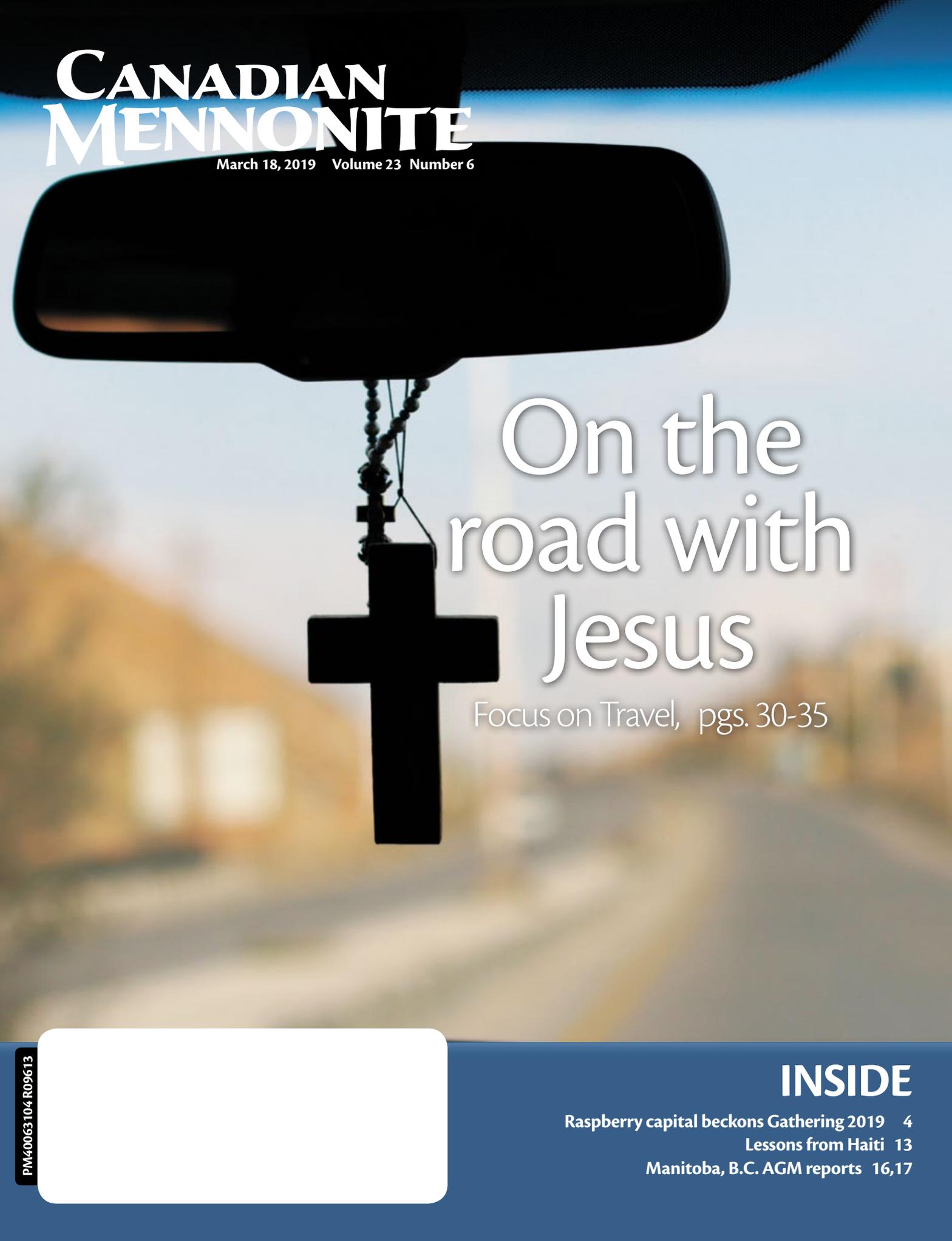


CANADIAN MENNONITE

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EDITORIAL

Are we there yet?

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



Do you remember those family car trips? In the front seat, Mom and Dad are navigating, driving and planning for the next pit stop. In the back seats, kids are staking out their individual spaces, trying to stave off boredom and bickering. Everyone is looking forward to the adventure ahead. Someone calls out the question, “Are we there yet?”

In March 2013, *Canadian Mennonite* ran the first article introducing a new nationwide process called Future Directions. It was the beginning of an adventure towards life in a changing reality.

Dealing with decreasing church membership and reduced donations, the structures of Mennonite Church Canada faced serious challenges. Two questions were central: “What is God’s Spirit calling us to in the 21st century? What are the best ways (programs, structures, strategies) for the church to thrive and grow?”

The Future Directions process engaged people across MC Canada in conversations about where our church body was heading. Consultations happened, reports were written and many people offered opinions.

Like any other voyage, this trip toward the future has included planning and navigating, both enthusiasm and lack of interest, and, yes, some bickering. Small gatherings happened across the country, and the larger delegate body discussed proposals at the 2014 and 2016 assemblies. A final vote happened at the Special Assembly in October 2017. That resulted in a new structure that moved many responsibilities from the head office in Winnipeg to the former area churches, now named regional churches.

An emphasis early on was the affirmation, “The congregation is the foundational unit and expression of God’s work in the world.” Out of that grew the conclusion: “The key to remaining faithful and effective as a larger body in our changing world is revitalizing the life of [the church’s] foundational unit, the congregation” (Future Directions Task Force Supplement to Final Report, Oct. 23, 2015).

This trip has included significant bumps in the road. Staff members serving at the nationwide level lost their jobs as programs were cut. Workers in the International Witness program faced a new funding model, one that relies more on donors “out there,” as opposed to guaranteed support from a central office. Staff and volunteers of regional churches are being asked to do more facilitating and implementing of efforts for their respective areas. Responsibility for cultivating donors has increased at the regional level. We’re all learning about new ways of communicating across geography.

Sometimes the vision for the trip hasn’t been very clear. Who’s driving this car and where are we going? Grieving, fear, confusion and indifference have all been part of the mix, along with reminders that God is still Lord of the church.

It has now been 17 months since the decision to re-structure. Regional churches have experienced a complete fiscal year in this new reality and are finding ways to foster reflection around the vision moving forward. In this issue, you will find reports on the annual delegate gatherings of Mennonite Church Manitoba (pages 16-17) and MC B.C. (pages 17-18). Also, on pages 20 and 21, you’ll find a report on the 51 responses to an informal Future Directions

survey our senior writer conducted.

We’re not there yet, on this trip toward the future. Still ahead: the church has serious work to do in addressing racism in our midst (see the story on page 15). Given differences in theological perspectives, we need to keep fine-tuning ways of having meaningful conversation that propels us forward. When our churches deal with diminishing numbers, it’s not clear that we will be able to meet the financial needs our dreams call for.

I’m encouraged by small signs: congregations and regional staff are praying for each other and learning to work together, and regional efforts are inspiring members to consider their calling as a revitalized church. An upcoming consultation will foster conversation about the purpose of the church in today’s society.

As individuals and as larger church body, we’re on a journey, learning how to be faithful disciples in the 21st century. The adventure continues.

You’re invited

Each year the *Canadian Mennonite* fundraising dinner helps us to connect with readers and supporters in one area of the country. This year we invite you to our 48th dinner, on April 6, 6:30 p.m., at Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Man. There will be delicious food, entertainment by the Accent Women’s Ensemble, and the opportunity to talk to CM staff and board members. Tickets are free, but reservations are required. Donation baskets will be available. To reserve your seat, email office@canadianmennonite.org with “CM April 6 dinner” in the subject line, or call 1-800-378-2524, extension 221. We hope to see you there! ☺

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PHOTO: EMILY LOEWEN, MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

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FEATURE

Raspberry capital beckons Gathering 2019

Rest of Canada invited to the mountains and valleys
where lakes were drained and land reclaimed

Story and Photos by Amy Dueckman
B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.



The roundabout on South Clearbrook Road in Abbotsford, B.C., features a giant raspberry sculpture, symbolic of the agricultural heritage of the area. In the background is the Mennonite Heritage Museum.

The raspberry capital of Canada, the most charitable city in Canada, the Bible Belt of Canada. These terms have all been used to describe Abbotsford, the site of Mennonite Church Canada's Gathering 2019, to be held from June 28 to July 1.

Nestled in the scenic Fraser Valley just over the border from Washington state, Abbotsford is a growing community known as the "city in the country."

It is also diverse. After Toronto and Vancouver's metropolitan areas, Abbotsford, with an estimated population of 147,000, has the highest number of

visible minorities in Canada. It is also the largest city by area in British Columbia.

Unlike in Ontario, where Mennonites settled beginning in 1786, or in the Prairies, where Mennonites came in the 1870s, the Mennonite presence is relatively recent on Canada's West Coast. Some Mennonites had arrived in B.C. by the early 1900s, settling in the Castlegar, Prince George and Vanderhoof areas. But being few and far apart, they had little sense of cohesiveness.

More Mennonites began moving to the Lower Mainland of B.C. beginning in the 1930s because of an ambitious lake-draining project. Sumas Lake between Chilliwack and Abbotsford would overflow in spring and often flood the village of Yarrow. The government began a project to drain the lake in 1922. Through a system of dams, dykes, canals and pumps, the project was completed by 1925 and 13,500 hectares of fertile farmland were reclaimed at a cost of \$3.7 million.

The reclaimed land was put up for sale, and one of the purchasers was Chauncy Eckert of Yarrow. Hoping to attract farmers, Eckert put an ad in the *Winnipeg Free Press Prairie Farmer*. Beset by economic depression and dry farming conditions, Mennonites from the Prairie provinces answered the call, eager to start over in an area of cheap land, a milder climate and adequate rainfall. They also hoped to establish a community modelled after their Russian villages. The community of Yarrow welcomed 12 Mennonite families in 1928.

More Mennonites from across the country began coming to B.C. and settled in Yarrow, Abbotsford and other communities. The first Mennonites arrived in the Clearbrook area (Matsqui Municipality, later amalgamated with Abbotsford) in 1931. Many farmers found raspberries to be a profitable cash crop.

A Mennonite Brethren (MB) congregation was organized in 1931 and some of what later would be called General Conference Mennonites chose to worship there until they formed their own congregation in 1936, first named Abbotsford Mennonite Church and later renamed West Abbotsford Mennonite Church. All



MENNONITE HERITAGE
MUSEUM PHOTO

The first West Abbotsford Mennonite Church building. The congregation merged with Wellspring Christian Fellowship in 2008 and became Level Ground Mennonite Church.

MC B.C. (and its predecessor Conference of Mennonites in B.C.) congregations in Abbotsford can trace their roots to the West Abbotsford Church, known as Level Ground Mennonite since it merged with Wellspring Christian Fellowship in 2008.

Representatives from seven Mennonite congregations in the province met in November 1936 to form *Konferenz der Vereinigten Mennonitengemeinden in Britisch Columbien*, or the Conference of United Mennonite Churches of British Columbia. The provincial conference was officially incorporated on July 22, 1940, with eight member congregations. The conference also joined the Conference of Mennonites in Canada in 1937. Wishing to join in mission and publication endeavours with other North American congregations, joining the General Conference Mennonite Church was discussed. Because membership was by individual congregations, however, eight B.C. United Mennonite congregations applied for membership in 1938 in the General Conference; this affiliation remained until MC Canada was formed in 2002.

Education, programs and cooperation

Christian education was a priority for the Mennonites from the beginning of their time in B.C. A Bible school was first established in Coghlan (Aldergrove) in 1941 and was later moved to Abbotsford, where it became Bethel Bible School. In 1970, Bethel Bible Institute merged with the Mennonite Brethren (MB) Bible Institute to become Columbia Bible Institute, the first inter-Mennonite Bible institute in

North America, and now Columbia Bible College. In 2015, it became the permanent site of the Metzger Collection, a museum-quality compilation of historical art and artifact replicas.

Mennonite Educational Institute (MEI), was founded in 1944 as a private high school in Abbotsford, with 14 churches as founding members. In 1993, the school expanded to the elementary level with the addition of Kindergarten and Grade 1, adding a grade every year until it offered all 12 grades. The elementary and middle schools were opened in 1997. While the student body at its founding was 100 percent Mennonite, current students represent many denominations and other ethnic and religious backgrounds.

On the other end of life's spectrum, concern for care of the elderly motivated the formation of the Mennonite Benevolent Society in 1953. From its beginnings when Menno Home opened to 26 residents, today the Menno Place complex in Abbotsford houses more than 700 residents in different levels of care on a 4.5-hectare campus.

The Mennonite presence in B.C. is strong, with MBs far outnumbering MC Mennonites. In Abbotsford today there are three MC congregations but more than twice that many MB congregations. The two denominations cooperate not only on the elementary, secondary and post-secondary level, but on efforts such as Mennonite Disaster Service and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). The Mennonite Historical Society of B.C., organized in 1972, also encompasses both MC and MB stories.

For years, many Mennonites in B.C. had been hoping for a place to tell the Mennonite story, specifically the story of how Mennonites came to B.C. The dream was realized when the Mennonite Heritage Museum was opened in Abbotsford in 2016. A permanent exhibit inside the museum tells the Anabaptist and Mennonite story over the past 500 years through display panels, audiovisuals and interactive digital media. Temporary seasonal displays are also featured.

Sharing the building is the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C., which collects and preserves stories and archival records relating to Mennonite history in the province, and maintains a library and databases for historical and genealogical research. Computer stations are available for anyone interested in researching family histories.

A B.C. women's ministry group formed in 1939 and existed in some form until 2007. Although there is no longer a formal structure for Mennonite women in MC B.C., a fall retreat and a spring event remain.

MC B.C.'s Camp Squeah, located in the mountains near Hope, an hour's drive east of Abbotsford, hosts summer camps and church retreats, and serves as a year-round retreat centre for school and community groups. The word "Squeah" means "place of refuge" in the local Salish dialect.

At a May 27, 2007, celebratory worship service, 30 of MC B.C.'s 34 congregations signed a renewal covenant addressing the mutual relationships in, and commitment to, MC B.C. Two congregations later eventually signed and two more chose to leave the regional church later that year.

MC B.C. today

Mennonites have continued to move to B.C. throughout the years, not only from other parts of Canada but from Europe following the Second World War and later from Latin America and Asia. Today, MC B.C. has more than 3,000 members in 29 congregations that worship in 11 different languages: Cantonese, English, German, Hmong, Japanese, Karen, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, Spanish and Vietnamese.

