

'Taste and see that stuff is good'

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EDITORIAL

Going deeper together

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER



If you have been paying attention to what the regional churches are up to recently, you may have noticed a common question and a common longing. A question expressed at both regional and nationwide levels: What is God calling Mennonite Church Canada to do, as a church? And the longing: We desire to go deeper in our relationship with God and with our neighbours both inside and outside the church walls.

It makes sense to tie the question and the longing together. How can we in the church embark on a larger communal direction without being in touch with the heart and mind of God? And how can we give a focus to our work together without listening attentively to the person in the pew beside us and the person across the street?

Members of MC Canada now have two years of living into the new structure for the nationwide and regional churches. This has required us to learn some new ways of doing things and has demanded fresh discernment about the direction for our collective body. Leaders at the regional and nationwide levels are inviting us to consider our vision, our spiritual groundedness and our relationships.

At a consultation on mission in March of this year, Doug Klassen, now MC Canada's executive minister, emphasized that our calling arises because of a deep connectedness with God. He stressed that new strategies, structures or styles of worship will not bring about the revitalization of the church, but that transformation will

come from a deepened spiritual life.

At the April annual gathering of MC Eastern Canada, speaker and author April Yamasaki spoke on the theme, "Deepening our relationship with God" and began with the question, "What does it mean for us to be friends with God?" She pointed to Psalm 27 to show aspects of this relationship, including lament, surrender, waiting, confidence and joy.

MC Alberta is in the midst of "Vision 20/20," a process designed to help members live into deeper relationships with God and each other. "Living into a new structure and hope for the church

is not easy or convenient," says a report by Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, the regional church's executive minister, and June Miller, communications coordinator. But members of the regional church are being encouraged and equipped to do "prayerful listening for God's voice as [they] discern what it means to be the church in the 21st century."

"Refresh Refocus Renew" is the aim of MC Saskatchewan's three-year process, as members seek to deepen their walk with Christ, with each other and with their neighbours. Executive minister Ryan Siemens reflects: "Christ calls us to love one another, as we are, simply because Jesus loved us first. The grace of God, as revealed to us through the person of Jesus Christ, is the divine reality into which we are invited to live

together, warts and all. And in deepening our walk with each other as imperfect people, the divine reality of God's grace is made known to each other and the watching world."

At the annual delegate session of MC Manitoba, in March, guest speaker Sara Wenger Shenk called listeners to become rooted and grounded in God instead of being blown by the wind. In this fractured world, "we are going deeper into the love of God," she said. MC Manitoba's "Mission, Values, Constitution" statement says in part, the regional church "is a covenant community. . . . Our commitment is to be together and to grow closer in love without insisting on uniformity. . . . God's message of love motivates us to nurture and care for others and each other."

One of the activities at this year's MC

How can we in the church embark on a larger communal direction without being in touch with the heart and mind of God?

British Columbia annual meeting was a workshop to practise listening. As participants considered the pain caused by privilege and prejudice, Pastor Darnell Barkman challenged them, "What can we do to make Mennonite Church British Columbia more like Jesus?" We must listen to each other and become more like Christ, he said. "We, as disciples of Jesus, are transforming our reflexes to be Christlike so that our actions reflect his actions in body, mind and spirit. This is the fruitful life of a mature disciple."

May God guide the church as together we continue seeking a shape for our vision and as we grow deeper into divine love and love of neighbour. ✎



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PHOTO: ROSS W. MUIR, MENNOPIX

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FEATURE

'Taste and see that stuff is good'

The illusive allure of worshipping at the mall

By Thomas Bergen



MENNOPIX PHOTOS BY ROSS W. MUIR

Capitalizing on the way that society is currently unplugging itself from traditional forms of religion, the mall is an example of a cultural institution that has successfully read the religious market and opened a new outlet for selling and consuming transcendence.

The human struggle has always been—and always will be—between worshipping the God who made us or worshipping a god that we have to make for ourselves. Secularism is a myth because there is no such thing as not worshipping.

