

## Canadian faces of MDS in Texas

Photo Essay, pg. 28-31



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## EDITORIAL

# Motivated by fear

Tobi Thiessen  
PUBLISHER



Two hours into a conversation that I deeply regretted starting, the man seated next to me said, “Most people on this airplane are probably not Christian. If this flight starts to crash, I will stand up, tell everyone to repent [of their sins], accept Jesus as Lord and be saved. Otherwise, they will spend eternity in hell. Will you help me?”

We were flying from Calgary to Toronto in March. I was returning from the Mennonite Church Alberta annual delegate session; he, from a conference with his own church. He wasn’t actually asking for my help. He was testing my commitment as a Christian.

What a question. An Ethiopian Airlines flight had crashed only days earlier. If our flight crashed into Lake Superior—whose icy surface I could see from my window—we would die too. In everyday life, people may not see a need to claim Jesus as Lord and be saved, but facing imminent death, people might take interest. My seatmate saw an airplane crash as a chance to save some souls.

He was probably correct to assume few people on the plane were Christian. In this issue of *Canadian Mennonite*, Ryan Dueck’s column on page 8, “Who will pick up the baton?” comments on the decline of religious affiliation in Canada.

At the MC B.C. annual gathering in Vancouver this winter, keynote speaker Jared Siebert noted that, in Canada today, many people know very little about Christianity and they have a poor

impression of Christians. If someone asks why you are Christian, Siebert said, don’t give them a list of beliefs held by your denomination, like Mennonites practise adult baptism and are pacifists. Instead, he said, explain why you are a believer. What is it about your faith that is worth sharing?

My seatmate believed that the reason to tell people to repent and be saved was so they could avoid God’s punishment. He needed to do this or he would be punished too. It was a complete contrast to my faith, which begins with the premise that “God is love.”

Our conversation started because he was reading the Book of Joshua. It was so unusual to see someone on an airplane reading a Bible—let alone the Book of Joshua—that I asked if he might be a preacher preparing a sermon. It turned out that he had a Bible reading app on his phone and this was part of the day’s readings. I said that Joshua is a book Mennonites struggle with because of the violence carried out in God’s name and this is what led to a lengthy conversation about obedience and “God’s justice.”

We had two completely contrasting views of Christian discipleship. He was fearful of punishment at death. I spoke of positive reasons for being faithful now. He flipped back and forth through his Bible, citing verses that showed God punished the disobedient. I pointed out that Jesus frequently criticized the Pharisees and Sadducees for being too legalistic, and that Mennonites took inspiration from Jesus’ daily life, in which he offered grace, healing and

hope to the needy and marginalized in society.

All this had led to my neighbour’s question. “If this airplane is going down, we need to save the people who have not accepted Jesus, or they will be condemned. We will be condemned too if we don’t try. Will you help?” he asked again.

Can one stand up while an airplane is crashing? Would anybody even hear? I didn’t think I should mention the physical challenges of his plan. He would have reminded me that “nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37). In any case, fear is not rational, so there was no point arguing further.

I told him I would.

## New columnists sought

*Canadian Mennonite* is looking for writers to expand our roster of columnists. If you participate in a Mennonite Church Canada congregation, have writing experience and are interested in sharing personal experiences and insights with our readers, we welcome a proposal. Columnists should have a particular focus for their column (for example: peace and justice, or an evangelical theological perspective). Columnists write 600 words 12 times a year and receive a small honorarium. Send your proposal, including a column focus and name, and one sample of a 600-word reflection to editor @canadianmennonite.org.

## Corrections

Sherbrooke Mennonite Church’s neighbourhood ministry program has volunteers from seven churches and a core group of 20 families. Incorrect information appeared in “A place to belong,” April 15, page 15. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the errors. ❧



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PHOTO: JOHN LONGHURST, MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE

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## FEATURE

## THE OPIOID CRISIS: PT. 1

# Who is my neighbour?

Exploring the church's response to the opioid crisis

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent



PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/WILDPixel

**T**he language is stark: crisis, epidemic, tragedy. The facts are startling. According to a Government of Canada website, opioid-related overdose has become the No. 1 cause of death for people under 50. In 2016, there were 3,017 such deaths in Canada; in 2017, there were 4,034; and in the first nine months of 2018, there were 3,286.

It can be overwhelming to imagine how to address this crisis, but Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont., recently finished a six-week adult and youth Sunday school series entitled “The opioid crisis: Understanding addiction as a disease.” The six sessions were packed.

Mabel Hunsberger, a retired health-sciences professor, and Jodie Boyer Hatlem, Erb Street’s co-pastor, shaped the series after members of the congregation expressed a desire to learn more about the problem in Waterloo Region, where 20 people died from overdoses in the first three months of this year.

They sought input from members of the church and wider community: a doctor, a pharmacist, a politician, a spiritual caregiver and social service providers. Topics included the scope and history of the crisis, how opioids work in the body, community strategies and resources for treatment, and how churches can accompany people who are suffering.

## How did we get to this point?

Many people lay the blame for the current crisis at the feet of pharmaceutical companies that developed pain medications containing opioids and marketed them despite their addictive properties, and the doctors who over-prescribed the drugs. This led to a black market

**Moral bias, blame and judgment create a burden of guilt and shame that keeps addiction hidden and people suffering in isolation.**

demand for stolen prescription drugs. Currently, fentanyl (a synthetic opioid) and carfentanil, which is even more potent, are being integrated into other illicit drugs, all of which can be injected. Because the amount of carfentanil equivalent to a few grains of salt is deadly, imprecise dosages can easily trigger an overdose.

But Joe Mancini, co-founder of the Working Centre, a social agency in Kitchener, Ont., argues that what contributes to addiction also has deeper, more systemic roots. In his organization's newsletter, he writes that "dislocation is the root cause of addiction." When people no longer feel they belong, he says they often use drugs "to mask trauma, abuse, shame, failure and stress."

John Neufeld, executive director of the House of Friendship, a Kitchener-based social services agency, concurs. He cites the three E's:

- **Economics** (being raised in poverty).
- **Environment** (being raised with abuse, neglect or dysfunction in the home).
- **Experience** (an unforeseen, traumatic incident).

These can lead to poor health outcomes, including drug addiction, later in life. He emphasizes that the best way to mitigate the impact of these E's is to have buffers: caring and compassionate family, friends, counsellors, mentors and others, who provide support and encouragement.

### Dispelling the myths and breaking the stigma

Hunsberger says that one of the major goals of the Sunday school series was to reduce stigma around the use of drugs. Moral bias, blame and judgment create a burden of guilt and shame that keeps addiction hidden and people suffering in isolation. She emphasizes that "individuals from all walks of life can be affected by the opioid crisis," which means this is "close to home" and impacts families, friends and coworkers.

Neufeld echoes the concern about the

harm of stigma. He says the church needs to see addiction as a medical condition rather than a moral failure, and approach treating it the same as heart disease or cancer.

### How can churches respond?

Certainly, lots of people of faith work on the front lines as healthcare providers, street outreach and social workers, counsellors and spiritual caregivers. As people of faith, Christians are called to love and serve their neighbours.

Margaret Nally is a long-time spiritual caregiver to the staff at the Working Centre and conducts memorials when the people they serve die. She calls on people of faith to "bear prophetic witness to the burdens of sorrow and sadness and poverty that people live with." Doing so, she says, acknowledges that "all people are created in the image and likeness of God," and affirms that "all human life has worth and value."

Increased knowledge helps people name and examine their biases, prejudices and assumptions, and helps to reduce fear and stigma. "Fear is dissipated when we have knowledge," Neufeld says. That's why people should seek out experts in the church and community, learn about local social-service agencies and treatment programs, find out what governs political decisions, and listen to the stories of people who are suffering.

Nally says it is also important to draw attention to the "structural issues that marginalize people." She says so much

could be solved by addressing poverty, lack of jobs and insufficient affordable housing.

Neufeld agrees that the church should ask "uncomfortable questions," such as, why are people in our society feeling so "disconnected . . . that they need a substance to allow them to escape?" He gave the example of a Kitchener pastor who provided a "strong voice of advocacy" around the location of a harm-reduction site, insisting that it was needed now. Civic leaders responded to his pleas, demonstrating that the faith community can impact political decisions.

Creating healthy communities can be one of the best ways to prevent addictions and overdoses. Nally says that the church, at its best, should be able to welcome and incorporate a wide range of people.

Neufeld adds, "The church has got to keep doing what church has always done best: community. Churches can be the drug of choice."

And churches can encourage developers to build affordable housing, and inspire members to volunteer at food banks and shelters, make and serve meals for people who are hungry, and welcome newcomers. As Mancini describes it, churches need to "create places of welcome that work to counter-act dislocation."

According to Neufeld, it is the role of the faith community to be "people of hope . . . people of light." ❧

## THE OPIOID CRISIS: PT. 2

# Walking alongside people with addictions

By Rachel Bergen  
Contributing Editor

**A**cross the country, opioid addictions are taking hold and claiming thousands of lives. But at the same time, a number of Mennonites across Canada are walking

alongside people with addictions and providing essential services, including informal pastoral care, social services and advocating on their behalf.

Caleb Redekop, 27, is one such



person.

He attends Rockway Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., and works as a community outreach coordinator at the Kitchener Public Library. He's worked in the field for five years, previously at a men's shelter doing street outreach and harm reduction.



**Caleb Redekop**

"I identified a desire to work with people experiencing homelessness because they're displaced people within a Canadian context," he says. "They're pushed towards harsh realities. A huge indicator of someone experiencing homelessness is that they'll struggle with addictions and mental-health problems. Society doesn't know how to properly deal with those people."

"If we attribute [addiction] to an individual and not a systemic concern, it allows us to ignore their pain and suffering," he says, adding that stigma has very real consequences for people living with addictions.

Redekop gave a sermon at Bloomingdale and St. Jacobs Mennonite churches last summer, calling on listeners to follow Jesus' model of challenging stigmas and approaching people with addictions with love instead of judgment. Sometimes stigmas can result in a "not in my backyard" mentality, he says.

Another is Sarina Brandt, 24, a member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C. She works for Abbotsford Community Service's low-barrier women's residence called Hearthstone and the Elizabeth Fry Society in its dry treatment facility.



**Sarina Brandt**

She grew up in Abbotsford, a community with a history of poorly treating people who experience homelessness and drug addiction. For many years, the community had an anti-harm reduction bylaw that prohibited services like supervised injection sites and needle exchanges, unlike Vancouver, which is only an hour's drive away.

She says that sort of mentality doesn't help the problem: "From my perspective, harm-reduction and housing-first policies are reducing what's happening in my backyard. If you don't want people to be using, overdosing or dying in the street, then it's less about getting it out of your backyard and [more about] talking about preventing it in the first place."

Alisha Nafziger, 31, attends the Gathering Church in Kitchener and is an addiction counsellor in a residential treatment centre. She also does day treatment community counselling with House of Friendship.



**Alisha Nafziger**

She says that her more-than-eight years of working in the field have forced her to change many of the stereotypes she had about people with addictions.

"Addiction is the Band-Aid to cope with all the stuff underneath," she says. "I'm working with people to process the



PHOTO BY SARINA BRANDT

*A collage Sarina Brandt made with some of her clients at Hearthstone, Abbotsford Community Service's low-barrier women's residence.*

even-harder stuff: the trauma, the hurt and the shame."

"Jesus came for those who are sick and in need of healing," she adds, "so to judge is in direct opposition. I view myself as a little vessel to bring some light into dark spots, and help them feel acceptance." ❧

### /// For discussion

1. How has your life been touched by opioid addiction or overdoses? How severe is this crisis in your part of the country? Who is working to reduce the damage of opioid addiction? Where do you see hope for improvement?
2. Janet Bauman quotes Joe Mancini, who says that people use drugs "to mask trauma, abuse, shame, failure and stress." What are the best ways for a community to work at dealing with these systemic roots of addiction? Is homelessness more of a cause or more the result of addiction?
3. Those who work with addicts say it is important to love and not to judge those caught in homelessness and drug addiction. Do you find this hard to do? Why have we tended to see addiction as a moral failure?
4. Bauman writes that the best way to prevent addiction and overdoses is to have healthy communities. What makes a healthy community? How well does your congregation foster a sense of belonging? How can churches strengthen their bonds of fellowship?

—By Barb Draper

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## /// Readers write

### ✉ Easy to sympathize about abortion, but hard to rationalize it

**Re: “Can we talk about abortion?” April 29, page 10.**

In reading Melissa Miller’s column, it is easy to sympathize with the women who are in a position to make such a decision. It is easy to rationalize abortion. However, does our rationalizing supersede what God says?

Jane Roe (Norma McCorvey) changed her mind after the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that, under the clause of the 14th Amendment, women had the right to choose. McCorvey, who died in 2017, became a pro-life activist, saying that the abortion “was the biggest mistake of my life.”

Regardless of what former U.S. first lady Barbara Bush, or the 1968 issue of *Christianity Today* say, we better concentrate on what God says. Psalm 139:13-14 reads: “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

That doesn’t sound to me that life begins after birth. People might begin the process of life, but if God is involved in creating my inmost being in my mother’s womb, I, for one, don’t want to pretend my rationalization overrides what God says. God does not appreciate our disobedience.

While I find it easy to be sympathetic to Miller’s point of view, I believe her conclusions are dangerous.  
PETER WIEBE, SASKATOON

### ✉ ‘God’s loving presence’ evident at ‘Beyond binaries’ event

**Re: “Queer and quirky and profoundly worthy of wonder,” April 29, page 14.**

What a joy to attend the “Beyond binaries” event on April 6. God’s loving presence was so evident throughout the day: in the joyful and inclusive welcome, the prayerful worship, the thoughtful and

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biblical theological reflection, the helpful workshops and the respectfully curious questions.

Christ’s radical kindness and God’s call to love and justice were the foundation for the conference, and they underscored every moment. LGBTQ+ Christians and we allies were encouraged and equipped to continue God’s good work in the world.