In addition to Abbotsford, congregations are located in Mission, Vancouver,

Richmond, Surrey, Maple Ridge, Langley, Chilliwack, Yarrow, Kelowna, Black Creek and Dawson Creek.

In 2012, MC B.C. sponsored the Pilgrimage Project (pilgrimageproject.com), a series of short online videos

featuring interviews with leaders in MC B.C. and discussing the work and ministry of the regional church.

An ongoing involvement in MC B.C. is relating to Indigenous neighbours. Before Sumas Lake was drained in the 1920s, the

TRAVEL GUIDE

Places to visit while at Gathering 2019

Metzger Collection, Columbia Bible College

This collection of museum-quality artifacts includes 1,200 replicas of significant archeological artifacts and works of art, such as the Rosetta Stone and the Gutenberg Bible, and encompasses biblical history and other ancient civilizations. Located in the Columbia Resource Centre, 2940 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford. For more information, visit metzgercollection.org.

Mennonite Heritage Museum

Opened in 2016, this museum tells the Mennonite story from the beginnings of Anabaptism to Mennonites today in Canada and B.C. The building also houses Mennonite Historical Society offices, where patrons can research their family history. Located at 1818 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford. For more information, visit mennonitemuseum.org.

MCC thrift shops

- **MCC Centre Thrift**, 33933 Gladys Avenue, Abbotsford. The building houses the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C. headquarters, a Ten Thousand Villages shop, MCC quilters, Common Place Café and thrift shop. For more information, visit mcccentre.ca/mcc-thrift/.
- **MCC Clothing Etc.**, 31872 South Fraser Way, Abbotsford. For more information, visit thrift.mcc.org/abbotsford-mcc-clothing-etc/.
- **Marketplace by MCC Community Enterprises**, 34377 Marshall Road, Abbotsford. Not a traditional second-hand shop; includes a mixture of unique new, used, hand-crafted and upcycled goods. For more information, visit mccce.ca/our-enterprises/marketplace/.

Places to eat with Mennonite connections

- **Common Place Café**, 33933 Gladys Ave., Abbotsford. Features quality home-cooked breakfasts and lunches. For more information, visit mcccentre.ca/common-place-cafe/.
- **Garden Park Tower Rose Room Coffee Shop**, 2825 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford. Serves fresh baked goods and homemade soups. For more information, visit garden-parktower.ca/rose-room-coffee-shop.
- **Marketplace by MCC CE**, 34377 Marshall Road, Abbotsford. Serves light homemade meals and pastries. For more information, visit mccce.ca/our-enterprises/marketplace/.
- **Yellow Barn Country Market**, 39809 No. 3 Road, rural Abbotsford. Sells fresh produce from local farmers and has a deli and café featuring fresh baking, burgers, soups and sandwiches. Operated by MCC Community Enterprises. For more information, visit mccce.ca/our-enterprises/yellow-barn-country-market/.

—COMPILED BY AMY DUECKMAN

lake and surrounding land had been most important to the Stó:lō people for fishing and other aspects of their culture. While the farmers who gained valuable agricultural land were the winners, Indigenous people lost a valuable resource.

There is no longer an MC B.C. Indigenous relations coordinator, but an Indigenous Relations Group continues to look after the work, such as redemptive listening, learning and advocacy, in order to preserve Indigenous dignity, cultural and spiritual experience. Some of this participation includes the Langley Walk for Reconciliation and continuing education of churches on the findings and recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This committee is also encouraging MC B.C. congregations to consider adopting a statement “acknowledging with gratitude our existence on what in most of our constituency is unceded Indigenous territory.”

Due to last year’s regional church restructuring, the new position of church engagement minister was created. Kevin Barkowsky concentrates his efforts on engaging MC B.C. congregations in fulfilling God’s mission locally and around the world.

MC B.C. encompasses a wide range of viewpoints, from liberal to conservative. Most divisive in recent years has been the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process and the adoption of BFC7 that addresses marriage and sexuality issues. Some congregations have chosen to leave, and some are re-evaluating their commitment to the MC B.C. family.

Nonetheless, MC B.C. continues on a “journey of reimagining who we are,” says Garry Janzen, executive minister, as he cites three key themes:

- **To define** and engage Anabaptist identity.
- **To be** a missional community.
- **To build** connections and trust between and within congregations.

“This ministry is work that we can only do together.”

MC B.C. welcomes fellow Canadian Mennonites to join it in beautiful British Columbia at Gathering 2019! ❧



Camp Squeah, MC B.C.’s church camp near Hope, is a place of refuge for children and families.

/// For discussion

1. What are your experiences with the lower mainland of British Columbia? If you have travelled there, whom did you meet and what did you learn about the people? How is the history of the Mennonite community in B.C. different from other Mennonite communities in Canada?
2. Abbotsford has a great deal of ethnic diversity. What strengths and challenges come from having a population that is diverse? How does this ethnic diversity affect the church?
3. Amy Dueckman writes that the early Mennonites in B.C. “hoped to establish a community modelled after the Russian villages.” What was so attractive about the Mennonite village system in Ukraine that they wanted to replicate it? Why was this not an achievable goal?
4. Dueckman writes that seven Mennonite congregations in B.C. formed a conference in the late 1930s. What are the advantages of having congregations work together? If you were in that situation with a young congregation today, would you organize a regional group? Why or why not?
5. On page 9, Garry Janzen welcomes the nationwide Mennonite church to Abbotsford for Gathering 2019. What creative ideas about being church might you have to share? What new ideas about church ignite your imagination?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources at
www.commonword.ca/go/1749

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OPINION

/// Readers write

✉ Should Thrift Store purchases be 'designated' to First Nations communities?

Re: "MCC Canada cuts Canadian programs to focus on advocacy," Feb. 4, page 14.

This article raises some serious concerns regarding Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada's Indigenous programming.

Executive director Rick Cober Bauman indicates that less Thrift Store income and more money designated overseas combine to result in less money spent in Canada on Indigenous programming.

Ironically, many of the Thrift Store customers in Altona, Man., happen to be First Nations customers. Perhaps they could request that the benefits from their purchases be designated to be spent nationally, or perhaps provincially, or, who knows, perhaps even on specific reserve projects, if there are any. This would make the Thrift Store purchases less of a slush fund, and more of a focused initiative—perhaps a better bang for their buck.

A resulting problem then might be that the "mission" aspect of MCC Canada might have less impact overseas, and we, as conscientious, faithful Mennonites here in southern Manitoba, would perhaps lose the "feel good" effect generated by the "overseas mission efforts" of MCC Thrift Stores.

As it stands now, MCC Manitoba representatives, led by director Darryl Loewen, have engaged in a recent mission to Zimbabwe, to understand more clearly, I suppose, the "lay of the land" and MCC's presence there. Seems to be a ratcheting up of the typical "overseas mission" initiatives.

There are likely a dozen or more legitimate reasons for an MCC Zimbabwe Africa mission; however, it seems that our overseas efforts come, at least in part, at the expense of the Indigenous people here at home. It seems we do not have an appetite here in Manitoba, or Canada for that matter, to help our First Nations neighbours because the African initiative is a more glamorous one.

PETER REIMER, GRETNA, MAN.

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.

✉ Who are we?

Re: "Sharing life with your tribe," Feb. 4, page 12.

Troy Watson's thoughtful article made me think of what my tribe may have passed on to make me who I am. I am responsible for my actions, but to what extent could I thank or blame my ancestors for the outcome?

I did some research about the genealogy of my ancestors and made interesting discoveries about my tribe. I learned about some of their quirks, their gifts and skills, their failures and successes, spiritual insights and contributions that they had made to their Mennonite environment. What has rubbed off on me?

I, too, went back to the place of my birth, now in Poland. I found no ruins to sit on and meditate, like Troy. Everything of the past was erased. Where the family farm had been, thistles had sprouted. They had the freedom to grow and had grown head-high. The thistles were in bloom, little thorny purple flowers providing beauty in the wilderness. Nature had taken back its place. Things end and give way to new life.

I will soon be added to the list of ancestors. Standing there before nothing, I tried to imagine where I would fit into my tribe. What will I have contributed to the life of my tribe that my descendants may carry on, appreciate or regret, and will recognize in their makeup?

God has created us in his image, unique in a way but part of a tribe.

HELMUT LEMKE, VANCOUVER

/// Milestones

Deaths

Koop—Elsa (nee Pauls), 94 (b. Aug. 11, 1924; d. Jan. 24, 2019), Ottawa Mennonite.

Ramseyer—Kenneth, 68 (b. Sept. 7, 1950; d. Feb. 19, 2019), Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

Wall—John R., 88 (b. Jan. 16, 1931; d. Feb. 10, 2019), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Wideman—Glenn, 66 (b. Feb. 23, 1952; d. Dec. 14, 2019), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Zacharias—Arthur, 81 (b. Dec. 24, 1937; d. Feb. 17, 2019), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Zehr—Mary (nee Roes), 94 (b. Dec. 25, 1924; d. Feb. 18, 2019), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

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

Welcome to Gathering 2019

Garry Janzen

Mennonite Church British Columbia is excited to welcome the nationwide Mennonite church to Gathering 2019 in Abbotsford, B.C.

The imagination of the church is still unfolding and becoming. We have said that the local congregation is the foundational unit of the church. We believe that the role of the regional and nationwide churches is to bring together, celebrate and provide resources for these local missional communities. To hear from each other about what ignites our imaginations is a great idea.

It is inspiring to see creative ways of being the church. Some of these catch the attention of many, who form new congregations. Others are good efforts but don't last.

Community Table Church, an MC B.C. church plant, gathered and worshipped around a meal. But it seemed that this church plant was a bit ahead of its time. Church planting is a big commitment

for the founding core group and, for Community Table Church, many of these people ended up finding church experiences elsewhere that didn't demand as much of their time.

However, MC B.C. is seeing new currents of church planting, and so perhaps this model will be taken up again.

Gathering 2019 will feature "fire starter" stories and workshops, which will show us the many ways the church is being lived out in gathered communities across Canada. I am convinced that these stories will ignite the imagination among MC B.C. congregants who will be at Gathering 2019. I am also convinced that the MC B.C. stories will ignite the imagination of brothers and sisters from the rest of the country.

I am particularly excited about guest speaker Elaine Heath. I just finished reading her book *God Unbound* and I highly recommend reading it in preparation for Gathering 2019. I believe she will be a voice that will capture and ignite

the hope of Mennonites who really care about the good news of Jesus Christ and about being engaged in God's mission.

I want to point us all to the Gathering 2019 website (ignitegathering2019.ca) as a place for information and inspiration, as well as registration. We picked the July long weekend so people can come without using up vacation time. Of course, coming to the West Coast may inspire people to add some vacation time beyond Gathering 2019.

Gathering 2019 will start with a bang on the afternoon of June 29 with dynamic worship, Heath's first talk and the installation of the new MC Canada executive minister, Doug Klassen. We will be led into a weekend of intrigue and engagement. On the morning of Canada Day our time together will come to a close with the celebration of communion. ✎



Garry Janzen is executive minister of Mennonite Church British Columbia.

A moment from yesterday



"They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."

These famous words from Isaiah 2:4 have been enacted in various ways over the years. Sculptures have been created, jewelry made and roads built with former military machinery. By the end of the Second World War, Klaas Brandt of Steinbach, Man., learned of decommissioned military aircraft in the province. He determined that the Lysander airplanes had the most usable material and purchased 27 to bring to Steinbach. He melted down their 890-horsepower aluminum engines and made farm equipment with the metal.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Klaas Brandt Photo Collections



archives.mhsc.ca

IN THE IMAGE

A friend tells a story

Ed Olfert

My friend Catherine* teaches at a community school in the core of our city. Given her experience and her skill set, she manages a classroom that is not so much age- or grade-specific, but rather contains children whose behavioural issues make them difficult to manage in normal classroom settings.

After the Christmas break, a new boy, Donny*, appeared in her room. As Catherine understood it, he had been abandoned by his parents at a very young age, so his grandparents took over as his guardians. These grandparents are somewhat nomadic, and so his records showed an unusually high number of schools in his short academic history.

Donny's life had obviously not been easy, as he displayed in her room with great anger and frustration. No one would be allowed close. He hated school, he hated kids, he hated teachers, he even hated his own name. He didn't want to be called Donny but he didn't want to be called anything else either. Rage boiled out of his pores.

Donny couldn't be managed on the playground, so he spent recess time with Catherine in the classroom. On a day when he seemed just a little more reflective, she tried a conversation. She asked him if he could remember a school that he had liked.

His shield cracked just enough for him to suggest a school that he had attended several years ago that hadn't been so terrible. The school he mentioned was in a town about an hour away. Catherine pushed just a little more. Was there a teacher there that he remembered, someone who had made that memory a good one?

There was. Donny offered a name. There was a teacher there who had expended the energy to offer him a warm place in his class community.

In her mind, Catherine was fist-pumping. "Yes! I know that guy!"

She forwarded a message to that school, to that teacher. "I have Donny in my class and he's got some pretty huge walls built up. We're having a tough time with him; wouldn't be surprised to see him bolt. But he has good memories of his time in your room. Can you give me any ideas how to connect with Donny?"

The reply came the same day. Yes, he certainly recalled Donny, and he had some ideas. He would get back to her.

Within a few days, the idea came. Donny's former teacher, along with a current student at that distant school, who just happened to be Donny's cousin, had sent a video. They talked about remembering Donny warmly and then talked

about how wonderful Donny's current school was, how good the staff were, how many fun things there were to do there.

As Donny and Catherine sat and watched, Donny began to cry. There were emotions being touched in ways that he had not allowed for a long time, and those emotions emerged as tears. Someone was declaring that Donny was worthy of time and energy and fun and laughter. It was huge for him.

I don't need the story to end happily ever after. I don't know the ever after. But Donny became warmer, more cooperative, more open in the class. Catherine ended the story by remembering that when school closed for the February break, Donny had come by to offer a hug and to offer his wish that she would have a relaxing holiday. Two more sets of eyes had tears.

A story of a group of people risking to discover the holiness within. %

* Catherine and Donny are pseudonyms.



Ed Olfert (p2ptheo@sasktel.net) lives just down from God and peers up on occasion.

Et cetera

Count 'em up

440,000: Number of foreign missionaries in the world.

2.5 billion: Number of Christians in the world.

1.8 billion: Number of Muslims.

0.7 billion: Number of agnostics.

66: Percentage of British Anglicans who voted in favour of Brexit.

20: Percentage of Americans who answered "spirituality and faith" when asked what provides a sense of meaning.

69: Percentage of Americans who answered "family" as a source of meaning.

