

CANADIAN MENNONITE

July 22, 2019 Volume 23 Number 14



Holy Spirit fire and imagination

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GUEST EDITORIAL

The Spirit is moving our body

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY



I knew everything would be okay as soon as the singing started. As I sat at a table positioned behind a small tower of crates half covered in cloth—a make-shift platform for the room’s main projector—I looked up from my detailed program schedule and smiled. Right, this is why we’re here.

“Gathering 2019: Igniting the imagination of the church,” held from June 28 to July 1, was our inaugural nationwide event under our new expression of Mennonite Church Canada. More than 300 people registered, and each day between 200 and 250 people attended the main sessions. We gathered in a hotel ballroom, seated around tables and facing a small stage, where the worship team led us through the weekend, and where guest speaker Elaine Heath spoke to us about building missional communities and the future of the church.

Over the three-and-a-half days we were together, I quietly watched our nationwide family gather. Several things were clear. We care deeply about each other. We listen to one another and are inspired by one another’s stories. We are a body of many parts, each of us willing and ready to help when called upon.

I witnessed many people willing to help at Gathering 2019. With no official photographer for the event, one of our creative worship leaders took photos throughout the weekend. Members of the Gathering 2019 planning committee led the crokinole tournament and the outdoor worship time, and rounded up folks for excursions when the buses came early. Volunteers spent

time with children, registered people and answered questions. I was struck by how not only the organizers offered themselves, but so did the participants.

A moment I found particularly meaningful happened during communion in our last worship service together on Canada Day. Those offering the bread and cup went to the people seated at the tables. As music played, everyone stood and passed the bread and cup around the table. Because I was in charge of the PowerPoint for the worship songs, I couldn’t get up to join the circle of people at the table beside me. It only took a second for the person with the bread and cup to motion to people to stand around me, so I could partake and keep my eye on the next slide.

The purpose of Gathering 2019 was to ask ourselves how we feel the Spirit moving in our midst, among our congregations, our regional churches and as MC Canada. This moment of communion around my little table was an example to me of how the Spirit moves in us, urging us to move in ways that are new, unexpected, and perhaps even uncomfortable.

In the moment, I didn’t think it was important that I partake because I was busy making sure everything was running smoothly. I had a job to do. But what was most important for me to do was to break bread with Christ’s body and be reminded of our true purpose.

Over the weekend, we heard from seven people who shared stories of how the Spirit is moving in their congregations. Lyne Renaud of Quebec, Sandy Plett and Don Rempel Boschman of Manitoba, Terri Lynn (Paulson) Friesen

of Saskatchewan, Christina and Darnell Barkman of B.C., Colin McCartney of Ontario, and Donna Entz of Alberta have all been challenged to imagine church differently and to follow the Spirit’s leading. At our delegate session and annual general meeting, people were asked to discuss how they imagine engaging in missional work locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, and write their responses on paper. From my perspective near the back of the room, there was much conversation and sharing of experiences and listening as well. I look forward to going over those responses and being witness to the vision of the people of Christ’s body.

I’ll take the remaining space I have left here to offer a final word of thanks for the planners, organizers and participants, who all offered themselves to make Gathering 2019 possible and inspiring. We are many parts of one body. Let’s keep talking. And singing. ✎

Katie Doke Sawatzky is MC Canada’s communications officer. She works from Regina and can be reached at kdsawatzky@mennonitechurch.ca.

Digital edition

Our next issue—dated Aug. 5 (posted July 31)—will be digital. To learn how you can receive this digital issue, visit canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital.



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During a blessing ceremony at Mennonite Church Canada's Gathering 2019, Doug Klassen holds a lamp symbolizing the light of Christ. The lamp was given to him by the Foothills Mennonite congregation, where he served as pastor until he became the new executive minister of the nationwide church. For more coverage of the gathering, see pages 2, 4 to 6, 10, 12 to 18, and the back cover.

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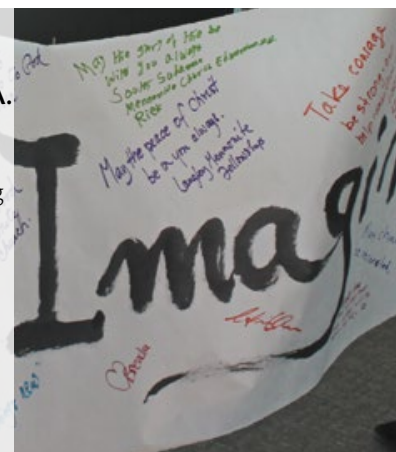
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FEATURE



PHOTO BY AMY RIDDELL WANNER

Many hands were needed to display a 10-metre banner with the theme of Mennonite Church Canada's Gathering 2019. Witness worker Bock Ki Kim presented it to the assembly as a gift from their Mennonite sisters and brothers in South Korea. Throughout the gathering, attendees wrote their blessings and prayers on the banner.

Holy Spirit fire and imagination

By Virginia A. Hostetler
Executive Editor

“Singing a new church into being,” sang the 300-plus people gathered for the first nationwide meeting of Mennonite Church Canada since its restructuring in 2017. Behind the blended voices was the vision, “Igniting the imagination of the church,” the theme of Gathering 2019, held in Abbotsford, B.C.,

from June 28 to July 1.

Representatives came from each of the five regional churches, from as far away as Petitcodiac, N.S., to take part. The event began with a day for pastors and other leaders (see page 13), followed by two-and-a-half days of worship, inspirational speakers, a delegate business meeting (see page 12), workshops, excursions and more.

The times of worship, led by committee members of *Voices Together*, the new hymnal still in formation, gave participants a chance to try new songs and ways of worshipping. Scripture passages from Acts 2 and red, orange and yellow streamers suggesting the tongues of fire that visited the early church, pointed to the gift of the Holy Spirit for God's people gathered there and the gifts offered to their own communities and to the larger world.

A new day

Guest speaker Elaine Heath brought real-life stories, insight, humour and an academic grounding to her presentations. An author, former pastor and dean, and a current member of an intentional Christian community, she explored ways in which congregations can live out their calling to be good neighbours in their own unique contexts. Drawing inspiration from John 1:14, "*The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood*" (The Message), she invited listeners to become active in the contexts in which they live.

In a broken and traumatized world, God's people are called to live out and proclaim God's salvation, which Heath defined as "that which makes us well again."

While addressing topics such as "Biodiversity and the work of the people," "Neighbouring in post-Christendom contexts," and "Imagine a new day," Heath invited listeners to dream and seize opportunities for ministry, by showing up in their local communities, paying empathetic attention to the people there, cooperating with God, and releasing the outcome of their efforts.

Heath acknowledged that North Americans live in a time when Christianity is no longer the dominant force in their society. This reality requires new models for being faithful disciples; some of the old ways of "doing church" no longer work. It requires the followers of Christ to move away from perfectionism and judgment, looking at ourselves and at others with the compassion of God.

It is clear to her that the church is at



PHOTO BY JANE GRUNAU

During the worship service on July 1, newly installed executive minister Doug Klassen, left, serves communion to Calvin Quan, moderator of MC Canada, and Lee Dyck, moderator of MC British Columbia.

"the front end of a new Reformation," and she's excited about what God is doing today. "I'm not afraid because things are changing. The church has to change," she said. Presenting this as an opportunity to create new forms of being church, she said, "Let's quit hunkering down and feeling nervous and wondering whether the sky really is going to fall this time."

Salvation means helping people to overcome toxic shame and to become part of a caring community where they are able to observe and practise new behaviours. Heath calls this a process of sanctification in which people get better and better at making wise choices. "This is what God's mission is: shalom for this world, the making of all things new," she said. And, she reminded listeners, you don't need to be a big church for God's salvation to happen.

A new day for MC Canada was symbolized by the installation of Doug Klassen as the new executive minister, replacing interim executive minister Henry Paetkau.

Klassen, formerly pastor at Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary, spoke of his early calling to serve through

leadership in the church and he recalled how he has experienced God's love and guidance for him over the years.

"What an incredible honour it is to link arms with all of you and to walk together into the future of Mennonite Church Canada," he said. "Each one of us, each congregation, no matter how big or small, no matter how strong or weak, we have all been called to participate in God's grand redemption project. We've been called to be the bearers of the gospel, the Word incarnate that is good news for everyone."

Speaking of the hopes and aspirations that continue to emerge within local churches and regional bodies, Klassen confessed, "Sometimes, I have to tell you, for hours my mind runs wild with ideas for our collective witness."

Members of the Joint Council, Executive Staff Group and MC Canada staff gathered around Klassen for a prayer to bless his new ministry.

Beyond ourselves

Each day's activities began with a public acknowledgement that the meeting was happening on unceded ancestral lands of the Coast Salish People. A group

representing the Mennonite Church in Vietnam brought greetings and sang, “Peace be with you” to the gathering.

Witness worker Bock Ki Kim, from South Korea, brought a 10-metre banner from the church there as a gift to those gathered in Abbotsford. Throughout the gathering, attendees wrote their blessings and prayers on it.

In keeping with the theme of ignition, people from various parts of the country told inspiring “Firestarter stories” about how they and their congregations are experiencing—and cooperating with—God at work in their neighbourhoods (see page 14).

Worship times throughout the week-end included acts of worship, such as anointing, communion and a renewal of baptismal vows.

On June 30, an additional 100 local people joined the group for a Sunday morning worship service.

In the evening, participants chose from three varied options: an “outdoor church,” a Taizé-style service or a hymn sing.

Lighter times of fun and learning included excursions to nearby attractions (see below right), a crokinole tournament (see page 17), and a coffee house.

As participants returned back to their own neighbourhoods, perhaps the refrain of the song will inspire new imaginings: “Let us bring the gifts that differ / And in splendid, varied ways / Sing a new church into being / One in faith and love and praise.” ✎

For videos of the event, visit home.mennonitechurch.ca/node/1660.



A new day for MC Canada was symbolized by the installation of Doug Klassen as the new executive minister, replacing interim executive minister Henry Paetkau.



PHOTO BY JANE GRUNAU

Pictured from left to right: Darryl Neustaedter Barg; Bruno Cavalca; John Briner, hidden behind the music stand; and Anneli Loepp Thiessen lead the congregation in songs new and old. The other Gathering 2019 worship team members were Moses Falco, Sarah Johnson, Kathy Lumsden and Glenn Sawatzky.



PHOTO BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER

At the Xáy:tem Longhouse Interpretive Centre in Mission (Hatzic), B.C., tour members enter the replica of a pit house, a traditional dwelling of local Indigenous people. The bus excursion took visitors along the Fraser River, where Indigenous tour guide Sonny McHalsie (Naxaxalhst'i) identified traditional territories of the Stó:lō Nation. Visitors also had a brief visit at the former St. Mary's Residential School.

/// Readers write

✉ **Headline ‘diminishes and sensationalizes’ church article**

Re: “Church ditches ‘overt religiosity’ to become ‘community resource,’” May 27, page 18.

We were delighted to connect with John Longhurst when he expressed interest in writing an article about our recent Calgary Inter-Mennonite Church’s renovation project. We have been grateful for funding from a community foundation to create a community resource using our building. His article in *Canadian Mennonite* is articulate and captures well our story and the reasons why we took this initiative forward.

Unfortunately, the headline chosen for the article both diminishes and sensationalizes this initiative. We are disappointed that the team at *CM* would choose to assign a title of this nature to Longhurst’s article. In reviewing recent copies of *CM*, this seems out of character. It also feels that presenting our church work under this banner does nothing to build bridges between the Mennonite constituency and our faith community, a relationship that has often been difficult over the past decades.

We thought it important for you to be aware of our sentiments about this. Assigning a title of this nature is disheartening for our faith community as we seek to live out the gospel in ways that reflect peace and build connections.

BERT ENNS AND GRAHAM NEUMANN, CALGARY

✉ **My encounter with Jean Vanier**

Recently, I read the obituary for Jean Vanier and found myself transported back to London in the fall of 1989.

At the time, my husband had gone to England for an international conference, and I attended the final evening program followed by a presentation from Vanier, the keynote speaker.

Before the dinner, the conference organizers made a special effort to introduce the few of us who were fellow Canadians to him. I was immediately struck by his warmth and his open and unpretentious way of communicating, and I could not help noticing that, although his clothes were not quite threadbare, they had seen a lot of wear.

When he heard that we lived close to Toronto, he encouraged us to visit Daybreak in Richmond Hill, the first L’Arche community established in Canada. He also asked us to take greetings to Henri Nouwen, a Catholic priest and writer who had left

a prestigious position as a professor at Harvard University in order to live a life of simplicity with the residents at Daybreak.

By the time we were called to dinner, he had adopted us as his Canadian companions for the evening. He was concerned about misplacing his bag—a small, brown and battered piece of luggage—and asked us to keep it with us.

I do not remember the specific words that he spoke in his keynote address, but I will always remember the powerful message that he shared: Every human being is precious and needs love, even those neglected, overlooked and despised. There was power in his words because of the life he lived. The audience knew that he helped to feed, wash and toilet his disabled housemates at L’Arche in France.

I have a file in my desk where I collect stories about people in our time who inspire me. Vanier and his words are in my inspiration file: “We are not called by God to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things with extraordinary love.”

JOANNA REESOR-MCDOWELL, STOUFFVILLE, ONT.

✉ **Voting for a candidate who was ‘thrown under the bus’**

Re: “Murky lessons from a political firestorm,” May 27, page 17.

Perhaps the lessons are not as murky as suggested. The implication that Jane Philpott and Jodi Wilson-Raybould possibly should have taken the moral low-road because “caucus solidarity is essential to our system of government” is part of the problem. Both women were summarily “thrown under the bus” and our family will be voting for Wilson-Raybould, who is now running as an Independent, again.

PETER A DUECK, VANCOUVER

The author is a member of First United Mennonite Church in Vancouver.

✉ **European cathedrals have a lot to teach us in North America**

Re: “The gift of ecumenism,” May 13, page 11.