The article summarized very well God’s loving inclusion of all: “People of all genders are created in the image of God, are beloved of God and are essential parts of the body of Christ.”

KRISTEN MATHIES, WATERLOO, ONT.

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Klassen**—Aizalee Rowan Danielle (b. March 26, 2019), to Jeffrey and Stephanie Klassen, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Kroeker**—Aubrey June (b. April 18, 2019), to Daniel and Megan Kroeker, Morden Mennonite, Man.

### Baptisms

**Maria Klassen**—Breslau Mennonite, Ont., May 5, 2019.

### Marriages

**Funk/Siemens**—Alex Funk and Joel Siemens, at Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon, Feb. 16, 2019.

**Klassen/Noble**—Jessica Klassen and Kenton Noble, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg, Jan. 12, 2019)

### Deaths

**Cameron**—Hugh, 66 (b. July 4, 1952; d. April 8, 2019), Toronto United Mennonite.

**Falk**—Erna, 91 (b. April 27, 1928; d. May 8, 2019), Morden Mennonite, Man.

**Good**—Olive (Snider), 99 (b. May 20, 1919; d. March 25, 2019), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

**Nafziger**—Edna (nee Gerber), 83 (b. Dec. 5, 1935; d. April 21, 2019), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

**Neufeld**—Greg, 56 (b. Dec. 10, 1962; d. May 1, 2019), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

**Neufeld**—Martha, 90 (b. Nov. 10, 1928; b. April 26, 2019), Bergthall Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

**Ramer**—Paul Eugene, 58 (b. March 26, 1961; d. April 24, 2019), Wideman Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

**Spink**—Tasha Lynn, 38 (b. Aug. 23, 1980; d. April 12, 2019), Grace Mennonite, Prince Albert, Sask.

**Steingart**—Mary (nee Epp), 91 (b. Sept. 6, 1927; April 30, 2019), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Who will pick up the baton?

Ryan Dueck

I was recently invited with a handful of other clergypersons to lunch at a local seniors home. Between the main course and dessert, the conversation turned, predictably, to the decline of the church.

There was talk of the good old days when churches were full, the culture was Christian and people dressed up on Sundays. There were half-hearted diagnoses of the problem and the odd limp solution offered. There was a recognition that the structures we've inherited aren't working anymore. There was longing and lament, however guardedly it was expressed. Who wants to ruin a nice lunch, after all?

There was an older Buddhist priest there, too, and I made sure to sit beside him. My wife is Japanese, and I've had the opportunity to get to know him at various family and church events over the years. He calls me his "Bible teacher," and I call him *Sensei* (teacher). I had observed him listening politely to all of this nostalgic memorializing of "our Christian past."

Near the end of our lunch, *Sensei* leaned over to me and asked me why I thought that the Christian church was having such trouble in this culture.

I gestured toward the usual suspects—postmodernism, consumerism, individualism, pluralism. But then I had the good sense to stop talking and ask him what he thought. "What about you? Do you see similar trends in your context?" I asked. He smiled. "Oh yes," he said. "Not many people come on Sundays. We have people who attend cultural events at the temple and who are interested in Japanese celebrations and rituals. But not many are interested in the Buddhist teachings. Mostly the older people."

His concerns were identical to what I hear in church circles. What will happen when the carriers of this tradition and culture die? Who will pick up the baton? Will anything survive beyond cultural curiosity and selective practice?

We sat together with this for a bit. I looked out into the dining area where the

seniors were finishing their lunch. I thought about what some of them had seen over their many decades, what many of them had suffered. Some had seen war, some had known poverty, some had endured backbreaking labour that I struggle to imagine.

I turned to *Sensei* and said, "Perhaps we will have to suffer for our communities to grow and thrive again." He smiled. "I think so," he said. "The Japanese community was strongest here when we first arrived in southern Alberta during the war. We needed each other to survive. We were a community with a shared purpose."

I nodded along as I thought about the history of my own Mennonite community and about the church around the world. There certainly does seem to be a correlation between suffering and the strength of the church, both historically and in the present. There is an existential urgency that suffering often produces, that easily withers and dies in contexts of comfort. It's not a lesson that I particularly want to learn, but I wonder if it might be necessary. ❧



Ryan Dueck ([ryandueck.com](http://ryandueck.com)) serves as pastor of Lethbridge (Alta.) Mennonite Church.

## A moment from yesterday



Streetscape of Nipawin, Sask., in the 1920s. Mennonites first began moving to Lost River in the Rural Municipality of Nipawin in the early 1900s. By 1906, they were meeting in homes for worship. In 1913, Bishop Abraham Doerksen of the Manitoba Sommerfeld Mennonite Church travelled to the Nipawin area, where he baptized 42 people and ordained Aron Doerksen and Abram R. Bergen as pastors. In 1917, Bethany Mennonite Church was built.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Mennonite Heritage Archives



[archives.mhsc.ca](http://archives.mhsc.ca)



## FAMILY TIES

## Pray for the city

Melissa Miller

**N**early 20 years ago, my husband accepted a job offer in Winnipeg that resulted in our family's move from Ontario, a place we had called home for 22 years.

While I appreciated his opportunity, I was also quite distressed. Like some sensitive flowers, I do not transplant readily, and the move was hard on me. I grieved the distance between Manitoba and my extended family in Pennsylvania. I missed my house and my friends. I lost the social and professional networks that I had cultivated in Ontario. I yearned for the rolling hills and purple-blue mountains of the east, and I was disquieted by the endless Prairie horizon.

After six months, I reported to a friend that I was no longer crying every day, a small sign of progress. I truly felt like something in me had died and I was not sure what kind of life the future held. Bit by bit, new life called to me through the beauty of the vast, ever-changing sky; a canopy of elms blanketing old neighbourhoods; the vibrant art and music; the resilience of Prairie farm families; and through acquaintances who became friends, patiently loving me through my homesickness.

One Sunday, the preacher read an unfamiliar scripture: "*Pray for the city*

*where I have sent you into exile, for in the city's welfare [shalom] you will find your welfare*" (Jeremiah 29:7 paraphrased). It was one of the times when God's voice sounded disturbingly clear, shocking as a bucket of cold water in the face. I remember nothing of the preacher's sermon, but I long pondered the text and its meaning. I did feel like an exile, and the verse did command me to pray for the city in which I'd landed. God knows a city needs prayers.

I began to raise such prayers. I gave thanks for generous green spaces and long, flat biking paths; for hardy winter dwellers and snowflake crystals on my eyelashes; for abundant water, smog-free air and endless summer days. I raised prayers of intercession for woebegone potholed streets, for the 25 percent of children living in poverty, for those harmed by structural racism, for victims of murder.

Prayer changes things, I often say, and prayer changed me. My original distress gave way to a fondness for the city and its people. Prompted by Jeremiah's ancient words to an exiled people, I came to see the relationship between my well-being and that of the city in which I had been a reluctant dweller. As I hear over and over again from Indigenous elders, we are

infinitely interconnected. Our *shalom* is tied to the *shalom* of all the other creatures of the Earth. In my case, that includes the Filipino woman who greets me as we pass on the sidewalk, the beaver chomping leaves by the river, jazz musicians in the park, and the snowy owl sunning itself at the top of the hydro pole on a winter's day.

The time has come to leave Winnipeg. In a few months, my husband and I will pack up our downsized belongings and return to Ontario. Perhaps it's not surprising that I am shedding a few tears as I prepare to leave. Maybe Jeremiah knew that if one prays for a city, one creates a heart-space for that place. One becomes attached to it, and cords of compassion, caring and joy bind one to the other. One hopes the place and its people will know God's *shalom*. Even if Jeremiah didn't know that, I'm pretty sure the Spirit did, and used those words to guide me home. ❧



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

## Et cetera

## They thank God for Trump

According to the Pew Research Center, 69 percent of white evangelicals in America "approve of the way Donald Trump is handling his job." White Catholics come in at 44 percent, while only 20 percent of religiously unaffiliated Americans approve of their president's performance. All three numbers are down from a year ago.



'Vague Orange Man.' acrylic on canvas, by Jon Owen, 2017.

## THIRD WAY FAMILY

# The holy task of parenting

Christina Bartel Barkman

It was at the baseball diamond on my 36th birthday that I stumbled upon a breaking point. It came as a deep gut conviction, a weary heartfelt and tear-filled prayer, and a holy call from my Lord.

After an embarrassing stand-off in left field with my seven-year-old, in which I could not convince him to comply, I came home feeling defeated. When our four little ones were finally asleep, I sat beside my most defiant, stubborn and sensitive boy, and wept. In those moments of prayer, I vowed to give my “all” so that he would always feel unconditionally loved and absolutely secure.

The week I stumbled into this refreshed commitment to love better I had been reading Gabor Maté’s book *Scattered Minds: The Origins and Healings of Attention Deficit Disorder*, and I had been feeling the grave importance of being a constant, steady and emotionally self-regulated parent to my not-so-self-regulated child.

In searching for techniques to parent a child who has ADD—we’re in the process of having him diagnosed—this book reminded me that no technique, discipline plan, schedule or punishment/rewards tactic will have an ounce of success if the parent is not emotionally self-regulated, confident, calm and loving.

Basically, how we parent doesn’t matter, but who is parenting is what makes the entire difference. So that means who I

am—my state of mind, my ability to self-regulate, my resilience in the face of my kid’s frustrated meltdowns, and my capacity to ensure he feels loved and secure—is the single defining factor to promote his growth and development. Talk about a tall order for this mama!

Later that week, as I dove more into what this means and how my son can heal, I realized more and more how much his success lies with me and my husband. Maté writes, “The relationships with the parents is the earth, the rain, the sun and the shade in which the child’s mental development must blossom.”

I need to nurture our relationship, whatever it might take. I need to show a deep and unflinching love to my son, and not let his antics get under my skin. When he’s picking fights with his brother and sister, making us late for school and keeping the little ones awake at bedtime, it’s hard not to flood him with negative attention and demands to be different, better, calmer, more attentive. But when at school and at home he is constantly fed a message that he’s not doing things right, how does that affect his inner peace and sense of worth?

I want my son to know deeply how much he is loved, just the way he is. I want him to know, in his heart of hearts, that he is exactly the person I want him to be, exactly the person God created him to be, and feel completely safe in his identity.

As Maté writes, “The child can be

ornery, unpleasant, whiny, uncooperative and plain rude, and the parent still lets her feel loved. Ways have to be found to let the child know that certain behaviours are unacceptable without making the child herself feel not accepted. She has to be able to bring her unrest, her least likable side, to the parent without fear that it would threaten the relationship. When that is made possible, absolute security is established. We can reliably expect emotional growth to follow.”

If I am to create the space for my child to feel unconditionally loved and absolutely secure, I believe that I, first, need to feel and believe this truth. If I know in my heart of hearts that I am precisely the person God wants and loves, and that I don’t have to do anything or be any different to earn that love, then I will have the confidence, love and maturity to create that same foundation for my child.

With God’s abundant grace when I fail, and also my son’s grace, a supportive community around me, and my deep God-given passion to love, I feel fully up to the call of this holy and most-difficult task of parenting. ☸



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

## Et cetera

### Give to Caesar what is God’s

Many European governments collect a church tax from registered members of religious groups and then forward that money—totalling billions of euros annually—to the groups. While growing numbers of people are opting out by de-registering from their church or religious body, most are not. For instance, in Denmark, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Finland and Sweden, between 68 percent and 80 percent of citizens pay the church tax.

Source: Pew Research Center

Photo: Tomasz Przechlewski (CC BY 2.0 licence)



*Photo of a Danish church.*

## GATHERING 2019 REFLECTION

# God's love will ignite the church's future

Lee Dyck



**W**hen you live on the west side of the Rocky Mountains and sometimes feel isolated from the rest of the country, what does it mean to be part of our nationwide family of faith?

This summer's nationwide gathering in Abbotsford promises to bring that connection closer to home for us here in B.C. As Mennonite Church British Columbia hosts MC Canada folks from across the country, MC B.C. people will connect with our brothers and sisters in the faith, and we trust that this will be reciprocated. It will be a time to celebrate the movement of the Spirit of God both locally and around the world as we come together to share and learn.

For many, MC Canada assemblies were like family gatherings. People reconnected with friends and family they might not have seen since the previous year. This is the spirit in which we gather to "ignite the imagination of the church." We are a family, and even the best, most functional family has members who don't agree with each other about everything. In fact, even their memories are in different colours! But they are family. The love that brought them into being continues to connect them, and so with us.

God's love for each of us individually, and as a community, inspires and will be

the force that ignites the church's future. This is not something we dream up; it is a reality to be claimed and to be curious about.

This future requires vision and courage to try new things. We are all aware that the "same old" isn't the same anymore. As Richard Rohr wrote in his daily meditation several weeks ago, some of us never get past the "cleaning up" stage to the "growing up," "waking up," or "showing up" stages. We need our imaginations sharpened and our eyes wide open as we participate in "kingdom come" here on earth as it is in heaven. An awareness of God's presence is key to total confidence in being beloved and living as the beloved in the community God has placed us.

Think of Moses and the burning bush, or hear the disciples who walked with Jesus to Emmaus say they felt their hearts burning within them as he talked with them, or remember Christmas Eve

candlelight services. All are images of igniting something that may start small but then grows. From one candle others are lit, and soon what was a darkened sanctuary is beautifully alight. Everyone participates; no age, gender or race barriers here. Igniting is a group event and, in this case, it takes the whole church.

On Easter Sunday in my home church, there was *paska* and coffee in the adult Sunday school class. As folks were helping themselves, word of it leaked out into the halls and one young man came into the room to see if he could have some.

"What's the password?" someone asked.

"Um. . . He is risen?" he queried quietly.

"Help yourself," came the reply.

With that, word of both the *paska* and the password gained momentum, and soon there was a line-up of youth repeating, "He is risen," and sharing in our *paska* communion.