37: Percentage of Canadians who believe the overall contribution of faith communities to Canadian society is very good or more good than bad.



Sources include: nytimes.com, instagram.com, gordonconwell.edu, theguardian.com, religion news.com and pewforum.com.

THEATRE REVIEW

Extending—and receiving—grace

The Amish Project.

By Jessica Dickey. Presented by Dark Glass Theatre, at The Nest on Granville Island, Vancouver, in February.

Reviewed by Angelika Dawson

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

The *Amish Project*, which had a brief run in Vancouver last month, is based on the shooting that took place in Nickel Mines, Pa., in 2006., when a dairy-truck driver entered an Amish schoolhouse, ordered the boys to leave and then started to shoot the girls. In the end, five girls died and seven more were wounded.

Yet the play focuses less on the events of that day than on what took place afterwards, as members of the Amish community visited and extended forgiveness and compassion to the family of the killer, who also took his own life.

Dark Glass Theatre's mandate is to tell stories that enable us to see, face to face, people we might not otherwise meet, thereby decreasing judgment, increasing compassion and fostering empathy. In the program notes, Angela Konrad, the company's artistic director who also directed this production, writes that the idea of forgiving something so terrible seems unimaginable: "How—on earth—is it possible?" she asks, adding that this is the "great question of this play."

And while *The Amish Project* deals with the act of extending grace, it also explores the challenge of receiving it. Kelsey Krogman, who played the killer's wife, Carol, was a standout among the strong,



PHOTO BY JALEN LAINE PHOTOGRAPHY

A scene from *The Amish Project*, performed last month by Dark Glass Theatre at The Nest in Vancouver.

all-female cast. Her anguished portrayal of a woman trying to make sense of her husband's actions was what the audience expected to see.

Her character's response to the grace offered by the Amish families was unexpected. It is an emotional, gut-wrenching scene, where she imagines herself yelling at Aaron, the father of two of the victims. "Where was God?" she screams, collapsing in grief.

It is the pivotal moment in the play, as her grief is turned on its head by "a word" that Aaron speaks to her. Carol, in turn, speaks that word to the spectre of her husband as she comes to some form of forgiveness for him as well. The audience never learns what that word is.

In the talk-back session after the second-last performance of the run, Krugman was asked what she thinks the word is.

"Well, as actors, we want to turn that question back to you," she said. "What do you think the word is?" She added that, as cast members, they had an agreed-upon word among themselves but they purposefully did not share that.

And therein lies the strength and beauty of *The Amish Project*. It asks that bold question—"How on earth can anyone forgive something so horrific?"—and then answers it with more questions. By allowing us in the audience to see the story from many perspectives, it forces us to consider experiences different from what we might have thought logical.

The play really asks us to look inward and consider where we can extend forgiveness to those we have hurt and how we might respond when grace is extended to us. ❧

Et cetera

Mennonites from Mexico travel to Angola

A group of nine people from the Cuauhtémoc area of Chihuahua, Mexico, travelled to Africa on Nov. 28, 2018, to explore the possibility of creating new Mennonite settlements in Angola. They met with representatives of the Angolan government, who expressed interest in having foreign farmers to work their land, but no decisions were made.



From *Die Mennonitsche Post*, Nov. 30, 2018.

VIEWPOINT

Is there such a thing as a Mennonite song?

Darryl Neustaedter Barg

How many of the songs in our *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and the two supplements *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story* do you think are Mennonite? What does that even mean?

If it means songs that are embraced by Mennonites in worship, well, the answer might be all of them.

If it means songs with what some might call Mennonite theological distinctives, that would be quite a few of them.

If it means songs written by self-

coming to us from the contemporary worship music movement, but we wondered if we couldn't create music that might put that summer's Bible curriculum teaching from a Mennonite perspective right into campers' hearts.

We organized our first songwriting weekend in the spring of 2000. We specifically invited people who had been involved in leading music at our camps the previous summer. There were no "real songwriters" among us.

We analyzed what we liked about other

folk, pop, rap, skater punk and everything in between.

All the songs that survived through a summer at camp have been collected on the CwM website. It has been gratifying to hear about these songs moving out through the church and serving in contexts we could not imagine. I have heard people claim that this is the largest collection of Mennonite music anywhere. I have no idea if that's true. I still don't really know if we can or should call music Mennonite.

It has been part of the work of the worship and song committee creating the new *Voices Together* hymnal to collect music by Anabaptist songwriters for inclusion in the hymnal. We found that there are fewer writers creating music for corporate worship than we'd hoped. This probably says something about the environments we have or haven't created for songwriters in our congregations, but that would be a conversation for another day.

We do know that there will be a greater number of Mennonite-created songs in *Voices Together* than in previous collections, possibly even one or two from CwM.

Also watch for the new *Together in Worship* website, a project parallel to *Voices Together*, that will gather worship resources, art and music from Anabaptist creators. ☘

Darryl Neustaedter Barg is energized by leading singing in worship in very diverse styles but feels most at home by the camp-



fire. He is a communicator employed by both Mennonite Church Manitoba and Canadian Mennonite University, and is a member of the Voices Together Worship and Song Committee.

We've found that there are fewer writers creating music for corporate worship than we hoped. This probably says something about the environments we have or have not created for songwriters in our congregations, but that would be a conversation for another day.

identifying Mennonites, you might be surprised. The number of tunes, texts and full songs in *Hymnal* is less than 60. The supplements might add a couple dozen more.

There is a little place in Manitoba where songs with Mennonite distinctives, written by Mennonites, are embraced in worship, even though we don't talk about our songs as anything but "our songs."

In the mid-1990s, a few of us camp staff at Mennonite Church Manitoba's camping ministry, Camps with Meaning (CwM), tried writing songs. I have no recollection of why we thought this was a good idea but, to our great surprise, our efforts were well received and they quickly became part of our ever-evolving camp song canon.

This modest success had us thinking more about the role of music in worship at camp and what we sing.

We recognized the power of music in worship and teaching, and wondered if we couldn't be a bit more deliberate.

There was much great praise music

songs, and then spent a bunch of time investigating the Bible curriculum and, particularly, the theme scripture text for the upcoming summer. Finally, we spent time in prayer, inviting the Spirit's creative movement in us. We all went to individual spaces for a while and, after an hour or two, brought rough ideas back to the circle. A few songs emerged that weekend, and one of them—"Lord You've Searched Me," based on Psalm 139 and I John 4—is still sung very regularly to this day.

Every year since, we have gathered camp staff who were involved in music the prior summer to take a chance and become vulnerable by trying to write music together. The process has evolved in a number of good ways, but some of the principles from that first weekend are still very much in place. Some years the songs are awesome and some years they are very much not awesome. But they are ours and they serve a purpose for that summer: connecting campers from various walks of life with the gospel via

VIEWPOINT

Lessons from Haiti

What can it mean for engagement with our Indigenous communities?

Betsy Wall

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

One may well ask what does Haiti have to do with Indigenous communities in Canada?

Well, the most significant lessons are the shared history of colonialism; the systematic and abusive undermining of other cultures; and the resulting fear and mistrust, low self-esteem, low productivity and deference to powerful leaders, to name a few. Add to this, a worldview that is more circular than linear, and a value system that understands environment, progress, autonomy, materialism, achievement, honesty and spirituality, in a very different way than the western world.

In my long observation and experience in Haiti, the general response to people and situations that we see as “poor” or “in need” usually is in the form of helping, healing, saving or fixing.

I recall being invited to meet with several men and women who represented a number of informal organizations in Port au Prince, Haiti’s capital. Their members had been the recipients of micro-credit funds. They radiated commitment, intelligence, energy and motivation. But their plea was: “We are tired of being dependent. We are tired of being treated like we can do nothing for ourselves. We are together. We are strong, but we know nothing about structure, about how to organize ourselves as a business. We may each have a little something, but what we want is how we can be taught a system for us to grow collectively and not be dependent on someone else.”

What is it we’re not getting? To be sure, Haiti is not poor for lack of money. Perhaps poverty has become its commodity that serves as an opportunity for our affirmation?

My new friend, Rita, gets it. She sat beside me on her way to Toronto to celebrate the ordination of her friend, who is



FIDA PHOTO

Betsy Wall, left, chats with mothers and children who are part of a FIDA-sponsored nutrition project for mothers in Haiti.

the first female Anglican priest in her Inuit community on Hudson Bay in northern Quebec. When I asked if she would tell me something about her community, she eagerly launched into a description of an economically vibrant community based almost entirely on cooperative enterprise. “We have become so strong that the banks are starting to feel a little threatened,” she said with a laugh.

As the cooperative business model is at the heart of what I do in Haiti, I was intrigued to hear how much of our discussion resonated with my own experience:

- **I believe** we must remember the colour of our skin. To a people who carry the scars of colonialism, we must be aware that we may not be seen or received as well-meaning or well-intentioned as we believe we are.

- **I advise** visitors to Haiti to come with a spirit of humility. It requires more than an apology for the sins of our fathers and mothers; it requires that we be forgiven in return.

- **Relationship begins** with dialogue. The one thematic plea in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake was not for houses, food,

water or even money. The request was for dialogue. It became a demand. But no one was listening. There is a price being paid for that today.

- **A question** I am often asked when someone is considering a trip to Haiti is, “What am I going to do?” My response is, “Be still and listen. And we will exhaust you.” I asked Rita what she thought

we could do. She said, “Be compassionate, understand what it means to share. . . . Compassion and sharing is something we can teach you!”

- **I recall** at a seminar hosted at St. Jerome’s University, Waterloo, Ont., entitled “Catholic church: Saint or sinner in Haiti?” a question asked of my Haitian colleague was, “Why is Haiti poor?” His response stunned the audience. “I am poor,” he said, “because you tell me I am poor.” We are moved to develop a relation-

ship with them because of what they do not have and what they are not. This is not the basis of a respectful relationship.

- **As a witness** to the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, I saw that few Haitians were asking for a house. “A house is just a house,” I heard over and over. “What I need is a livelihood. And all this free food and free water and free help is killing me.” History has told us that housing alone does not magically imbue people with an ability to overcome their poverty. Ask Rita. A house is just a house. Credit is just credit.

Former British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli said, “The greatest thing you can do for someone is not to share your riches, but to reveal to them their own.” Without motivation, there is little likelihood of worthy action, either in Haiti or in Canada. Personal and community transformation rooted in the dignity that comes through productivity and ownership is the real hope of the poor. I think Rita would agree. ❧

Betsy Wall is the executive director of the Foundation for International Development Assistance - productive cooperatives Haiti, and a member of Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.

NEWS

Get ready to be shaken

'Rattled by the Radical' gathering to focus on creation care, Indigenous relations and holistic health

BY RACHEL BERGEN
Contributing Editor

Ready to be rattled by the Radical? Youth from Mennonite Church Canada congregations in grades 6 to 12 (including new graduates) are invited to take part in "Shake: Rattled by the Radical," which takes place at Saskatchewan's Shekinah Retreat Centre, located 75 kilometres north of Saskatoon, from July 28 to Aug. 1.

"Shake" is being co-organized by representatives from MC Manitoba and MC Saskatchewan, including Kathy Giesbrecht, associate director of leadership ministries for MC Manitoba, and Kirsten Hamm-Epp, regional church minister for MC Saskatchewan.

According to Giesbrecht, participants will engage with three themes:

- **Climate change** and creation care.
- **Our relationship** with our Indigenous neighbours: Walking into reconciliation and truth.
- **Holistic health:** Paying attention to body, mind and spirit.

The themes came up as the planning committee asked themselves, "What are the things that weigh heavy on the spirits

and minds of the youth of the church?" Giesbrecht says. "These were the themes that rose for us. Each day in the Scriptures we engage and our experiences in our workshops and road trips will focus on the theme of that day."

One of the people involved in planning the retreat is Haley Funk, 20, who attends Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon and serves as its youth coordinator.

Funk has been involved in the local and nationwide church for years. Before she graduated, she was on the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization's planning committee and took part in youth retreats as often as she was able. In 2013, she was a youth participant at the Fat Calf Festival in Winnipeg put on by MC Canada. She also attended the Mennonite World Conference Global Youth Summit in Pennsylvania in 2015.

Now she's taking that lived experience and using it to plan a similar event. "I know what worked out or didn't work out from a youth's perspective," she says. "I can say, 'When I was in youth, I wouldn't have liked that. We should be having more activities and shouldn't be sitting down for this long.'



'Shake: Rattled by the Radical' takes place from July 28 to Aug. 1 at Saskatchewan's Shekinah Retreat Centre, 75 kilometres north of Saskatoon.

I bring that different perspective."

She believes it's important to give back to help make church events successful. "When I was in youth, I loved it," she says. "I loved getting together with other youth that I didn't see all the time. The energy and showing that you're not the only one out there—there are so many people out there who have just as much love for Jesus as you do. I want to continue and be part of it, too."

For Giesbrecht, that's heartening to see. "It's really fun to see youth who grow up in our community invited to not only be formed by the community but to inform it," she says.

She thinks it's important to bring people from the national church together. "Our faith is impacted in different ways when we sit with the wider church—the people to which we belong and to which we share deep theological and historical connection. Whether that's at the lunch table or the conversation table, it strengthens us in a way that's different when that only happens within your own geographical region."

To make it easier for youth from the nationwide church to come together, MC Canada is offering \$5,000 in travel subsidies, and groups that register before April 26 are eligible for an early bird discount. ☘

To take part in Shake, visit prairieyouth.ca. Follow @shake_prairieyouth on Instagram, too.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAILEY FUNK

Hailey Funk is on the planning committee for 'Shake: Rattled by the Radical.'

'Audacious preacher' tackles racism at School for Ministers

STORY AND PHOTO BY JANET BAUMAN
Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

Through worship, workshops and keynote addresses, Anthony Bailey challenged participants at Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's annual School for Ministers to be audacious: bold, daring, provocative and courageous.

Bailey, lead minister at Parkdale United Church in Ottawa and a community activist for racial justice and reconciliation, explained to the gathering at Conrad Grebel University College last month that his "sacred calling" to engage and dismantle racism comes from a promise he made to his brother who died in his arms of stab wounds from a racist attack.

Pressing home the point that racism is a life-threatening reality, he simply stated, "The colour of my skin caused people to want to kill me." He emphasized that racism continues to infect Canadian society, with deadly consequences.