It was a delight to read this reflection by Pastor Mark Diller Harder. On numerous tours and service stints in Europe, my wife Mary and I have also visited and appreciated many of the historical sites of early Anabaptism mentioned by Diller Harder.

My delight in his article, however, was evoked by the “rich ecumenical encounters” he details in its second half. Many of us North American

Mennonites have rejoiced in the wide spread of Anabaptism in the Third World, turning our backs on the continent of our origin, where we all too frequently think of the Christian churches—some Mennonite, but mostly others—as being more or less dead, and of their architectural monuments, such as the famous cathedrals, as merely being reminders of a dying Christian presence.

Central Europe has indeed undergone widespread secularization for some time. Now, however, as we in Canada experience a similar trend of secularization, with rapidly declining church membership and attendance, we, too, may increasingly need to learn how to be church in such a situation. European churches may offer us some good models.

Diller Harder's article portrays wonderfully encouraging experiences of a Christian presence in a secularized European context. At one point, for example, he records: "The historic building was suddenly a vibrant present-day worshipping community and we were no longer tourists."

I remember similar experiences in non-Mennonite settings in Europe. The ecumenical church scene in Europe is by no means dead. It can teach us much about the resilience of believers in our own increasingly secularized country. A greater ecumenical awareness and collaboration is one of these.

WALDEMAR JANZEN, WINNIPEG

✉ **Where does MCC fit in the Mennonite world?**

As a former Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) volunteer and an active Mennonite, it seems to me that we need to take a fresh look at the service we do as Mennonites and that we have been so famous for, for so long. Helping others is at the core of our Anabaptist interpretation of the priority given us by the words and acts of our leader, Jesus Christ.

I look at this subject in two categories: short-range emergencies and longer-range development programs.

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) is a good example of a successful model in the short-range-emergency category. The same thing for Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) in the longer-range-development category.

But what about MCC? It seems that its roots are in the short-range emergency category. North American Mennonites helped their brethren in Russia through a revolution and famine, and helped with post-Second World War cleanup in Europe. And in recent years, MCC has responded to emergency needs in other countries, including refugees from

Venezuela and human needs resulting from conflict in the Congo, and thrift stores in North America.

What I see, as a businessman and outsider, is a lack of focus within MCC and a buildup of overhead expenses in administration. Perhaps it's time to re-think MCC. Maybe what MCC is now doing would fit better into MDS or MEDA.

RICHARD PENNER, SASKATOON

✉ **Embrace the 'week'**

Re: "Between Pure and Mennonite Heritage Week," June 10, page 2.

The recent motion in the House of Commons to designate the second week of September as Mennonite Heritage Week was intended to, in the words of MP Ed Fast, "re-emphasize for Canadians how fortunate we are to live in a country like this, where we celebrate that diversity, live with each other in peace and learn from each other." It is notable that MPs from three political parties spoke in favour of this motion, and that the vote was almost unanimous.

However, some individuals within our Mennonite circles, highlighted in Virginia A. Hostetler's recent editorial, have reacted with apprehension, citing Mennonite humility among other concerns.

At present, there are dozens of similar heritage days, weeks and months, recognizing groups from Indigenous Canadians to Sikhs and United Empire Loyalists. All of these groups see this as an opportunity for celebration, contemplation and education, focusing on the positive aspects of their cultures and their role in Canadian life.

Similarly, Mennonites have made a wide variety of positive impacts in Canada, and these contributions deserve to be recognized and celebrated in the wider context that Mennonite Heritage Week can provide. Mennonite Heritage Week can also be used to promote a broader understanding within Canadian society of the diverse, global and multi-ethnic nature of our denomination, rather than the traditional, narrow definition that some see as the focus of this motion.

While there will always be space for nuanced

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to letters@canadianmennonite.org and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

self-reflection, I would suggest that embracing Mennonite Heritage Week and accepting the opportunities it provides will be beneficial to Mennonites as well as Canadian society in general.

DOLORES HARMS PENNER, WATERLOO, ONT.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Blackler—Eli Samuel (b. June 7, 2019), to Meghan Gerber and Evan Blackler, Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Loewen—Calex Jethro (b. June 30, 2019), to Matthew and Theresa Loewen, Main Street Church, Chilliwack, B.C.

Peters—Brooklynn Michelle (b. June 21, 2019), to David and Rachael Peters, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Shantz—Adelaide Mae (b. May 14, 2019), to Cody and Meggy Shantz, Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Baptisms

Michael Frena, Susie Hiebert, Dawson King, Anna

Wiebe—Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont., June 9, 2019.

Cael Penner, Dylan Peters, Gerald Wiens—Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, Jan. 20, 2019.

Matthew Rappolt—Breslau Mennonite, Ont., June 9, 2019.

Michael Enns—Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, June 9, 2019.

Valerie Cheaney, Amanda Martin—Floradale Mennonite, Ont., June 2, 2019.

Taysa Dueck, Jordan Kroeker—Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Adele Short, Claire Dueck, Jonathan Wiebe—Lethbridge Mennonite, Alta., June 23, 2019.

Lucas Sawatzky—Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., June 9, 2019.

David Regehr-Wiens, Jaclyn Regehr-Wiens—North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg, June 9, 2019.

Marriages

Ang/Friesen—Marie Ang and Adrien Friesen, Hamilton Mennonite, June 22, 2019.

De Waard/Froese—Meaghan De Waard and Sean Froese, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., June 15, 2019.

Friesen/Toporchak—Vicky Friesen (North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.) and Kyle Toporchak, at North Star, June 28, 2019.

Martin/Steinmann—Sonya Martin (Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.) and Noah Steinmann (Elmira Mennonite, Ont.), in West Montrose, Ont., June 15, 2019.

Deaths

Dyck—Jacob, 92 (b. Feb. 2, 1927; d. April 18, 2019), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Friesen—Amanda (nee Rempel), 106 (b. Sept. 2, 1912; d. June 30, 2019), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Gascho—Sharon (nee Driedger), 57 (b. Nov. 6, 1961; d. June 9, 2019) Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

Martens—Gary, 62 (b. June 5, 1956; d. Feb. 28, 2019), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Martin—Roy B, 81 (b. Oct. 26, 1937; d. May 17, 2019), Milverton Mennonite, Ont.

Neufeld—Linda Schulz, 85 (b. June 30, 1933; d. May 20, 2019), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Penner—Anne (Wiebe), 79 (b. March 15, 1940; d. June 1, 2019), Fields of Hope Mennonite, Glenbush, Sask.

Reese—Alan, 63 (b. Feb. 26, 1956; d. June 3, 2019), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Reddekopp—Deanna, 73 (b. Oct. 26, 1945; d. June 18, 2019), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Schellenberg—Helen, 57 (b. April 28, 1962; d. June 18, 2019), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Schulz—Susan (Reddekopp), 94 (b. July 23, 1924; d. June 9, 2019), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Shantz—Grace (nee Stevanus), 92 (b. May 17, 1927; d. June 17, 2019), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Toman—Wanda (nee Weber), 98 (b. Sept. 9, 1920; d. June 20, 2019) Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Unger—Neil (Cornelius), 86 (b. Jan. 22, 1933; d. May 12, 2019), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Voth—John, 89 (b. Dec. 22, 1929; d. April 20, 2019), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

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



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FROM OUR LEADERS

Things I noticed at Gathering 2019

Darryl Neustaedter Barg

I didn't used to get nervous leading singing. There were times before leading at Mennonite Church Canada's Gathering 2019 when I was nervous. I was less nervous leading 6,500 youth and sponsors at the St. Louis '99 Youth Convention than some points before leading a few hundred in Abbotsford, B.C., last month.

It's made me wonder what's happened, besides me getting older? Something good, I hope. I think I "care" much more deeply and I have to admit that I have grown to love our nationwide church.

Does caring come with age? Or was I so careless and carefree when I was younger? Of course, I did care back then, but it sure used to be easier. Now I cared about this body of people who gathered in Abbotsford. I cared that worship can bind us together; I cared that they all had a chance to sing their kind of song as worship; I cared that they all be stretched just a little; I cared that the new hymnal I'm working on (*Voices Together*) be represented well; I cared that the band rock a bit, but, more importantly, that it be good enough to lead and stay mostly out of the way; I cared that I represent my employers,

Mennonite Church Manitoba and Canadian Mennonite University, well; and I totally continue to care about the fragility and beauty of our nationwide and regional church bodies.

That's just part of the list. I'm glad I only made it now, after the event. These kinds of lists can become a crushing weight. We are told that Jesus will make our "yoke easy," and perhaps, without Jesus, I would have packed up and went home.

The great news is that caring also meant noticing. I noticed that many people participated in worship in a whole-hearted way; I noticed that there was joy in worshipping together; I noticed tears as songs touched sacred spaces; I noticed that people were super-generous with their compliments of the music and worship; I noticed that there was incredible grace as things went wrong; I noticed there was patience as surprises pushed our worship time way over the mark on June 30; I noticed that the grace extended to the many places where our new nationwide structure struggled to organize well. This list goes on, too. So good.

I felt absolutely honoured to be

invited to lead (with my fantastic *Voices Together* colleagues, Anneli Loepp Thiessen and Sarah Johnson). I also don't remember feeling honoured when I was younger. This is probably also a function of care.

I have to admit, caring can feel pretty good—more vulnerable than I used to prefer to allow, but pretty good. I'd encourage you to give caring a go if you're not a regular, especially about something like your church family across Canada or around the world. You might notice things. ☘



Darryl Neustaedter Barg is associate director of communications for Mennonite Church Manitoba and media production coordinator for Canadian Mennonite University. He'd prefer to spend his time leading singing.

A moment from yesterday



New Canadian initiatives around multiculturalism in the 1970s—celebrating anniversaries like Canada's centennial in 1967, Manitoba's in 1970, and the arrival of Mennonites in Manitoba in 1974—created a new energy and appreciation for history in Canada. During these years, the Mennonite Heritage Centre and the Archives of Ontario hired permanent staff. Energy was put into founding Mennonite archives in Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. Family and community history books were written, capturing many stories. Public commemoration is an important role in maintaining community. Pictured in 1974, John C. Reimer, left, then premier Ed Schreyer, and Rev. Gerhard Lorenz unveil a plaque commemorating the Mennonite centennial in Manitoba in the Manitoba legislature.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Mennonite Heritage Archives / Lawrence Klippenstein photo collection



archives.mhsc.ca

IN THE IMAGE

Millie, my lions and me

Ed Olfert

In early June, a sermon was delivered by a mother-daughter team in Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite Church in Saskatchewan. The daughter, Abby, is 12.

From time to time, the growing whiteness of my hair and whiskers seems to dictate that I offer opinions about how we do church. About how we obsess over smoothness and perfect timing, and dulcet tones and perfect cadence. We put on a Sunday language that feels, and is, awkward in the workplace or schoolyard. We express ourselves in ways that set us apart from—perhaps above—the unwashed masses.

Then came Abby.

A decision was made that on the first Sunday in June, the youth would take responsibility for the service. Abby suggested a favourite story, “Daniel in the lions’ den.” Someone, an adult, asked Abby if she would offer the meditation. She felt a little obligated, I’m guessing, and consented.

Abby and her mom decided that the lions’ den would be a metaphor for all the things that threaten us in our complicated lives. Abby would acknowledge some of her own struggles, the complications of her 12-year-old life, and then go on to talk about how she experienced God’s protection

and support within those struggles.

What, you might wonder, could muddle the life of a much-loved 12-year-old, who is adored by her family, has a wacky sense of humour, is stubborn up to here, and who is gifted academically, musically and artistically? At an age when children are notoriously self-absorbed, what could chase lions into Abby’s den?

“For me, that has been my ongoing struggle with anxiety and depression,” Abby admitted. “Anxiety is my lions’ den.”

She went on to describe her growing realization that her fears were isolating her, preventing her from forming relationships with her peers. She talked about “being trapped in my head.”

Then Abby described the moment when things began to change. She invited her parents into her despair. From there, she told us, “I feel like God sent some reinforcements into my lions’ den.” She mentioned a growing courage to speak out. She mentioned the steadfast support of family. She pointed to a medical community that cared about her mental health, and she cited her gift of music and love of reading.

The line that moved me the deepest was about God bringing “my dog Millie [a huge, black, Newfoundlander brute] into my life. She is

the best therapy a person could ask for. She never lets me down, she stands between me and my lions.”

Congregants were all challenged to name their own dens, and the lions that circulate there. Then Abby sat down.

After the service, as folks gathered around her, Abby just wanted to go home. She was exhausted.

As moving and emotional as that message was for me, there was another realization that was striking. To a significant degree, this was not a huge stretch for Abby. This was more a-matter-of-fact telling about a piece of her life.

I’m sure Abby didn’t sniff the huge stigma that earlier generations have placed upon mental-health matters. She didn’t know that two generations earlier, when her grandparents were in her place in grade school, there was no awareness, no language and certainly no pulpit connected to the topic of mental health. Even a generation ago, when her parents filled that 12-year-old space, there was only a tiny bit more acknowledgement, but still little healthy language, and, in my awareness, no more pulpit time given.

“A child shall lead them.” ❧



Ed Olfert (p2ptheo@sasktel.net) continues to peer around corners and under things to see God. In the interest of full disclosure: Abby and her mother share Ed’s genes.

Et cetera

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) Ontario stood alongside FreeGrassy.net, on May 9 at a rally outside a Liberal Party fundraiser where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was speaking. Protesters rallied to demand the construction of a promised mercury treatment home for mercury survivors. An Indigenous youth entered the fundraiser and told Trudeau, “It has been 500 days since . . . your government promised the community. People continue to be sick and die from mercury poisoning, and I know you care,” and he handed Trudeau a letter from Grassy Narrows in northwestern Ontario. The youth called on Trudeau to follow through on a 2017 commitment to build and operate a mercury treatment home and care centre to treat those poisoned by mercury.