Advocates of the secularization thesis believe that as science and technology advanced into the future, religion would eventually retreat into the obscurity of the past. But, as William T. Cavanaugh demonstrates in *Migrations of the Holy*, humanity's religious impulse has instead been redirected to various cultural institutions.

One such institution is the mall.

In *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Baker Academic, 2009), co-author James K.A. Smith illuminates the religiosity of the mall. Consider how our mall experience meets many of our religious needs. It provides:

- A **promise of salvation.**
- A **communal web of belonging.**
- An **invitation into mystery.**
- A **mission to evangelize others.**
- A **training of desire towards an ultimate object of love.**

Worship through stuff

Worship at the mall promises salvation through stuff. For all have fallen short of the glory of the beautiful images in malls, which insinuate that there is something wrong with us.

“The logic is simple,” Smith explains, “the people in advertisements seem to be enjoying the good life, that billboard mom has it all together: I mean, her kids are smiling and seem remarkably obedient; she is slim and well-dressed and seems so carefree—surely that new minivan with the DVD player and 14 cup holders must have something to do with it.”

In the alluring models and images that showcase the good life, there is religious proclamation: Taste and see that stuff is good. There is a religious demonstration: Behold the redeemed and saintly form of humanity. There is a religious invitation: Imagine yourself with this, like this. And there is a religious dedication: Yes, this new pair of jeans will cost \$150, but it’s so worth it.

Responding to the call to worship in advertisements, we are humbled by icons of success and beauty, and overwhelmed by a stabbing recognition: That’s not me. Our worshipful response is to consume things with the high hope of being made new. At the checkout altar at the mall, “priests” transubstantiate our purchases to make the good life more tangible to us. We part with their benediction: “Enjoy your purchase.”

By contrast, worship in the church begins with a confession of sin and ends



The mall’s clean, bright, inviting and vaulted interior architecture make it easy for us to forget about the outside world.

with the joyful recognition of the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ. Responding to the call to worship, we are humbled by our need and overwhelmed by the stabbing recognition that God loves us despite our sin. At the altar of the church, our worshipful response is to consume the body and blood of Jesus with the high hope of being made new.

Games of competitive comparisons

If another telltale sign of religion is a communal web of belonging, then worship at the mall binds worshippers together in triangulating games of competitive comparisons. Images in the mall inevitably shape our self-image and the standards we use to judge others. While sitting at Starbucks we size up passing shoppers, scorning their make-up job or admiring their fashion sense. Without realizing it, we’ve evaluated others against ideals we’ve absorbed from the mall’s evangelism. We then use these ideals to keep a running tally in our head,

congratulating ourselves when we score higher and getting down on ourselves when we score lower. But of course, it’s not all about competition. Worship at the mall gives us a feeling of connection to shoppers around the world who see the same brands and buy the same goods we do.

By contrast, worship in the church binds worshippers together through the triangulating love of God. Worshippers in the church are called to love their neighbour as an expression of their love for God. From the teachings and traditions we absorb in the church, we learn to extend grace to one another and to see Christ in one another. In this way, Christian worshippers are bound together in the communion of saints, everyone encouraging everyone to practise loving their neighbour. Worship in the church connects us to Christians around the world and throughout the centuries who read the same scriptures and worship the same Lord.

The mystery of prosperity

If an element of mystery is another telltale sign of religion, then worship at the mall invites worshippers into the mystery of prosperity. The mall’s clean, bright, inviting and vaulted interior architecture make it easy for us to forget about the outside world. Don’t ask where this prosperity comes from; accept the mysteries of production, transport and disposal!

This worship requires mystery. If we knew how unfair and destructive many of these processes are, how could we go on worshipping? The mystery of the mall invites worshippers to believe that stuff comes from heaven, but at its heart is the unspoken truth of exploitation and injustice that cannot go on forever.

By contrast, worship at the church invites worshippers into the mystery of the triune God, who is outside the world and beyond our wildest comprehension. But God is also a mystery that has been revealed in the world through the person of Jesus Christ crucified. This worship requires both mystery and revelation. If God was not a mystery, how could we truly worship God? On

the other hand, if God was not a revealed mystery, how could we worship God? How could we know what or whom we are worshipping? The mystery of the Christian faith invites worshippers to believe that Jesus Christ came from heaven, and at its heart is the unspeakable truth of the God of love and justice whose kingdom, power and glory will go on forever.