In his wide-ranging keynote addresses, he tackled the uncomfortable topics of race and racism. He explained that race as a way of classifying humans is a relatively recent, socially constructed concept, describing how it emerged in European societies in the late 1600s and later served to justify taking advantage of others as European nations began to colonize the world. In the 1800s, philosopher Immanuel Kant used race classifications to create a hierarchy that privileged some and disadvantaged others, he said.

Citing evidence from the Human Genome Project, in which researchers studied 3.3 billion base pairs of DNA over the last decade, he explained how the concept of race has been debunked as bogus, with "no biological basis." Scientists determined that "race was not a scientifically valid construct." Unfortunately, Bailey said, racist ideology "has huge repercussions" that people still suffer from today. Several times he emphasized, "Race



'Audacious preacher' Anthony Bailey is pictured with Marilyn Rudy-Froese, MC Eastern Canada's leadership minister, at this year's School for Ministers event.

does not exist. Racism does."

He outlined how racism found its way into all the major institutions of society, and then explored how this systemic racism plays itself out in daily life. He cited examples from the justice, education and social service systems in which white people experience unearned privilege, power and rights, and black and Indigenous people experience disadvantages. He also reviewed some black history, noting how these contributions have been largely ignored.

He then challenged MC Eastern Canada pastors to re-examine their theological and biblical heritage, to see where it has been infected by racism. He called for a "radical reorientation about how we understand the Bible." Instead of reading with the lens of the privileged, chosen ones, he called pastors to see and preach from a different plotline. He said that the story of God can only be told by testimonies of people from all nations, even people considered outsiders, outcasts and inferior.

He said that "God's enduring commitment to all nations" is not an extra appendage, but is "seminal to God's salvation history," and "interwoven into the very incarnational story of Jesus."

Bailey cited numerous examples of outcasts and people from other nations who were integral participants in God's salvation story. He noted that Hagar, an Egyptian woman, was protected and blessed by God even though she was an outsider in Abraham and Sarah's family. He brought attention to texts in Exodus and the prophets that describe God saving other nations besides the Israelites (Exodus 12:38, Amos 9:7). He identified the inclusion of gentile women in the lineage of Jesus and gentile Magi in the nativity story. He also noted the diverse leadership in the church at Antioch, described in Acts 13, including people from sub-Saharan and North Africa.

He also showed how Jesus used the encounter with a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28) to test his disciples. When they failed to move beyond an exclusive, Israel-only view, the Canaanite woman ended up schooling them on the generous nature of God's grace for everyone.

He noted that there is resistance to this plotline within the Bible. For example, Jonah pouted when God's mercy was extended to the hated Assyrians. In a different incident, people listening to Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth turned on him when he highlighted stories of grace extended to gentiles. In the early church, Peter, after baptizing and eating with gentiles, later backed away from such inclusion, demonstrating how hard it is to make such changes.

Despite resistance, Bailey insisted that the "story of God's incarnate Christ and the mission of God to and in the world can only be comprehensively told and experienced by the full-throated, embodied testimony of people from all nations." Otherwise, he said, the telling of God's story will be incomplete. "The grace of God... can only be true if it is for everyone." ❧

New structure brings challenges and opportunities

MC Manitoba works through change at annual delegate gathering

BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE
Manitoba Correspondent
STEINBACH, MAN.

The people of Mennonite Church Manitoba discussed and dreamed what the new structure of MC Canada means for their regional church, at this year's annual delegate gathering.

Nearly 150 delegates and other attendees representing 35 churches from across Manitoba gathered at Steinbach Mennonite Church on the first weekend in March.

Budget matters

The main focus of this year's meeting was the finances. Congregational donations in 2018 came in at \$970,000, roughly \$100,000 short of what was expected in the budget. The regional church was consequently \$50,000 short of meeting its budget in 2018.

Board member Richard Klassen said

that because it was a year of transition between the old and new structures, it is hard to get an accurate picture of donation patterns, and he anticipated that next year's patterns will be clearer. However, not meeting the budget has been a trend for the last several years, and he noted that MC Manitoba can't keep this up much longer. He is hoping for a more positive conversation next year.

Both the financial reports and the 2019 budget were presented in a new format, as part of a standardized reporting happening in several regional churches. In the new budget format, amounts put towards partner ministry support, such as MC Canada and Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) are listed under revenue, which created a point of confusion for some attendees. Klassen explained that it is an attempt to have the budget show clearly that MC Manitoba's priorities are just as much about the nationwide church as the regional church.

Camping questions

Camps with Meaning (CwM) is now doing its own bookkeeping and has a separate budget from that of the regional church. When asked whether this means that CwM was not a regional church program anymore, Klassen assured delegates that MC Manitoba is still 100-percent committed to the camps but wants to give them freedom to operate. In the future, delegates will receive camp financial statements and budgets as well.

Congregational donations are set at \$975,000 for 2019. One concern



PHOTO BY DARRYL NEUSTAEDTER BARG

Henry Paetkau, interim executive minister of MC Canada, holds the covenant document between the regional churches that make up MC Canada. He said they are now more connected with each other than before.

is how this will affect CwM, which was allotted \$125,000 in the budget, less than what the camping ministry had requested. CwM is essentially being asked to do more, but with the same financial contribution, it was voiced from the floor.

Judith Friesen Epp, co-pastor of Home Street Mennonite Church, asked about the pain it is causing camp staff when the regional church can't meet their needs, while their camper numbers are dropping.

Ken Warkentin, MC Manitoba's executive minister, admitted there is extra pressure on CwM, but he said the regional church is working with what it has, and couldn't afford to give more in addition to its other commitments.

Dave Wiebe, a delegate from Springstein Mennonite Church, followed this by sharing small actions congregants in MC Manitoba churches can take to help CwM in a substantial way. They include churches sending one extra child from their congregations to camp, hosting one fundraiser a year, or donating as little as \$20 a month through the Club 84 initiative.



PHOTO BY AARON EPP

A Saskatchewan Roughriders jersey was spotted in Winnipeg Blue Bombers territory. Ken Warkentin, executive director of Mennonite Church Manitoba, speaks at the MC Manitoba delegate gathering in Steinbach, Man., on March 2, as Ryan Siemens, executive director of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, looks on.

Other church business

Warkentin reported that MC Manitoba's need for accounting services has decreased due to the separate accounting by CwM and the standardization of MC Manitoba's financial system. Going forward, MC Eastern Canada will provide accounting services for both MC Manitoba and MC Canada. This resulted in the regional church releasing long-time employee Tom Seals, which was recognized at the gathering.

MC Manitoba will be looking to hire for a church engagement position that was deferred last year due to budget constraints.

The budget was passed with no opposition.

The nomination slate for 2019, including delegate nominations for the MC Canada biannual gathering, was also approved.

More than just a business meeting

The day began with worship, singing and hearing stories about congregational life, followed by communion, a reminder that congregants are the body of Christ together and part of a larger church community.

Three afternoon workshops covered updates from CwM, MC Canada in this new era, and leadership development, including the new master of divinity program at CMU.

Henry Paetkau, interim executive minister of MC Canada, said at the MC

Canada workshop that there are challenges with the transition, but that things are slowly becoming clearer. He reported that there is more interpersonal interaction between the regional churches, especially among leaders.

Warkentin agreed that MC Manitoba is more aware of what is happening in other regions now and is sharing resources across the country. "Before the restructuring we thought of ourselves as separate entities, not knowing much about each other," said Paetkau. "Now we are envisioning ourselves as one body with many parts." ❧

B.C. delegates engage together in 'God's mission'

'Honouring God with your bodies' motion defeated

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
RICHMOND, B.C.

Delegates at the Mennonite Church B.C. annual meetings at Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, Feb. 23, found themselves walking alongside each other, encouraging each other and sometimes disagreeing with each other, yet with a common goal to fulfill "God's mission: Our mission" as a church body.

A presentation by the leadership of Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church in Abbotsford was fraught with disagreement. Noting that "we observe that theological diversity has created divisions within churches and within MC B.C.," the church's resolution called for the "Honouring God with your bodies: Concerning the authority of Scripture on gender identity and human sexuality" document to "be recommended to our MC B.C. congregations for review, study and discernment."

Affirming the resolution, Ron Braun of Eben-Ezer said, "We believe Scripture has clear teaching, and that Article 19 [from the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite*

Perspective, which addresses family life, singleness and married life, and states that 'We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life'] still stands." He said that Eben-Ezer hoped for the delegate body to return next year to discuss and vote after discussing the document this coming year.

On the other hand, Rob Brown of Eden Mennonite in Chilliwack encouraged congregations to engage with the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) documents. He encouraged delegates to re-read BFC4 that talked about paths and ditches of biblical interpretation and cautioned against proof-texting and generalizations.

Other comments included:

- "Why are we trying to spend more time figuring out ways to keep people out?"
- "I have a high view of Scripture, but others have a high view of Scripture that come to different conclusions."
- "I can't vote yes or no. The *Canadian*



MC B.C. executive minister Garry Janzen, right, gives a blessing to Tammy and Rob Wiebe of Church of the Way in Granisle, as they leave the regional church for partnership with another denomination.

Mennonite printing of the Maple View document ["Honouring God with your bodies"] created so much divisiveness?"

- "I believe that the BFC7 process was profoundly flawed. This resolution is simply an attempt to have a traditional biblical understanding [of this issue]."
- "I have four siblings who feel rejected, excluded. . . . All have closed the door on the church. I encourage our churches to invite people into the kingdom and join us on the journey."
- "It's a complicated document. There's more to process. . . . Let's get a conversation going on both sides."

The motion was defeated with a ballot vote of 71 to 25.

Other church business

- MC B.C. gave a formal blessing and

farewell to Church of the Way in Granisle, which has decided to join the Evangelical Free Church of Canada after 45 years with the regional church. Delegates authorized the transfer of the property to Church of the Way upon its becoming a legal society in B.C. and fulfilling withdrawal procedures.

- **The delegates heard** a report from the Clearbrook Property Committee, which has been discussing options for the former site of Clearbrook Mennonite Church that disbanded in 2015. The property on Peardonville Road in Abbotsford, now owned by MC B.C., is estimated to be worth \$2.5 million. Options being considered have included selling the property, with proceeds to be used for financial support of the regional church.

Executive minister Garry Janzen outlined several possibilities for the money, including revitalization of congregations, church planting, pastoral training and more welcoming office space for the regional church.

Other possibilities included developing a multi-storey building with commercial

and industrial rental units, possibly with an anchor congregation as part of the space. Some of these options were considered too complex or contrary to the purposes identified in the MC B.C. constitution.

A resolution to have the Clearbrook property “appraised and then sold in accordance with a plan to be prepared by MC B.C. identifying priorities, initiatives, durations, financial requirements and operating procedures to be approved by MC B.C. delegates prior to any financial withdrawals from the sale proceeds” was passed, including an amendment to decide on a specific purpose for the property before selling.

- **The regional church’s** Indigenous Relations Group, under the auspices of the Service, Peace and Justice Committee, presented a resolution to accept the offer of Mennonite Central Committee B.C. to contract with MC B.C. for the services of its Indigenous Neighbours Program coordinator, provided MC B.C. pays for the cost of 40 percent of the position. It would be funded for the remaining nine months of 2019 by a \$100,000 draw on the

regional church’s Mountainview Fund and \$15,000 raised by solicited donations. The resolution passed.

Keynote message

Using the role of a midwife walking alongside an expectant couple, guest speaker Jared Siebert said the role of a Christian is to walk alongside people as they have their life experiences. “The work that we do takes time, is a journey, and we can’t have it all in one conversation,” said Siebert of New Leaf Network, a Canadian church-plant training organization.

In “Let’s make this personal,” he shared his own story of leading a neighbour to Christ through many months of gentle encouragement, proceeding patiently only as the man seemed ready. “We exist for the sake of the world, for the sake of God’s mission,” he said. “Go out and find people who are ‘spiritually pregnant.’”

After his message, delegates had three workshop options to choose from: “What next?” “Mental health in 3D: Drug abuse, depression and dementia,” and “Listening in the image of God: Transforming prejudice, power and privilege.” ❧

Teaching horse sense

Saskatchewan camp expands horse program to include Equine Assisted Learning

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

ROSTHERN, SASK.

No one likes to be told, “Hey! You need to change your attitude!” But that bitter pill is much easier to swallow when it’s administered by a horse.

Cheralyne Gibson is horsemanship director at the Valley Equestrian Centre, a ministry of Youth Farm Bible Camp, which is owned by Mennonite Church Saskatchewan. Not only is she a certified riding instructor, Gibson is also a trained facilitator in equine-assisted learning (EAL).

She describes EAL as “using horses to teach life skills.” It’s built on a curriculum that contains upwards of 40 sessions. Each session has an objective related to

a life skill such as trust, problem solving, anger management or communication. And while each session can stand alone, Gibson encourages participants to sign up for a minimum of six sessions. The facilitator selects the objectives based on participants’ needs.

In a typical EAL session the facilitator works with two participants and one horse, leading them through a series of tasks to achieve the desired objective. Tasks might include working together to lead a horse through an obstacle course. The facilitator observes the human participants as well as the horse, watching for signs that a

participant may be struggling. Open-ended questions allow participants to discover the nature of the problems and address them with changed behaviours.

The horse’s behaviour can signal distress. “Because horses are prey animals, their senses are keen,” says Gibson. “They are always observing their environment for any perceived threat.” She notes that horses are sensitive to human emotions such as anxiety or anger.

Gibson recalls hearing about a youth who participated in an EAL program. During the session one horse kept nuzzling the youth and staying close beside him, behaving like a mare with a foal. The facilitators later learned that the youth’s mother had abandoned him.

Not every horse is a good candidate for EAL. Gibson says, “We have to be able to trust that no matter the situation the horses will keep the [participants] safe.” They also have to have what she calls “a forgiving personality.” Older horses that are used to being handled are often good

Cheralyne Gibson is horsemanship director at the Valley Equestrian Centre, a ministry of Youth Farm Bible Camp. She appreciates being able to offer equine-assisted learning in a Christian setting.



EAL teachers.

Mark Wurtz, Youth Farm's executive director, points out that humans have a long history with horses and that their size alone commands respect. "Using the horse's voice can be more direct," he says.

Gibson adds, "It's easier to take constructive criticism from a horse."

Youth Farm is partnering with schools to provide EAL for at-risk children and youth. Wurtz is also developing a connection with Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan, to provide EAL for inner-city youth through its Appleby Kids and Youth Clubs.

But EAL isn't only for troubled youth. Gibson says it's an excellent tool for

leadership training and team development. In an activity called "Crossing the river," for example, five participants are tasked with moving themselves, the horse and all of their gear across an imaginary river without touching the piranha-infested water. The objective is to work together as a team to solve the problem. "It's about personal development," she says, "but it's lots of fun, and we try to keep it light and positive."