Story and Photo source: CPT Ontario



GATHERING 2019 NEWS

Nationwide church experiences modest surplus

By Tobi Thiessen
Publisher
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

A much simplified Mennonite Church Canada organization turned an expected \$239,000 deficit into a surplus of \$42,000 for the fiscal year ended (FYE) Jan. 31, 2019. The modest surplus was the result of higher-than-forecast revenue from the regional churches, and lower-than-expected expenses in nearly every budget category.

In the new church structure, adopted in October 2017, the 200-plus congregations that make up MC Canada are asked to send all financial contributions to the five regional churches. Each of these regional churches commit to MC Canada for shared nationwide ministries.

The \$1.7 million program of FYE 2019 is a drastic contrast from budgets of more than \$4 million a decade ago. The reorganization was prompted by long-term declines in institutional giving and a multi-year visioning process. Staff reductions were painful, as some programs were eliminated and others were handed over to the regional churches to carry instead.

In the new structure, a Joint Council, consisting of representatives from each regional church, meets quarterly to co-manage the nationwide church agenda. To approve the budget, the work of the Joint Council and the overall direction of MC Canada, regional churches selected and sent 84 delegates who attended Gathering 2019.

At the June 29 morning delegate session, secretary-treasurer Allan Hiebert explained that the transition to the simpler program was complicated. "The MC Canada accounts contained many other small funds set aside for various purposes. We have been researching the original intended purposes of these funds, and trying to see how the original intentions of these funds can best be honoured within the current nationwide church reality," he said, adding that MC Canada is working towards

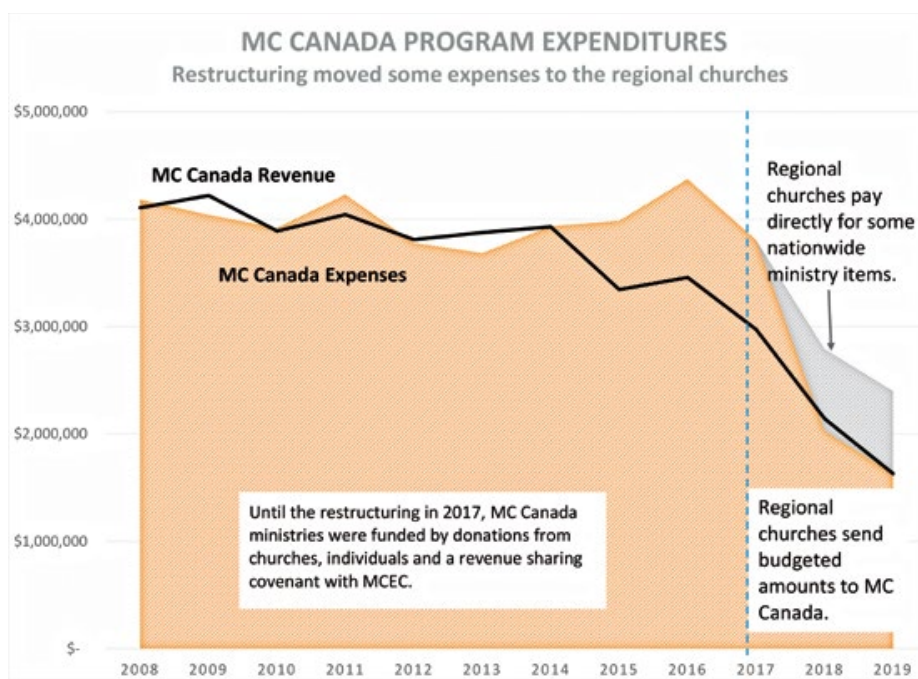
sharing the finance department roles with MC Eastern Canada and MC Manitoba. "This is still a work in progress," he said.

Delegates approved a balanced budget for FYE 2020 of \$1.63 million, based on the amounts committed by the regional churches.

Moderator Calvin Quan said that,

Quan was referring to the mixed reaction of Mennonites when MC Canada staffer Steve Heinrichs was arrested for participating in a protest against pipelines in British Columbia in August 2018. In response to the event and concerns raised from the constituency, the Joint Council drafted a policy for MC Canada staff called "Speaking publicly and acts of conscientious civil disobedience." The draft has not been made public but it was listed as one of the actions of Joint Council from the past year that delegates were asked to approve.

Doug Johnson, co-pastor of Erb Street Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., raised the concern that there are times when acts of civil disobedience are im-



among all the nationwide commitments that the regional churches are pursuing, "the work of International Witness continues to be a significant priority," and that "focus on Indigenous-Settler Relations ministry continues." He said there is no consensus on how best to approach the latter. "Living into these calls to action . . . has tested our commitment to seek reconciliation with our Indigenous neighbours as much as it has challenged us to seek consensus on a complex issue with varying understandings across our nationwide church."

portant, and he asked for clarity on the document.

Quan responded that the draft policy had not been approved because Joint Council wanted further amendments before making it official. Interim executive minister Henry Paetkau read the draft aloud after Quan said more amendments were coming. Paetkau reiterated that Joint Council was still considering the document, so it had not been adopted.

Subsequent to that brief discussion, delegates voted to approve the actions of Joint Council. ☺

Good news of Jesus in a traumatized world

Leadership Day addresses neighbourhood evangelism

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

The way of the missional God is that the word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood, Elaine Heath told church leaders on June 28 at Gathering 2019's Leadership Day. Heath is a former dean of Duke University Divinity School in Durham, N.C., and an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church.

Much of Heath's talk, entitled "Trauma informed leadership for a missional church," focused on how various kinds of trauma people have experienced can hinder how they hear the good news of Jesus. Those who are in trauma cannot be fully present because they are so hyper-vigilant, they feel the "sky might really fall," she said. She defined trauma as "not what happens to us, but what we hold inside in the absence of an empathetic witness."

The church must be a good neighbour to its neighbours in a traumatized world, she said, citing statistics of one in three women and one in five men being sexually abused by age 19, making them feel toxic shame.

She defined evangelism as more than a formula to get people to believe the "four spiritual laws"; instead, she said it is the fruit of true presence, deep listening, wise discernment and loving action. She gave examples of two congregations that lived out this definition: a rural one that revitalized itself from an attendance of 11 to around 50 each Sunday, and an urban one that found itself welcoming homeless people, cooking and eating meals together regularly, and enjoying community life.

"People are coming to know God because God has moved into the neighbourhood," she said, then asked her listeners, "What are the next steps for you and your congregation to become flesh and blood,



PHOTO BY JANE GRUNAU

At Gathering 2019's Leadership Day, Elaine Heath encourages Mennonite Church Canada leaders to be good neighbours in a traumatized world.

and move into the neighbourhood in the power of the Spirit?"

Heath also talked about the importance of spiritual discernment, a contemplative practice. Showing up, paying attention, cooperating with God and balancing options are all part of a contemplative life. Contemplative practices, she said, are "whatever helps you find God and peace."

To choose life is always the best way, Heath concluded, asking listeners to reflect on "What must you take up and what must you give up to choose life?" ❧

News brief

Pastor suggests ways to talk about God and spirituality



'Engaging in play is a spiritual discipline,' Troy Watson said during a presentation at Gathering 2019.

How can Christians let the Holy Spirit ignite their imaginations? Troy Watson addressed that question during a workshop at Gathering 2019 entitled, "Finding innovative ways to talk about God and spirituality." Watson, the pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont., and a columnist for *Canadian Mennonite*, listed a number of ways to do this. Chief among them, Watson said, is to develop a practice of childlike play and imagination. "Engaging in play is a spiritual discipline," he said. Some of the other practices Watson recommended included:

- **Listen more** than you speak in every interaction and every relationship.
- **Don't judge** or write off what doesn't fit your experience of God.
- **Be aware** that God is trying to transform you as much as God is trying to transform the person you are speaking with.
- **Stop speaking** "Christianese." Avoid clichés and insider terms, which are meaningless to people outside the church.
- **When you** feel the divine prompting to share your spiritual experiences and their impact, do so with honesty, humility and clarity.

"If we fail to let Jesus ignite our imaginations," Watson said, "we will fail to communicate the gospel effectively and meaningfully to Canadians in the 21st century."

—STORY AND PHOTO BY AARON EPP

'Firestarter stories' spark the imagination of the church

By Lisa Williams

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

"My job is to love the people in my neighbourhood, accept them for who they are and create a safe place where they are welcome," said Lyne Renaud, pastor of Hochma in Montreal, as she shared her "firestarter story" to spark the imagination of the church at Mennonite Church Canada's Gathering 2019.



Lyne Renaud

Lyne, along with her husband Michel Monette and their family, explored new ways of being church in their Montreal community. Her son invited a homeless man to the breakfast that the church offered to the neighbourhood. Through their ensuing relationship, Michel and Lyne accepted the invitation to dine at the man's home.

"They were stoned and selling drugs while we were eating with them," she recalled. "Dealers came into the apartment while we were there. My husband and I looked at each other and asked, 'Where are we?'"

But each Sunday this man faithfully came to Hochma. He was stoned and stinking of the gas that he sniffed, but he was always there. Hochma was his church. He loved it and felt safe and welcomed.

When he suddenly stopped coming, people began to worry. No one knew where he had gone or what had happened. Three months later, he returned and said confidently, "I have met Jesus and I gave my life to him. I decided to get sober so I went under the bridge and stayed there to get clean of drugs. It has been three months and I am sober and want my life to be aligned with God."

There has been a change in this man's life and the people on the street have noticed and are talking about it, Lyne said. He is now the director of Care Montreal, an organization Hochma started with his

help, to offer a warm place at night for homeless people. "He is on a mission with Jesus in the neighbourhood to help the city become more and more Christlike," said Lyne. "Truly, no one is better to take care of that centre because people in the neighbourhood have seen the changes in this man's life."

- **Colin McCartney** trains young urban leaders in Toronto to lead and plant churches in their urban and often under-resourced neighbourhoods. "Someone has to step outside of the walls of the church to build relationships, so that the neighbourhood becomes a part of the church," he said during his "firestarter story." "God so loved the world that he sent his son into the world—into the community, the neighbourhood. There are a lot of good people already living in urban centres who can plant churches in their own neighbourhoods, among people and



Colin McCartney

in settings that they are a part of already."

- **Maysoun Darweesh** and her husband, Nour Ali, are Syrian refugees. While travelling abroad in 2006 and alerted by friends not to return to Syria, the family found themselves in Macau, China. Their life upturned and with no opportunity to work, they did not know what they were going to do. China was not welcoming

refugees to resettle there.

While in China, they met George and Tobia Veith, and through them became connected to Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, which sponsored them to come to Canada. Shortly after their arrival in 2013, they asked if Douglas Mennonite might also sponsor their brother and sister-in-law, Brian Darweesh and Reem Younes.

Darweesh and Younes had had a small civil wedding service with no family in attendance," said Don Rempel Boshmann, pastor of Douglas Mennonite Church. "Reem had always dreamt of having a wedding, a proper wedding."

Krista Neustaeder Barg from Douglas Mennonite helped Younes's dream come true. The wedding was complete with a wedding dress, suit, family and friends, along with heartfelt smiles and tears.

Since 2013, Douglas Mennonite has sponsored 21 Syrian refugees. "It has just snowballed and keeps rolling along. We are so fortunate to be partnering with Maysoun and Nour," said Boschmann. "It has been wonderful."

- **Vine and Table** is a community for young adults and students to live, learn and grow in a Jesus-centred community. Located in Saskatoon, Terri Lynn and Thomas Friesen opened their home for young adults to engage in household life and spiritual growth. The couple live on site as part of the community, and offer mentorship and support in academic study and vocational exploration. They named their home Vine and Table; the vine represents growth and the table represents sharing life together.

- **Donna Entz**, a Mennonite worker with Muslims and African immigrants with MC Alberta, has been forming relationships with Christian and Muslim communities

in Edmonton for the purpose of dialogue. “Dialogue is an authentic way of doing witness, especially in a North American setting,” she said. Through A Common Word, Alberta Christians and Muslims meet to reduce misunderstandings and stereotypes that can come between people groups.

• **The seeds of hope** are the gifts of stories that interrupt the darkness,” said Darnell

Barkman, pastor of Yarrow United Mennonite Church in B.C. He highlighted four categories to direct missional thinking:

1. **What is God doing?**
2. **What is our context?**
3. **What are the seeds of hope** that we see?
4. **What kind of spiritual practices** do we have as individuals and congregations to sustain us in this mission of God?

The stories encouraged congregations to intentionally find the seeds of hope in their communities to see what interrupts the brokenness in the world and brings healing and hope. ☞

Watch “Firestarter stories” at home.mennonitechurch.ca/node/1660.



Youth retreat at Squeah

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LIAM KACHKAR

Four youths and an equal number of leaders went on retreat at Camp Squeah in Hope, B.C., during Mennonite Church Canada’s nationwide Gathering 2019. Pictured in front: Rachel Onsonge, a young adult leader from B.C.; and back row from left to right: Liam Kachkar, a young adult leader from Alberta; Sara Ehling and Christine Lee, youth from B.C.; Mike Wiebe, a Canadian Mennonite University representative from Manitoba; Mykayla Turner, a Conrad Grebel University College representative from Ontario; Aidan Morton Ninomiya, a youth from Ontario; and Caleb Friesen Epp, a youth from Manitoba.

Mike Wiebe, left, a youth leader at the Gathering 2019 youth retreat, and youth participant Aidan Morton Ninomiya of Ontario make a fire for the others to enjoy at Camp Squeah.



Mennonite Women dissolve national ministry

Regional ministries to benefit from distribution of funds

Story and Photo by Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

With tears, hugs and 67 years of memories, participants at the Mennonite Women Canada annual luncheon meeting, held on June 30, said goodbye to each other and to their national organization.

With the theme for the afternoon, “To everything a season,” members recognized the season had come for ending the nationwide women’s body. Declining attendance in individual women’s groups, the restructuring of Mennonite Church Canada to shift responsibilities and resources to regional churches, and the dissolution of MC Canada’s five regional women’s groups all contributed to the change.