When imaginations are ignited, the possibilities are endless. All are welcome to Gathering 2019, to share something so contagious that it cannot be contained but must indeed be shared. ☞



*Lee Dyck is moderator of Mennonite Church British Columbia.*

## Et cetera

### Burgeoning growth in the Global South

**Overall, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) member churches have grown by two percent annually from 2015 to 2018. In Africa, MWC churches grew by five percent, while in Latin America the growth was six percent. Two-thirds of Anabaptists are found in the Global South.**

Source: Mennonite World Conference website: "A growing church: A look at reported church members in 2018."

Photo: Mennonite World Conference



**Anabaptist women theologians met in Honduras in August 2018.**



## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

# Healthy interpersonal confession

Troy Watson

**A**s the saying goes, “Confession is good for the soul but bad for the reputation.”

Have you ever wondered what Jesus thought about his reputation? Word around town alleged he was an illegitimate child, a glutton, traitor, blasphemer and drunkard who hung out with debauchees and was probably demon possessed. His unorthodox behaviour, controversial teachings and frequent association with questionable people only made it worse. It seems Jesus didn’t care about his reputation.

Jesus focused on character development. The way of Jesus is essentially about becoming the best possible version of ourselves, namely, one who loves God, self and others fully and freely, without judgment. Character development and reputation management are often at odds with one another. When we’re concerned about our reputations we make choices that make us look good rather than choices that help us grow.

Focusing on character development, rather than managing our reputations, is an important and difficult reprioritization in life. Interpersonal confession helps us make this shift, as it invites us to be honest about who we are. This is not something humans excel at.

A great deal of research reveals the person you’re worst at evaluating is you. We are prone to overestimating our abilities, gifts and attributes, such as intelligence, objectivity and generosity. For example, more than 90 percent of us perceive ourselves to be above-average drivers. This tendency to overestimate how wonderful we are is called “illusory superiority.” This issue is compounded by the fact that we work really hard to convince others that this inflated and unrealistic image of ourselves is who we actually are.

This problem has exploded expo-

nentially in our social-media paradigm. We compulsively post things on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Tumblr that reinforce our personal brand or preferred self-image, because of our need to be viewed by others the way we think and feel about ourselves.

Life coach Tony Robbins says, “The strongest force in the human personality is the need to stay consistent with how we define ourselves.” It’s extremely difficult and painful to recognize, own and integrate the aspects of our lives that don’t fit with how we define ourselves. Most of us need help to face the uncomfortable and inconvenient truths about ourselves, and to allow God to shine a light into our shadows (the hidden, disavowed and unknown parts of our beings).

This is terrifying for most of us, and next to impossible to do on our own, because we have blinders preventing us from seeing the contradictory totality of our complicated selves. We need others to speak and mirror truth into our lives with love, grace and courage.

This is why the Christian practice of interpersonal confession is so important. It creates intentional space for us to be vulnerable and find the courage to face the various ways we fail to measure up to the best possible version of ourselves. It opens up our lives to others who can help us unveil the truth of who we are, enabling us to see aspects of our beings we routinely hide or are unable to see on our own.

I know from personal experience how profoundly and deeply healing it is to reveal one’s deepest, darkest secrets to someone you trust and respect, and to hear the person say, “You are forgiven. You are loved.”

Counsellors, therapists and spiritual directors have taken the role of our “confessors” today. This makes sense, as they are trained to guide us to self-real-

ization while protecting us from falling into debilitating shame and self-loathing. Good “confessors” help us see that all our behaviour is rooted in our deepest desire to be fully known and fully loved. They help us integrate the root energy of our brokenness, weakness, fear, insecurity and anger by seeing these “negative” aspects of ourselves as manifestations of unintegrated positive attributes of our true self.

However, our “confessors” must be psychologically, emotionally and spiritually mature to help us guide our whole selves into the transformative light and grace of God. This full exposure to divine light is the only way to be set free from our compulsive tendency to preserve our unrealistic self-images and to accept who we are, liberated to fully manifest our true selves in daily life.

I believe interpersonal confession is something we need to rediscover how to do in our church communities in safe and healthy ways. God’s original design was for us to do this with one another rather than reserving the “confessor” role to professional counsellors, therapists and spiritual directors. However, confessing to a professional “confessor” is significantly better than ignoring this important spiritual practice altogether.

✎



*Troy Watson (troydw@gmail.com) is still convinced he’s an above-average driver.*

*This concludes a three-part series on confession, which began with “Confession as a personal spiritual practice,” April 1, page 11, and, “What ‘confessing your sins to one another’ isn’t,” April 29, page 13.*

## BOOK REVIEW

## Opioid crisis: A view from the inside

*Addiction Nation: What the Opioid Crisis Reveals About Us.*  
Timothy McMahan King. Herald Press, 2019, 272 pages.

Reviewed by Barb Draper  
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

Timothy King found himself addicted to opioids when complications after surgery led to intense pain and serious illness. In *Addiction Nation*, he describes what it feels like to be trapped in a cocoon of addiction and how he was able to achieve recovery with the help of a kind doctor and a supportive family.

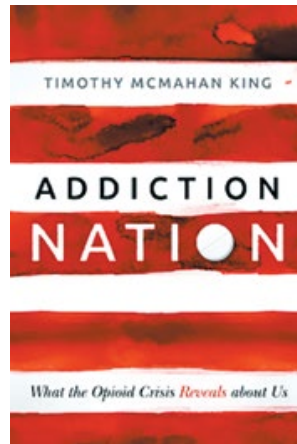
Although he uses personal experience, this book is not a memoir. King has researched addiction extensively and explores the world of compulsive drug use—how and why it happens, and what responses are helpful. An experienced writer, he describes complex ideas in an easy-to-read style. Throughout, he uses stories from the Bible to illustrate how Christian faith fits into the discussion.

For King, the opioid crisis is a symptom of a larger problem. He writes, “It is born out of a crisis of meaning, a collapse of culture, constant consumption, corporate corruption, the end result of a so-called War on Drugs, a breakdown of public institutions, and a stifling of opportunity.”

He points out that in the last 40-plus years North Americans have experienced an erosion in family and community life, and a corresponding sharp increase in overdose deaths. He argues that when life loses its meaning, drugs are a way to cope with the resulting distress.

One of the most important things that King’s doctor told him was that his addiction was not his fault; it did not happen because he was a bad person. This statement allowed King to move beyond blame and shame, and toward recovery.

The assumption that an addict is morally deficient is never helpful, declares King. Punishment and shame do not lead to recovery; they only make the addict crave the feeling of security the drug delivers, however short-term that may be. The



disease model that compares addiction to diabetes or heart disease is a better approach, he says, but the reality is even more complex. Just as there is no single cause for the opioid crisis, there is no simple solution to it.

Our brains are complex, and decisions are made by both the “automatic” self and the “conscious” self, says King. He writes, “It is a breakdown in communication between the automatic self and the conscious self that is at the core of addiction,” explaining why it is not effective to just choose not to take drugs. When habits become ingrained and are attached to emotions, conscious decisions have little influence.

King explores the history of drug use and the history of pain medications. He is scathing of Purdue Pharma, the company that misled doctors about the addictive qualities of opioids for years and used aggressive marketing to push Oxycontin. The result has been skyrocketing abuse of opioids. At the same time, King recognizes that medication has a vital role to play in dealing with acute pain. Opioids are both a beneficial medicine and a harmful poison.

Throughout *Addiction Nation*, King

cites various studies discussing the factors that influence addictions. Although it is not a guarantee, those who feel secure in their homes and families are better equipped to keep addiction out of their lives. Dislocation and trauma, on the other hand, increase the attraction of drugs.

Another factor that influences our tendency to addiction is whether or not we feel we are in control of our lives. Those who have little control and few choices are more vulnerable. He argues that drug dependence begins not as a rejection of morality, but as a search to satisfy a need that is lacking. It is the pursuit of something good that ends up backfiring.

“Addiction’s power is how it mixes the truth and lies. The devil doesn’t come with a pitchfork, hooves and the smell of sulfur; the devil comes as an angel of light,” writes King. He explains that the path to addiction is a search for meaning in life, for connection with others, or for safety, but in the end the path leads to destruction.

The power of this book is King’s honesty and willingness to be vulnerable. He shows that addiction is not something that happens to others, to “them.” All of us are susceptible to addiction, and dependence comes in many forms. Rather than viewing it as an individual moral failing, we should view it as a cancer growing in our society. As his title indicates, this crisis is a community problem.

King writes with compassion from an openly Christian perspective. He does not say that a simple faith in God can triumph over addiction, but he explains how faith in God can help in the recovery process. I recommend this book for anyone interested in knowing more about addiction and the opioid crisis. ❧

## NEWS

# 'I am getting help now'

*MCC supports mental-health care for the poorest in Haiti*

Story and Photos by Paul Shetler Fast  
PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI

“Close your eyes and imagine you are walking to your garden,” says Saint-Hilaire Olissaint, a community mental-health worker. His calm, soothing voice carries over the din of the nearby street market and the curious chatter of the children watching nearby.

“You open the gate and see the plantain leaves glistening with dew. The trees are heavy with ripe fruit and your plants are loaded with corn, beans and tomatoes ready to harvest. You can smell ripe guavas and wet earth from the rain last night, you can feel the hoe handle, gritty in your hand. You can hear your goats in the distance.”

As he talks, the woman to his right, his patient, is holding her chest tightly with one hand, her eyes pinched shut, smiling. Tears are running down her cheek. She is muttering “Thank you, Jesus” under her breath as he narrates each part of this guided visualization exercise.

Noel Derenis, a 57-year-old widow in the rural community of Lahoye, Haiti, a half-kilometre from the Dominican border, has major depression. Like many people with mental illness in Haiti, she suffered for years before being able to get the mental-health care she needed.

This visualization exercise is but one tool among many that MCC’s partner, Zanmi Lasante, the Haitian branch of the non-profit Partners in Health, uses to address mental-health needs.

Community mental-health workers like Saint-Hilaire do initial screenings, refer patients to higher levels of care when it’s needed, provide regular followup and teach coping skills, like the visualization exercise. They also educate the community about mental health to reduce stigma.

People who need higher levels of care can get talk therapy from psychologists and social workers. Doctors provide medication, if needed, and manage the

care of the most-complex patients. Last year, Zanmi Lasante’s mental health program worked with 2,210 patients.

“It all started when my husband got



*Guerres Lucien, outside her home in Lahoye, Haiti, is a participant in an MCC-supported community mental-health project with partner Zanmi Lasante, the Haitian branch of Partners in Health.*

sick and died,” Derenis says. “We spent everything we had on medical care, and he still died. I was left with nothing, and I had four children to take care of. I had to take them out of school. We didn’t have enough food to eat. I was panicked. I couldn’t breathe. I couldn’t think. I began to see things and hear things that weren’t there.

“My children were suffering because of me, and I saw that,” she continues, “but this only gave me more shame and sadness. If I were not a Christian, if I didn’t have these four children to feed, I would have taken my life long ago.”

Untreated mental illness is a serious public health concern because it not only reduces the number of years a person is productive by as much as a third, it results in suffering and premature death, according to various studies.



*Noel Derenis, centre, who has major depression, stands outside her home in Lahoye, Haiti, with her team of community mental health workers Joseph Benissois, left, and Saint-Hilaire Olissaint, who have helped Derenis to regain energy to care for herself and her family.*



Yet funding for mental-health care around the world makes up just 0.41 percent of total global health funding. While MCC is a relatively small funder, it spends an estimated 1 percent of all private philanthropic dollars on global mental health by supporting eight mental health projects in Afghanistan, Haiti, Lebanon, Nepal, Palestine, Syria and Tanzania.

According to most experts in the field, including the recent Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development, the majority of mental-health care available in economically poor countries like Haiti is of low quality and often consists of warehousing extremely sick patients in psychiatric hospitals rather than providing effective treatment.

Zanmi Lasante's model of mental-health care is based on the principle that the poorest people in Haiti deserve high-quality, effective, compassionate mental-health treatment. Whenever possible, care is brought to people's homes and communities, to make it accessible to even the most vulnerable and remote people.

"I am getting help now," says Derenis, smiling shyly at Saint-Hilaire. "I still have times of sadness, and my economic situation is still so difficult. Sometimes I am overwhelmed by all I cannot do for my children. But I get counselling now and I have medication that helps me hang on to hope. I have energy to love and take care of my kids. I have energy to work and clean and leave my room. I am much

better, thanks to God."

Another participant from Lahoye, Guerres Lucien, says, "When I could no longer work, couldn't leave my house or care for my children, my family called me lazy, stupid and crazy. It's by God's grace that I lived long enough to get this help and come to know that I could heal, and that it wasn't my fault that I suffered like this. I'm so thankful I don't live like that anymore." ❧

*Paul Shetler Fast is serving as MCC's global health coordinator and is based in Haiti.*

## CMU celebrates the class of 2019

Story and Photo by Canadian Mennonite University  
WINNIPEG

Another academic year came to a close as Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) recognized the accomplishments of 96 graduates on April 27, when president Cheryl Pauls conferred 78 undergraduate degrees, 15 master's degrees, and three undergraduate certificates at the convocation service held at Portage Avenue Church.

The Class of 2019 included the first-ever graduate from CMU's bachelor of science program, Taysa Dueck, while Erin Froese and Sara Wolowich became the first students to graduate with environmental studies majors.

Pauls awarded President's Medals to Erin Froese (BA, four-year, environmental studies) and Mackenzie Nicolle (BA, four-year, social science), in recognition of their qualities of scholarship, leadership and service.

Tegan Willick (BA, four-year, psychology) delivered the valedictory address, based on this year's graduation verse from Philippians 4:9: "Whatever you have

*learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put that into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."*

Willick said that she and her peers at CMU were taught not only course material but also how to care for the world. When learning how to face the world's seemingly endless problems felt overwhelming, she turned to community to find hope. "No one can care about everything all the time, but a community that cares is capable of sustaining empathy," she said.