The results can be quite dramatic. Gibson remembers one young participant who, at the end of his first session, said, "Today I was able to trust the horses and I've never been able to trust humans."

In another session she worked with two adult co-workers with very different

personalities. "One was a leader, the other one held back," she says. "The objective of the lesson was teamwork, but it wasn't working. The horse was confused and agitated because it was receiving mixed signals." Gibson and the participants were able to address this, and two months later the more-reserved participant reported that the working relationship with the other individual had improved from that moment on.

EAL sessions, as well as group and individual riding lessons, take place in Youth Farm's recently constructed riding arena. Wurtz says the camp had been dreaming of building an arena for about 20 years. While horses have always been a component of summer camp, the arena will allow programming to continue year-round.

Gibson appreciates the opportunity to do the work she loves in a Christian setting. "Working at the Youth Farm, I can talk about being a Christian, whereas in secular organizations, you're not allowed to talk about it," she says. "I want people to know I'm a Christian and that I'm doing this because I care about people."

She also notes, "I find it interesting that the more you acquire Christ-like ways of being, the better you are with horses." ❧

News brief

Rockway brings Orwell's 1984 to life

KITCHENER, ONT.—Through a variety of creative elements, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's drama department immersed audiences in the dystopian world of George Orwell's *1984*. From spies in the foyer before the play began to the ubiquitous presence of Big Brother on a video screen, Rockway's version of Orwell's novel portrayed a chilling realm in which the powerful use fear and hate to control others, and manipulate language and information to define reality. The production, which ran from Feb. 27 to March 1, also featured original piano music composed and performed to suit its bleak mood by Grade 12 student Jonathan Cressman. Undertaking a play with such troubling material was not easy, but director Alan K. Sapp noted, "Rockway's drama students have never shied away from a challenge." Thea Andres, who played a main role, noted how "every single line was analyzed to the bone" to see how it fit with the major theme, "What is truth?" Micah Peters Unrau, another lead, was quick to give credit to the tech, costume and make-up crews, whose skills helped to immerse actors and audiences in the "horrifying world of 1984." Sapp saw the play's exploration of truth, reality and the power of fear as "timely," serving as both a "cautionary tale" and a "check-in, to see how much of what Orwell imagined has . . . come to pass."

—BY JANET BAUMAN



PHOTO BY JONATHAN LAM

Thea Andres, right, as the ruthless Comrade O'Brien, interrogates Micah Peters Unrau, playing Comrade Winston Smith, who has been arrested for 'thought crimes' in Rockway's production of 1984.

The future is now

Taking stock six years into Future Directions

BY WILL BRAUN
Senior Writer

I posed one question to the 186 Mennonite Church Canada congregations for which my search engine found email addresses. My question: “What changes has your congregation experienced as a result of the Future Directions decisions of October 2017?”

The most succinct reply was one word: “None.” End of email. That was also the best summation of the 51 responses I received—mostly from pastors or church council chairs. This can be interpreted as good or bad.

But first, even people who care about “conference” and went to the assemblies are confused about what was decided. Here’s the recap. In 2012, faced with gradual decline in donations and people in the pews, the Future Directions Task Force was given two questions: “What is God’s Spirit calling us to in the 21st Century? And, what are the best ways—programs, structures, strategies—for the church to thrive and grow?”

By the time deliberations wrapped up in 2017, MC Canada had been forced to lay off numerous staff. The final decisions formalized this, with a greatly reduced MC Canada—10 staff—making way for a new emphasis on the five area churches, which were renamed regional churches. Now, technically, congregations belong only to the regional churches and donate only to

the regional churches, with a portion of money forwarded to MC Canada. Some regional church offices have increased their staff; one did the opposite.

A significant reduction in international work is also a “future direction.”

One respondent to my query said Future Directions had “little impact” on her congregation and, to her, this means “the transition process has been successful.” Churches are carrying on despite restructuring.

But the whole point of Future Directions was that the church critically needed change, both in structure and vision. In the end, the vision piece was a focus on the congregation as the “foundational unit of the church.” The final report talked about revitalizing and energizing congregations through “congregational clustering,” “missional catalyst teams,” and best practices in calling and training leaders.

In 2016, Keith Regehr told me that, for people in the pew, the main difference of Future Directions would be a closer connection to the regional church. Regehr—a consultant whose firm was paid about \$100,000 to assist with the Future Directions process—told me he was excited about the prospect of rejuvenated congregations.

None of the responses I received spoke about rejuvenation or new vision. Only a

few spoke of a closer connection to the regional church.

Other responses

While the dominant response indicated little or no change, there were other comments. A few said their congregation’s primary connection is to the regional church and that will continue. Some said they are focused on their mission, not denominational structures. Some conflated Future Directions with the largely simultaneous Becoming a Faithful Church process that centred around same-sex questions. A few said they don’t know what Future Directions is about. Some said it was a “waste of time,” bogged down by “wordiness” that left most people behind, or simply “irrelevant.”

Some praised new communications staff in Alberta and B.C. In an interview, Ryan Siemens, executive minister for MC Saskatchewan, said staff from the five regional churches are working together more regularly and meaningfully in the new reality.

International Witness

Several respondents expressed concern about International Witness work. This raises the largest remaining question about Future Directions: “As MC Canada’s direct support for Witness workers declines, will individuals and congregations take up the slack?”

Over the past year, four International Witness families completed their terms. According to Jason Martin, director of International Witness for MC Canada, these workers will not be replaced. That leaves 11 Witness workers serving in China,



the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

Essentially, this is the new normal, at least if Witness workers can raise at least 50 percent of their funding. MC Canada has announced a three-year transitional plan, during which time Witness workers will be “enabled to achieve the necessary relational funding,” money that workers raise themselves, with the help of regional church staff and Witness Support Teams (groups of five to eight volunteers from one or more congregations, as identified by Witness workers).

The International Witness Working Group had recommended that Witness workers not be required to raise their own funds, as no other national or regional staffers are asked to do so.

The Working Group also referred to a study that found that between 2005 and 2010 only 4.5 percent of congregational giving among MC Canada churches found its way beyond Canadian boundaries. The vast majority was spent on things that benefit church members.

Martin says that “at least 10” new partnerships between congregations

and Witness workers have developed, although no Witness Support Teams are as yet in place. A manual for such teams is forthcoming. Garry Janzen, executive minister of MC B.C., expects it will take some time for the new Witness reality to settle in.

Meanwhile, as we enter regional church annual-general-meeting (AGM) season, we will get a closer picture of the financial sustainability of the new structure, even if the vision remains obscure. (*Read about the Manitoba and B.C. AGMs on pages 16 and 17, respectively.*) 卍

One question, many answers

Below are a sampling of responses, in no particular order, to Will Braun's question: "What changes has your congregation experienced as a result of the Future Directions decisions of October 2017?" Respondents were granted anonymity.

- **We have seen** next to no change that would be noticed in the pew.
- **MC Eastern Canada** is now more directly involved in “overseas mission,” as some of our newer immigrant congregations are returning directly to their countries of origin in shorter-term initiatives.
- **Probably the** biggest change we have seen is increased attention to the regional church news/information. It took a little while to get communications sorted out, but [the communications person] has done a stellar job of taking initiative and working hard to connect the churches. It has been really heartening!
- **We have not** experienced any changes that I can put my finger on.

- **I think the basic** outcome of these changes is confusion. . . . While there is still good belief in, and support for, the working of the church, there is an increasing distance from the ways and movements out of ongoing imprecise directions. Greater communication is definitely needed to rebuild identity and direction of who we want to be.
- **I would be** surprised if 50 percent of our church knew what the old national church structure was, and how and why it has changed. The reality is that we have always valued our connection to the wider church, but we have not been as invested in being a part of the decision-making and programming of the larger body.
- **I think there** is general confusion about

what [MC Canada] does and how we connect with it. I am personally confused about what is going to happen with our Witness program. I was sad to see how much it shrunk.

- **I am skeptical** about the gathering in Abbotsford and wonder if people will show up.
- **I feel like** we have lost a lot and are at a stage of uncertainty, which feels uncomfortable. But I am also hopeful that something new will emerge.
- **Anticipating that** building or maintaining relationships across the country may be more challenging with the changes of the Future Directions decision, in 2018 we invited a pastor from B.C. to be a part of our AGM (via video).

To read more responses, visit canadianmennonite.org/fd-responses.



Looking back on Saskatchewan Mennonite migration

Two significant anniversaries to be celebrated in coming years

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

Ted Regehr, speaking at the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan's annual meeting, provided context for celebrating two significant anniversaries in the coming years.

In 2022, it will be a century since Old Colony Mennonites migrated from Saskatchewan to Mexico, while 2023 will mark the centenary of the beginning of Russian Mennonite immigration to Saskatchewan.

At the March 1 gathering, held at Saskatoon's Bethany Manor, Regehr recounted the history of Mennonite settlement in Saskatchewan. The former University of Saskatchewan history professor, who now resides in Calgary, said that following the First World War the provincial government mandated English as the only language of instruction in public schools. Old Colony Mennonites taught their children in German-language private schools.

As there were no public schools where they lived, the government built schools at local ratepayers' expense. "If they refused to send their students to the public schools, they would be fined," he said, "and if they sent their children to school, they faced excommunication from the church."

It was a no-win situation. In 1922, about 1,700 Old Colony Mennonites left



Ted Regehr, right, discusses details of Mennonite immigration with Leonard Doell and Leo Schulz at this year's annual meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan for Mexico.

That same year, the Canadian government opened its doors to Russian Mennonite immigration. The Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization was established, with David Toews as chair. Over the next several years, more than 22,000 Russian Mennonites came to Canada.

"A large majority of them came to Saskatchewan," said Regehr. "Many moved on to Alberta, but Saskatchewan was a critical stopping point."

This influx of newcomers created tension, as the *Russländer* Mennonites came with different attitudes and leadership styles than those of their *Kanadier* cousins, he said.

The Russian Mennonite immigration of



SAUBLE SKI CLUB PHOTO /
TEXT BY JANET BAUMAN

Tanya Dyck Steinmann, pastor and spiritual director, centre in the blue ski jacket, is pictured at the Sauble Ski Club with some participants in the 'Women's rest and renewal retreat' she led at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Hepworth, Ont., in mid-February. In times of worship, reflection, creative expression and play aimed to enrich body and spirit, women explored the theme, 'The mark of a wild heart: Living the paradox of love in our lives,' and what it means to be vulnerable and courageous in the search for true belonging.

the 1920s more than offset the emigration of Old Colony Mennonites. According to Regehr, the 1931 census showed Saskatchewan to have a larger Mennonite population than any other province. ☘

News brief

Grebel, MCC formalize partnership to advance peace



PHOTO BY FRED W. MARTIN

From left to right: Paul Heidebrecht, director, Kindred Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement; John Head, executive director, MCC Ontario; Rick Cober Bauman, executive director, MCC Canada; and Marcus Shantz, president, Conrad Grebel University College, at the signing of the memorandum of understanding.

Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) formalized their partnership to advance peace through the Kindred Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement (CPA) by signing a memorandum of understanding. The CPA is home to peace-oriented innovators and established organizations from Waterloo Region's vibrant peacebuilding ecosystem. Over the past four years, the CPA has enabled Grebel and MCC to partner in new ways through consultations, conferences and gallery exhibits. This agreement builds on that foundation by deepening this unique partnership over the next three years. Going forward, MCC will be identified as a "core collaborator" in the CPA. This category of participation includes established organizations such as Project Ploughshares, whose staff are located in the CPA, as well as Grebel faculty and research fellows. MCC is sponsoring a "hot desk" for occasional use by a staff member, partner or one of the peacebuilding start-ups in the CPA's Epp Peace Incubator program.

—GREBEL / MCC

Voices Together visual art chosen

12 works to accompany new hymnal due out in 2020

BY LEANN HAMBY
MennoMedia

Visual art for the *Voices Together* hymnal has been chosen by the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee. The 12 visual art pieces selected will appear in the forthcoming hymnal—including the pew, worship leader, digital app and projection editions. These pieces will be placed throughout *Voices Together*, inviting worshippers to encounter God creatively in ways that engage all the senses.

“Mennonite communities are diverse in terms of language and age, as well as ways of learning and expression,” says MennoMedia publisher Amy Gingerich. “Including a series of visual worship resources in the bound and projection editions of the new worship and song collection celebrates that diversity.”

With guidance from a visual art committee composed of Randy Horst, Merrill Miller, Tom Yoder Neufeld, Saejin Lee, Sarah Kathleen Johnson and Bradley

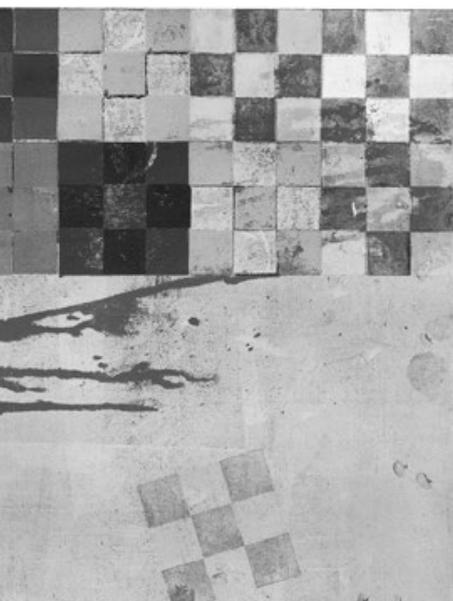
Kauffman, the hymnal committee chose visual art to represent the following themes: gathering; praising; praying; creation; Advent and the birth of Jesus; the life, teaching and ministry of Jesus; the death and resurrection of Jesus; Holy Spirit, Pentecost and church; baptism; communion; service and witness for peace; and sending.

Each of the 12 works selected for the collection is by a different artist and in a distinct style.

“The theme of death and resurrection is challenging in the sense that both words tend to conjure binary associations of light/good versus dark/bad,” says Anne H. Berry, creator of “Alive.” “It was important for me, consequently, to integrate the imagery of life and death together in the composition, uniting light and dark in a complementary way. The visuals provide a certain level of agency for people like me—people of colour—who want to see ourselves acknowledged and affirmed through positive representation.”

“Our hope is that including visual art in *Voices Together* will encourage congregations to invite visual artists to share their gifts in worship alongside other music and worship leaders,” says Sarah Kathleen Johnson, worship resources editor for the new hymnal.