“As the seasons of our lives have changed, so have the projects of Mennonite Women Canada,” said president



Mennonite Women Canada executive members met for one last time at Gathering 2019 in Abbotsford, B.C. Pictured from left to right: Shirley Redekop, president; Elsie Rempel, secretary; and Liz Koop, past president.

/// Briefly noted

Gathering 2019 by the numbers

- **\$700** (minus expenses) raised in the crokinole tournament
- **400 attended** the June 30 morning worship service
- **More than 300** registrants
- **84 delegates**
- **48 participants** in the crokinole tournament
- **25 volunteers** from four congregations: Eden Mennonite, Emmanuel Mennonite, Peace Mennonite and Yarrow United Mennonite
- **8 children** in attendance
- **4 toddlers** in attendance, plus some guests
- **4 youth** in attendance

—COMPILED BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

Shirley Redekop. “It has been a time of growth—of spring and summer—and now, Mennonite Women Canada has moved into its autumn and winter, a quieter season.”

Participants accepted the proposal to dissolve the nationwide ministry by the fiscal year end, Jan. 31, 2020. Approval was given to lift any restrictions on funds and to distribute the balance to regional women’s ministries. Financial assets will be distributed by Jan. 31. MW Canada hopes the money will support the dreams and visions for present and future women’s ministries.

Executive team members expressed their gratitude to those who had gone before, citing an April 29 “Connections” article: “We are thankful for the vision and commitment of women in the past who served their church locally, provincially and nationally. We are also thankful for the support of women’s groups across the country who continue to nurture and minister to others across the street and around the world, accomplishing much more together than they could alone.”

“The seeds will sprout somewhere else,”

said former MW Canada president Liz Koop, reflecting on the future of Mennonite women in Canada. Koop said she had joined the organization as a young woman and that without it, “I wouldn’t be the person I am today.”

Jason Martin, director of MC Canada International Witness, thanked the women’s organizations for the \$100,000 they had given to overseas mission workers in the past 18 years.

Jeanette Hanson, a long-time Witness worker in China, told the women’s group she was “a grateful recipient of your generosity” over the years. She held up a pen given to her years ago by MW Canada and said that during challenging times she would often pick it up and hold it as a reminder of the support back in Canada.

Members of the nationwide and regional church executive read a litany describing the history of Mennonite women’s groups decade by decade, starting in the 1930s. In a final act of togetherness fitting the theme, the women present sang “In the Bulb There is a Flower.”

—With files from June Miller



PHOTO BY JUNE MILLER

An intergenerational crokinole tournament on the evening of June 28 pitted 48 participants against each other for a time of fun. Teams played on 10 boards custom-made by Christopher Epp, Andrew Kornelson and Darnell Barkman of Yarrow (B.C.) Mennonite Church. Three boards, embellished with the MC Canada logo, were sold in a silent auction and raised \$700 towards the work of Mennonite Partners in China.

/// News brief

'The best way to share the gospel is to live it'

The reality of a world in which the church is no longer at the centre of daily life presents exciting opportunities for kingdom work, says Colin McCartney, the founder of UrbanPromise Toronto and Connect Ministries, who delivered a workshop at Gathering 2019, exploring ways to do effective and innovative ministry within post-Christendom culture. "I think Jesus is more comfortable in post-Christendom than he ever was in Christendom," said McCartney, who works with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. Ministering in post-Christendom contexts requires creating a "discovery zone" where people are free to think through and test new ideas; fostering inclusive community where everyone's sacredness is recognized; pursuing a spirit of risky grace in which people try new things, even when they aren't sure what the outcome will be; and authentically modelling the kingdom of God. "The best way to share the gospel is to live it," McCartney said. No one is "in" and no one is "out," he added. That mentality creates judgment and fear. Rather, everyone is on a journey with Jesus Christ. "God is still working on every person's heart right now," McCartney said. "Every person's heart."

—STORY AND PHOTO BY AARON EPP



Colin McCartney explored how to do effective and innovative ministry within post-Christendom culture at his Gathering 2019 workshop.

Holding growth and the past in tension

Young adults engaged in the future of Mennonite Church Canada

By Rachel Bergen
Contributing Editor

For the first time since Mennonite Church Canada restructured, delegates from the five regional churches met in Abbotsford, B.C., to discuss the future of the nationwide church body.

Among these delegates were a number of younger adults who hope to contribute ideas from their imagination to the future of MC Canada as it shifts and adapts with the times.

Here are just a few of the reflections of four younger delegates:

Aaron Roorka, MC B.C. delegate

Aaron Roorka, 43, is the associate pastor of Eden Mennonite Church in Chilliwack. He was called by the regional church to serve as a delegate for MC B.C.



Aaron
Roorka

Roorka said he wanted to take part in the gathering to contribute to building up the church. "I really appreciate MC Canada and really want to be a part of strengthening the connection between it and the regional groups, as well as strengthening the connection with the local churches," he said.

Moving forward, he wonders about the role of his church in the nationwide body: "How can we, as a local B.C. church, support the work of MC Canada in stronger and growing ways?"

Overall, though, he said his experience at the Gathering was a positive one. "There is a richness found in the intentional national connection that is really important for each local congregation and for the regional groups," he said.

Caleb Kowalko, MC Alberta delegate

Caleb Kowalko, 31, is pastor of Calgary

First Mennonite Church and was nominated to take part in the Gathering as a delegate.

He said he left the gathering with hopes for the Mennonite church in Alberta.

"I'm a relatively new Mennonite, as I just became a member in 2017," he said. "So I'm still learning about the structure and polity as it is now. That being said, my dream is that MC Canada wouldn't be quite so concentrated in Manitoba and Ontario, and the abundance it can offer would someday be realized in a province like Alberta."

Kowalko will report on what took place at the Gathering at church during an upcoming Sunday service. He also plans to use the Gathering as a way to launch into strategic planning at Calgary First Mennonite.

Moses Falco, MC Manitoba delegate

Moses Falco is pastor of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg and was a delegate for MC Manitoba at the Gathering.

The 28-year-old said he really enjoyed taking part in it.

"As a non-traditional Mennonite, I can't seem to get enough of these get-togethers, perhaps because I never had them before," he said. "Not only was the input from Elaine Heath [the keynote speaker] and all the presenters very life-giving, but so was connecting with so many Mennonites from all over the country. I was inspired by what God is doing in our denomination."

He said he will likely report on the Gathering in future sermons. "I took a lot of



Caleb
Kowalko

notes from the sessions and know that it will be helpful as we continue to figure out what being the body of Christ means in our context," he said.

As MC Canada grows and changes, he hopes the growth can be held in tension with remembering what was. "It has always been a mixed bag of letting go and looking to something new," he said. "My hope is that we can look for new life in ways that respect and honour what has happened before. We need to always remember that what has come before is a building block to what is ahead. As we continue forward in our ever-shifting culture, I know that it was not for nothing."

Emily Hunsberger, MC Eastern Canada delegate

Emily Hunsberger, 25, attends Shantz Mennonite Church in Baden, Ont. She serves as a worship leader and sits on a number of committees.



Emily
Hunsberger

She was told her role as a delegate was to network within MC Eastern Canada and with other MC Canada congregations, and to bring home ideas for the regional church's congregations. "We were instructed to participate and be present within the larger body of the church," she said.

Moving forward, she hopes MC Canada will develop a nationwide welcoming statement. "I would like to see MC Canada have an explicit inclusive statement regarding LGBTQ+ people," she said.

She also has some questions for the church as it is in flux. "With church numbers declining, how do we preserve our ideals of equality, peace and justice?" she wonders, noting, "One of our biggest priorities is probably growing the church, but that's hard in this world. How do we maintain our ideals when we want people to be part of our churches?"

She said she will report back on what she learned and reflected on in a presentation to the regional church and will speak in her congregation. ❧

Canadian Mennonite was unable to connect with a young MC Saskatchewan delegate before our press deadline.

Arnaud Mennonite Church celebrates 75 years

Rural church maintains presence in its community

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

Manitoba Correspondent

ARNAUD, MAN.

While many churches in rural Canada face closure, Arnaud Mennonite Church recently celebrated its 75th anniversary. Located in the prairie town of Arnaud, Man., the church is home to a wide range of ages, from young families with children to seniors. Although about 40 people regularly attend Sunday morning worship, more than 150 people gathered on June 9 to celebrate the church's birthday, reminisce and reconnect with old friends.

The day began with a worship service. The church rang with the harmonies of a

of the older generation even revived the circle games they used to play at weddings and church events when they were young.

The day concluded with open-mic sharing. One highlight was sharing memories of a rich tradition of music in the church.

Harold Penner, congregational co-chair, in an interview, said that many skilled musicians have come from this church, including well-known composer and conductor Leonard Enns, organist Lottie Enns-Braun and pianist Wilma Poetker, among many others.

Another common thread identified in the open-mic time was the outstretched hands of the church's members. "I think we've also been known as a really caring church in the community," said Penner. Whenever people were in trouble, church members "rallied around and helped out," like harvesting a family's crops when they experienced a death in the family. "That's something that actually still continues, because we do care about each other and really try to help each other."

Many members of the church have also been heavily involved in a Canadian Foodgrains Bank growing project, called Helping Other People Eat (HOPE).

As a community project, they work with individuals from different backgrounds in their community to help others around the world have enough food to eat.

Arnaud Mennonite was built in 1944 by Mennonites who came from Russia in the 1920s. Lichtenau Mennonite Church in Ste. Elizabeth was the first church built in the region, but it was too difficult for some members to travel there every week, so they built a second church in Arnaud and became two congregations. Arnaud Mennonite has since outlived the Arnaud

Mennonite Brethren and Lichtenau congregations, which closed in the late 1990s.

Penner said the church has faced its share



Young and old participated in church picnic activities after lunch.

of challenges over the years, like every other church does, but that the bigger challenges are occurring now.

"The declining numbers in our congregation is a challenge, which has mostly to do with rural depopulation—bigger farms, smaller families, and so on," he said.

For many years, the church rested comfortably at about 100 regular attendees. But at the start of the new millennium, the numbers in the pews on Sunday morning began to decline.

"We see churches closing in rural Canada. It's not like we don't realize that could also happen to us," Penner said. "But at this point we're not entertaining that option. We have a group right now that still sees ourselves continuing and we hope we can do that."

For today, tomorrow and the weeks to come, the church will continue to serve its community and act as a space for gathering and worship. "I guess the bottom line for us is that we trust that God will continue to lead us and that we will continue to do what we're called to do here." ❧



PHOTOS BY RICK FRIESEN

Church members brought back the circle games they used to play at weddings and church events when they were young.

mass choir, a feature that was a regular part of weekly worship in the past.

Children crowded around Phyllis Wiebe for a story. Wiebe often did the children's story when her husband Dave, who has since passed away, was Arnaud Mennonite's first hired pastor in 1977. Seven former pastors participated in the morning worship and afternoon sharing.

After lunch, young and old participated in church picnic activities, competing to eat food with no hands, put books of the Bible in order and play-tug-of-war. Some

Walk for Common Ground puts faith into action

Story and Photos by Jonas Cornelsen
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
CALGARY

Friends and family huddled in light afternoon rain on June 14, waiting for about 30 participants in the Walk for Common Ground to arrive in Calgary. The walkers were led in by a Scottish bagpiper, then greeted with drumming and singing by local Indigenous elders. Tears of joy mixed with the rain as walkers were congratulated for finishing their 14-day journey from Edmonton to Calgary. They walked to honour treaties made between First Nations and the Government of Canada in the 1870s and to start conversations on what the treaty relationship means today.

The Walk for Common Ground was co-organized by Indigenous leaders like Patricia Makokis, faith groups including Mennonite Church Canada, and the Health Sciences Association of Alberta, a province-wide union. Walker and organizer Scott MacDougall, who sits on the association's social justice committee board, said churches, unions and Indigenous peoples are woven together by "a single thread" of shared values like mutual support, but "labels have kept [those groups] from having important conversations" with each other. MacDougall thanked Mennonite participants like Steve Heinrichs, director of Indigenous-Settler Relations for MC Canada, and Allegra Friesen Epp, a practicum student in Heinrichs's office, for their "gargantuan contribution" to the walk's organization and success.

Each day, the group walked 20 to 30 kilometres along Alberta's secondary highways, in conditions ranging from dry heat to blowing snow. They carried flags symbolizing Treaty 6 (Edmonton and central Alberta) and Treaty 7 (Calgary and southern Alberta), and signs reading "We are all treaty people." At evening stops in churches, colleges and community centres,



Caleb Kowalko, left, and Steve Heinrichs celebrate reaching their destination in Olds.

walkers were joined by local residents to watch a documentary called *Treaty Talk: Sharing the River of Life*, and then held a sharing circle at which participants would reflect on what they had learned with each other that day.

Along the way, Mennonite walkers reflected on how faith shaped their approach to this journey. "I'm participating because I am a Christian," said Caleb Kowalko, pastor of Calgary First Mennonite Church. "I follow Christ to the margins," he added, as trucks roared past the walkers on the edge of a two-lane highway.

Cassidy Brown, who grew up near Carstairs, Alta., and now studies at Canadian Mennonite University, said being on the walk challenged and strengthened her faith. "I found myself praying more through this walk," she said. Brown enjoyed starting each day with a ceremony led by Elder Eugene Makokis from Saddle Lake Cree Nation. The group would pray together "to set our good intentions for the day," she said, noting she often prayed for strength as the walk was

physically and mentally challenging.

Walkers also spoke about the need for settler Canadians to educate each other about treaties. As a pastor, Kowalko hopes to start conversations on how Mennonites can "live in a more loving relationship" with Indigenous peoples in Canada. Treaties, he said, are "agreement[s] of how to share and live side by side" on the same land.

Steve Heinrichs linked the spirit of treaties with sacred agreements from the biblical story, saying, "We need to know the covenants of which we're a part." He added that, for too long, Indigenous peoples have advocated for treaty rights without enough response from settlers.