She referred to the event hosted at CMU in March, when more than 700 people gathered in support of Bill C-262 and the adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Canadian law.

"Our grad verse asks us to put into practice that which we have learned, received, heard or thought," she said. "If what we have learned is the care and hope demonstrated that day, then we truly have



**Tegan Willick delivers the 2019 CMU valedictory address, based on this year's graduation verse from Philippians 4:9.**

everything we need to see us through what lies ahead."

Another significant milestone this year was the first graduation of an Albanian student from CMU. Masimo Picaku (BA, four-year, business and organizational administration) was one of the first two students to come to CMU from the Lezha Academic Centre in Albania in 2014. Five years later, 22 students from that school have since attended CMU.

In honour of this occasion, Klementina Shahini, executive director and principal of the Lezha Academic Centre, delivered the graduation address. She drew from Acts 20:32-35, which is about working to support oneself and others, and ends with Jesus' words: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." ❧

# Challenge and hope on the road

*Third in a series of annual MWC events commemorating the 500th anniversary of the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement*

By Kristina Toews and Karla Braun  
Mennonite World Conference  
SAN RAFAEL DE HEREDIA, COSTA RICA

**“W**e enthusiastically celebrate that we are a Christo-centric, borderless, faith community, because, as part of Mennonite World Conference [MWC], we fraternally unite with 107 Anabaptist and Mennonite [national churches and one international association] across 58 different countries in the world,” said Maykol Luis García Morelli, president of Asociación de Iglesias Cristianas Mennonitas de Costa Rica, as he welcomed MWC leaders and local guests to the Renewal 2027 event, “Justice on the journey: Migration and the Anabaptist story,” on April 6 at Iglesia Vida Abundante in San Rafael de Heredia.

Renewal 2027 is a 10-year series of events commemorating the 500th anniversary of the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement. Each year, local churches host the event in a different region of the world.

## Justice on the journey

“We take seriously the teaching of Jesus,” said Carlos Martínez García, an Executive Committee member, who gave a testimony on how Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas Anabautistas Menonitas de México works with displaced people.

“The Anabaptist tradition invites us to be faithful followers of Jesus and his gospel, especially in the midst of global crises such as wars, destruction, violence and injustice . . . where many people must leave their homes and migrate. It is for this reason that on this occasion we are examining the theme ‘In pursuit of justice,’” Morelli said.

A worship band from Costa Rica and traditional folk dancers opened the day of singing and worshipping together

attended by around 450 people, including MWC officers, executive committee, lead staff, Young AnaBaptists (YABs) Committee members and visitors.

Latin American contributors Belinda Rodríguez and Jaime Adrián Prieto Valladares addressed the theological and historical context of the event.

Rodríguez related experiences of forced migration from Honduras, saying, “God requires love and obedience from his children,” paraphrasing Leviticus 19:33: *“When the foreigner lives among you in your land, country, city, etc., do not mistreat them.”*

“The teachings of Jesus, our Anabaptist Mennonite experience of migration, and the songs of migrants, then, should lead us to take pastoral action,” said Valladares, a Mennonite historian from Costa Rica, who organized his presentation around a poem by Carlos Drummond de Andrade. “How can we, as churches, contribute in order to offer a better future to migrants and their children? Will it be possible for us to imitate and follow Jesus along the path of the migrants? Will we allow the Holy Spirit to move us so that we create and sing songs to migrant girls and boys that allow them to dream of peace?”

## Finding home

From each continental region, speakers shared a testimony of challenge and hope.

“I learned that to belong is a two-way street,” said Liesa Unger, MWC’s chief international events officer, who moved to Germany from Siberia as a child. “Whether I belong or not does not only depend on the others who need to accept me, it also depends on me—whether or not I accept the invitation.”



MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE PHOTO  
BY HENK STENVERS

**A worship band from Costa Rica and traditional folk dancers opened the day of singing and worshipping together attended by around 400 people, including MWC officers, executive committee, lead staff, YABs Committee members and visitors.**

“The story of migration is one that we all share as brothers and sisters in an eternal kingdom,” said Larissa Swartz, YABs North American representative. “Our spiritual identity is that of foreigners in a foreign land on a pilgrimage to reach our true home.”

“No matter what are the ways of the enemy, let us not forget that our God is the God of restoration,” said Paul Phinehas, MWC Executive Committee representative from India, who focused on the story of Joseph in Genesis to emphasize the role of family in God’s restoring process.

Zaida López of Costa Rica offered a challenge: “When we meet a migrant in our country, do we think, how would I like to be treated if I were in their place? And, rather than discriminate against them, we offer them a helping hand because they offer an opportunity to share the love of God.”

## Praise and prayer

To close the event, participants gathered in groups with people they hadn’t met before to pray for Latin American countries with the greatest rate of forced migration. ☸

# Murky lessons from a political firestorm

*Mennonite politicians reflect on SNC-Lavalin affair*

By Will Braun  
Senior Writer

As the partisan jostling over SNC Lavalin wanes, we can more clearly examine the ethical questions at the core of a scandal that Mennonite cabinet minister Jane Philpott stepped right into the middle of.

Philpott and former justice minister and attorney general Jody Wilson-Raybould brazenly called out the Prime Minister, sacrificed promising political careers, took a big pay cut, and undermined the prospects of the party they said they still support—all on account of moral conviction.

The story was complicated; the principles were basic. Do ends justify means? Is there a time to stand for one's beliefs despite collateral damage?

## The back story

In 2015, Canadian authorities charged SNC, a massive Quebec-based engineering firm, with paying \$48 million in bribes to Libyan officials and defrauding Libyan entities of \$130 million. The charges have not been proven in court. The company then launched a lobbying campaign to have the Criminal Code changed so it could avoid criminal prosecution in favour of lesser penalties. The Liberals made these changes in 2018.

Under the new law, the decision of whether to offer SNC its desired “deferred prosecution agreement” lay with the director of public prosecutions but could be overridden by the attorney general.

The director of public prosecutions said SNC did not qualify. Wilson-Raybould, in defiance of Trudeau—who wanted the easier path for SNC—refused to overrule the director of public prosecutions.

Wilson-Raybould eventually resigned

from cabinet and Trudeau expelled her from the party. Philpott—who, in addition to stints as health minister, Indigenous services minister and Treasury Board president, is a member of Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville, Ont.—also resigned from cabinet, in ethical solidarity with her colleague and was likewise expelled from the Liberal party.

Other parties—as if unwavering exemplars of ethical purity—predictably clamored to extract partisan gain from the situation as the Liberals surely would have if the roles had been reversed.

## Former Mennonite politicians weigh in

I spoke with two retired Mennonite politicians about SNC and the ethical mathematics of politics.

Ray Funk was an NDP MP from Saskatchewan from 1988 to 1993. Berny Wiens served in the NDP government in Saskatchewan from 1991 to 1999, holding numerous cabinet posts. Both were circumspect about SNC.

They spoke about the dynamics within a caucus (the elected members of a party). A key element of the SNC affair was that two cabinet ministers openly contradicted their caucus colleagues and leader, something not tolerated in our political system.

Funk spoke about division within the NDP caucus of his day on pacifism and abortion. Tough, direct debate took place, although in both cases it never came to a final vote that would have demanded hard decisions. He said caucus solidarity is essential to our system of government, but he also lamented the increasing control exerted by leaders, adding that MPs need some freedom to pursue matters of importance to them.

Wiens spoke about his government's move to allow more gambling. He stated his firm disagreement in caucus discussions, but, in the end, he was on the losing side. “Then, like a good cabinet minister,” he said, “I followed the party line.”

For him, the ethical calculation was that he could do more good as a minister within a government he agreed with on most issues, than by making a sacrificial personal stand on one issue, which would have presumably put him on the outside looking in.

Wilson-Raybould and Philpott seemingly made that calculation differently. Or perhaps they simply needed to do what they felt was right, no matter the consequences.

Funk said that, in a situation like the SNC affair, there are two things at play: “Do you take the high road?” and, “What good will it do?”

As for the Liberal party, Funk said it took a “partisan, electoral viewpoint” on SNC, and that ruled out the high road.

Both Funk and Wiens also suspect the public will never know all the factors in play.

When asked what he feels the public might not understand about politics, Wiens talks about sitting around the local rural coffee shop table with people whose views are well to the right of his. He is adamant that their political views are legitimate and that they should afford their opponents the same consideration.

In our political system, opposing views must be considered legitimate. Debate takes place, decisions are made. The majority wins, the minority loses. You try not to kill each other. You move on. You keep talking. Alignment often changes over time. New rounds of decisions are made. But we must give “credence” to opposing views.

As for whether Wilson-Raybould and Philpott were misguided in putting personal principles ahead of party pragmatism, Wiens said he is divided 51-49: “I’m going to have to leave that one in the muddle.”



Jane  
Philpott



# Church ditches ‘overt religiosity’ to become ‘community resource’

*Theatre 1308 shares space—but not identity—with Calgary Inter-Mennonite Church*

By John Longhurst

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
CALGARY

“Light up the church.” That’s what members of Calgary Inter-Mennonite decided they wanted to do when asked about ways to engage with their local community.

What that meant for the congregation of about 40 households was making their building, located in the northeast part of the city, available for use by others during the week—not only on Sunday mornings by congregants.

“We wanted it to be a community resource,” says congregational chair Dale Taylor. “We wanted to have things going on during weekdays.”

The result is Theatre 1308, a newly renovated and upgraded space available for community events.

The new venue opened with the first annual Bright Side Festival, which ran for seven nights from Feb. 23 to March 2.

The week-long event featured improv, stand-up comedy, concerts, a philosopher’s café and art show.

“There was good uptake and attendance,” says Taylor of the festival, which drew a wide range of people.

Bert Enns was Calgary Inter-Mennonite’s community care coordinator in 2017, when the congregation conducted a visioning process.

“It was clear people wanted a focus beyond Sunday morning,” she says. “We looked at it through the lens of how we could build up our own community while connecting with the local community.”

The idea of using the space as a theatre came from members Graham Neumann and his sister, Jody Neumann-Koop. The two noted that Calgary lacked smaller, well-equipped arts and performing venues; they felt the church, which seats about 90 people, could fill that need.



THEATRE 1308 PHOTO

**The group Hymn performs at the Bright Lights Festival at Theatre 1308 in Calgary on Feb. 24.**

They developed a business plan, including ways to get grants for upgrades such as rebuilding the stage, installing a professional lighting and sound system, adding a high-definition projector and screen, plus new microphones and floor monitors.

Together with others in the congregation, they worked on a brand image for the venue, and a name—it comes from the church’s address—along with the idea for a festival to launch the new space.

Before the grand opening, people from the area, including the local city councillor and members of the community association, were invited to see the building.

For the festival itself, church members signed up to serve as volunteers.

“It was fun to introduce our building to our neighbours,” says Enns, who took tickets for events. “It was exciting to see the building being used by the community, to welcome them into a space that we use for our faith and life,” she says.

For Neumann, who also volunteers as general manager of the theatre, it was

important to keep the church and theatre separate.

“Many churches rent their space, but it is still seen as a church, a sacred space,” he says. “We wanted a more welcoming approach.”

In addition to giving the theatre its own brand image and name, it also meant no overt religiosity in the space—no stained glass, large pulpit, pipe organ or other religious images or iconography.

“It helps to be Mennonite,” Neumann jokes, since Mennonite churches are not noted for those kinds of things.

Of course, he adds, “Everyone knows it is a church. But it’s definitely muted.”

Keeping the two separate makes it easier for other groups to use it, he explains. “There’s no mismatch in esthetics.”

Along with engaging with the community, the church hopes the new theatre space will help with upkeep and maintenance of the 76-year-old building.

“It spreads the costs of running the building further,” says Neumann of revenues from rentals. Down the road, this could also give the congregation, which sees between 30 and 50 people congregating for Sunday services, “more resilience” if numbers fall.

Taylor agrees. “Over the long term, we hope it will generate additional revenue for the church, paying for a portion of running the building,” she says.

With only a few months behind them, it’s too early to tell how successful the effort will be, she notes. But it is already giving the congregation “an outlet for its energy, something for us to connect around.” ❧

*John Longhurst is a religion reporter and columnist at the Winnipeg Free Press.*

# Grebel breaks ground to make space for community

*Half of the \$7-million-plus kitchen expansion already donated or pledged*

Conrad Grebel University College  
WATERLOO, ONT.

In the fall of 2020, Conrad Grebel University College students will start the school year equipped to be more welcoming and inclusive than ever before. On April 1, the school's board of governors approved the budget and final plans for a brand-new kitchen and an expansion of the dining room, and on April 23 groundbreaking ceremonies were held to get the process started.

Apart from small upgrades, the Grebel kitchen is the same size it was when the college opened in 1964. "Our food services staff are excited about new space that will help us to better serve a growing and diverse student body," says Cheri Otterbein, who manages food services.

In addition to regular student meals, the college has experienced increased catering needs over the years, as programs grow, and initiatives like the Kindred Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement, Conflict Management Certificate Program, and Anabaptist Learning Workshop become established.

Over the past 55 years, the dining room has undergone some moderate renovations, but as the Grebel community has grown, the people have exceeded its capacity. "Putting off-campus associate students on a waiting list for weekly community suppers doesn't send an inviting message," says Mary Brubaker-Zehr, director of student services. The expanded dining room will seat up to 300 people, a vast improvement from the current capacity of 220 for term-end banquets. "We look forward to the future, when we are all able to share a meal together, without leaving anyone out," says Brubaker-Zehr.

"The board is excited about the impact that the extra space and improved kitchen will have on students at Grebel," says

chair Jim Tiessen. "A key feature of the project is the inclusion of a stairway to connect the dining room directly to an expanded chapel foyer. This better connects the chapel to the other public areas and will serve the college well for the next 50 years."

Kate Steiner, who leads the music and worship program, says that "this physical connection reflects a programmatic commitment to have the chapel space and the spiritual life it represents better integrated into the academic life of the college."