“We aspire to honour a diversity of human experiences, including race and ethnicity, class and economic status, age, and ability,” says project director Bradley Kaufman. “We aim to celebrate the theological diversity of the Mennonite church and to provide multiple ways of envisioning and encountering God, one another and creation.”



‘Nine patch No. 8,’ a monotype by Brenton Good, chosen for the theme of ‘praying.’

To learn more, visit VoicesTogetherHymnal.org.



‘Alive,’ a pen and ink drawing by Anne H. Berry, chosen for the theme of ‘the death and resurrection of Jesus.’



Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth allows young people (grades 10 to 12) to engage their faith questions, develop their passion for ministry and test their leadership gifts.

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Fundraisers provide Centre4Women with purses and money

BY MARIA KLASSEN
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

Westview Christian Fellowship's Centre4Women has been the beneficiary of recent generosity.

A major fundraiser held last November raised \$3,000. The money will be used for summer outings for the centre's women and a fall retreat at Crieff Hills in Puslinch.

The theme of the event was "A passage in time," and many women and staff took leading roles. They sang their way through the decades, starting with the 1920s and finished with Carol Burnett's "I'm So Glad We Had This Time Together," sung by Jane LaVacca, the centre's executive director. As a janitor mopping the floor, LaVacca shared about needs in the community, including household items, clothing, food, bus tickets, feminine products, hygiene items and diapers.

The Purse Project Niagara encouraged people to donate new or gently used purses and items to fill them, such as shampoo, deodorant and body wash; socks, mitts, a



PHOTO BY GRAZIA SHEPPARD

For the Purse Project Niagara, Mandi Neiser, left, Jane LaVacca and Sarah Boville collected new or gently used purses, 180 of which were given to Westview Christian Fellowship's Centre4Women in St. Catharines, Ont.

scarf and hat; mints and coffee gift cards; makeup and feminine hygiene products; a pen and notebook. The theme was "Fill a purse with love and a woman's heart with hope." Two-hundred-and-fifty purses were filled, 180 of which were donated to Centre4Women, and the rest to other

women living in shelters or second-stage housing.

Gay Lea Foods Co-operative Ltd., a dairy products co-operative in Canada, recently gave Centre4Women \$6,000 to purchase eggs and milk for the centre's pantry. The donation should keep these staples in stock for a year. ☼

News brief

Trivia nights raise funds for Camp Valaqua



PHOTO BY JUNE MILLER

Calgary's winning Team Jemml members, pictured from left to right: Marie Fraser, Steve Zimmerly, Mikaela Heidebrecht, Lori Pauls (down low), Ethan Heidebrecht, Lauren Harms (down low), and Jonas Cornelsen. Not pictured, Edmonton's Not Cheating team consisted of Martin and Jean Blank, Karl and Kurt Blank, Donita and Jacob Wiebe-Neufeld, and Pat and Ev Buhr.

Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary and First Mennonite Church in Edmonton held trivia night fundraisers for Camp Valaqua on Feb. 9. Teams of six to eight people answered sets of questions, and results were posted after each set. Projections of the scores at each venue allowed teams in both cities to compare results in real time. Calgary's Team Jemml and Edmonton's Not Cheating team tied for first place. By the end of the evening, a total of \$5,200 was raised through team admission fees and donations. The money will be used to pay down a line of credit taken out in 2018 for needed washroom renovations. A total of \$13,000 is left owing on the project.

—BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

News brief

Jazzing up relationships of all kinds

WATERLOO, ONT.—Shalom Counselling Services hosted "Celebrating love: In our relationships, families and friendships," at the Jazz Room in Uptown Waterloo on Feb. 14. Billed as a "casual evening of music, appetizers and good company," the event highlighted the importance relationships of all forms play in people's lives. A jazz ensemble (pictured) made up of vocalist Laura Joy Moolenbeek, saxophonist Willem Moolenbeek, keyboardist Caleb deGroot-Maggetti and acoustic bass player Mark Spagnolo entertained the crowd of some 125 people. The music reflected both the delights of love and the pain of loss and loneliness. Favourites included "What a Wonderful World" and "Fly Me to the Moon." In explaining the context for the evening, Wanda Wagler-Martin, Shalom's executive director, noted that the most common reasons people seek help at Shalom are struggles with anxiety and depression, and "struggles with all kinds of relationships." She said that while people spend a lot of time focused on addressing mental health and illness, they don't pay as much attention to healthy relationships. "Celebrating love" was an opportunity to change that. A light-hearted love quiz distributed to each table gave those in attendance a chance to test their understanding of healthy relationships.

—BY JANET BAUMAN





PHOTO BY WALKER GIESBRECHT / TEXT BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Walker Giesbrecht, 16, braved the -40C degree weather to capture this mesmerizing shot at the Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization's senior-high youth retreat. Rick Unger, youth sponsor at First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, lit a piece of steel wool on fire and spun it around in a circle while Giesbrecht, a congregant at Charleswood Mennonite, also in Winnipeg, took a long-exposure shot with his camera. The youth retreat took place at Camp Assiniboia at the end of January, when 45 youth and sponsors gathered to worship, play and eat together.

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PEOPLE

Searching for a 'generous space'

LGBTQ+ Mennonites find community in queer Christian groups

BY RACHEL BERGEN
Contributing Editor

A handful of Christians were looking for community and a place to meet with others with similar experiences. They found it at Queerly Christian.

The participants identify under the LGBTQ+* umbrella and take the time to sing queer hymns, pray, take communion, reflect on Scripture and take part in a community meal. They gather twice a month to worship together outside of, or instead of, at their church.

According to Sylvia Hook, who is a founder and one of the leaders of the group as well as a board member of Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service, it's a time for people to come as they are and find spiritual nourishment with others who are like-minded and like-experienced.

The 28-year-old attends Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont., which is an affirming congregation, but says Queerly Christian is a special place where they can just be. "Worshipping in a queer-normative, a queer-majority environment is a very different experience than worshipping in an affirming space," Hook says.

Queerly Christian is an initiative of Pastors in Exile (PiE), an Anabaptist-rooted

movement that is passionate about connecting young people in Waterloo Region with vibrant faith experiences outside and inside of church walls.

According to its website (erbstchurch.ca/program/queerly-christian/), Queerly Christian is meant to provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ Christians to explore the intersections of faith and sexuality or gender identity in a welcoming community.

"One of the main needs it's filling is community," Hook says. "For some of the members of the group, it's the first time they've met other queer Christians. For some people, it's a place to go when the faith of their childhood failed them. Their church may have rejected them, or the theology of their church didn't make room for them."

But the group isn't just about queerness and Christianity. It's also a place for participants to check in on each other's mental and physical health.

"The smaller group like this also makes it easier to bring your whole self," Hook says. "It's much easier to say, 'I'm having a really hard time right now,' to 10 people rather than 150. This is sadly not that common and something we don't feel in church,



PHOTO COURTESY OF SYLVIA HOOK

Sylvia Hook is a member of Erb Street Mennonite Church and is a founder and co-leader of Queerly Christian.

even if it is affirming."

For other LGBTQ+ Mennonites, queer Christian spaces don't need to be worship- or Bible study-oriented to meet needs that other Christian and social groups aren't.

Community building

Ben Borne, 29, attends Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, which is an inclusive church. He takes part in a monthly group for LGBTQ+ Christians through an organization called Generous Space.

Generous Space, which has small groups all over Canada, is motivated to disciple "Christ-followers to work together to eliminate fear, division and hostility at the intersection of faith, gender and sexuality."

The group, like others in the Generous Space community, meets monthly for food and fellowship, and to share about their lives. Sometimes participants talk about their faith, but in general they just socialize.

"Attending an affirming church is great, but being part of a group of like-minded and like-experienced people is helpful in terms of providing a space to articulate my experience of faith that perhaps isn't the same as others," he says "Plus, it also provides an opportunity to pass on wisdom and experience to others who are on their way."

Clare Schellenberg helped start a small group for the LGBTQ+ members of Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg when she worked as an associate pastor there in



PHOTO COURTESY OF TAMARA SHANTZ

Members of Queerly Christian often take communion together during their meetings.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEN BORNE

Ben Borne is a member of Wildwood Mennonite Church and attends a Generous Spaces group in Saskatoon.

2017. “The hope for this group was that it would be a safe and confidential place for those who identified, or were questioning, their place in the LGBTQ+ community, to connect and be with one another,” she explains.

Much like the Generous Space group Borne attends, Schellenberg’s group spends the majority of its time sharing food, talking, supporting one another and connecting with other LGBTQ+-identifying Christians.

Although small groups provide unique experiences for these LGBTQ+ Mennonites, they all agree that affirming churches and church-borne LGBTQ+ groups are important.

Creating an inclusive space

Schellenberg says that queer church groups are important for all Mennonite Church Canada congregations, whether they’re affirming churches or not. “These groups remind our congregations that we exist, that we care about our faith, and that we have a place within the body of Christ,” she says. “While welcoming statements are a huge step in a congregation’s journey of affirmation, having an LGBTQ+ group is putting action into those statements and providing a sense of healing.”

Borne believes that safety for people on the LGBTQ+ spectrum is paramount in a church setting. “I believe that the first imperative for the church is to create safe spaces for queer people to simply be. Whether it’s an intentionally queer Bible study, or an all-inclusive Bible study, it doesn’t matter to me. As long as people



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLARE SCHELLENBERG

Clare Schellenberg is a member of Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and attends an LGBTQ+ group there.

feel safe,” he says.

Hook says that having a safe space is energizing: “It makes it easier for me to go out and do advocacy in the wider church. It gives me more energy and helps me remember why I do it.” ❧

** LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, plus all of the other sexualities, sexes and genders that aren’t included in these few letters.*

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Search Process: Nominations and/or letters of application with CV or resume may be submitted to the AMBS Presidential Search Committee at AMBSPresSearch@mennoniteeducation.org, or through postal mail to: AMBS Presidential Search Committee, Mennonite Education Agency, 3145 Benham Avenue, Suite #2, Elkhart, IN 46517. Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary does not discriminate against employees or candidates for employment on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, age, disability or any legally protected status.

'I feel like it is God's will that I am here'

Worship, curling, intercultural gathering, all part of IVEPer conference

STORY AND PHOTO BY ZACH CHARBONNEAU

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

LEAMINGTON, ONT.

For a week in early February, North Leamington United Mennonite Church played host to the annual mid-year conference of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP), including an international worship service on Feb. 10.

The pews were filled with 50 IVEPers from 29 nations surrounded by their 16 host families from four local Mennonite churches. The IVEPers came dressed to the nines in traditional clothing representing their countries of origin and brought with them music, dance, stories, skits and cultural highlights. The young adults from around the world first met six months ago in Akron, Ohio, for an orientation week before being dispatched to different year-long postings across Canada and the United States.

Leamington has hosted an IVEPer since last fall. Sharon Dass, 25, is from the town of Bhilai in the Chhattisgarh province of India and is working at the Leamington

Mennonite Home as a speech pathologist.

A fourth generation Mennonite, Dass was strongly encouraged by her family to pursue an IVEP experience. Despite support from her home community, she was hesitant to participate in IVEP. But, as she put it, "If God's will is there, you can't escape. I feel like it is God's will that I am here."

She shared that the cold climate and culture were surprising to her, but that the most surprising thing was the lack of young adults at North Leamington United Mennonite, where she is living with Pastor Alicia Good during her time as an IVEPer.

Good has her own connection to IVEP, having participated in MCC's Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program in Bolivia. SALT is the North American equivalent of IVEP, sending North American volunteers to Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe.

Dass said the Leamington conference was like a huge reunion among friends,

adding, though, that Bolivian dancing was the hardest thing for her to get the hang of during their week together.

Su Jia Hui, a 23-year-old from Fujia, China, is posted at the MCC Thrift Store in Edmonton, where his first observation was, "It's pretty cold." He shared that being in a different country away from friends is lonely, adding that he has learned to depend on God for connection in a new way and that he's grown as a person through this experience: "You can find yourself in a new environment. I know myself better."

Oscar Suárez, 24, from Ibagué, Colombia, volunteers as a Spanish and music teacher at Central Christian School in Kidron, Ohio. He said he became interested in IVEP through a friend who encouraged him to check it out. He was unsure, but after attending the last Mennonite World Conference in the United States in 2015, he realized he was passionate about sharing language and culture with others, so he connected with MCC. Suárez credited his IVEP experience with helping him grow professionally and personally, and opening his mind to new experiences of the world and life.

As the night of worship wrapped up, Kathryn Dekkert, MCC Canada's IVEP coordinator, reminded everyone in attendance, "When we're away from loved ones and apart from friends, worshipping together reminds us that we are part of a much bigger family."

During the rest of the time the IVEPers spent in Leamington, they took part in many local activities, like throwing rocks at the Sun Parlour Curling Club and visiting Canada's southernmost tip at Point Pelee National Park. Something that stood out in their itinerary was a meeting with the elders of the Caldwell First Nation representing Canada's Indigenous peoples in the region. ☸

For more photos, visit canadianmennonite.org/ivep-2019.



This year's IVEPers pose with their flags at North Leamington United Mennonite Church on Feb. 10 during a worship service with their hosts from four local Mennonite congregations.

OBITUARY

A disciple who met Jesus in the wounded

Adolfo Puricelli
Aug. 24, 1936 - Dec. 31, 2018

BY MADALENE ARIAS
 Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Adolfo Puricelli had a profound love and respect for humanity, not only in his words but in the life he lived and in his work with migrants and refugees.

He was born in Trenque-Lanquen, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina, on Aug. 24, 1936, and studied at the Seminario Metropolitano with Jorge Mario Bergoglio, more commonly known today as Pope Francis. Adolfo did not join the priesthood but would later obtain a degree in sociology from the Catholic University in Buenos Aires, where he met his wife, Betty Kennedy.

His journey within the network of Canadian Mennonites began in the 1980s. Many of those who fled Latin America during this decade sought refuge in Canada. In 1981, the United Mennonite Church of Ontario invited him to conduct research into the needs of Spanish-speaking newcomers.

After investigating the situation, he proposed a multi-service community centre for refugees and the development of a church community that offered alternative faith exploration in Anabaptism.

In his proposal to the Mennonite missions committee, he wrote that “to meet Jesus in the wounded demands that we come with deep respect. It is not enough to go to them through a sense of duty just because God told us to visit the poor.”

By 1983, Adolfo’s vision and the collaborative efforts of Mennonite organizations across Canada established the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto



Adolfo Puricelli

and the Toronto Mennonite New Life Church.