The Walk for Common Ground was partially inspired by the Pilgrimage for Indigenous Rights in Ontario in 2017, when a group of mostly settlers, including several Mennonites, walked from Kitchener, Ont., to Ottawa. Both of these walks, said Heinrichs, represented a way for non-Indigenous participants to teach each other about treaties. Allegra Friesen Epp added



Cassidy Brown, right, and her mother Nola Brown walk along Highway 2A north of Olds, Alta., carrying the Treaty 7 flag.



Local elders greet walkers at the Health Sciences Association of Alberta office in Calgary as part of the closing ceremony.

that, as Mennonites, we need to “remember to put [our] faith in action and walk the talk” of standing with communities that society has marginalized.

Indigenous participants in the walk were encouraged to see non-Indigenous participants taking an active role in teaching one another. Anita Crowshoe of the Piikani First Nation (Treaty 7) said it

was “humbling” to know that churches, including MC Canada, were taking on more allied work with Indigenous communities. “I envision settlers creating allies within churches to learn the true intention of the wampum belt and treaty,” she said, referring to an image of two canoes moving side-by-side down a river, sharing space without interfering with each other.

Crowshoe said, if someone had told her decades ago that she would be part of a walk like this in her lifetime, she would not have believed it. She spoke with deep emotion when she described the feeling of “being able to walk into treaty territory with treaty friends,” both Indigenous and settlers. “It means the world.” ❧



PHOTO BY JOANNE DE JONG

Led by Diana Steinhauer, centre, and her eagle staff, a group of Indigenous, unionist and church friends travel together on the Walk for Common Ground that began in Edmonton. The treaty walk was meant to nurture treaty understanding and relationships.

Mennonites find warm welcome at Indigenous theological symposium

Story and Photo by Zach Charbonneau
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
TORONTO

Under the bright blue sky, on the grassy hill of Tyndale University in Toronto, situated on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Huron-Wendat peoples, Casey Church performed an Anishinaabe pipe ceremony, acknowledging the Creator and the sacred directions. He gave thanks on behalf of the 200 or so people gathered in two large circles around him.

For a conference focused on Christian theology, the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies (NAIITS) 2019 Symposium began in a way that may have seemed foreign to many of the attendees looking on, but, in truth, the pastors, academics and interested people of faith were witnessing something that had deep roots in the very land upon which they stood.

Land was, in fact, the core theme of this year's symposium entitled, "Land and place: Indigenous perspectives in an era of displacement." Plenary speakers covered a wide range of topics: from the land as a relational gift of the Creator and the land as that which shapes human and cultural identity, to the land that has been stolen and commodified through accounting language and legal systems that excluded Indigenous people. Presenters were engaging and inspiring, bringing history and ideas to the fore that many said they had not considered before.

Some of those in attendance at the symposium came from Mennonite churches across Canada and are invested and interested in relationships between Indigenous and settler peoples. Lucia Eitzen of Langley Mennonite Fellowship has been learning about Indigenous issues and has participated in walks for reconciliation in British Columbia, but she admits she has lots to learn. "I am a beginner in this conversation and know little," she said. "I



Daniel Dixon, left, and Adrian Jacobs take part in a Talking Circle following a plenary speaker at a recent NAIITS symposium held in Toronto in early June.

was worried I wouldn't get all the terminology right and unintentionally offend people. I was determined to just listen. Being warmly welcomed and accepted for who I am baffled me at first, but I really liked it," she said.

This warm welcome was not lost on others. In fact, it seemed as if welcome, hospitality and embrace were the unspoken themes of the conference. Each speaker received beautiful introductions, complete with ribbing and laughter, and finished with firm, lasting hugs from the leadership of NAIITS. There was an intimacy that everyone was invited into during presentations, the NAIITS graduation, and a beautiful celebration of the life and work of Wendy Beauchemin Peterson, who passed away last October. This intimacy was palpable as Terry LeBlanc, one of NAIITS's co-founders, began to refer to those in attendance as the "NAIITS family."

This was not a conference for strangers but a meeting place for brothers and sisters. Muriel Bechtel of Cambridge, Ont., commented, "I was very moved that this community sees us all as family and all that means."

Carol Penner of Conrad Grebel University College also pointed this out, saying, "There was a real emphasis on relationship and community; I don't think I've ever

been at a conference where there was so much storytelling about how people knew each other and what they have meant to each other."

The presenters spoke about the history between settlers and Indigenous people from Indigenous perspectives. It was not flattering or sugar-coated. In its honesty, it was as if there was some undoing of the stories of the past that served to justify the actions of settler Christians.

Denise Falk of Bethany Mennonite Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., said: "As Mennonites, we cannot feel the superiority of blamelessness. Mennonites also ran residential schools and as a church that wronged so many people. The church cannot be silent now but must lead the way to reconciliation and justice."

Reasons for attending the NAIITS symposium were varied. Curtis Krahn of Steinbach, Man., said that the content of the symposium had influenced his faith far beyond what any church had. Krahn was also a close friend of Wendy Peterson.

Josie Winterfeld of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., shared that her congregation had come in contact with concepts of reconciliation with Indigenous people and they told her, "Don't let us drop this."

Randy Haluza-Delay, who teaches sociology at King's University in Edmonton, attended the symposium because of his interest in the different shapes in which Christianity can be found.

It was evident that there is still a great deal of real, feet-on-the-ground and seat-at-the-table work to be done regarding reconciliation in Canada and abroad. Ray Minicon, an Indigenous man from Australia, demonstrated this as he shared stories from his work in Australia. They were all too familiar to a Canadian audience: residential schools, reserves, stolen children

and churches misusing power.

All over the world, the conversation of reconciliation and justice for Indigenous people is taking place. In her presentation,

“A search to belong: Cultural reclamation on the Jesus way,” Crystal Porter made the statement: “The church that was so loud in the past cannot be silent in the present.” ❧

Not because they were male

Social worker shares his thoughts on Anabaptism and the challenge of masculinity

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

Don Neufeld shared his reflections on the themes of masculinity and Anabaptism at a “Probing the potential for peace” discussion series held at Grace Mennonite Church in St. Catharines on May 3.



PHOTO BY JONATHAN SEILING

Don Neufeld shares his reflections on the themes of masculinity and Anabaptism at Grace Mennonite Church in St. Catharines, Ont., on May 3.

His insights came from years of experience working for House of Friendship in Kitchener, Family and Children’s Services in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and for almost a decade as a private-practice therapist in St. Catharines. He was recently appointed coordinator of Mennonite Men in Canada.

After more than 30 years of working in the social-work field, he feels compelled to give voice to a perspective on the lives of men.

His first job in Kitchener with socially disadvantaged men led him to realize how differently he had been raised within a stable and secure family, a supportive community and a belief in a loving God. This difference in child-rearing helped him make better choices than the men he was

working with, who were struggling with the consequences of their actions. But as he encountered these abusive men, and listened to their stories, he realized that they had also been abused and neglected. Their unacceptable behaviour came from their experiences, not because they were male. His observations include:

- **Many men** have deep insecurities.
- **Men have** been taught to be tough and not to rely on others, and, as a result, they often do not seek counsel for their issues.
- **Much of** the bad behaviour of men lies in the difficulty in finding their own identity.
- **Society must** honour men who, through the centuries, have acted in good faith within their understandings of masculinity and their roles as men, while now working with diligence to address the deficits of this understanding and broaden their opportunities as men to live fully.
- **In the** past decades, girls have heard the message that they can be anything and do anything—which has been good—but what messages have boys been given?
- **Men have** become much more a part of their core families, but when the relationships fail, the power to punish the fathers comes through the court system.

Much work needs to be done on gender and justice issues for the purpose of bringing healing to hurting men, and for building healthier relationships in the family and in the community, he said.

Neufeld looked at three areas of Anabaptist theology for what it offers:

- **Discipleship:** Called to respond to God’s love, to seek peace and justice in human relationships here on Earth. This involves positive and life-giving connections with self, with others and with God.
- **Community:** The antithesis of the solitary man. Boys and men have not been taught the skills of emotional intelligence, and thus they find it hard to relate well in relationships. This results in isolation and loneliness. Community is welcoming, encouraging and supporting; it leads to healing, growth, friendships and intimate relationships.
- **Peace:** Responding nonviolently to enemies and seeking reconciliation with others. The world pays the price of men who lack peace. This lack of emotional resilience makes it difficult for men to face loss and grief, who too often fall into despair and react through violence or addictions to the experiences life deals them. Peace comes from within.

The revisioning of masculinity is to give men more opportunities to grow emotionally, relationally and spiritually, to become whole. Men need to work on healthier relationships, for the sake of future generations.

Much of his presentation was based on *Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity* that he co-edited with Steve Thomas. This new resource addresses these issues; 16 men contributed chapters, and three women provided reflections.

People who attended the discussion found the topic intense.

“I was most impressed by Don Neufeld’s presentation,” said Desmond Dequiera. “One reason is that . . . he proposed that it would be incorrect to assume that men are innately violent. Rather, most violence in men can be attributed to historical socialization, often starting from the ‘cradle.’”

“I came away from Don’s talk encouraged, with hope that his . . . book will be a tool to help men overcome cultural and socialization influences, which keep them from being able to relate to women in healthy and equitable ways,” said Ruth Beekhuis. ❧

Quilt auction goes digital

Six quilts bought by online bidders

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

Over the last 53 years, the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale has raised more than \$12 million for relief, development and peacemaking efforts around the world by Mennonite Central Committee. In that time, in addition to favourites like doughnuts, strawberry pies and spring rolls, more than 10,000 quilts have been pieced, quilted, donated and auctioned off at the New Hamburg sales.

This year, 210 quilts were donated for sale at the late May event at the New Hamburg fairgrounds. But for the first time, prospective buyers could watch the sale and place their bids online. Organizers decided to add the use of modern technology to the well-known sale, hoping to attract a wider audience of potential bidders and generate better prices for the handcrafted works of art.



MCC PHOTO BY JESSE BERGEN

Bids are tracked on a large screen at the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale and quilt auction on May 25. This was the first year for online bidding, with six quilts going to buyers who placed their bids electronically.

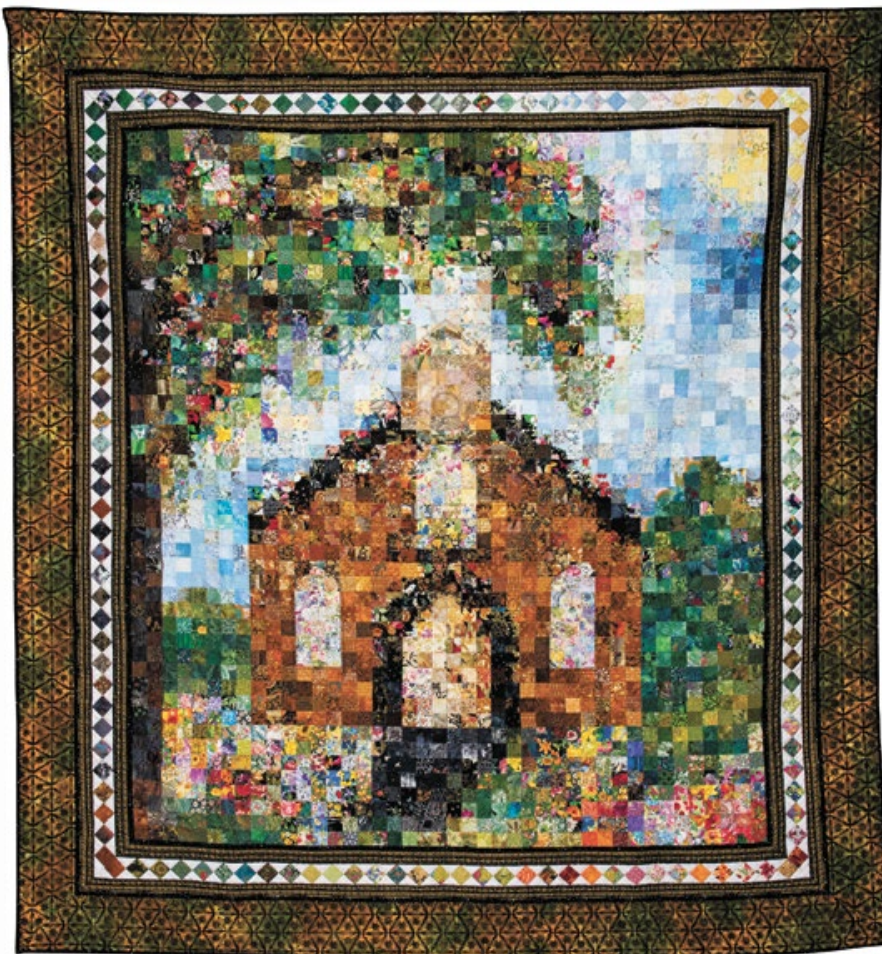


PHOTO BY ST. JACOBS PRINTERY

See the story behind the 2019 feature quilt, 'Little Brown Church,' at nhmrs.com/content/feature-quilts.

According to John Reimer, the relief sale's chair, the focus this year was to prove that the technology would work. "The trial passed all our goals, and we will continue with it next year," he said. Six quilts were purchased by online bidders.

Reimer noted that there were not enough online bids to significantly increase the prices on the quilts this year, but he hopes that in three to five years, with improvements to the system and wider marketing of the auction, the prices paid for quilts will rise. This year, the feature quilt, "Little brown church," described as a giant puzzle with more than 3,000 pieces, sold for \$3,200, the highest bid at the sale.

Preliminary estimates put the total profits from the two-day sale at just over \$260,000, which is down from the previous year's total of \$314,000.