Evangelization through marketing

In worship at the mall, the mission to evangelize others is called marketing. Advertisements are not intended to make people buy a product so much as they are intended to make people buy into a product. Super brands like Apple, Nike and Starbucks are quite open about their aims to forge spiritual bonds with consumers. The job of ad executives and brand managers is to tack elaborate meaning-systems onto their products and to invest their mundane products with transcendent qualities. Their ultimate goal is to fulfill this religion's great monetary commission, baptizing consumers in the name of prosperity, profits and progress.

By contrast, the church's evangelism is about the call to worship a God who requires no marketing gimmick, no awkward sales pitch of meaning, no tacked-on qualities of transcendence. The job of this God's missionary executives and church managers is to worship him fully and solely, and to call others to do the same, baptizing them in the (brand) name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Longing for the good life

Finally, if the training of desire towards an ultimate object of love is the final and most important telltale sign of religion, then worship at the mall is about training worshippers to long for the good life: a life of perpetual youth, beauty, wealth and independence. Worship at the mall sets forth a particular vision of this good life that captures the hearts and imaginations of worshippers. This mostly happens on a subconscious level.

By contrast, worship at the church is about training worshippers to long for

the kingdom of God, a kingdom where the first are last, where the greatest are servants, and where it is more blessed to give than to receive. Worship at the church also sets forth a particular vision of the good life that also captures hearts and imaginations. Despite the emphasis we place on words and beliefs, much of this also happens on a subconscious level. Worshippers at the church are shaped by the practices of gathering, greeting, praying, reading, singing, listening, confessing, giving and celebrating together.

If our definition of religion remains narrowly fixed on beliefs and practices related to a supernatural order of existence, we will miss the fact that religious beings like ourselves cannot but superimpose religious meaning on our natural order of existence, which raises the question of "How 'natural' is our existence?"

Capitalizing on the way that society is currently unplugging itself from traditional forms of religion, the mall is an example of a cultural institution that

has successfully read the religious market and opened a new outlet for selling and consuming transcendence.

The next time you enter a mall, remember the words of the Apostle John: "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (I John 5:21). ❧



Thomas Bergen is a graduate of Vancouver's Regent College. This is an edited version of one of three sermons he gave at

Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Church on the theme of worship; the other two were entitled "Worship at the stadium" and "Worship at the university."



Ross W. Muir took these photos for a Christianity and Contemporary Culture class assignment on "exegeting the presence

of God (gods) in and around Toronto's Eaton Centre" during his master of theological studies degree at Tyndale Seminary in the early 2000s.

❧ For discussion

1. How often do you go to the mall? What are you looking for when you go? What makes a shopping centre alluring? Is it wrong to enjoy shopping?
2. Thomas Bergen says humans struggle between worshipping God or worshipping gods made by humans, and writes, "Secularism is a myth because there is no such thing as not worshipping." Do you agree? What does it mean to "worship" at the mall?
3. What advertisements are most effective in inviting us to worship at the mall? Do you agree that advertisements call us "to consume things with the high hope of being made new"? How much do brand names shape our self-image and cause us to judge others? How do you respond to super brands that try to "forge spiritual bonds with consumers"?
4. How do we work at resisting the call to worship at the shopping mall? As shopping habits have changed because of the internet, how has this affected the religion of consumerism?
5. What do you think Thomas Bergen might have said in his sermons on "Worship at the stadium" and "Worship at the university"?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources at
www.commonword.ca/go/1860

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/// Readers write

✉ 'This is our church'

Re: "How to talk about money at your church," Sept. 30, page 10.

I read this Viewpoint piece, which I thought may give me insight into the responsible use of my resources. But Lori Guenther Reesor was actually serious about the church bragging about supporting the church preschool class, the regional church administration, buying hymn books for the church, and pastoral care for the church members.