Construction expenses will be more than \$7 million. The board has authorized using \$1 million of capital reserves for this project because many expenses, such as new windows, are maintenance-related. A fundraising advisory group is leading the "Fill the Table" campaign to raise \$4 million in donations. The remaining amount will be financed.

"We are optimistic about the generous response of supporters who understand hospitality and that eating a meal together is core to the Grebel experience," says Ruth Ann Shantz, fundraising chair, noting that almost \$3.5 million has been pledged or donated already.

"This has been a challenging project from a design and constructability perspective," says operations director Paul Penner, who chairs the building committee. "We are tying together two sides of a 56-year-old building, so we will probably find surprises. We also need to keep our students fed during construction, so coordinating schedules with the Nith Valley Construction team will be critical."

Brian Rudy, a Grebel alumnus, is the lead architect from Moriyama and Teshima Architects. "This kitchen design is bright and efficient, and expands the capacity," he says. "A dedicated special-



GREBEL PHOTO BY JENNIFER KONKLE

**On April 23, Conrad Grebel University College celebrated the groundbreaking for a new kitchen and dining room expansion project. Student council president Madeleine Neufeld, left, and Grebel president Marcus Shantz officially turned the sod while more than a hundred people cheered them on. With an anticipated completion date near the end of 2020, the project also includes an elevator and staircase to the chapel, a student pantry and a green roof.**

ized diet area and an after-hours pantry space are provided."

"Students are thrilled that their request for a pantry will be realized," says Hannah Hill, a student who serves on the fundraising committee. "This will be a space for associates to store and prepare their meals, and for residents to make late-night snacks." ❧

# Tuesdays at Faith

By Zach Charbonneau  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
LEAMINGTON, ONT.

Like at many Mennonite churches, the back of any given pew at Faith Mennonite in Leamington includes a blue hymnal, an offering envelope, and, for the lucky few, a small, colourful, hand-made encouragement card. These one-of-a-kind cards are something new and they point to a wily group of seniors who are helping to bring new energy into the life of the congregation.

What started as a Bequest Fund donation has become a vibrant community ministry, including both young and old, church regulars and newcomers.

For about the past seven months two groups have gathered at Faith on Tuesday afternoons.

Upstairs in the sanctuary is where the seniors meet. Linda Thiessen-Belch, a retired registered nurse, who previously worked in parish nursing and the community health team, and who has women's ministries training, leads the group.

"I've pretty much been given a blank slate," she says. "It's a bit of an experiment."

As such, each Tuesday at Faith provides a different opportunity for the partici-

pants to connect with one another and connect with their faith in a new way. Once a month, they participate in a book club, during which they share reflections on the books they are reading with the group. Other weeks include travelogues, social time and guest speakers, like the Ontario Provincial Police who visited to discuss ways to protect seniors against fraud. Of course, snacks and coffee are always on hand.

When asked what they enjoyed about Tuesday at Faith, members unanimous approve of the activities. Nancy Hogendyk says, "On Tuesdays I get to know each of you better beyond Sunday mornings. There's a life beyond Sunday morning church." Another responds that the event is "open to men, but we're not sure where they're hiding."

Along with the in-person aspect of the ministry, Thiessen-Belch is working on providing online offerings such as devotionals, reading material and other resources to provide something beyond the face-to-face interactions of the group.

In the basement, sounds of a wholly different kind of experiment waft up to meet



**Rita Unrau shows off one of the many 'encouragement cards' that have been distributed in Faith Mennonite Church's pews.**

the ears of the women upstairs. There, in the multi-sensory, laughter-filled party-kitchen, is where Sara Garnett, the church youth worker, has her hands full with 17 neighbourhood children learning to cook nutritious food. Like in any professional kitchen, there is chopping and sizzling going on, colourful vegetables being portioned out, aromatic spices being added to interesting dishes, and bodies moving in all directions washing something, passing something, throwing something.

Garnett is Thiessen-Belch's counterpart. She works with the children each week as the programmer of community connections and faith formation. Along with a group of volunteers, Garnett helps the children hone their cooking skills through "You're the Chef," a health-conscious cooking manual for young people put out by the local health unit.

"We're learning how to cook and it's really fun," says McKayla, a smiling fifth grader in the program. "We make things



**Tuesday's Book Club at Faith Mennonite Church includes, from left to right: Sonja Kuli, Joan Enns, Anne Reimer, Nancy Hogendyk, Rita Unrau and Linda Thiessen-Belch.**





**McKayla and her grandma, Marianne Dyck, pose for a shot while making vegetarian chili in Faith Mennonite Church's kitchen.**

without meat, so it's easier to make." Food preparation isn't the only aspect of cooking being taught, though. "We learned that you should check the labels for information about your food," says McKayla.

Tuesdays aren't the only nights for children to connect at Faith.

On Wednesdays, the church runs a general after-school program for students in grades 2 to 6. They play outside, building forts before coming in for snacks, small-groups activities and art time.

Garnett also started a tween book club that has youth bringing their friends to the church to enjoy books.

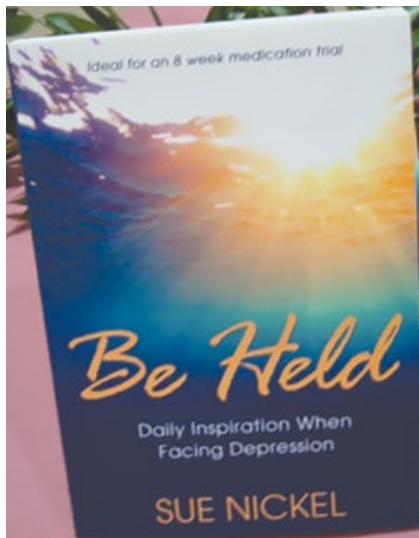
Thursdays are drama days. The children recently learned parts in a play written by Barry Bergen, husband of Faith's pastor, Ruth Boehm, that he based on the Book of Esther. The drama was performed publicly at a theatre in Kingsville.

Faith Mennonite's ability to hire capable staff to engage both young and old was made possible by a Bequest Fund donation from Agatha Neufeld.

"Her desire was that the community and church would be blessed by her bequest," says Boehm. "The biggest thing was the ability to improvise and experiment." ❧

### News brief

#### B.C. Women's Day has last-minute change



ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—When Sarah Bessey had to cancel her speaking engagement at the Mennonite Church B.C. Women's Day 24 hours before she was to speak, organizer Janette Thiessen contemplated calling off the whole event at great financial loss. But two women came to the rescue. Kelly Rader, the already-booked fall retreat speaker, who was scheduled to give a 10-minute teaser to the spring gathering, agreed to take the entire morning speaking time. Then Sue Nickel, the author of *Be Held: Daily Inspiration When Facing Depression*, who spoke on depression/mental health at the February LEAD conference, agreed to take the afternoon speaking time. Although more than 60 women cancelled when it became known that Bessey, a Christian author and blogger, would not be there, those who did come found the day to be worthwhile. Bessey has agreed to speak at next year's Women's Day, scheduled for May 2, 2020. "We are thinking of calling it, 'Awake my soul 2.0: second chance!'" says Thiessen.

—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

### News brief

#### Choral tradition continues with new Saskatoon choir



**Coro Nova performs at Knox United Church in Saskatoon on May 3. The choir is directed by Lynne Driedger-Enns and accompanied by Brenda Epp.**

SASKATOON—Coro Nova is a new 55-voice mixed choir based in Saskatoon; Lynne Driedger-Enns is its director. Several years ago, she and accompanist Brenda Epp founded a women's choir, which they called Sonrisa (Spanish for "smile"). Although they had regular concerts of their own, Sonrisa sometimes performed with A Buncha Guys, a men's choir led by Russ Regier. But when Regier died last October, that choir's more than 20-year run came to an end. In January, Driedger-Enns extended an invitation to both men and women to form a new mixed choir. Former members of both Sonrisa and A Buncha Guys joined, but so did a number of more seasoned singers. Coro Nova's May 3 concert, which was held at Saskatoon's Knox United Church, included sacred works by Rachmaninoff, Schubert and Thomas Tallis, as well as contemporary, secular pieces by Royal Canoe, Ian Tyson and Carly Simon. The choir's next season will begin Sept. 11.

—STORY, PHOTO AND VIDEO  
BY DONNA SCHULZ

To view a video of the choir singing, visit [canadianmennonite.org/coro-nova](http://canadianmennonite.org/coro-nova).



# CM brings home 10 CCP awards

Canadian Mennonite  
WATERLOO, ONT.

**C**anadian Mennonite executive editor Virginia A. Hostetler returned from Winnipeg following the 2019 Canadian Church Press (CCP) convention and awards banquet earlier this month with a total of 10 certificates for writing, photography, layout, and socially conscious journalism work CM published in 2018.

## First-place entries

### • A.C. Forrest Memorial Award for Socially Conscious Journalism, circulation under 10,000:

Senior writer Will Braun, author (“Modern ghosts of a horse-drawn scandal, Part IV: Humility,” Nov. 26, page 18). Judge’s comment: “This is more than a deft book review [of Miriam Toews’s *Women Talking*] and analysis, often written in the first person. . . . It endeavours to expand the boundaries of what is ‘socially conscious religious journalism.’” The award includes a \$1,000 prize.

### • Department, open:

Eight “young voices,” authors, and Aaron Epp, YV editor. Judge’s comment: “It’s not afraid to reference contemporary issues which are more likely engaging to young readers. . . . The space uses photography simply, but effectively, to engage the eye of the reader.”

### • Feature photo-magazine, circulation under 10,000:

Noah Friedman-Rudovsky, photographer (“Modern ghosts of a horse-drawn scandal, Part 1: Justice” cover photo, Oct. 8). Judge’s comment: “This is a wonderful photograph on so many levels. . . . I like photographs that make me look around and, in doing so, I find more things to look at. In the course of doing this I found that the chair was just a shadow.”



### • Front cover-magazine, circulation under 10,000:

Noah Friedman-Rudovsky, photographer, and Ross W. Muir, designer (“Modern ghosts of a horse-drawn scandal, Part I: Justice,” Oct. 8). Judge’s comment: “A great, simple photo that leaves lots of space for type, and which directly supports the story. . . . The shadows symbolically link to the scandal. . . . A really great, super-effective cover.”

### • Feature layout-magazine, circulation under 10,000:

Ross W. Muir, designer (“Pregnant with peace / An everlasting light” Advent feature, Nov. 26, pages 1,4 to 7). Judge’s comment: “The art [by Mennonite Collegiate Institute students Merle Yin, Celena Harder, Christy Zhang and Emma Unger, and Rockway Mennonite Collegiate student Shirley Zhang] is really, really good, and is very well handled within the layout. The opener is beautiful and the following spread is clear and nicely put together.”

## Second-place entries

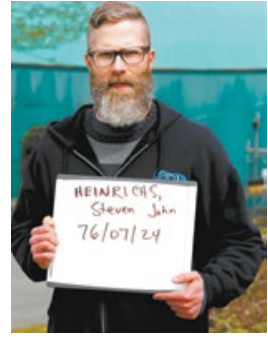
### • Editorial-magazine, open:

Virginia A. Hostetler, author (“Questions of conscience,” May 21, page 2). Judge’s comment: “Well-laid argument that doesn’t fall on one side or the other of an issue relevant to the readership, but rather an argument to persuade the community to make an informed decision on the issue. It’s an excellent call to action, where that action is reflection on the issue.”

### • Edition layout and design magazine, circulation under 10,000:

Betty Avery and Ross W. Muir, designers (Jan. 15 issue). Judge’s comment: “This issue features a lot of purpose-shot photos, which adds to the already high quality. . . . A great issue of a great magazine.”

## God at Work in the World Mugshot



PROVING THAT DISCIPLINE CAN SOMETIMES BE COSTLY, Steve Henrikes, M.C.C. Canada's Indigenous Sufferer Believers coordinator, was arrested during a protest of the Kinder Morgan Pipeline along with other religious leaders in Burnaby, B.C., on April 20. He faces criminal and civil charges for contempt of an order prohibiting protests at the site and an injunction issued by the B.C. Supreme Court.

### • News photo-magazine, open:

Jennifer Osborne, photographer (“Mugshot,” May 7, page 18). Judge’s comment: “This photo looks like a mugshot, with the seriousness of your subject’s face. He does not look happy. . . . well framed the way you have him almost caged in within the frame is very dramatic.”

## Third-place entries

### • News story-magazine, open:

Amy Dueckman (now Amy Rinner Waddell) and Ross W. Muir, authors (“Mennonite arrested at Kinder Morgan pipeline protest,” May 7, page 19). Judge’s comment: “This is very good journalism. Yes, we learn of Mennonites being arrested, but we also learn of dissenting points of view from within the Indigenous community and elsewhere. . . . The editor and the writers deserve credit for this balanced approach.”

### • Personal experience/first-person account, circulation under 10,000:

Henry Neufeld, author (“From ‘never a teacher’ to ‘why not?’” Sept. 24, page 4). Judge’s comment: “A valuable piece of history told by a man who, with his wife, had direct experience teaching in Indian Day Schools in Manitoba. He and his wife’s willingness to learn Cree and Ojibwe for bilingual classes didn’t go over well with the federal Department of Indian Affairs. But he did what he believed was right.”

# Elmira congregation hosts arts appreciation Sunday

By Fred Lichti

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
ELMIRA, ONT.

On a recent Sunday morning, Elmira Mennonite Church gathered to celebrate that God is creative and builds into the DNA of people the impulse to create. It was simply called “Arts Appreciation Day” and it was designed as a multigenerational, multisensory, experiential time of worship and learning.

After beginning with a time of traditional worship, the congregation was divided into three large, intergenerational groups that rotated through the building to different learning centres. At each centre, an artist introduced a different form of art or creative expression and helped the group understand how faith and values are expressed through his or her art.