While the Friday evening was the busiest on record, bad weather forced the cancellation of the Run for Relief and put a damper on in-person attendance on the morning of May 25, which meant profits that day were down from previous years. ☘

‘Working at home is over-rated’

Three Mennonite organizations share space in new Edmonton location

Story and Photo by Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
EDMONTON

After years of dreaming of a Mennonite hub in Edmonton, it finally came to pass. Mennonite organizations that were formerly in basements, spare rooms and kitchens have come together to share space at the invitation of Mennonite Mutual Insurance (MMI). MMI, an Alberta-based insurance company that officially formed in 1960 to meet the needs of the Alberta Mennonite community, leased a space just off Whitemud Drive in Edmonton and invited Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta and Mennonite Church Alberta to join as renters.

While MCC Alberta’s head office remains in Calgary, Edmonton supporters are glad for the new local presence. “Now MCC doesn’t feel so far away,” said Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, development coordinator for MCC Alberta. Even though it is not a full service MCC office, it is a connecting point. People can ask questions or drop off school kits instead of arranging to drive all the way to Calgary.

On a personal note, Donita said, “Working at home is over-rated. It’s much easier to be organized, focused and efficient in a designated office. I love having an office and colleagues to interact with. Now when I go home, I’m not at work.” She also mentioned, “It’s beneficial having a Mennonite hub where we bring together different arms of the church—it creates a synergy and that central place instead of having it scattered in homes.”

She shares the new offices with her husband, Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, executive minister for MC Alberta, and MMI insurance advisers Dena Harris and Sonia Halliday.

“I’m excited about getting all of my files out of the house and into an organized and dedicated space,” said Tim. “I also like to have a place to show hospitality,

which is difficult when you have a home office.” Tim moved into the new quarters from their house basement and Donita from the spare room, while Halliday and Harris’s former office space included a desk in a church kitchenette.

Dena is enthusiastic to have a sound-proof office, a more professional look, and especially a shared camaraderie among the Mennonite organizations. This feeling is shared by Tim and Donita, who both expressed how much nicer it is to work together in a common space. “It’s good



Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, MC Alberta executive minister, left; Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, MCC Alberta development coordinator; and Sonia Halliday and Dena Harris, MMI insurance advisers, now share a common space in Edmonton.

for morale. I feel more connected and less like a lone ranger,” said Donita.

MMI took possession of the space on March 1, and on April 9 an open house to celebrate the new offices was held. All are welcome to stop by and say hello. ☘



PHOTO BY JON OLFERT

Jonah Olfert Wiens, left, and Noah Thiessen stand proudly on the gorgeous Nihahi Ridge in Kananaskis Country, Alta., during this year’s 18th annual Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon, held on June 15. The hikers had raised \$12,000 for Camp Valaqua as of June 21.

New hymnal project introduced to MC Saskatchewan

Story and Photo by Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan is getting ready to welcome the new *Voices Together* hymnal. While some may be ready to receive it with open arms, others may be reluctant to embrace the change a new hymnal brings.

Pastors, worship leaders and musicians from many MC Saskatchewan churches met at Mount Royal Mennonite in Saskatoon on June 15 to learn about *Voices Together* and wonder about the impact it might make in their congregations.

Sarah Johnson and Anneli Loepp Thiessen, both members of the *Voices Together* committee, and Marilyn Houser Hamm, who served on the planning committee for *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, joined forces to present an afternoon workshop, with sessions covering various topics related to the new hymnal.

Johnson led a session designed to explore the planned worship resources book that will accompany the hymnal. She described this publication by what it will not be. It won't be a minister's manual but will hopefully "resource communion more robustly." It won't be a textbook, but rather more of a problem-solving guide. It won't offer more words for worship but

will offer ideas for writing one's own worship materials. It will offer resources for how to pray a congregational prayer, she said, or how to use projection in worship. It will provide theological grounding for the seasons of the church year, for worship and culture.

Johnson invited participants to look at several versions of the prayer that Jesus taught, also known as the Lord's Prayer. In groups of two or three, they examined contemporary interpretations of the prayer, discussing their merits and drawbacks. Some use more inclusive language, while others choose contemporary idioms to attract younger readers.

Loepp Thiessen's session discussed the criteria used for changing hymn texts. She assured participants that *Voices Together* will include some hymn changes that people will love and some that they will dislike. But, she added, "It's very freeing [to know that] you don't have to love it all."

The rationale for changing hymn texts, said Loepp Thiessen, is that "our environment is always changing. Relationships change. We would like the text to reflect that."

In response to the proposed change

from "This is my Father's World" to "This is God's Wondrous World," Andrea Enns Gooding, pastor of Zoar Mennonite in Waldheim, wondered, "What is this going to do for our worship? How might it cause tension?"

Loepp Thiessen admitted that making decisions to change a beloved hymn's text is "not straightforward." Committee members ponder whether a hymn's text is harmful or just archaic. She says they are "feeling it out" and "listening to people's feedback."

A third session, led by Houser Hamm, gave participants ideas for how to introduce world music—that is, music from other cultures—to their congregations.

In a final plenary session, Johnson and Loepp Thiessen spoke about contemporary worship music. Both women serve on the popular idiom subcommittee, and they talked about the criteria this group uses to decide which contemporary songs make the cut.

To be included, a song must be widely sung by "a broad diversity of Christians," said Johnson. It must also have stood the test of time. Loepp Thiessen said, "In *Voices Together*, we're hoping to represent music that has been sung for the last 30 years and that will be sung for the next 30 years."

The committee members promised there will be "a lot more contemporary worship music in *Voices Together*, but they assured participants that about half the new hymnal will consist of pieces from *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story*.

"Not every song is for you or your congregation, but we hope that the collection will represent the diversity of our whole body," said Johnson. ❧



Marilyn Houser Hamm leads a session on introducing songs from another culture to the congregation.

'In this together'

Saskatchewan Mennonites participate in Saskatoon Pride Parade

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

This wasn't the first time Mennonites participated in the Saskatoon Pride Parade, but it was the first time they walked together as a group.

According to Susanne Guenther Loewen, co-pastor of Nutana Park Mennonite in Saskatoon, in previous years, "people from Wildwood, Osler and Nutana Park [Mennonite churches] were running into each other at the parade. Pastors from these three congregations got together and decided to register as a group and walk together this year."

The parade, which was held on June 22, included about 45 individuals from these three congregations.

A week prior to the parade, those who wished to participate were invited to a "Prep for Pride" event at Nutana Park. About 30 people attended. The purpose of this event was "to raise awareness that we were walking, to decorate shirts and posters and make buttons, and to unveil our banner," says Guenther Loewen. "We also shared rainbow-coloured snacks."

Guenther Loewen and her colleagues—Joe Heikman of Wildwood; Eileen Klassen, an interim at Wildwood; Patrick Preheim of Nutana Park; and Patty Friesen and Nora Pederberg of Osler—had talked previously about why they wanted to participate. She says, "[We] agreed it was primarily about taking part in a wider celebration of diversity."

Guenther Loewen says they chose the sentiment, "In this together," to express this desire. These words appeared on the banner they carried as well as the buttons they fashioned during Prep for Pride. She points out that these buttons "were first made and distributed at the Mennonite Church Canada assembly several years ago in Saskatoon."

So far, she hasn't heard any feedback from other MC Saskatchewan

congregations, either negative or positive. But, she says, "there has been a lot of positive feedback on social media, especially from Mennonites in other provinces, who have found our story inspiring."



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEN BORNE

About 45 people representing three MC Saskatchewan congregations walked in the Saskatoon Pride parade on June 22.

The weather wasn't ideal for walking in a parade, but "those of us who walked certainly enjoyed ourselves, in spite of the rain," she says. "We walked together and sang in four-part harmony about justice and freedom and 'walking in the love of God.'"

She adds that participating in the Pride parade seems like a natural next step for her congregation, given that a number of years ago the church adopted a statement of inclusion that appears in its bulletins each Sunday: "Nutana Park Mennonite Church welcomes into fellowship and membership all persons who confess faith in Jesus Christ, without regard to their race, ethnic background, gender, age, sexual orientation, income, education, ability, and other factors that give rise to

discrimination and marginalization."

Wildwood Mennonite, likewise, has a similar statement of welcome that appears on the church's website: "We're glad to welcome everyone to worship and participate with us! Wildwood Mennonite Church is a community of followers of Jesus Christ that invites into membership all who wish to join us in the journey of faith. With God's help, we will not discriminate in regard to race, ethnic background, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, income, education, ability and other factors that may give rise to division and marginalization."

The pastors of the three churches did not make the decision to participate lightly and they did it in consultation with church members who are part of the LGBTQ+ community.

"Before making firm plans to participate in the parade," Guenther Loewen says, "we made sure to consult with our LGBTQ+ members and congregants, to see whether they'd feel comfortable with it. They did, so we went ahead." She adds, "The queer folks and family members and all of us who participated had a good time celebrating diversity, equality and love, and that's what it was ultimately about." ❧

To view a video, visit
canadianmennonite.org/sask-pride-2019.



A life-long journey for freedom

Road connecting Shoal Lake 40 to mainland officially opens

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

For the first time in more than a century, the isolated island of Shoal Lake 40 First Nation is now connected to the rest of mainland Canada.

The Indigenous community, located on the Manitoba-Ontario border, just celebrated the official opening of Freedom Road, a 24-kilometre, all-season road that links to the mainland via the Trans-Canada Highway.

walking dredge with his brother-in-law, Klaas R. Friesen, to make the construction possible.

An impressive engineering feat for its time, the dredge could cross swampy terrain that traditional excavation equipment couldn't. With a large shovel, the machine dug a trench for the concrete pipeline. He completed his work on the project after four years. The aqueduct has sourced Win-

community's only access to the mainland, cutting it off and making the community an island. The only way to travel outside the community and meet everyday needs like buying groceries was on a barge in the summer, which often broke down, or on treacherous ice roads across the lake in the winter.

While Winnipeggers can turn on a tap and instantly drink clean water, Shoal Lake 40 residents have lived under a boil-water advisory for more than 20 years due to inadequate water-treatment facilities, relying on imported bottled water.

"Every time a Winnipegger turn[s] on their tap there [is] a direct connection. This is coming from Shoal Lake 40, and our gain has been their tremendous loss," says Dorothy Fontaine, Mennonite Church Manitoba's director of mission.

Fontaine attended the celebrations for Freedom Road. She says that despite all the tragedy the community has experienced, the day was one of beautiful celebration, consisting of speeches by politicians and allies, and several hours of

storytelling by members of the community, followed by an evening of music by Indigenous artists.

Many Shoal Lake 40 members repeatedly said how great it is to be connected to the mainland and the people and resources there, Fontaine says. And the feeling is mutual. "The folks of Shoal Lake 40 are so warm, so wonderful and so inviting, one of the true gifts of Freedom Road is that



BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MENNONITE HERITAGE ARCHIVES

Workers construct the Greater Winnipeg Water District aqueduct between 1915 and 1919.

Shoal Lake 40 held four days of celebrations and feasts at the beginning of June to commemorate the new road and the opportunities it brings.

In 1919, the City of Winnipeg finished constructing a 163-kilometre aqueduct to transport water from Shoal Lake to Winnipeg. Klaas W. Brandt, a member of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren (Bruderthaler) Church, built a 55-tonne

nipeg's drinking water ever since.

But while the city celebrated this significant milestone of progress, Shoal Lake 40 was beginning what would be a century of injustice and the struggle to rectify it.

To make room for the building of the aqueduct, First Nation members were removed from their land and relocated to a peninsular area of their reserve. The city then proceeded to build a canal across the



Klaas W. Brandt's dredge used to construct the aqueduct.



2014 FILE PHOTO BY WILL BRAUN

Daryl Redsky of the Shoal Lake 40 First Nation stands on a temporary bridge over the man-made channel that used to isolate his community but has now been replaced by Freedom Road.



the mainland can connect with them," she says. "There's much for us to learn. This relationship really will be a blessing to Winnipeg and the community beyond."

Freedom Road means a lot to the people of Shoal Lake 40. "It means everything to me," says Angelina McLeod, an off-reserve member who has been involved in advocacy for Freedom Road. "It means no more hardships for the community, it means hope for the future, hope for the youth."

McLeod grew up in Shoal Lake 40 but moved away when she was 14 and now lives in Winnipeg. She is releasing a series of five films this fall through the National Film Board, entitled *The Freedom Road Series*, about the journey to Freedom Road and the experiences of the people of Shoal Lake 40.

"We're going to be having a new school and more jobs and more opportunities outside of the community," she says. The plans for a water treatment facility are also in progress once again.

Although it might feel tempting to say the work is done, that's far from the truth, says Jeff Friesen, associate pastor of Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and a member of Friends of Shoal Lake 40: "The biggest task of people living in Winnipeg is to push back against the temptation to see this as a firm ending of the story of Winnipeg and Shoal Lake 40."

A few specific things need to happen in Winnipeg, he says. There are numerous monuments across the city commemorating the aqueduct, and not one of them recognize Shoal Lake 40. Political pressure needs to be applied so this is corrected.

People can also push the Canadian Museum of Human Rights to properly acknowledge where Winnipeggers' water comes from: a community whose rights have been infringed on for a century.

McLeod says people should know that Shoal Lake 40 "still has no clean drinking water. It's pretty bad out there."

In fact, as of July 3, 58 long-term drinking water advisories still exist on First Nations across Canada, according to the Government of Canada. ☘

CHURCHES FOR FREEDOM ROAD FACEBOOK PHOTO
Freedom Road is now officially open.

Cycling into the future

Non-profit has a vision to expand cycling education and creation care

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

When Philip Martin discovered several years ago that “cycling education in Canada is almost non-existent,” he set out to do something about it.

With the help of his students at Shepard Public School in Kitchener, Ont., he designed a program that would fill the gap. It was those students who pushed him to make the cycling training comprehensive and authentic, with on-road experience and evaluation at the end. They assured him that children would take it more seriously.

for the earth in the process. He also serves as its current board chair.