Remember, our governments have granted churches relief from property taxes, and they allow us to get tax-deductible receipts for "church" work. Our governments, therefore, expect us to do good to those around us as part of this agreement.

What is the work that Jesus requires of us? Sociologist Tony Campolo says the church is the only club that is not for its members. Guenther Reesor should have been able to present stories of church members feeding the poor, supporting the widows and single parents, supporting the lonely, cutting the neighbour's lawn, supporting drug rehab, and more.

I have never written in before because I rarely read your publication. In my opinion, it often reports on stories like this that have little relevance to the world we are currently living in. Also, I rarely attend our Mennonite church anymore, after being a member for 35 years, as it has the same illness that this magazine represents.

Instead, for the past seven years, using our resources, my wife and I visit with, and prepare a meal for, our local homeless folks, who range from 75-year-old grandparents to teenage drug addicts, on Sunday nights. This relationship often extends into the following week, to help with needs that we see on these evenings. We do harm reduction, and supply socks, gloves and whatever else we can afford to pass on to these friends of ours. This is our church.

DAVID WALL, FORT LANGLEY, B.C.

✉ Mennonite church 'has come a long way'

Re: "Queer hymns now online," Aug. 19, page 35.

The *Songs for the Holy Other* hymnal does justice in multiple ways.

Cedar Klassen's love of hymns is honoured. The collection of hymns helps affirm the spiritual integrity of the LGBTQ+ community. The music also tells the story of religious and parental injustice where hard hearts leave painful scars.

At age 84, I'm starting to slow down, but I can still

recognize that the Canadian Mennonite church has come a long way forward from my time as a member of the Mennonite Voluntary Service of Toronto in 2005-06.

JERRY KAHLERT, WEST ST. PAUL, MINN.

✉ Enough is enough when it comes to sharing time

I have a concern to express regarding our Sunday morning worship services, where many congregations have a "sharing" or "prayer and praise" time.

We, as a people, need to learn to know what to share, how much to share and how long to share. In today's age of privacy, the church fails miserably regarding privacy matters. I don't need to know all the "gory and bloody" details of someone's illness, injury, medical emergency or personal matter. I most certainly don't need to know these details of Bobby-Sue's friend Ellie whose uncle's friend had this experience.

I could go on, but then I would be sharing too much of my concern.

No matter how concerned we are of their plight of others, God is also aware of them and their plight. If we feel the need to ask for extra prayer for the person or situation, all we need to say is, "Please remember Sven in your prayer."

God knows Sven's needs, and those closest to him know what is happening; all we need to do is ask for prayer for healing, strength, humility or whatever we think is needed for him. That's it. No details, no waxing eloquent for the reason.

We also can't go on naming people we do or don't know without their permission. That's the law.

We need to be cautious that our prayer time is prayer time, not gossip time or a race to let people know just how much we know.

You are free to agree or disagree with me; that's your choice. I have nothing further to say.

ERIC FROESE, DIDSBURY, ALTA.

✉ Presentation warns of environmental degradation by Bolivian Mennonites

On Oct. 15, I attended a presentation on the Mennonites in Bolivia given by Abe Janzen, a former director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta, and I came away deeply concerned and very upset.

The Mennonite community in Bolivia has been expanding at a rapid rate, in part by people

embracing the Mennonite philosophy and by population growth from large families. Their large families are a concern, but I will leave that alone.

Of greater concern was that most of the young people want to follow an agrarian lifestyle. In itself, there is nothing wrong with this occupational choice. But land in Bolivia is limited, and so they must acquire more and more marginal land.

This land is unsuitable for cultivation, so it is cleared of rain forest and used for cattle grazing. Also, they are clearing land up the mountain slopes for cultivation. This has devastating effects on the environment.

Couple this with their belief that it is sacrilegious to use rubber tires, so they put steel wheels on their tractors and combines. Steel wheels are very detrimental, as they compact the soil and promote erosion. Their agricultural practices are exploiting the land, leaching the soils and destroying rain forest crucial to the welfare of the world.

Canada and other countries have condemned these agricultural practices and have offered funding to curb this devastation.

Is the Canadian government aware that the Mennonite community in Canada is providing financial assistance or endorsing these practices?