At their onset, the centre and church both operated out of rented spaces. In 1992, Toronto United Mennonite Church invited the Puricellis to a meeting to discuss the possibility of creating new spaces for both organizations.

Several months later, they established a successful building partnership that provided the New Life congregation with a bright and airy space to worship within the same building as Toronto United Mennonite, as well as space for the centre’s offices. This arrangement allowed the centre to expand its services to newcomers, including emotional integration support groups for newcomers dealing with grief and trauma.

Adolfo served as the centre’s executive director of New Life Centre until 2006 and led the New Life Church as pastor until he retired in 2013.

Bruce Burgetz of Toronto United Mennonite worked with a task force that oversaw Adolfo’s ministry and sought ways to sustain it. He says Adolfo often spoke during prayer requests to make other Mennonites aware of the challenges faced by Latin American refugees and immigrants.

Retired settlement services worker Mario Bianchi worked alongside Adolfo for nearly 26 years at the New Life Centre. He says Adolfo had a strong devotion to serving others, and he instilled this spirit in every staff member at the centre. If the centre learned of a woman who had escaped an abusive

situation, their workday was not over until they had found her a safe place to spend the night.

Betty accompanied Adolfo for more than 50 years as his wife and colleague. “It is not always easy to follow someone with a very clear vocation, because that vocation takes priority over everything,” she says, recalling one year on Christmas Day when he left his family to visit a migrant detention centre.

Don Francisco, an illiterate farmer who knew nothing of big cities or bureaucracy, had left his country because the conflict between the guerrillas and civil army had left him without cattle to raise. “When I asked Adolfo why he couldn’t get a volunteer to do that, he would say, ‘Because I am learning,’” he says.

Former refugee and Colombian author Luis Mata considered Adolfo to be someone who could provide spiritual support through a social or political context. They first met at an anti-war demonstration in Toronto in 2003. As a refugee, Mata looked to Adolfo for guidance on immigration matters; his family had few resources and found themselves living in a very precarious way back then.

“One Sunday, Betty and Adolfo had prepared a cake for my son’s fifth birthday,” Mata says. “It was our first celebration here. That day we definitely felt that we were not alone in this country. We had the company of two humans who would not only centre their attention on immigration or spiritual matters, but they also took care of the smaller details.”

As Adolfo’s life drew to a close, Betty asked spiritual director Mary Klein to join the Puricelli-Kennedy family. Less than an hour before he drew his last breath, Klein read a prayer she’d written for Adolfo: “Alive, in the doing, in Christ Jesus, your work is never done. Know this and draw your first eternal breath, in peace. Peace, my brother.”

Adolfo passed away on Dec. 31, 2018. ❖

FOCUS ON

Travel

Couple enjoys being 'on the road' with MDS

BY JOHN LONGHURST
Mennonite Disaster Service

A year off to travel and volunteer—that's what Neil and Audrey Rempel are doing.

The semi-retired couple from Winnipeg are part of the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) recreational vehicle program, whose volunteers drive their RVs to work-sites to assist with rebuilding.

Neil, 66, was a painter for 20 years, and he also built homes. Audrey, 67, worked alongside him.

"We enjoy helping people," says Audrey of their decision to join with MDS.

"God has blessed us so we can bless others," adds Neil.

Last summer, the two provided supervision and guidance to young volunteers working with MDS in Williams Lake, B.C., where MDS rebuilt four houses in the area following the wildfires that tore through the northern B.C. region in 2017.

"Through volunteering we've met so many good people," Neil says of how they have volunteered with MDS and several

other organizations in North America, Nicaragua and Mexico.

Plus, he adds, "we enjoy travelling. This isn't a hardship."

"We get lots out of it," adds Audrey. "We're making lifelong friends."

The couple think that even when the year is over, they will keep volunteering "as long as we are able," Audrey says.

"Our faith calls us to serve others," says Neil. "MDS is one way for us to do it. We have skills and talents in this area, so why not use them?"

The Rempels are just one of a number of individuals, couples and whole families who spend weeks or months of every year travelling and serving with MDS across Canada and the United States, says MDS volunteer development coordinator Evelyn Peters-Rojas.

"They tell us they are looking for adventure, a chance to see other parts of Canada and the U.S., meet new people and to do something to help others," she



MDS PHOTO

Neil and Audrey Rempel, a semi-retired couple from Winnipeg, are part of the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) recreational vehicle program, whose volunteers drive their RVs to worksites to assist with rebuilding after disasters.

says. Through MDS, "they are able to do all those things, and come away from it at the end knowing they have made a significant impact on the lives of people who lost homes due to disasters."

At the same time, she adds, for Canadians there is the added incentive of "escaping the winter" by doing service in the south.

"Winters are long," she says. "For some, they'd rather work on a house in the warm sun than sit on a beach. Through MDS, they can do that and make a real difference in the lives of others." ❧

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Learning through space and time

BY SAFWAT MARZOUK
Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary organized a trip to Egypt in January 2016. The goal was to encounter the long history of Egypt as well as to get to know Christian and Muslim communities. Of the 37 participants from Canada, the United States and Australia, seven took the trip as a seminary course.

Together we engaged with texts from ancient Egypt that relate to the Bible and texts from the early church, as well as discussions about translating the Bible into Arabic, western missionary encounters with the Egyptian church, and socio-political changes since the Arab Spring.

As one of the students put it, "This



AMBS PHOTO BY SARA WENGER SHENK

Participants in the January 2016 AMBS 'Encountering Egypt' learning tour visit a Nubian house in Aswan, Upper Egypt.

course is unique in that we read texts from across a 3,000-year span."

Whether in the course structure or in the trip itinerary, we were always conscious of not only encountering Egypt

FOCUS ON TRAVEL

but also being encountered by Egypt, and the faithfulness, strength and resilience of the Egyptian communities.

We visited the Pyramids, of course, but there were also times when we were hosted by Muslim scholars to hear about Islam, and by the head of the Protestant churches in Egypt to hear about the church's witness in its own context. The long history of Christianity in Egypt and the complex contemporary context of the church as a minority in Egypt have a lot to teach the church in the West about what it means

to be faithful to the gospel.

One of the students reflected on what the Christian minority in Egypt teaches her about being a Mennonite living in North America as she negotiates the facets of her identity as a Mennonite who comes with privilege. This is indeed the kind of reflective work that can be sparked through travel and through encountering the church in a new context.

Students and church members who travel to encounter and be encountered by the church's faithfulness will be more

likely to view mission work as a mutual enterprise, experiencing God's faithfulness not only through their ministries but also through those of others. ☸

Safwat Marzouk is associate professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible at AMBS in Elkhart, Ind. He is originally from Egypt. Another learning tour, "Encountering Egypt: Past and present," is scheduled from Jan. 25 to Feb. 8, 2020. To learn more, email rringenb@amb.edu.

The Great Trek from Russia to Central Asia remembered

BY SANDRA REIMER
TourMagination

“[I]n Tashkent] the nearby river was full of fish and the banks were lined with trees loaded with apples, pears, plums, cherries, peaches, apricots, pomegranates, lemons, oranges and many fruits we had no name for.

“It seemed like the ideal place to settle,” wrote Elizabeth Unruh Schulz, reflecting on the Great Trek migration from Russia to Central Asia.

It was 1880 when 14-year-old Schulz and her parents travelled with a caravan of 125 covered wagons from the Molotschna colony in Russia to Central Asia. Like other Mennonite migrants, they wanted to avoid military conscription. Influenced by Claas Epp, many in this group also believed Christ was returning to Earth in Asia.

The migrants discovered a beautiful land, but then experienced many hardships. “We stayed in Tashkent nine months and, in that time, 80 people died. Some were sick only three days before they passed,” she wrote.

After leaving Tashkent, the migrants had a failed attempt to settle near the Himalayan Mountains. It was the rainy season and they had no place to stay. Thankfully, Muslims in the village of Serabulak housed them and allowed the Mennonites to use their mosque.



PHOTO BY JOHN SHARP

Audrey Voth Petkau of Waterloo, Ont., left, is welcomed with flatbread by Muslim villagers in Ak Metchet, Uzbekistan. Mennonites from Russia settled in Ak Metchet from 1884 until 1935.

Jim Juhnke, a Great Trek researcher and Bethel College professor emeritus of history, says, “Two Mennonite couples were married and 21 Mennonite young people were baptized in that mosque.”

In the spring, a wealthy Muslim sent them on their way with gifts and money.

Before giving up and emigrating to North Dakota, Schulz's family endured more sickness, her youngest brother's death, conflict within the group, hostility from locals, near death in a violent

sandstorm, and decimation of their crops by grasshoppers.

In 1884, 38 of the remaining families settled in Ak Metchet near Khiva, where they built a thriving life. Although the Mennonites were all deported in one fell swoop by the Soviets in 1935, locals still remember their excellent wood craftsmanship, agricultural productivity and the introduction of new technologies including photography.

On a tour in Uzbekistan later this year, Juhnke and John Sharp, another historian and Great Trek scholar, will retrace the Great Trek migration and

visit the Ichan Kala Museum in Khiva with a new exhibit containing Mennonite artifacts from Ak Metchet. ☸

Listen to a dramatic reading about Elizabeth Unruh Schulz's memories of migrating to Central Asia at youtu.be/DHmnuRvtek.

See details of the Central Asia: Crossroads of Faith & Culture tour, Sept. 22 to Oct. 3, 2019, at tourmagination.com/central_asia.



FOCUS ON TRAVEL

'A community of friends around the world'

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DASHIR LODGE AND SAFARIS

Building “a community of friends around the world” is a driving force behind Dashir Lodge and Safaris, based in the Arusha area of Tanzania.

Darryl and Shirley Peters’ vision is founded on bringing Africans and guests together as friends. Dashir, a blend of Darryl and Shirley’s names, is also a way for them to live in Africa, sending their roots deep into the community in which God planted them.

The Peters see Dashir as building a home and not just a lodge, putting relationships first as they strive to live with their staff as family and not just in an employer-employee relationship.

Living in Africa was in the “prenup,” but getting there was put on hold with the birth of their first child, who was born prematurely and spent half of his first year in the hospital on a respirator.

The Peters eventually found their way to Botswana with Mennonite Central Committee from 1999 to 2002, when their children were 9, 11 and 13. Darryl worked with a mission school as a teacher, while Shirley led Bible studies in a women’s prison in the capital city, Gaborone.

During that time, they met a Tanzanian



Shirley and Darryl Peters’ vision is founded on bringing Africans and guests together as friends.

through a very leaky roof. Bakari fixed the roof and they became best friends with him and his wife Agnes. That’s how they connected with Tanzania. Bakari and Agnes helped the Peters get started with their new life in the Arusha area.

For the entirety of their married lives, home life revolved around people coming for meals. Now the Peters have a business that includes people coming to their home for meals. Their guests have the added bonus of interacting with the extend Dashir “family” from the surrounding community and experiencing wildlife safaris to the Serengeti and other game parks.

The business makes it possible for the

Peters to live in and help their community. Business for God’s people is always about mission for them. For the past two years, they have employed 25 full-time contract staff and another 25 casual workers, which means 50 nuclear and extended families receive a steady income.

Over the past eight years, seven were devoted to building the lodge and grounds. The goal is to continue to develop the facility and to provide income for as many people as possible. Doing all the work by hand makes it possible to employ many.

The Peters are committed to living and dying in Tanzania if God wills. ☿



Maasai men dance for joy in Tanzania, home to Dashir Lodge and Safaris.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Insights from abroad

BY KARA BERGSTROM
Columbia Bible College
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Since I began as director of intercultural studies (ICS) at Columbia Bible College in 2013, the college has sent out 45 young adults to serve in a variety of contexts—Mongolia, Mexico, Mayotte, Myanmar, Macedonia, Moldova—and those are just the countries beginning with “M”!

After two years of academic learning, leadership equipping and spiritual preparation on campus, they practise implementing what they’ve learned abroad through a variety of service agencies, including



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEXTER VOLKMAN

Dexter Volkman and friends in Wadi Rum, Jordan, during his year of teaching high-school music through the MCC Serving and Learning Together program.

FOCUS ON TRAVEL

'Go if you can'

MCC learning tours a transformative way to travel

BY RENATA BUHLER

Mennonite Central Committee Canada

Mennonite Central Committee. All third-year ICS majors experience a unique, accredited internship as they minister cross-culturally for eight months to a year.

When they return, I am inspired. Many exhibit a deeper faith, a matured character and a nuanced view of issues encountered in the local context.

What follows are a few of their insights:

• **There are many** issues I'd cared about, but now that I've experienced them firsthand, I have such a deeper understanding and passion for those issues. It is one thing to be aware of what is happening in the world; it is another thing entirely to live where those things are happening and among those who are affected. . . . I have a much greater ability to empathize with those living in poverty.

• **I experienced** God's love for the poor and marginalized. . . . I was so grateful to be able to talk to the mothers for my ethnography project and to hear their stories. . . . These women spoke about God as their ultimate comforter and companion. . . . I believe God loves all people, but the way the poor and marginalized feel his presence seems to be something special.

• **My perspective** and understanding of refugees were shaped by my internship experience. My heart grew for these friends in a way I did not know it could. We chatted, laughed, drank tea, played with the kids and shared stories. It was a genuine time. Some became curious, asking questions and becoming more interested in Jesus. One asked for a Bible of his own. I saw that my passions lie with helping and befriending those on the margins of society.

• **We went with** the mindset of serving local pastors however possible. We were there to join what God was already doing through them. Serving looked like scrubbing mouldy kitchens, leading Bible studies or worship, or preaching on Sundays. Whatever we were asked to do, we tried to do it with a posture of a servant heart. This helped form deep friendships and freed the pastors for more ministry." ❧

"Seeing for yourself" can be a compelling motivator. It's one of the reasons Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) offers learning tours several times a year.

With projects in more than 50 countries in the areas of relief, development and peacebuilding, the scope of MCC's work is vast and complex. Learning tours are a tangible way to engage with MCC's work, often resulting in transformation for the participants.

"The tour was a bit of a shock to the system but in a good way," says Paul Langel of his experience on an MCC learning tour. "It widens our horizons to other realities."

Paul and his wife Tabitha travelled to Ethiopia from their home in Winnipeg as part of a learning tour in 2017. The tour highlighted MCC's education projects

with partners in the area.

"The quiet pride in nearly all Ethiopians we met was incredible and has stayed with me," he says.

For Adelia Neufeld Wiens, who attended an MCC learning tour to India, a highlight of her tour was meeting the MCC workers in the Indian capital, Kolkata (Calcutta).