The non-profit organization began when Martin’s class decided to complete the remaining 3,000 kilometres of Terry Fox’s Marathon of Hope from Thunder Bay to Victoria, B.C. They tracked the distances they ran around their schoolyard, but they got discouraged by how long it was taking. One student suggested they could do more if they were allowed to bring their bikes.

Martin agreed but was dismayed to wit-

the bike-safety program that became Cycling into the Future.

Six local schools participated in the first year. Now, five years later, 1,500 Grade 5 students in Waterloo Region were trained. Over its short history, the program has trained more than 5,000 children to cycle safely in traffic and taught 200 more how to ride a bike. The goal is for all 6,000 Grade 5 students in Waterloo Region to participate by 2024.

The comprehensive training program offers six modules over three days, “designed to teach kids how to safely and confidently operate and own a bike.” It begins with an interactive classroom session on rules and road safety. Then, under the supervision of trained instructors, students learn how to maintain their bikes and repair a flat tire. They go through a schoolyard riding rodeo so they can practise safety skills before going through a 75-minute, on-road session in small groups with a riding instructor. The program is embedded into the health and physical education curriculum, so teachers assess student achievement at the end.

At the heart of the program’s philosophy is its covenant of inclusion. Children who don’t have a bike or helmet will get them to keep at no cost, and those who have never ridden a bike will learn how to ride. Efforts are made to accommodate children with special needs.

Reflecting on this core commitment, Martin notes that “receiving a bike is a powerful thing for kids.” It provides fun, improves health, expands their world and represents growing independence, while being good for the earth. “The meaning of cycling for kids is profound,” he says.

Ella Strathdee, who worked for Cycling into the Future as a student and now volunteers, was recruited at Breslau Mennonite by Martin, to help with the program. She is part of a team of 40 people, including a full-time executive director, and many young adults and retirees—some paid and some volunteer—teaching cycling and maintenance skills, tuning up bikes and doing administrative tasks. Her passion for physical fitness, hands-on learning and working with children made her a natural fit. She reflects on how rewarding it is to see the joy and exuberance when children



CYCLING INTO THE FUTURE PHOTO

Philip Martin, left, and Ella Strathdee promote Cycling into the Future at a community event at Kitchener (Ont.) City Hall.

So the now-retired teacher, who is a member of Breslau (Ont.) Mennonite Church, founded Cycling into the Future, which enables children to become safe, confident, life-long cyclists, while caring

ness a near accident between a student cyclist and a car on the school’s busy street. Realizing that most children receive no instruction in how to cycle safely, he engaged his Grade 5 students to help design

learn to ride for the first time, and parents witness their success. She adds that it feels good to make a difference in the safety of so many children.

For Strathdee and Martin, being part of the program is an expression of their faith. Martin describes creation care as one of the most important ethical issues of the day. His theological foundations of God as creator and people as earth-keepers ground his work. He says that getting children cycling outdoors inspires greater

appreciation for the natural world, even in the city, and gives them a tangible way to care for the Earth.

Strathdee describes how being part of the program deepens her sense of gratitude, especially when she sees how much it means for children whose families can't afford bikes to get one for the first time.

The program nurtures strong partnerships in the cycling community and with business, education, charitable and government sectors. Beyond expanding to

all schools in Waterloo Region, Cycling into the Future sees other opportunities to grow by partnering with summer camp programs, or businesses whose employers encourage healthy, active living for their employees.

Martin's passion for creation care, cycling education and authentic learning continues to inspire a new generation of confident, safe, earth-keeping cyclists. ✎

✎ News brief

Columbia launches health care assistant program

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Columbia Bible College launches its new healthcare assistant (HCA) program this fall, which will qualify graduates to serve as care aides within healthcare settings across British Columbia. Recognized by the B.C. Care Aide and Community Health Worker Registry and B.C.'s Private Training Institutions Branch, the eight-month program will follow provincially approved curriculum for training care aides. It will also integrate a Christian perspective that aligns with the healthcare sector's emphasis on person-centred care, and it will give students tools to connect their Christian faith with their work via a newly developed course, "Foundations of Christian vocation." In launching this program, Columbia is working to address a major need within B.C. for well-trained healthcare assistants, and local care residences have responded with enthusiastic support. Senior staff members from Tabor Village, Baptist Housing and Menno Place served on the program advisory committee during the development of Columbia's program and are committed to welcoming Columbia's HCA students for their practicum training experiences. The first intake of the HCA program is currently accepting applicants for an October program start. For more information, visit columbiabc.edu/HCA.

—COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE



Columbia Bible College launches its new health care assistant (HCA) program this fall.



✎ News brief

Babies celebrated at home and abroad

CALGARY—Every February, First Mennonite Church in Calgary has one big shower to celebrate all the babies born in the church. This year, however, it was decided to have a second shower for the pastor's family who were expecting their first child in the spring. Traditionally, there is a potluck following the church service, followed by a baby shower. Since this shower was only celebrating one new baby, it was decided to add some babies from Ukraine to the list. On June 23, following the church service, gifts were poured out on their new pastor and spouse, Caleb and Triana Kowalko, in celebration of their new baby girl, Nova Aramburu Kowalko. In addition, 14 infant care kits were assembled at the shower that will be leaving for Ukraine in the fall through Mennonite Central Committee. "We were so generously gifted, so I'm excited that we can also give to others who have less," said Pastor Kowalko.

—BY JOANNE DE JONG



PHOTO BY LINDA DICKENSON

Fourteen infant care kits are off to Ukraine this fall through the Mennonite Central Committee Alberta as part of a church baby shower for the pastoral family at Calgary First Mennonite Church.

PEOPLE

Finding hope in the midst of the climate crisis

By Rachel Bergen
Contributing editor
EAST BRAINTREE, MAN.

Climate change is doing more than triggering environmental disasters. It's also triggering mental health crises and a sense of impending doom for some people.

Zoe Matties, 30, is finding hope in the midst of it all through a creation care organization she works for, and she's ensuring others do, too. Matties is the Manitoba program manager for A Rocha Canada. She recently facilitated a discovery day at the organization's Boreal Ecology Centre

from June 14 to 15. A Rocha is a faith-based organization that works primarily in conservation, environmental education and sustainable agriculture.

The Boreal Ecology Centre is a project of A Rocha. It's a place of environmental learning and retreat in East Braintree, near the Whiteshell Provincial Park. Matties said the message of the centre stands in stark contrast to the negative messages people are overwhelmed with day and night.

"We are constantly inundated with news of the environmental crisis. Every time I see a news report or see a news story of the mess we've made of the planet and people who've been forced to flee, it's tempting to feel despair, paralysis or even apathy in the face of daunting news and the bleak reality," she says. "A Rocha offers me a hopeful alternative to this despair."

The Boreal Ecology Centre was formally turned over to A Rocha to steward by Walter and Eleanor Loewen a year ago. It's situated on 90 hectares of forests, meadows and river valley and is the perfect place to witness the "warmth and wildness of God's creation," she says.

About 20 people from Winnipeg and the East Braintree area came to the centre to wander the property, canoe and kayak on the river, and take part in a community lunch.

"Offering people a way to practically care for the created world and learn from the theology of creation care gives people a lot of hope, and it gives me a lot of hope," she says, adding that it was a particularly wondrous day because the wild orchids were in bloom as participants wandered the property.

The most recent discovery day is just one of the ways A Rocha Manitoba has tried to get Manitobans in touch with creation. Over the last year, the organization

has hosted prayer and silence retreats to experience God through creation, along with other discovery days, and it has worked alongside Canadian Mennonite University's science program to do some preliminary conservation science monitoring. It also plans to host a group from the University of Kansas to do some surveying of small mammals later this year, she says.

Reconciliation with the Earth

Matties says that working with A Rocha has been a way for her to work alongside others who have a similar vision for reconciliation with the Earth and to mitigate some of the stress she feels about the state of the world.

"As Christians, we're called to be a people of hope. We're called to live into the reconciliation God brought about through Jesus. God is continuing to do that reconciliation work here and now," she says. "I think that we're called to help God in the work of reconciliation to be co-creators, I guess, and to live into the *'behold, I am making all things new'* that's spoken about in Revelation."

She adds that she's also inspired by the words of Mary Oliver who said, "Attention is the beginning of devotion."

"I think when people learn how to pay attention to the world around them, to creation, they learn to love it as well," Matties says. "When it becomes personal, when people can learn the place around them and learn to love them, there's a way forward. It's not as overwhelming."

She hopes the Boreal Ecology Centre will serve as a place where Manitobans can come together, to pay attention and learn to love creation. ☞



PHOTO BY SCOTT GERBRANDT

The Boggy River flows right through the property at the Boreal Ecology Centre.

‘The hands and feet of Jesus’

Canadians reflect on Mennonite Voluntary Service experiences on 75th anniversary

By Rachel Bergen
Contributing Editor

This year, Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) is celebrating 75 years of placing young adults in service positions across Canada and the U.S.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOANNA LOEPP THIESSEN

Joanna Loepp Thiessen is pictured at the Street2feet annual five-kilometre fundraiser, where she worked as an assistant race director, taking the opportunity to raise awareness about addictions and homelessness in the area.

About 20 years ago, when the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church merged and became Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A., they planned to have separate service programs owned by each national church that would partner at a high level.

Although MC Canada hasn't been officially involved in MVS since 2002, many Canadian Mennonites are still involved in the one- to two-year-long program that has participants live in community with their peers, serve 40 hours a week with community organizations addressing the symptoms and root causes of injustice, and actively participate in the life of their neighbourhood and host congregation. They serve in the fields of health, education, immigration law, restorative justice and business.

Joanna Loepp Thiessen is one of them. The 21-year-old from Kitchener, Ont., is in her second year of service in San Antonio, Texas.

For her first year, she worked as a refugee resettlement case worker at the Catholic Charities Archdiocese of San Antonio. For the last year, she's working at a large homeless shelter called Haven for Hope.

"One half of my work is in the spiritual services department, facilitating meditation circles, support groups and one-on-one conversation," she says. "The other part of the time I'm a running coach and program assistant with Street2feet, a partner of Haven for Hope that seeks to create wellness in mind, body and spirit through a five-kilometre training model."

Prior to moving to Texas, she was studying music at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, when she felt her mental health deteriorate. Her mother, who had done MVS in the 1980s, advised her daughter to apply, but Joanna didn't pay much attention to her suggestion.

That is, not until she felt like she really needed to leave school.

"It has proven to be the best and most formative experience of my life thus far," she says. "I can't hype MVS up enough."

Although she says the experience has been challenging, she learned so much about herself. "I discovered that I am more than a musician," she says. "I can be a musician and a faith leader and a social worker and a friend and a runner all at once."

Sophia Amstutz, 19, who is also from Kitchener, just finished a 10-month term serving in Albuquerque, N.M. She worked full-time at Title 1 Homeless Project through the Albuquerque School Division.

She spent most of her time packing backpacks full of school supplies, hygiene kits and food bags for children in poverty. She also worked in a preschool for homeless children, and helped organize and participated in lunch and after-school programs throughout Albuquerque.

Amstutz says she learned over the past year to count her blessings and to not take what she has for granted.

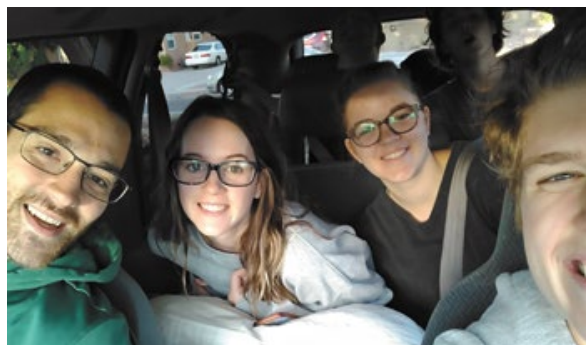


PHOTO COURTESY OF SOPHIA AMSTUTZ

Pictured from left to right: MVS volunteers Rudy Moyer-Litwiller, Sophia Amstutz, Tjorven Lichdi and Michelle Moyer-Litwiller.

"Kids I worked with were living in their cars and they didn't have any food to take to school," she says. "I couldn't imagine,

at their age, going through what they're going through."

Del Hershberger works as the director of Christian Service for Mennonite Mission Network, the organization that oversees MVS. He worked with the program before it separated at the border.

He says Canadians like Amstutz and Loepp Thiessen are part of a broad network of people making a difference.

"I think MVS provides a valuable opportunity for young adults to live and serve together in churches that had a long

history together before our denominations separated at the border," he says. "We appreciate the unique perspective that Canadians bring that creates opportunity for mutual growth."

Part of that growth is spiritual, Amstutz says: "I think, for me, serving is a huge part of my faith. A lot of times throughout the year, I felt I was being the hands and feet of Jesus. I feel like, if Jesus were here, this is a population he would be working with, too."

Both Amstutz and Loepp Thiessen say they would recommend other Canadians

take part in the program.

"As much as I am only a couple hours on a plane away from Kitchener, it felt like a totally different culture, and geographically was incredibly different," Loepp Thiessen says. "I love living in Texas, and MVS is a really great avenue to see what life is like in the United States without having to marry an American." ❧

For more information, visit mennonitemission.net/Serve.



Women without limits

Bolivian artisan collective helps women earn an income and feed their families

Mennonite Central Committee

It's a hot, humid morning, and Maria Elena Algarañaz de Masabi is working at a booth displaying brightly coloured handicrafts for sale. She carefully lays out cloth purses and drawstring bags and hangs up knit children's clothes.

Masabi is president of Mujeres sin Limites (Women Without Limits), an artisan collective in Montero, a city in the Santa Cruz department of Bolivia. The 12 members work together to make and sell handicrafts to supplement their household incomes.

All 12 women learned these skills at El Comedor de Niños, a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) partner. El Comedor provides after-school care for children but also offers workshops in everything from nutrition, self-esteem and basic healthcare, to cooking, hair-dressing and sewing.