Maybe MCC should consider helping Bolivian Mennonites change their course. I certainly hope that none of my donations are going to Bolivia!

PETER KROEGER, CALGARY

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.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Chalmers—Lucille Audrey Mae (b. Oct. 8, 2019), to Nathan and Jessica Chalmers, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Gruber—Maverik Ross (b. Sept. 5, 2019), to Kim and Erik Gruber, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Jantzi—Miya Francesca Valles (b. Oct. 9, 2019), to Edgar and Ginalyn Jantzi, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Vitt Schellenberg—Felix James (b. Aug. 23, 2019), to Kathleen Vitt and Clare Schellenberg, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Witzel—George Paul (b. Aug. 8, 2019), to Naomi and David Witzel, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Baptisms

Nathan Horst, Mary MacKenzie, Anthony Martin,

Dominique Thornback—Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont., Sept. 29, 2019.

Annora Proudfoot—First Mennonite, Edmonton, Aug. 4, 2019.

Diana Decaire—Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Oct. 6, 2019.

Marriages

Bauman/Poole—Nicholas Bauman and Michelle Poole, both of St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont., at St. Jacobs Mennonite, Oct. 11, 2019.

Deng/Thiep—Mosa Deng and Sarah Thiep, at First Mennonite, Edmonton, Aug. 24, 2019.

Fraser/Hamm—Elliot Fraser and Julia Hamm (Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.), in Baden, Sept. 28, 2019.

Gerber/Schultz—Braden Gerber and Renee Schultz, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont., Aug. 24, 2019.

Guerra/Plumtree—Talon Guerra and Victoria Plumtree (Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.), in Baden, Aug. 3, 2019.

Deaths

Boshart—Dorothy (Curtis), 89 (b. Oct. 20, 1929; d. Oct. 2, 2019), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Dyck—Peter, 76 (b. May 22, 1943; d. Oct. 10, 2019), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Hiebert—John, 89 (b. July 16, 1930; d. Aug. 15, 2019), First Mennonite, Edmonton.

Klassen—Nettie, 87 (d. May 30, 2019), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Loepp—Beate (Musselmann), 91 (b. May 20, 1928; d. Oct. 10, 2019), Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Neufeld—John, 83 (b. Dec. 4, 1935; d. Oct. 4, 2019), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Sauder—Mabel (Martin), 89 (b. Feb. 13, 1930; d. Sept. 24, 2019), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Sawatzky—John, 89 (d. Sept. 8, 2019), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Shantz—Robert L., 80 (b. Nov. 7, 1938; d. Sept. 23, 2019), Mannheim Mennonite, Petersburg, Ont.

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

I smile because I'm grateful

Kirsten Hamm-Epp

There's canola in my bed and it makes me smile.

Perhaps I should explain.

Currently, harvest is in full gear. I see my husband at mealtimes (maybe), and when he crawls into bed after combining fields well past the middle of the night. Last night, some canola seems to have crawled in with him, and at 38 weeks pregnant I look at those little black seeds, give the squirming munchkin in my belly a little rub, and I smile. I smile because today that canola reminds me of all that I have to be grateful for.

I am grateful for a safe harvest and crops stored safely in the bin.

I am grateful to be part of families who are passionate about what they do and care about being good stewards of what they have been given. And I am grateful that this statement extends beyond my immediate families, to our family of faith.

As I think about the faith community our little one will grow up in, I am filled with gratitude and anticipation. Sunday school, church plays, arranging family trips around wherever the next

“gathering” (or whatever word we've moved onto by then) is being held, and, of course, that first week at camp. Here in Mennonite Church Saskatchewan we talk a lot about the joy we have of being together, and I think this is true at every level. Locally, regionally and nationwide, there is a goodness when we gather that is unlike anything else.

I experienced that goodness profoundly at Shake, the youth gathering held at the Shekinah Retreat Centre near Waldheim this past summer. At Shake we laughed, we cried, we worshipped, and we experienced God together. Our hopes and dreams were exceeded in ways only possible when the goodness of God is present. And none of it would have been possible without the support of our family of faith: the congregations and families who made it possible for youth to attend, the regional leadership who gave their blessing to staff to make their crazy dreams a reality, the incredible volunteers who gave of their time and more, the youth leaders who said yes to the unknown, the youth who were our

inspiration both before and during the event, and the community of saints who helped us up in prayer.

