or to register, visit mcco.ca/student-seminar.

Feb. 15: MCC Ontario heifer sale fundraiser, in Listowel.

Feb. 18: Family Day open house, at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Puzzles, pretzel making, sledding and more. RSVP to 519-625-8602.

Feb. 20-21: Anabaptist Learning Workshop, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. Topic: "School for ministers: The audacious pastor." Speaker: Anthony D. Bailey.

U.S.A.

Feb. 25-28: Pastors and Leaders 2019 event, at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. Theme: "Loving our neighbours in tense times."

For more information or to register, visit bit.ly/ambspastors-leaders-2019.

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



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



Home Street Mennonite Church

**Employment opportunity
Co-Pastor of Christian Formation**

Home Street Mennonite Church is seeking a 0.75 Co-pastor of Christian Formation who brings a passion for nurturing faith across generations. Home Street is a vibrant, welcoming, Anabaptist congregation in Winnipeg's inner-city.

For more information please contact Rick Neufeld at
rneufled@mennochurch.mb.ca
<http://www.hsmc.ca>



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**Employment opportunity
Full-time pastor**

Our church is a dynamic congregation in London, Ont., that thrives on intergenerational relationships. Children and youth are central to our identity. We are an urban church that is inclusive and welcoming. We are looking for an experienced pastor to walk with us as we grow as a diverse community of faith within the Anabaptist tradition.

The Micah 6:8 scripture passage anchors us, and we embrace these values by showing agape love, promoting peaceful living, and actively pursuing a relationship with God.

London is a mid-sized city with several colleges and a major university, with affiliated church colleges. It is blessed with major healthcare centres, lies close to two Great Lakes, and offers many recreational opportunities for adults and children.

Learn more about us by visiting <http://valleyviewmc.ca>.
 For a job description please visit:
<https://mcec.ca/jobs/pastor-1>



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CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK PHOTO

Canadian Foodgrains Bank supporters, staff and member agency representatives presented 8,000 'I care' postcards to the minister of international development on Parliament Hill for World Food Day, Oct. 16, 2018. The postcards contain the message that Canadians care about ending global poverty and hunger, and urge an increase to Canada's support for vulnerable people around the world. The postcard presentation was part of a larger event on Parliament Hill that brought together volunteers from across Canada and staff from the Foodgrains Bank and its members, to learn about global hunger and advocacy and then to meet with Members of Parliament. In the end, they met with 42 individual MPs, sharing the message that Canadians want to see more people around the world with the ability to enjoy full, peaceful and productive lives.

Photo finish



PHOTO BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER

A handful of Canadian women attended the third biennial conference of Women Doing Theology, held Nov. 8 to 10, 2018, at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. Organized by Mennonite Church U.S.A., the conference had as its theme 'Talkin' 'bout a revolution: Dialogue, practice and the work of liberation.' In the workshop, 'Mennonite and feminist: The revolutionary work of theologian Lydia Harder,' a panel of Canadian women—from left to right: Michele Rizoli, Kim Penner, Susanne Guenther Loewen, Lydia Neufeld Harder and Carol Penner—responded to Harder's most recent book, *The Challenge is in the Naming: A Theological Journey*. Other workshops were led by Canadians Sarah Kathleen Johnson, on questions of worship and language; Marilyn Zehr and Svinda Heinrichs, on post-Mennonite lesbian pastors; and Steph Chandler Burns, on queer theology. For more about the conference, visit canadianmennonite.org/women-theology-2018.