Between 2003 and 2006, the women took part in workshops at El Comedor, learning to knit, sew and weave *aguayo*, a traditional Bolivian fabric, with colourful patterns. Members of the collective began making products, including guitar cases, wallets, purses and clothing. As they improved, they analyzed the quality of their products and eventually decided to start a business together.



MCC PHOTO BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY

Maria Elena Algarañaz de Masabi works at the booth she runs with Mujeres sin Limites, an artisan collective in Montero, Bolivia.

None of the members attended university, and Masabi didn't even finish primary school, but all feel they have learned a great deal from the workshops.

"We don't have education but we've graduated from El Comedor," Masabi says. "El Comedor has opened the door for us, and because of that we've gone very far. It's so beautiful."

In addition to learning how to make the handicrafts, the women were taught basic business management skills through

El Comedor, including the importance of saving. Each month, members put aside 10 percent of their earnings to buy more supplies and grow the business. Together, they've been able to buy three sewing machines. The savings are also used to pay for transportation and food when one member represents the group at fairs around the country. They split the profits equally, and all materials and machines are collectively owned and shared.

"With these rules we've been able to keep the group going," Masabi says.

The group also helped Masabi overcome a personal obstacle. Her husband is a large, brash man who verbally abused her when he found out she was attending classes at El Comedor. She stood up for herself and went against the cultural norm because her family needed the extra income.

"I decided I needed to do this when I saw my children were suffering from malnutrition and being underweight," she says. "We didn't have enough money to buy nutritious food and we didn't have enough food."

She and her husband managed to work through their differences, and today he is supportive of her business and her part-time work at El Comedor, where she works as a social worker. She credits El Comedor and the other members of artisan collective for their support.

"It was a challenge, but not impossible," she says. "We do it all together and we've succeeded. That's why our group is called Women Without Limits. We don't have limits." ❧

A bouncer for Jesus

Voluntary Service volunteer tries to respond to each situation in a nonviolent way

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
LETHBRIDGE, ALTA.

So how did a 22-year-old Mennonite from France end up volunteering on the streets of Lethbridge as a bouncer for Jesus? Even he's not sure, but he's loving it, and when he returns to France in September, he plans to continue working with street people if he can find an opportunity.

Simon Crelerot, a volunteer living in the Mennonite Voluntary Service Adventure (MVSA) unit in Lethbridge, first heard about the program through the non-profit organization Joie et Vie. A member of the Église Mennonite de la Prairie de Montbéliard in Eastern France, he was looking for a volunteer opportunity. He thought Streets Alive, a faith-based non-profit organization, whose vision is to bring hope to people living on the streets, would be a

great chance to serve God in a practical way through the MVSA program.

He has already done two volunteer assignments, including time in Togo, and also in Burkina Faso, where his Mennonite grandfather was a missionary. He shares how meaningful it was to serve in the very school his grandfather had started many years ago for children with disabilities.

Now he is in Canada, doing what he would never have dreamed of as a service assignment. He is a bouncer for Jesus. At first, in addition to his regular responsibilities, he was serving as a security guard at the Streets Alive community centre two nights a week, but when they saw how he handled himself, they



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SIMON CRELEROT
Simon Crelerot, Lethbridge volunteer, explores Crowsnest Mountain in Alberta.

increased his shifts to four or five evenings a week.

Ryan Dueck, pastor of Lethbridge Mennonite Church, describes the work Crelerot is doing as "pretty desperate": "Simon has to de-escalate if someone is getting rough. We are seeing more weapons in the community, as well as an explosion of crime and addiction. Some blame the introduction of safe injection sites in the city."

Streets Alive is a ministry for street kids and does frontline work with addicts. It has been working in the community for decades.

Crelerot expresses how surprised he was that there is so much drug addiction and homelessness in Lethbridge. "Eighty percent of the clients are addicted to drugs," he says. "Sometimes it's difficult because there are some fights and overdoses, and I have to intervene. I have to stop the fights, calm angry clients if they are yelling, and make first aid if somebody needs it."

Of Crelerot serving as a bouncer, Anne Martens, a Lethbridge Mennonite Church member, jokes, "I would guess all he has to do is smile and they'd all disappear." Crelerot attends Lethbridge Mennonite and the Streets Alive church, where he is



Streets Alive and Mennonite Voluntary Service Adventure volunteer Simon Crelerot, left, and his girlfriend, Cathy Oberli, travel around Lethbridge, Alta., offering sandwiches, clothing and encouragement to people living on the streets.



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Historians, pastors, archivists and students gathered for conversations on keeping the history of the global church alive.

canadianmennonite.org/global-history-alive

known as kind and caring.

He says that, because of his faith, he tries to respond to each situation in a nonviolent way. His first strategy is to start talking to the client and, if necessary, get his supervisor to help. He also tries to be proactive by spending time with the clients and building relationships. "Unfortunately, I do sometimes have to use my body to resolve the situation," he says.

'Sometimes it's difficult because there are some fights and overdoses, and I have to intervene. I have to stop the fights, calm angry clients if they are yelling, and make first aid if somebody needs it.'
(Simon Crelerot)

One night he was having trouble with a particular client. He could see on the video camera that the man was waiting outside the back door with a knife. Crelerot stopped and prayed and then noticed the man was gone. Crelerot arrived safely home, but it reminded him how dangerous the job can be.

His time of voluntary service is drawing to a close. He reflects on how his experience impacted his faith: "I have really appreciated this experience. I learned to work with addicted people. I learned to say thanks to God because I have a house, I have a car and everything I need. Because, when I see my clients, and I ask, 'How are you?', often the answer is, 'I survive.'"

"I really like to bring hope to them to get out of the hard, street life," he says, referring to a client who has been in and out of detox. But Crelerot keeps encouraging him to try again. "It's an evolution to get better."

He has also tried talking to the clients about God, noting, "People are open," he says. ☺

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**CANADIAN
MENNONITE**

/// **Staff change**

Wenger Shenk concludes nine years of service at AMBS



• **Sara Wenger Shenk** retired from her role as president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., on June 30, after nine years in the role. Since beginning in the fall of 2010, she provided strong direction for the seminary's future, overseeing changes such as transitioning the institution's name from "Associated" to "Anabaptist" in 2012, renovating the Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount in 2011-12, and degree program revisions that included the creation of a distance-friendly master of divinity program in 2013. She also led efforts to increase the seminary's global reach through Global Anabaptist Education initiatives, including connecting with Meserete Kristos College in Ethiopia. As existing faculty members retired, nine new teaching faculty members and a new vice-president and academic dean have been hired during Wenger Shenk's tenure. She initiated strategic focus conversations among the faculty that led to further integration of environmental, immigration and peace issues into the curriculum. Bruce Baergen, AMBS's board chair from Edmonton, has observed how Wenger Shenk's leadership has empowered others. "Sara's ability to encourage collaboration and enable people to lead and be the best they can be—combined with her willingness to give strong direction when required—has empowered AMBS to grow and thrive," he said. Prior to coming to AMBS, Wenger Shenk served in a variety of roles at Eastern Mennonite University and Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., including as seminary associate dean and associate professor, and interim seminary dean. She has written and contributed to several books, including *Meditations for New Parents* (Herald, 1996 and 2014). She continued writing regularly while serving as AMBS president in "Practicing reconciliation," a blog she launched in February 2013 that has consistently been one of the most visited pages on the AMBS website.

—ANABAPTIST MENNONITE BIBLICAL SEMINARY



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Calendar

British Columbia

Until Sept. 6: "Abbotsford MCC Quilts" exhibit, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum Gallery. Quilts are for sale.

Sept. 13-14: MCC Festival for World Relief at Tradex in Abbotsford. For more information contact bcoffice@mccbc.ca or call 604-850-6639.

Sept. 21: Camp Squeah Paddle-a-thon down the Harrison River. For more information visit contact info@squeah.com.

Oct. 5: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. fundraiser, with comedian Matt Falk, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Abbotsford, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit mhsbc.com.

Oct. 18-20: MCBC Women's retreat at Camp Squeah featuring Kelly Rader. For more information contact info@mccbc.ca.

Alberta

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



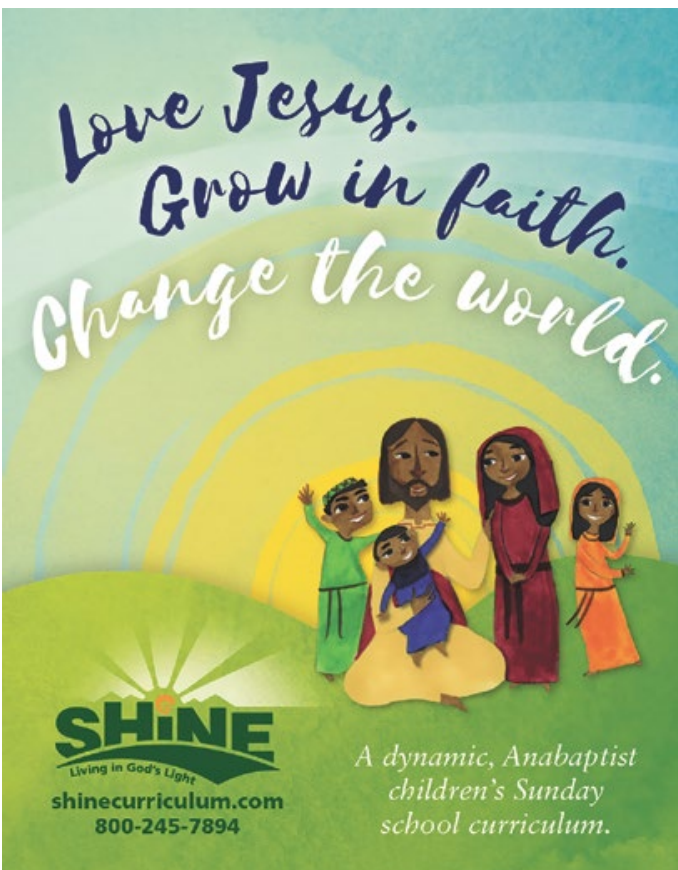
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- This Tenth Annual event is being held to raise awareness of Landless Indigenous Bands in Saskatchewan. Proceeds go to MCC's Stoney Knoll Fund.
- For more information please contact Randy Klassen @ 306.280.1839
sprucriver@mccsk.ca
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www.sprucriverfolkfest.com

Saskatchewan

Aug. 19-23: Shekinah music camp, for campers aged 12 to 17. For more information, or to register, visit shekinahretreatcentre.org.

Aug. 25: Shekinah Retreat Centre celebrates its 40th anniversary. Outdoor service starts at 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch and an afternoon of games and frivolity.

Sept. 14: Shekinah Bike-Paddle-Hike-a-Thon at 9 a.m. Bike from Saskatoon, canoe from Petrofka Bridge or hike at Shekinah. For more information, visit www.shekinahretreatcentre.org.

Sept. 15: Langham Mennonite Fellowship (formerly Zoar Mennonite Church) hosts an open house of its new building in Langham, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Oct. 4-5: RJC hosts an alumni volleyball and soccer tournament.

Oct. 26: RJC homecoming banquet and corporation meeting.

Manitoba

Until Sept. 14: Manitoba Society of Artists' 87th annual juried exhibition, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg.

Sept. 28: 35th annual Brandon MCC Relief Sale, at the Keystone Centre, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Includes lunch, an auction for children, a quilt auction and music by the Janzen Boys.

Ontario

Aug. 3: Former Stratford Voluntary Service workers participating in a reunion are hoping to meet with locals at Avon Mennonite Church at 5 p.m. with a potluck at 6 p.m.

Aug. 18: Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, hosts the Fair Wind band playing traditional music from the British Isles, at 2:30 p.m.

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/.

Sept. 21: Doors Open Waterloo Region, a day of architecture, heritage and tech events, including at MCC Ontario's headquarters at 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener. For more information, email doorsopen@regionofwaterloo.ca.

Sept. 21: Toronto Mennonite Festival to support MCC at Black Creek Pioneer Village 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information visit mcco.ca/events.

Sept. 28: Breakfast celebrating 40 years of The Mennonite Story at Waterloo North Mennonite

Church, 8:30 a.m. with John Ruth as guest speaker. Tickets at mennonitestorybreakfast.eventbrite.ca.

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



Classifieds



Charleswood Mennonite Church

Pastor (Full time)
Start Date: January 1, 2021
Winnipeg, Manitoba

For more information, to express interest, or to apply, contact Rick Neufeld at:

204-896-1616 Ext. 257 or
rneufeld@mennonitechurch.mb.ca

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PHOTO BY KEVIN BARKOWSKY

Children at Mennonite Church Canada's Gathering 2019, held in Abbotsford, B.C., roast marshmallows over an open fire.

Kids make friends at Gathering 2019

“Our God is a God who makes friends,” sang children from three provinces while playing a clapping game with a partner, laughing as the refrain and the clapping got faster. The words of this song by Bryan Moyer Suderman were ignited into action at Gathering 2019 as they participated in a weekend packed with relationship-building activities, excursions and service. The kids gathered most mornings at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C., for activities ranging from making butter and apple juice to decorating Gathering 2019 T-shirts and flying

homemade kites in the local playground. Most afternoons, a bus took the children into the community; a highlight was a visit to the seniors at Menno Place, where they sang, played games with seniors around tables, and gave flag gifts to their new friends, and finally shared the snacks they’d made. Said seven-year-old Isaiah Siemens of Langham, Sask., about himself and eight-year-old Leo Doke Sawatzky of Regina, after stepping off the bus the first morning, “We only met a few minutes ago but we’re already friends.”

—BY HILDA BERGEN, SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE



PHOTO BY HILDA BERGEN

Elliot Siemens, Isaiah Siemens, Leo Doke Sawatzky and Ian Fehrmoore paint Canadian flags—one to give to Menno Place, a seniors residence in Abbotsford, and one to keep—during Gathering 2019.



PHOTO BY KEVIN BARKOWSKY

Maeve Goertzen, one of eight children at Gathering 2019, enjoys fresh bubblegum ice cream from Birchwood Dairy in Abbotsford.