I may be a child raised in a village, but it takes a nationwide family of faith to offer our youth the kind of holiness we experienced together at Shekinah this summer.

MC Saskatchewan is currently exploring what it means to deepen our walk with each other, and in a way that's exactly what Shake was: a deepening of our walk together, a walk that I am grateful to be on with each of our families, in every sense of the word.

As we make final preparations for our little one, I don't expect every mess I clean up to have such a profound (or odour-free!) effect. But as I remake the bed and prepare another field lunch, I smile, because today I am grateful for the canola in my bed. ☘



Kirsten Hamm-Epp is currently on maternity leave from her position as MC Saskatchewan's regional church minister.

A moment from yesterday



Readers raised on fruit farms—including this archivist—may remember the high-pitched whine of an orchard pesticide sprayer in action. Pictured, Peter J. Sawatzky of Ruthven, Ont., is operating a “speed-sprayer” in his apple orchard. This photo accompanied an article in *The Canadian Mennonite* from September 1959 about the costs of transporting apples to market. The newspaper commonly covered a wide range of farming issues, both for the many Canadian Mennonites still engaged in farming and the growing number making their lives and careers in the city.

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing
Photo: *The Canadian Mennonite* /
Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca

IN THE IMAGE

Allow a little child to lead you

Ed Olfert

My good memories of Thanksgiving 2019 will be focused on children.

On Oct. 13, I preached a sermon at Grace Mennonite in Prince Albert. Church culture has me arriving an hour before the service. It's a 100-kilometre drive. I will encounter four or five folks creating bulletins, making coffee, setting out cookies, trying out offertories and preludes, while I print off the sermon. Sometimes street wanderers will stop by, aware of the snacks and warmth available.

On Thanksgiving Sunday, two children arrived with their mother, the two who are the most regular of our little folks. Shortly after that, another family appeared, again with two young ones, cousins of the first two. They were visiting from Alberta for the weekend. The four were somewhere between the ages of 10 and 14.

By the time the service began, the kids were nowhere to be seen. It was not until after the benediction that those faces again appeared, this time eyes wide and shining.

No, this was no tale of destructive mischief. You see, these cousins had made a plan to meet that morning at church, head down into our basement

kitchen and make sandwiches. There were donated "fixings" waiting.

Lunch bags are set out in our "blessing box" in the church parking lot for hungry folks who pass by. Hannah informed me excitedly that there were more sandwiches left in my office to hand out during the week.

While the congregation, including the kids' mothers, were in the sanctuary praying, singing, listening and sharing, the children went about addressing needs that are part of the mandate of the church.

This is not a one-time event. Regular Sunday school time is given to building lunches. I am always moved close to tears when the kids run up to me and tell me where they have stored the food, so I can find it during the week. The shining eyes tell me that this is an experience of church that will remain with them for a lifetime and will impact their thinking as they make future decisions about the relevancy of "church" and "God" in their fast-paced world.

I drove the solitary distance back to my hometown of Laird, still on a high from that morning Thanksgiving lesson. Arriving home, I needed to quickly set that processing aside because my house

was filled with noisy family gathered for the festive meal. A granddaughter demanded that I eat at the kids table. I protested that there were no chairs to spare, whereupon she stood, grabbed a chair from the adults, brought it over, pointed at me, and said "Sit."

Later, I suggested to the five grandchildren present that we head out to my little workshop, where I would show them various bits of metal collected in my Blind Guy Welding venture, and they would focus their creativity to see what possibilities they could recognize in the pieces. I have a picture of the five, aged 4 to 15, with eyes shining as they took up the challenge: "This triangle is the head of a fox." "These kitchen knives could be a dragonfly." This spoon is a lady bug." "These rings are the eyes of an owl!"