Eugene Gostikov introduced congregants to the art of working with clay. As they passed around samples of clay and some of his finished sculptures, he talked

about the challenges and rewards of each piece. Gostikov is a self-taught sculptor whose love for working with clay grew out of a time of childhood illness when his parents gave him a gift of modelling clay as a pastime.

Drawing on his experience as a long-time high-school drama teacher and congregational song leader, Gord Davis led a workshop that incorporated poetry, singing and movement. First, he spoke of the long and rich history of drama in the church. He walked congregants through the theology of the song, “And I Will Raise You up on Eagle’s Wings” (Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 596) and taught them to sing it. Finally, the group stood up and added movement to the words.

In a more meditative setting, retired teacher Betty Dyck and elementary-school art teacher Jennifer Phillips led

a session on appreciating the fine arts. Drawing upon their skills as art critics and art historians, they invited congregants to reflect on how artists express their message through perspective, colour, light and darkness.

After the formal time of worship and learning, all generations moved to the church fellowship hall for the “Festival of the arts,” organized by Brenda Snider, where more than two-dozen painters, woodworkers, fabric artists, collectors, writers and photographers displayed their creations and gladly interacted with inquisitive congregants.

Although it took many outside of their Sunday-morning comfort zones, there was strong affirmation for the experience. ❧



PHOTO BY JEFF BAUMAN

Greg Bauman shows off the finer points of his photography at Elmira (Ont.) Mennonite Church’s recent ‘Festival of the arts.’



# Teaching with Talking Books

*Pre-recorded messages an effective way of getting information to rural Ghanaian farmers*

Mennonite Economic Development Associates

**T**eaching technical information to people who are mostly not literate can pose serious challenges. But if use of books isn't helpful, Talking Books can get the message across.

The Greater Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW) project of Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) has made wide use of Talking Books through a partnership with Literacy Bridge, a Ghanaian non-governmental agency.

More than a thousand lead farmers—producers trained to share information and best practices with their peers—who are part of the GROW project use the technology. Talking Books help them share critical information related to agriculture, gender, nutrition, finance, buyers and suppliers, and other matters that affect the farmers they work with.

The Talking Book is an inexpensive mass-communications technology that promotes learning opportunities for women, men and children. Literacy Bridge provides the book to the women in the GROW program at no cost. Users buy the AA batteries needed to power the device, which could also be run by electricity in areas where that is available.

Last year, MEDA's efforts to record timely and valuable advice on pest control saved farmers from having crops in the upper west region of Ghana being ravaged by an infestation of fall army worms. Early warnings helped farmers launch large-scale efforts to rid their fields of the worms.

"The Talking Book is much better than the radio because it deals with



PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN KUDER

*Ghanaian lead farmers Mariama Majeed and her husband Majeed Sohinwini listen to their Talking Book.*

issues that affect our daily lives," says Hilia Kazie of Kohuo, which is in the upper west region of northern Ghana. "The radio sometimes talks about things that are not useful to us, but we cannot ask the people inside there to switch to a differ-

ent topic. . . . With the Talking Book we decide what to listen to and when to do that. All the topics are useful."

Literacy rates among women in Ghana are much lower than the proportion of men who can read and write, particularly in rural areas. Talking Books are a powerful extension tool because multiple messages are recorded in the appropriate local dialect and uploaded to the devices for people to listen to and use. Messages are updated quarterly, as necessary, on emergency issues such as disease outbreaks or pest problems. MEDA technical staff put together the messages and have Learning Bridge translate them into seven local languages.

All MEDA groups in the GROW project have a Talking Book device. They listen to information during their village savings and loan association meetings, and also at the individual or household level, as the device can be shared among group members. If members miss a meeting or training session, they can listen to the Talking Book and catch up with their fellow farmers later.

Abina Bagiro is a 64-year-old lead farmer with the Neeweri group, which means "where is better." She has found that her participation in the GROW program and her use of the Talking Book have led to positive changes in attitudes around gender roles in her 14-member household, which includes five children and her husband. Prior to the start of the project, she was responsible for cooking, fetching water and caring for household needs, while her husband Fatawu



*A Talking Book.*



**Talking Books can be used by MEDA clients regardless of their level of literacy.**

Bagiro decided which crops to plant, took care of the farming and household decision-making. Now, she and her husband work together to achieve the common goal of improving living standards for their household. “The Talking Book teaches me how to take care of my children and the roles of a man, a woman and children,” she says.

Household members now share

responsibilities equally. Males pitch in with cooking, washing utensils and fetching water, while women help with farming and caring for livestock.

Fatawu realizes that he must rely more on his wife to care for him. He is now supportive of her choice of land to farm and gives her free access to the farm, which allows the family to plan their agricultural activities together.

“In my household there is nothing like ‘this work is mine and the other is not mine,’” Abina says proudly.

Her two married sons have also heard the Talking Book messages about gender and spousal relationships, and they have happy and peaceful relationships with their own wives and families. Those who shirk their responsibilities, or start to slip back into an old way of thinking, are referred back to the Talking Book to listen to the message again.

A lead farmer from Kohuo says the Talking Book messages have even helped to expand her family. “My in-law has become pregnant through the unification between [her] and her husband through the consistent learning to the gender messages,” she says. “It is my hope that, when she delivers successfully, I will even name the baby after MEDA or PRUDA [Partnerships for Rural Development Action, one of MEDA’s local partners].” ❧

*This article originally appeared in the July, 2018, edition of The Marketplace magazine ([bit.ly/marketplace-july-aug-2018](http://bit.ly/marketplace-july-aug-2018)).*



PHOTO BY BETTY LOEWEN / TEXT BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

**The Faith and Life Choirs perform their spring concert, ‘Come, let us sing’ on May 12 at Morden (Man.) Mennonite Church. The Women’s Chorus and the Male Choir also performed the same concert at First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg the day before. The choirs, which are a ministry of Mennonite Church Manitoba, first began in 1978 with a recording workshop of a mixed choir led by George Wiebe. The Male Choir officially began in 1984 and the Women’s Chorus in 1996.**



## PEOPLE

# 'I just want to help people'

*RJC student dreams of becoming a first responder*

By Donna Schulz  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
ROSTHERN, SASK.

**L**ike many of his peers, Nathan Bartel is fielding questions about what he plans to do after graduation. But, unlike some of them, he has a ready answer. He wants to be a firefighter.

Bartel grew up in Arnprior, Ont. His older brother, Emerson, has Duchenne muscular dystrophy, which, he says, "gave me a different outlook." He remembers that when he and his brother were younger, Emerson would sometimes get stuck while playing. "I would run to get my dad," he recalls, "and he would put on a fireman's hat and make a siren noise as he ran to rescue Emerson. That probably had more to do with my wanting to be a fireman than anything."

Bartel's family travelled to Rosthern

**But wanting to be a hero isn't his sole—or even his primary—motivator. His faith in Christ also plays a significant part.**

each summer to visit his grandparents. When Bartel was in Grade 3, his dad Kevin attended his 30-year class reunion at Rosthern Junior College (RJC). Bartel told his dad that he would also like to go to RJC when he was older.

So his parents bought a house in Rosthern.

"We would live here for the summer months, but close up the house for the winter," Bartel says. "When I started Grade 10 at RJC, I moved here with my mom." His mother Tammy works for L'Arche Canada and is able to do her work remotely, although she sometimes returns to Ontario to attend meetings.

His father remains in Arnprior, to care for Emerson and Stephen, an adult with a disability who lives with the family.

Life as an RJC student is busy, but Bartel still finds time to volunteer. For several summers, he has been a counsellor-in-training at Youth Farm Bible Camp. He also participated in a couple of short-term mission trips to Mexico through the camp.

A chaperone on one of those trips was a member of a volunteer fire squad. He told Bartel that many fire squads have programs for junior members. When Bartel returned to Rosthern, he called the Rosthern fire chief and asked if he could join as a junior member.

"Being a junior member has involved a lot of learning," he says, but it has also given him opportunity to earn a "legit firefighting certificate." Through class time, written tests and practical assignments, he received training in firefighting history; using an air pack, mask and bunker gear; and practising safety at the fire scene.

When he turned 18 and was no longer eligible to be a junior member, he applied to become a full-fledged member of Rosthern Fire and Rescue, and was accepted. He has already had his first official call, to fight a grass fire just outside of town.

Bartel's long-term goal is to be a career firefighter, but he plans to first train as a paramedic and, if necessary, work as a paramedic until he is accepted for firefighter training. He believes his volunteer firefighting experience will also be an asset as he works to make his dream come true.

His experiences as a counsellor in training at Youth Farm and as part of

RJC's Alternative Learning and Service Opportunities program have taught him the importance of listening and learning. "Knowing that you're a servant, but you're also there to learn," is critical, he says. "Often the best gift you can give is listening." He sees this as a necessary skill in being a first responder. "Even when showing up to an accident, it pays to listen and pay attention to the smallest detail," he says.



PHOTO BY JASON HOGAN

**Nathan Bartel is the newest member of Rosthern Fire and Rescue. He hopes to make a career of firefighting.**

He says there's "something romantic" about "being able to help someone in their worst hour of need." But wanting to be a hero isn't his sole—or even his primary—motivator. His faith in Christ also plays a significant part.

"I love the story of the Good Samaritan," he says. "He has no idea who the person is on the side of the road, but he just does what he can to help. I just want to help people. I think that's a huge part of it." ❧



# Pacifism and the art of theatre combat

*'I think that the idea of not making war is very different than making everything calm': Jacqueline Loewen*

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

Jacqueline Loewen just spent the weekend riding a motorcycle as a stunt double for a science-fiction TV show and will be rolling on the ground with strangers tomorrow, choreographing combat for Shakespeare in the Ruins' production of *Hamlet*.

Loewen, 36, is well-versed and well-known in the theatre world. She is an actor, stunt performer, writer, director, producer and fight choreographer, who has worked with the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre (MTC), Prairie Theatre Exchange, Rainbow Stage, Manitoba Opera and Little Opera Company, to name a few.

A highlight in her career came last year, when she took on the task of choreographing a four-minute kung-fu fight sequence for Vietnamese-American playwright Qui Nguyen's *Vietgone*, a play at the Royal MTC Warehouse.

"Fight choreography is really great because you're working with the most intimate part of the story," she says. "You're never more intimately involved with somebody than when you're trying to make love to them or kill them."

As an in-demand fight director, Loewen has a lot of experience with scuffles and brawls on the stage. But she's not so comfortable throwing a punch off the job, because she also identifies as a Mennonite and a pacifist.

Born and raised in a Mennonite family in Winnipeg, she grew up attending Jubilee Mennonite Church in the city. She's used to playing the Mennonite name game. "I very much am enmeshed in a Mennonite ethnicity. I mean, I'm a Loewen on both sides," she says. She also went to Guatemala with Canadian Mennonite University's Outatown program in 2000-01.

Pacifism was a part of that Mennonite upbringing, but Loewen says her combat work and pacifist values don't conflict at all. "It isn't a conflict, because I'm making art with people onstage. I think that passivity in art is death," she says.

She explains that art should not attempt to calm through placid disengagement, but should actively engage, which can sometimes get gritty and confrontational.

"Pacifism is very important to me, but it means something different to me than I think it did when I was growing up," she says. "I think that the idea of not making war is very different than making everything calm."

When she creates fights for the stage, Loewen aims to expose the essence of the conflict in the narrative, and contribute to the story. She tailors it to the characters and actors, so each

movement fits with their capabilities and strengths.

Loewen began her adventures in acting at the University of Winnipeg, where she studied theatre and stage combat, and soon found herself acting as a stunt double on screen in CBC's *Murdoch Mysteries*. She also acted in Hot Thespian Action, a sketch comedy troupe from Winnipeg, before moving to Vancouver for a year to pursue her career.

"I guess it all sort of happened because of things I was interested in, but I was always doing them just for fun until I started my 'real life,'" she says. "And then suddenly I realized one day, this is my real life. Some people are in banks right now or sitting behind a desk doing whatever it is that people do in the real world, and this is what I get to do!"

Her job isn't just strategizing skirmishes, though. It's about using movement, action and tension to engage the audience. "I'm just fascinated by how you embody story and communicate story just through being it and doing it, not through talking about it," she says.

"I like physical movement so much on stage, because there's a non-cognitive but very poetic or connective quality to it that isn't about 'I heard the word this way and it means this,' or, 'I heard the word this way and it means that.'"

Loewen is playing with these dynamics in the new show she is creating for this summer's Winnipeg Fringe Theatre Festival. *Yellow Den*, the working title of her play, is an adaptation of the short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," first published in 1891, intertwined with interviews of Loewen's grandma in the 1970s. She will experiment with how to use set architecture, audience placement and movement to create sentiments in the audience—specifically those of discomfort—to match the storyline. ☘



PHOTO BY JENNIFER VILLAVERDE

*Jacqueline Loewen teaches a fight sequence to an actor on the set of *Vietgone*.*

## PHOTO ESSAY

# Canadian faces of MDS in Texas

Vignettes and Photos by John Longhurst  
Mennonite Disaster Service

**W**hat do you get when you put Mennonites from all over Canada, and from all sorts of different Mennonite conferences and churches—along with Christians from other denominations—in the same place? A Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) unit—that’s what.

In February, I visited volunteers in three communities in Texas hit by Hurricane Harvey in 2017—La Grange, Bloomington and Wharton.

Despite their differences of age, locale or theology, none of them mattered. They were there for only one reason: To show the love of God by helping people affected by a natural disaster. As Jeanne Wollf of Hague, Sask., put it about doing MDS: “We like how everyone leaves all their differences at the door, how they have come here for a common goal.”

They are the Canadian faces of MDS in Texas.

## Pushed out of their comfort zone

For Karen Harder of Morden, Man., MDS is “pushing me out of my comfort zone.” Sara Dyck of nearby Plum Coulee likes “the physical labour, and meeting other people.”

Harder, 21, and Dyck, 19, are part of Pursuit, a four-month discipleship training program at Steinbach Bible College.

“Building a house is a new thing for me,” says Harder, noting that her brothers have done MDS before.