"The staff hosted us for several days, taking the time to show us around, visit with us, and take us to visit their projects," she says. "We not only got to see the work of MCC, but also meet the people who work so hard at creating meaningful and impactful projects."

MCC plans the tours in consultation with local partner organizations. There's an intentional focus on interaction with

(Continued on page 34)

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FOCUS ON TRAVEL

(Continued from page 33)

local people and learning more about the work together.

The tour generated new perspectives to consider for Neufeld Wiens. “The learning tour opened my eyes to the complexities of ‘doing good,’” she says. “It also made me aware of the interconnectedness of our lives. I watch the news and look at what I purchase with different eyes.”

Neufeld Wiens and her husband, Werner Wiens, the former leader of MCC’s education projects support program in Canada, both grew up in households involved with MCC. “When the opportunity came up where we could actually see some of the MCC projects in India, I was keen to join in,” she says. “I would say, ‘Go if you can!’ It is an incredible experience.” ✎

For more information about MCC learning tours, visit mcccanada.ca/events.



PHOTO NEXT PAGE BY ROSE SHENK
During an MCC learning tour in 2017, visitors and villagers walk along a gully in the Wotebet watershed in Ethiopia.

ServiceLinks

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Mennonite Disaster Service

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



mds.mennonite.net

FOCUS ON TRAVEL



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at canadianmennonite.org



Give up complaining for Lent?

On the CM blog, John Longhurst writes about a Kansas pastor who challenged his congregation not to complain.

canadianmennonite.org/no-complaints



Internationally renowned peacebuilder receives award

John Paul Lederach has been awarded the 36th Niwano Peace Foundation Peace Prize.

canadianmennonite.org/lederach-award



'She was ahead of her time'

Remembering Peggy Unruh Regehr, who championed the cause of women in leadership in Mennonite denominations in Canada.

canadianmennonite.org/pioneer-remembered



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"When women flourish, men also flourish," writes Carol Thiessen from Canadian Foodgrains Bank. "Their families flourish. Their communities flourish. We all win."

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ONCE ROUND THE BARN

the **Twang** edition



Watch Will Braun's latest video rant on all things country.

www.canadianmennonite.org/once-round-barn-twang

CANADIAN Mennonite





Deepening Our Relationship With God

Lisa Williams
MC Eastern Canada

MCEC Annual Church Gathering April 26 & 27, 2019



“Attending to our relationship with God means attending to the movement of the Spirit in our lives and listening for God in Scripture, prayer, silence and other deliberate ways.”
- April Yamasaki

“We were created for relationship—with ourselves and with one another, with the earth and with God,” says April Yamasaki, keynote speaker for MCEC’s Annual Church Gathering in April. “In the busyness of life, we might tend to take one or more of these relationships for granted, but if they are to flourish, they need some tending. Attending to our relationship with God means attending to the movement of the Spirit in our lives and listening for God in Scripture, prayer, silence and other deliberate ways.”

Deepening our relationship with God is the theme for the MCEC Annual Church Gathering at Steinmann Mennonite Church on April 26 and 27, 2019 drawing on Psalm 27. Our relationship with God is the most important relationship in the life of a Christian. What does it mean to have a close relationship with God? How can we strengthen this relationship and care for our spiritual needs? How and where do we encounter God and how can we deepen that relationship?

“Throughout MCEC there is a heartfelt thirst to connect meaningfully with God,” says David Martin, MCEC executive minister. “As we prayed about Annual Church Gathering, this need or thirst continued to bubble to

the surface. April will help to guide us through this important conversation.”

April Yamasaki is from Abbotsford, British Columbia and is a writer, pastor and author of books on spiritual growth and Christian living. She was the first woman ordained for pastoral ministry in Mennonite Church British Columbia and pastored at Emmanuel Mennonite Church (Abbotsford, BC) for 25 years. She speaks widely in churches and other ministry settings and serves as Resident Author with Valley CrossWay Church, a liturgical worship community in Abbotsford.

Mike Erb and Anneli Loepp Thiessen will lead worship at the gathering. Mike Erb is a professional musician in the Waterloo area and has been instrumental in the new Mennonite Church worship project: Voices Together, a hymnal and worship music/resources project. He is co-president, owner and instructor at Sight and Sounds Studio in New Hamburg. He and his wife, Diana Erb, form a traditional and original country-roots band, Twas Now.

Anneli Loepp Thiessen is passionate about sacred music. She is also involved with Voices Together and brings a rich depth of worship training and love for worship in the church.

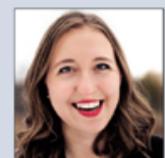
She is a piano performance and pedagogy student at the University of Ottawa and a recent graduate of Canadian Mennonite University with a Bachelor of Music Concentrations in piano performance and music ministry. She has worked the past number of years with Ontario Mennonite Music Camp as a director and instructor.

Friday evening holds an open invitation to all of MCEC to gather to worship, listen to God and celebrate the MCEC community of congregations. April Yamasaki will address those gathered. The evening will conclude with a celebration reception. Register at www.mcec.ca.



Speaker:
April Yamasaki

Dynamic worship team for MCEC Annual Church Gathering. April Yamasaki, Mike Erb and Anneli Loepp Thiessen, will focus on deepening our relationship with God.



Worship Leaders:
Mike Erb and Anneli Loepp Thiessen

Psalm 27



“Psalm 27 expresses a deep, personal relationship with God in times of joy and trouble,” says April Yamasaki. “It points the way to how we might deepen our relationship with God.”

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?
2 When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.
3 Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.
4 One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.
5 For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.
6 Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice
with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the LORD.
7 Hear my voice when I call, LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.
8 My heart says of you, “Seek his face!”
Your face, LORD, I will seek.
9 Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me,
God my Savior.
10 Though my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will receive me.
11 Teach me your way, LORD;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.
12 Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
spouting malicious accusations.
13 I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.
14 Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.

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Markham Christian Worship Centre and Refuge de Paix Confirm Relationship with MCEC

Ten years ago, Markham Christian Worship Centre joined MCEC as an emerging congregation. They are 75 people, predominately Tamil, with roots in Sri Lanka.

“We have some ministry ideas,” says Pastor Kapilan Savarimuthu, “but it is only when we put those plans into the presence of God that God will speak to and lead us.” The congregation has set aside specific days for fasting and prayer for the ministry of the church. He continues, “As a church, we are here to sow the seed and make disciples. God does the work and has a time and a plan that will prevail when we trust Him.”



Pastor Kapilan (right), Pastor Roberson (Hagerman MC) and Pastor Paul (Markham Chinese MC) celebrate new worship facilities.



Members of Refuge de Paix offer friendship, peace and hope to their neighbourhood.

Spotlight on Discernment

Youth Ministry

A consultation will take place in April with youth and adults from MCEC to name challenges, dream about possibilities for youth ministry today and begin to articulate a vision for youth ministry within MCEC. Hear what this group of committed leaders across MCEC have discerned together.

Mission Ministry

We anticipate an announcement of our new Mission Minister. Hear the vision of mission ministry within MCEC. How is God calling and leading us?

Discernment Documents, By-Law Changes & Financial Reports

An important part of our gathering is the “business” of the church. Faithfulness and stewardship undergird ministry within MCEC. Documents are posted at www.mcec.ca

Established in 2006, Refuge de Paix in Sherbrooke, QC, became an MCEC emerging congregation in 2011. Under the leadership of Pastor Lucy Roca, God has impacted many lives through this congregation. They provide a space for prayer, counselling and encouragement in their neighbourhood, responding to needs as they arise. They offer support to many Hispanic migrants, guiding and helping them to navigate their new surroundings.

Markham Christian Worship Centre and Refuge de Paix will be received into full congregational membership at this year’s Annual Church Gathering in April.





KNOW Poverty

2019 Poverty Studies Summer Institute

May 2019 • Calgary, AB

Are you passionate about ending poverty in Canada? Join the Canadian Poverty Institute for the annual **KNOW Poverty Summer Institute**. Come and be part of a unique learning community as we explore the material, social and spiritual dimensions of poverty and a faithful response to it.

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- Reconciliation and Organizational Change
- Gender-Based Analysis
- Trauma-informed Care
- Building Inclusive Communities Including the Voice of Lived Experience
- Data and the Common Good

Visit www.povertyinstitute.ca/study-poverty or email povertyinstitute@ambrose.edu for more info.

Calendar

British Columbia

May 4: Women's Inspirational Day, at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Speaker: Sarah Bessey.

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

May 13-15: Faith studies conference, in Lethbridge.

May 31-June 1: MCC Relief Sale, in Coaldale.

Saskatchewan

April 6: "Thirsting for God" Lenten silent retreat, at Shekinah Retreat Centre, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

May 24-26: Junior-high retreat, at Elim.

July 28-Aug. 1: "Shake: Rattled by the Radical," a gathering for Mennonite youth in grades 6 to 12, at Shekinah Retreat Centre. For more information, visit prairieyouth.ca. Early deadline for travel subsidies and sponsor discounts is April 26.

Manitoba

April 4: Spring at CMU fundraiser, at CMU, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m. Featuring the presentation of the 2019 CMU Pax Award to author Rudy Wiebe.

April 6: Canadian Mennonite 48th annual fundraising dinner, at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, at 6:30 p.m. Music by the Accent Women's Ensemble. Reservations required; email office@canadianmennonite.org and put "CMU April 6 dinner" in the subject line, or call toll-free 1-800-378-2524 x221.

April 19: Winnipeg's First Mennonite Church, accompanied by an orchestra, presents Bruckner's "Requiem in D Minor and Mendelssohn's "Christus"



Redekop School of Business

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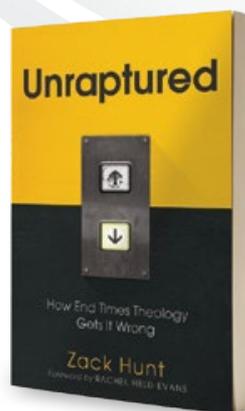
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The word rapture is not in the Bible. So how did we build a whole theology around it?



Part memoir, part tour of the apocalypse, and part call to action, *Unraptured* traces how the church's focus on escaping to heaven has it mired in decay. Teetering on the brink of irrelevancy in a world rocked by refugee crises, climate change, war and rumors of war, the church cannot afford to focus on the end times instead of following Jesus in the here and now.

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oratorio, at the church, at 7 p.m.
Offering will be taken.

April 26: Spring concert, at CMU, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

May 4: Exhibitions by Yisa Akinbolaji and Gabriela Aguero open at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg. Runs until June 22.

Ontario

Until April 12: "Gichitwaawizi/Igewin: Honouring" exhibition of artworks by Catherine Dallaire, at the Grebel Gallery, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

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

March 31: Pax Christi Chorale presents Miziwe... (Everywhere...), the world premiere of a newly commissioned oratorio sung in the Ojibwe/Odawa language (with subtitles), at Koerner Hall, Toronto, at 3 p.m.

April 6: "Following Jesus together as Anglicans and Mennonites, Pt. 1," at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Instructor: Pablo Hyung Jin Kim Sun.

April 6,7: Menno Singers present

"Lamentation," a Lenten service: (6) at Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener, at 7:30 p.m., (7) at Knox Presbyterian Church, Elora, at 3 p.m.

April 13: Women of MC Eastern Canada Enrichment Day, at Floradale Mennonite Church. Resource person: Marilyn Rudy-Froese. Theme: "Travelling companions: Staying centred and attuned to God's voice through the uncertainties of life."

April 15,16: Spring seniors retreat, at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Theme: "The many faces of Africa. Speakers: Dave and Mary Lou Klassen. (Same program each day.) For more information, visit hiddenacres.ca. (Register by April 8.)

April 19: Grand Philharmonic Choir, Children's Choir and Youth Choir, with the K-W Symphony, present J.S. Bach's "St. Matthew Passion," at Centre in the Square, Kitchener, at 7:30 p.m.

April 22-26: MCC Ontario meat canning, in Elmira.

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.



Mennonite Central Committee
Relief, development and peace in the name of Christ

British Columbia

Employment opportunity
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

This full-time position provides leadership and expertise to the accounting operations of MCC BC and its subsidiaries, and manages the various administrative functions of the organization.

Qualifications
 CPA Designation. Minimum of 5 years of accounting experience in a leadership and supervisory role. Knowledge and experience of both for-profit and not-for-profit accounting principles & regulations strongly desired. Strong analytical and communication skills. Ability to coordinate finance and administrative needs in a multi-faceted organization.

All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to: a personal Christian faith and discipleship; active church membership; and nonviolent peacemaking.

Anticipated Start Date: May 1, 2019
 For full job description and to apply visit: mccbc.ca/openings
 For more information contact Sophie Tiessen-Eigbrike, MCC BC HR Manager at 604-850-6639 Ext 1129

Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

Employment opportunity
Intentional Transition Pastor
 Calgary, Alberta

We are a multigenerational, urban church of 174 members. The fellowship was established in 1956 and is a member of Mennonite Church Alberta and MC Canada.

An Intentional Transition Pastor is sought to guide the congregation after the departure of its lead pastor of 20 years. We invite you to acquaint yourself with us by visiting our website, www.foothillsmennonite.com. Foothills MC is an Anabaptist faith community that desires to embody, share and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Calgary is a large, modern city with excellent educational opportunities and ready access to Canada's national mountain parks.

Please direct inquiries to: office@foothillsmennonite.ca, Attention of the Chair, Search Committee.

MENNONITE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Mennonite Collegiate Institute, located in Gretna, Manitoba, is searching for a *principal* to start in August 2019.

Our principal must be passionate about our mission, provide effective leadership, promote a vision for Christian education and build community – both within the school and its supporting constituency. We are seeking a person with a strong calling to serve within this dynamic context.

MCI continues to build upon a strong heritage of Christian education, which began in 1889. Our school includes both domestic and international students from Grades 9-12. Approximately one-half live on campus in the school's residence.

To find out more about this exciting position or to submit a resume, please contact the search committee at searchteam@mciblues.net.

www.mciblues.net





Thank you!

You are continuing Ted Friesen's vision for a Mennonite publication for prophetic voices. Your gifts this past fall totalled nearly \$60,000, with close to 20 percent coming from new donors.

We are grateful for your confidence in us as we continue to build this publication, both digitally and through the printed word.

Ted Friesen, the driving force behind *The Canadian Mennonite*, walking home from work as he did every day, into his 90s.

Artist: Margruite Krahn

Margruite Krahn/00

**CANADIAN
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