Dyck says she has wanted to do MDS “for a long time. I love that I get to go somewhere new and help people.”

## Healing through giving back

Errol Stein, 77, met Mennonites for the first time in 1997, when he came from Ontario to Manitoba to help with recovery efforts following the “flood of the century” in that province. A Roman Catholic, he spent six weeks in Manitoba as a Red Cross volunteer seconded to MDS.



*Manitobans Karen Harder, left, and Sara Dyck served with MDS as part of Pursuit, a four-month discipleship training program at Steinbach Bible College.*



*For Errol Stein, a Roman Catholic from Toronto, MDS is ‘about coming together from many different places and churches and denominations in the spirit of the Lord to do service for others. Other Catholics should check it out,’ he says.*

“It was a great experience,” says the retired insurance broker who lives in Toronto. So great, that he decided to do it again. “I’m happy to be here. I have been

blessed abundantly by God,” says Stein, a widower. “I want to do God’s work, that’s the main thing for me,” he says of his month in Texas as a crew leader.





*The Wiebe family from Austin, Man., performed for other MDS volunteers during their time in Bloomington, Texas, in February. They are on a year-long family adventure with MDS.*

### Service a family affair for Canadians

For the Wiebes of Austin, Man., service with MDS is a year-long family affair.

In January, the family of five—dad Daniel, 41; mother Pamela, 39; and children Brianna, 17, Brenten, 14, Caleb, 12, and Corey, 9—left their home for Texas, the start of 12 months on the road helping others.

The first time Dan and Pamela, members of the McGregor Sommerfeld Mennonite Church, did MDS was in 2000, before they had children. “When Dan suggested it, I thought, no way,” Pamela says. “But the Lord led us to a place where we could see how everything would work out.”

As for the children, they are enjoying it. Since they are homeschooled, they aren’t missing their education—although it is a different kind of learning this year.

For Brianna, the year is a way to “see new parts of the U.S. and Canada, meet new people, learn new skills and escape winter.” Being away from friends isn’t easy, but the time spent serving others is “also a blessing,” she says. “I am glad to help others, be a light and show God’s love. My joy comes from serving others. It’s a way to share my blessings.”

After Texas, next up is service in South



*Pamela Wiebe of Austin, Man., served as a cook in Bloomington, Texas, getting up at 5 a.m. to make breakfast for the volunteers and then feeding them supper when they came back from the job sites.*

Dakota, at Pine Ridge. After that? Maybe North America; they don’t know. to Newfoundland, or somewhere else in



### 'Hooked on MDS'

Dave and Jeanne Wolf of Hague, Sask., are "hooked on MDS." That's how Dave, 57, puts it about the way he and Jeanne, also 57, view service with MDS. "It's a family affair for us," Dave says.

In February, the couple, who attend the Blumenheim Bergthaler Mennonite Church, were in Bloomington with their son and daughter-in-law, Jason and Heidi.

"We are fortunate and blessed, and can give back to help others," says Jeanne.

When their kids were younger, they liked the way doing MDS gave them a chance to work and interact with adults, learn from people who "believe all the same ways we do," and "not just think about themselves."



*Dave and Jeanne Wolf of Hague, Sask., take a break after a day of building houses. 'We are fortunate and blessed, and can give back to help others,' says Jeanne.*



### Learning new skills, meeting new people

For Kevin and Teresa Bueckert of Neuanlage, Sask., service with MDS is a way to experience new things, see new places, learn new things and escape winter.

The couple left their three children at home this year but took them to an MDS family camp in 2018.

Kevin, 40, works for a property management company. For him, MDS is a way "to give back and get to know other people." A self-described non-people person, he says that MDS is also a way to "get out of my comfort zone." He adds, "It's great to be with people who all share the same faith, even though there are differences."

*Kevin and Teresa Bueckert of Neuanlage, Sask., painted doors as part of their MDS assignment in Texas.*



### 'I have hands. I can work'

The first time Kevin Shantz signed up for MDS, the organization said he was going to Hawaii.

"I thought it was a joke," says the roofing contractor from southwestern Ontario, who takes several months off each winter. Since then, the married father of two daughters has been to California, Saipan and now Texas, usually going for three weeks at a time.

Why does he do it? Escaping winter for a bit is one reason for the member of Drayton Community Mennonite Fellowship, but there's more. Stretching out his arms, he says, "I have hands. I can work. I can help my neighbours. I don't want to sit on a beach when people are in bad shape and need help. The least I can do is help them."

### God does different things through different people

For Ingrid Hughes of Canning, N.S., it is "very rewarding to serve God in such a practical way" with MDS.

Together with her husband Ralph, a retired mechanic, she was in Texas for five weeks. It was the first time with MDS for her, and the second for him.

"I like how well everyone works well together towards a common goal," says Ingrid, 62, who used to own a home-cleaning business. What makes it more satisfying is the work is being done to "help those affected by situations beyond their control," she adds. "We can help them, support them, pray for them." ✎



*Kevin Shantz, a member of Drayton (Ont.) Mennonite Fellowship, is a roofing contractor who takes off several months each winter. He's been 'hooked' on MDS since 2015, when he served in Hawaii.*



*Ingrid Hughes of Canning, N.S., was a first-time MDS volunteer, serving for five weeks in Texas with her husband Ralph, who had served once before.*



# What resilience looks like

By Rachel Bergen  
Contributing Editor

**F**rom dealing with disaster to mental health recovery, partners of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Nepal and their beneficiaries demonstrate resilience.

That was the theme of MCC's first-ever trekking learning tour. From April 1 to 19, participants from all over Canada and the United States hiked around Nepal, taking in the vistas while visiting MCC partners who are still in recovery but show incredible strength in adversity.

Joanna Loepp Thiessen was the youngest of the participants. The 21-year-old, who hails from Kitchener, Ont., where she attended the Gathering Church, currently lives in San Antonio, Texas, where she's taking part in Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS).

She currently works with people experiencing homelessness and addictions, and she lives in an intentional community.

She says it was the perfect opportunity to take part in a learning tour. She also thought it would be a good opportunity to learn more about mental health, considering her work with MVS.

"I thought it would be interesting to

draw connections between mental health in Nepal to mental health in the U.S.," she says. "So, having that challenging experience emotionally—but having the physical challenge of a trekking trip with other like-minded people—was very appealing to me."

The group started the trip off with a visit to MCC's partner Koshish in Nepal's capital, which supports the mental health and rehabilitation of Nepali women living with severe trauma. Koshish works to reduce stigma and improve resources for people living with mental-health problems.

This visit was the highlight for Loepp Thiessen.

"Hearing first-hand stories of mental-health recovery, I found that really inspiring," she says. "It was really cool to see MCC is actively trying to get involved and work with mental illness. It was meaningful for me to hear."

After that visit, participants hiked for six days through northern Dhading province, observing MCC's earthquake recovery work in four communities, before they trekked out east through the Ruby Valley for six more days.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOANNA LOEPP THIESSEN.

**Bethany Amstutz-Schrag, Joanna Loepp Thiessen and Krystal Porter jump for joy as they trek through the mountains of Nepal on an MCC learning tour.**



MCC PHOTO BY DAPHNE FOWLER

**MCC learning tour participants trek through northern Dhading province in Nepal.**



Daphne Fowler, the MCC country representative in Nepal, says that Shanti Nepal, another partner, supported these communities to rebuild homes, toilets, health clinics, drinking-water systems and livelihood opportunities after an earthquake in 2015.

“We specifically met with mothers groups and user committees—communities responsible for maintaining public infrastructure like drinking water systems and clinics—to hear about their ability to recover after the earthquake, rebuild their communities and gather community support to maintain these improvements,” she adds.

Fowler says that Nepal is highly dependent on tourism, but she thinks learning tours offer something extra. “We hope learning tours offer a unique opportunity to experience Nepal’s unique landscape and cultures in a way that does as little harm as possible,” she says. “For participants who come to Nepal, they gain the opportunity to hear first-hand stories of resilience that hopefully shape their opin-

ion of ‘others’ in a positive light.”

Loepp Thiessen recommends learning tours as a way to deepen a travel experience. “It’s one of the most meaningful ways to travel,” she says. “You get the cultural and food experiences, and physical experiences, but intertwined with a deep level of respect and understanding for the culture. I think I reached a new level of learning and growth that was facilitated by MCC.”

Fowler adds that MCC’s partners also get something out of the exchange. “For our partners and the communities they serve, our hope is that our posture of learning builds their sense of confidence and encourages them to carry on their good work,” she says.

Now that Loepp Thiessen is back in San Antonio, she wants to use what she



MCC PHOTO BY DAPHNE FOWLER

*MCC learning tour participants trek through northern Dhading province in Nepal.*

learned and apply it to her work. “Every Friday, I lead a meditation group with women who are in addiction recovery at the centre I work at,” she says. “We talk about shame, regret, joy and lots of different things. We also explore these themes in writing, singing and drawing. But something I’d like to bring back is opening up a conversation about what it means to build resiliency.” ❧

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### /// Staff changes

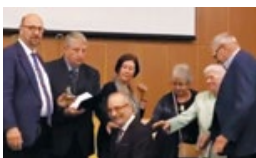
#### Pastoral ordinations, transition in Manitoba



• **Wes Goertzen**, pastor of Whitewater Mennonite Church in Boissevain, was ordained on Feb. 3. He holds a master of divinity degree with a concentration in biblical studies from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind.



• **Lizzie Schrag** began a part-time position as pastor for faith development at North Kildonan Mennonite Church in November 2018. She is currently a student at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, completing a four-year bachelor of arts degree in biblical and theological studies with a minor in international development studies. She has worked for two summers at Camp Mennoscah, a Mennonite church camp in Kansas. She has also completed eight months of volunteering with Mennonite Disaster Service and a year of voluntary service through Mennonite Mission Network's Service Adventure.



• **Doug Unrau** is pastor of Lowe Farm Bergthaler Mennonite Church in Morris. He was ordained on Sept. 30, 2018. He earned a master of divinity degree from AMBS.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

### /// Staff changes

#### April Yamasaki named new editor of *Purpose* magazine



• **April Yamasaki** has been selected as the new editor of *Purpose* magazine, a monthly magazine published by MennoMedia that offers stories of inspiration and promise. She is an ordained minister with 25 years of experience in pastoral ministry at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., who currently serves as resident author with Valley CrossWay Church in Abbotsford, B.C., and speaks widely in other churches and ministry settings. She has written and published widely on spiritual growth and Christian living—both online and in print publications—including *Christian Century*, *Christianity Today*, *The Redbud Post*, *Godspace*, *Vision*, *Leader* and *Rejoice!* Her published books include *Sacred Pauses*, *Ordinary Time with Jesus* and *Four Gifts*. She earned a master of arts in theological studies degree from Regent College, Vancouver, and a bachelor of arts degree from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

—MENNOMEDIA

#### Pastoral transition in British Columbia



• **Chris Lin** began as pastor of White Rock Mennonite Church on March 1. Married with three daughters, Lin has been a member of White Rock for 20 years and has served at the church for 15 years. He returned to Canada in February after a year of study at Holy Light Theological Seminary in Taiwan. He replaces Timothy Liang, who left at the end of 2018.

—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

### /// Staff changes

#### Pastoral ordinations in Ontario



• **Pablo Kim-Sun** was licensed toward ordination by La Iglesia Menonita Nueva Vida (Toronto Mennonite New Life Church) to serve as a pastor on March 24 in a joint service with Toronto United Mennonite Church. Kim-Sun, a doctoral student in theological ethics at Emmanuel College at the University of Toronto, preaches once a month for the Spanish-language congregation and helps with other administrative work. The licensing toward ordination begins a two-year process, after which Kim-Sun may be ordained. Expressing his thanks to those who planned the joint worship service, Kim-Sun said it was "one of the greatest moments of my life." Of Korean heritage, he grew up in Paraguay and is fully fluent in Spanish, English and Korean. He previously led a small Korean-language Mennonite congregation in southern California.

—BY JOELLE KIDD



• **Alicia Buhler** was ordained at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, on March

24 for ministry within and beyond the walls of the church. She is a spiritual-care provider in private practice since 2010 and is also an Anabaptist Learning Workshop instructor, facilitating workshops on spiritual care in congregations. She also serves on the leadership team of the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada. She earned a master of divinity degree in pastoral care and counselling from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., in 2011.

—BY JANET BAUMAN

## /// Staff changes

### Pastoral transitions in Saskatchewan



• **Curtis Wiens** began serving at Aberdeen Mennonite Church on Feb. 1. He earned a bachelor of science degree in agriculture from the University of Saskatchewan and is new to pastoral work, having most recently been employed in farming.



• **Emily Summach** has been hired by Langham Mennonite Fellowship; she started on May 1. She earned a bachelor of arts degree in communications from Providence (Man.) University College. New to pastoral work, she replaces Ric Driediger, who has been with the congregation since 2016.



• **Eileen Klassen** has begun serving as interim co-pastor at Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. She earned a master of divinity degree from Emmanuel and St. Chad College at the University of Saskatchewan, and she previously was employed as a hospital chaplain at Saskatoon City Hospital.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

### Ten Thousand Villages Canada names new CEO



• **Brent Zorgdrager** began his term as interim chief executive officer of Ten Thousand Villages (TTV) Canada, effective May 15. He spent the past 12 years with Kindred Credit Union, first as chief financial officer (CFO) from 2007-09, and then as chief executive officer (CEO) from 2010-19. He previously served as CFO with Meritas Financial Inc. and in various roles with Manulife Financial for 16 years. In 2018, he received the Gary Gillam Award for corporate social responsibility.

—MCC CANADA

## /// Staff changes

### CMU welcomes new biology professor for three-year term



• **Nicolas Malagon** has been hired as an assistant professor of biology in Canadian Mennonite University's growing science program. He completed his undergraduate study at the National University of Colombia and has a doctorate in cell biology from the University of Toronto. He comes to CMU with extensive research experience, recently holding postdoctoral fellowships at Yale University and the University of Toronto. His most recent research focuses on how epithelia, thin bodily tissues, regulate cell density and how these processes affect cancer formation and evolution. To investigate this, he studies a male-specific group of leg bristles on fruit flies. Malagon will begin teaching in September.

—CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

### Former Grebel student returns to teach and conduct research



• **David Y. Neufeld** will serve at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo, Ont., as visiting assistant professor of history for two years, beginning in July. He comes to Grebel as a highly regarded teacher of European and world history from the University of Arizona, where he completed a master's degree, followed by a doctorate in 2018. He received a BA in history from the University of Waterloo in 2009 with a minor in peace and conflict studies. The Institute for Anabaptist Mennonite Studies at Grebel has also named Neufeld the 2019-20 J. Winfield Fretz Visiting Research Scholar in Mennonite Studies. As the Fretz Scholar, Neufeld will offer a public lecture, collaborate with the institute's colleagues and the archives, and use the unique resources of the Milton Good Library for his research.

—CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

## /// News brief

### MC Canada, Mennonite Trust conclude assignment in United Kingdom



MC CANADA PHOTO


**Michael and Cheryl Nimz served as Witness workers in the United Kingdom for six years.**

WINNIPEG—Mennonite Church Canada and the Mennonite Trust have mutually decided to conclude the assignment of Witness workers Michael and Cheryl Nimz in the United Kingdom. The couple, who are connected to Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach, Man., will return to Canada in June. During their six years in the United Kingdom, the Nimzes demonstrated passion for ministry, relationship-building skills and a commitment to Anabaptist principles. Both organizations appreciated the efforts the Nimzes made to connect with people beyond the current reach of the Anabaptist Network, and to educate them about the Anabaptist tradition. They have interacted especially well with young adults and those on the fringes of the church, making effective use of social media as well as face-to-face conversations. MC Canada and the Mennonite Trust, which seeks to facilitate learning and discipleship opportunities across the United Kingdom in partnership with the Anabaptist Network and other like-minded agencies, affirm that the Nimzes' ministry among these people has been greatly valued. MC Canada invites prayer for the couple as they return to Canada and leave a meaningful ministry and friendship network behind.

—MC CANADA / MENNONITE TRUST



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**Remembering Rachel Held Evans**

Six Canadian Mennonites reflect on the best-selling author's impact.

[canadianmennonite.org/rhe-remembered](http://canadianmennonite.org/rhe-remembered)



**Watch: "I Am a Mennonite" trailer**

Winnipeg filmmaker Paul Plett announces his next project, a documentary exploring his Mennonite roots, in this short video..

[canadianmennonite.org/video/plettdoc](http://canadianmennonite.org/video/plettdoc)



**A crisis of compassion**

On the CM blog, Columbia Bible College student Hannah Gray reflects on artwork she created after attending a Mennonite Central Committee seminar.

[canadianmennonite.org/blog/hg-compassion](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/hg-compassion)



**MCC assisting after Cyclone Idai**

Mennonite Central Committee is providing food assistance and emergency supplies to people in Mozambique and Malawi affected by Cyclone Idai.

[canadianmennonite.org/idai-help](http://canadianmennonite.org/idai-help)

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**A daughter named Genesis**

I left the jail one Monday morning last month feeling a heaviness that I have not felt in some time. I don't go there each Monday with some big agenda—I'm not there to reform or... [Read More](#)

**What does it mean to be Anabaptist today?**

I am not one of those people who says, "I'm not religious, I just love Jesus" or "I don't belong to any denomination, I'm just a Christian." Rather, I have sometimes said, "Those... [Read More](#)

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Schools Directory featuring Menno Simons Christian School

# A legacy unfolding

Menno Simons Christian School, Calgary

Menno Simons Christian School (MSCS) is a place rich in history, a school that only survived through prayer, commitment and the perseverance of families who wanted a Christian education for their children and grandchildren. The Toewses were one of these families.

Ernie Toews attended a meeting that occurred at Foothills Mennonite Church to discuss the possibility of starting a Mennonite School. Excited at the prospects and the desire for a Christian education for their children, the Toewses were immediately on board, and when the time came they enrolled their four school-aged children the first year that MSCS officially opened its school doors in 1983.

Ernie and Shirley believed in what MSCS stood for and persevered with the community of parents to do everything necessary to ensure the school's survival. They served at the board level, overseeing school vision-

ing and finances, and at the floor level as classroom and event volunteers. Wherever there was a need, they were willing to fill it. They moved with the school five times, each time working to pack up, clean and prepare the classrooms for students. With joy, they witnessed the purchasing of a building on Northmount Drive, and later a plot of land in Springbank Hill that would finally help stabilize the future of MSCS.


The Toewses were one of many families that spent countless hours volunteering their time, resources and talents to make MSCS what it is today. MSCS's impact is affecting the next generation, as the children of alumni now enter the school doors, some of them having instruction from the same teachers that their parents did.

Today, Ernie and Shirley have the role of grandparents as they watch their grandchildren enjoy the blessing of attending MSCS, a school that they were integral in establishing.



The Toews family, from left to right: Jennifer ('86), Greg ('89), Shirley, Chris ('87), Ernie, Mark ('97) and Jeff ('92).





**Gathering  
2019**


**Igniting the Imagination  
of the Church**

A gathering of our nationwide  
MC Canada family  
June 28 to July 1, 2019  
Abbotsford, B.C.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Elaine Heath

- Worship and workshops
- Youth events, including an overnight stay at Camp Squeah
- Programs for children
- Leadership Day for pastors and lay leaders
- MC Canada AGM for delegates
- Field trips to local communities and ministries

**REGISTER NOW!**  
[www.ignitegathering2019.ca](http://www.ignitegathering2019.ca)



## Calendar

### British Columbia

**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.

**Oct. 5:** Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. fundraiser, with comedian Matt Falk, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Abbotsford, at 7 p.m.

**Nov. 8-9:** Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. genealogy workshops, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Abbotsford.

**Nov. 18-22:** Annual Christmas market, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Abbotsford.

### Alberta

**June 15:** Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon fundraiser. For more information or to sponsor a hiker, call 403-637-2510.

**June 16:** Camp Valaqua garden party. For more information, call 403-637-2510.

**Nov. 1-2:** "Vision 20/20 Phase IV: Incarnating God's call," at Calgary First Mennonite.

**March 20-21, 2020:** MC Alberta annual delegate sessions.

### Saskatchewan

**June 15:** *Voices Together* regional worship workshop, at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.

**June 21-23:** RJC musical, alumni reunions and graduation weekend, Rosthern.

**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](http://prairieyouth.ca).

**Aug. 19-23:** Shekinah music camp, for campers aged 12 to 17. For more information, or to register, visit [shekinahretreatcentre.org](http://shekinahretreatcentre.org).

## Voices Together and Mennonite Church Saskatchewan present

### Regional Worship Services

Deepening our walk with each other  
through song and worship



**Friday, June 14,** Rosthern Mennonite Church (Rosthern), 7 p.m.  
**Saturday, June 15,** Mount Royal Mennonite Church (Saskatoon), 7 p.m.  
**Sunday, June 16,** Herschel Mennonite Church (Herschel), 10:30 a.m.  
**Sunday, June 16,** Zion Mennonite Church (Swift Current), 7 p.m.

Join us as we gather for worship and communion, seeking to  
deepen our walk with Christ and one another

**Special guests:** Sarah Johnson and Anneli Loepf Thiessen from  
*Voices Together*, with Marilyn Houser Hamm

VOICES  
*Together*



**Mennonite  
Church  
Saskatchewan** [www.mcsask.ca](http://www.mcsask.ca)  
306-249-4844



## Manitoba

**Until June 22:** Two exhibitions at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg: "Who is in and who is out?" by Yisa Akinbolaji and "Luminous" by Gabriela Agüero.

**July 10:** MCC Manitoba fundraising golf tournament, at Bridges Golf Course, Starbuck. For more information, or to register, visit [mccmb.ca/golf](http://mccmb.ca/golf).

**July 25:** *Discovery: A Comic Lament*, a play about Indigenous/settler issues and moving forward together," at the CMU chapel, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets available at [Eventbright.com](http://Eventbright.com).

**July 25-28:** "Toward a just peace: Indigenous-settler reconciliation through friendship," the annual Bridgefolk conference for Mennonites and Roman Catholics, at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg. The focus will be on church and social relationships with First Nations peoples. Keynote speakers: Steve Heinrichs of MC Canada, and Sister Eva Solomon, and Ojibwe elder. For more information, visit [Bridgefolk.net](http://Bridgefolk.net).

**Dec. 7:** "Choose your own adventure trip" raffle, in support of Mennonite Heritage Village. Five trip options to choose from. To purchase tickets online until Dec. 6, visit [bit.ly/mhv-affle](http://bit.ly/mhv-affle).

## Ontario

**Until Oct. 25:** "New Fraktur," featuring recent works by Meg Harder, at the Grebel Gallery at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

**Until May 2021:** "Growing family: Design and desire in Mennonite genealogy" exhibit showcases family trees, hand-drawn charts and other ways Mennonites have remembered family; at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Waterloo. For more information, visit [uwaterloo.ca/grebel/growingfamily](http://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/growingfamily).

**June 6-8:** "Land and place," a North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies symposium on Indigenous theology, at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto. MC Canada will help sponsor six participants from the nationwide church who want to attend. For more information, email Steve Heinrichs at

[sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca).

**June 11:** Chicken barbecue and pie auction fundraiser, at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Advanced tickets only. For tickets, call 519-625-8602.

**June 12-13:** "Healthy boundaries in the context of ministry," at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener. For more information, visit [mcec.ca](http://mcec.ca).

**June 13-14:** "Spirituality and aging" retreat, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

**June 22:** Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario spring meeting, at Elmira Mennonite Church, at 2 p.m. Topic: "The Elmira Life and Work School: An innovative collaboration between public secondary schooling and Conservative Mennonites. For more information, visit [mhso.org](http://mhso.org).

**June 22:** Annual Nithview Community strawberry social, New Hamburg, from 2 to 4 p.m., and 6:30 to 8 p.m.

**June 22:** MennoHomes Out-Spok'n for Affordable Housing Bike-a-thon, at Elmira Mennonite Church. Options for hikers, recreational bikers and avid cyclists. For more information, visit [mennohomes.com](http://mennohomes.com).

**June 28-30:** Family camping weekend at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. For more information, or to book a space, call 519-625-8602.

**Sept. 13-16:** Anabaptist Learning Workshop canoe trip ("Canoe tripping as a spiritual practice: Deepening the waters of faith"), at Massasauga Provincial Park, with guides Tanya Dyck Steinmann and Mark Diller Harder. For more information, visit [uwaterloo.ca/anabaptist-learning-workshop/](http://uwaterloo.ca/anabaptist-learning-workshop/).

**Nov. 10:** "Following Jesus together as Anglicans and Mennonites, Pt. 2," at Renison Institute of Ministry, Waterloo, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Instructor: Pablo Hyung Jin Kim Sun.

## International

**June 26-July 6:** MC Canada wants to sponsor four people to travel to Colombia with Christian Peacemaker Teams. Meet human rights defenders who are working for a just peace in Magdalena Medio, and explore questions of faith and discipleship.

To learn more, email Steve Heinrichs at [sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca).

**To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event**

**date by email to calendar @canadianmennonite.org. For more Calendar listings online, visit [canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar](http://canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar).**



## Classifieds

### For Rent

For Rent - Guest room with private bath and full kitchen privileges in a private home across the street from the University of Alberta. For details contact Arnold Voth: [ft6\\_yh@shaw.ca](mailto:ft6_yh@shaw.ca).

## Employment Opportunities

Mennonite Church Manitoba (MCM) invites applications for the new 0.5 FTE Director of Church Engagement.

Responsibilities will include: nurturing relationships with congregations and our Mennonite Church Canada International Witness workers; promoting and supporting the ministries of MCM; and developing relationships with donors. For more info, visit [www.mennochurch.mb.ca](http://www.mennochurch.mb.ca) or contact Ken Warkentin at 204-896-1616.

Mennonite Church Manitoba



MENNONITE CREATION CARE NETWORK Service Opportunity for Older Adults (SOOP)

Mennonite Creation Care Network (MCCN) seeks a part-time volunteer to support the creation care efforts of MC Canada's congregations and to strengthen Canadian connections to MCCN. The role requires:

- A deep love for the earth
- Interest in seeing creation care flourish in congregational settings
- Professional writing and social skills
- Good internet access and comfort with electronic communication

The work can be done at a steady pace or in short bursts of activity. To learn more, see <https://mennoncreationcare.org/mccn-seeks-canadian-soop-volunteer/>.

## Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
June 24	June 10
July 8 (Digital issue)	June 24
July 22	July 8



PHOTO BY FRED REDEKOP /

TEXT BY JANET BAUMAN

*Different types of head covering work just fine for volunteers at the Mennonite Central Committee meat canning project that stopped in Elmira from April 22 to 26.*

*Pictured, Syrian refugees Zahia Al Jasem, right, and her brother Amchud Al Jasem, centre, work with members of the Markham-Waterloo Mennonite Conference that sponsored them. More than 20,000 kilograms of chicken were canned by 500 volunteers over the five days.*

## 20th anniversary of meat canning in southwestern Ontario

# Photo finish

PHOTO AND TEXT

BY ZACH CHARBONNEAU

*Margaret Neufeld, foreground, is pictured on the labelling line when the MCC meat canner came to the Gleaners headquarters in Leamington.*

*With the help of more than 400 volunteers over three days, the mobile cannery processed 10,000 kilograms of chicken, filling 13,903 cans now available to distribute worldwide. Neufeld, from Wheatley, Ont., has been volunteering with the meat canner for more than 15 years.*

*'I love it here,' she says. 'We like it and we know it's a good thing, so we keep coming back. I've had all the jobs; wherever they need me is where I go.'*