What to you and me were nothing more than a cold bit of scrap junk came alive in the passion around my welding table. I now have project ideas for quite some time.

Pay attention to a child close to you. Give thanks for holy lessons available nowhere else. Allow a little child to lead you. ❧



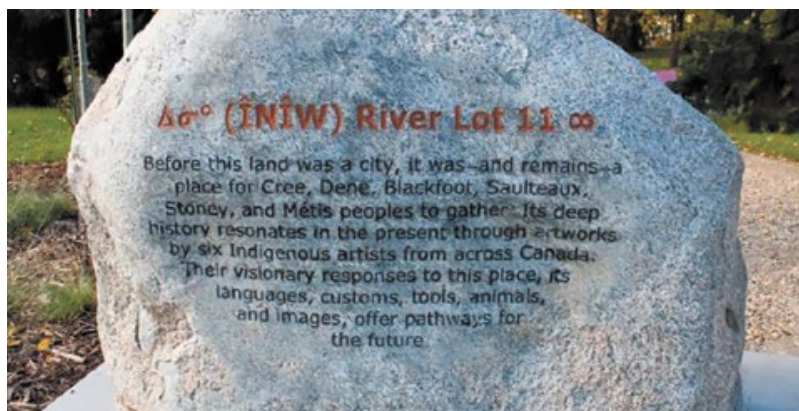
Ed Olfert (p2ptheo@sasktel.net) learns about the "impishness" of God from the beautiful little ones.

Et cetera

Views on Indigenous land acknowledgements

Increasingly, public events, including some church services, begin with an acknowledgement that the event is held on the traditional territory of a particular Indigenous people group. In a recent poll, the Angus Reid Institute found that 36 percent of Canadians say such acknowledgements are a valuable part of reconciliation, while 44 percent believe they do little to advance reconciliation. But context matters, as 59 percent support the prime minister and premiers making land acknowledgements.

Text and Photo Source: Angus Reid Institute (To learn more, visit angusreid.org/indigenous-land-acknowledgments/.)



MIND AND SOUL

Confronting a drastic future

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

It's been a month since Greta Thunberg—the 16-year-old climate activist from Sweden—came to my town for a climate rally.

The Edmonton reception was decidedly mixed. One reception was evidenced by around 10,000 people who gathered at the Alberta legislature. Most were young people, since her main message is that global environmental change, including a changing climate, drastically affects their futures.

There was negative reception, too. Some said they were sick of hearing about this foreign media darling. But even louder were those who rejected her as a one-message messenger doing a “hate-on” about Alberta’s oil and gas economy.

I would rather talk about the issues than the messenger. The celebrity culture rubs me wrong, although Greta didn't start out as a cult figure. Only 15 months ago, she was a solitary soul skipping school to sit outside her national parliament with a sign asking for meaningful action on climate change: What is the point of an education if what is relevant for the future is not being addressed?

My work has allowed me to be a delegate at World Council of Churches

climate-related meetings. I will never forget looking into the eyes of a brother from one of the low-lying Pacific Islands as he explained that he could not go back to his birthplace because sea level rise and storm surge had inundated the area and there was no longer any fresh water.

A Cree woman who has drummed and sung at several climate-related events in Edmonton told a CBC reporter that Greta is “the right race to be doing this [speaking up]. They won't listen to us.” She named racism and climate change as intersecting attitudes of domination.

Why do we pay so little heed to Indigenous peoples in our country and around the world? Or to the thousands in the global community of scientists using the best available techniques to comprehend God's creation?

Is Greta among the prophets for our time, like Jeremiah was to the Judeans threatened by the invasion of the Babylonian empire? His listeners rejected his message and even punished him for sedition (Jeremiah 20).

I've heard Christians saying that God will protect us from the threat of global environmental change. And I've heard Albertans say that opposing fossil fuel is un-Albertan. Are we like the Judeans of Jeremiah's time?

A few years ago, I co-chaired the Mennonite Church Canada working group on climate change and fossil-fuel divestment. We didn't recommend the church rid itself of investment in fossil-fuel companies at that time. One reason was that fossil fuels were entangled in every single part of our lives and economic sectors.

Let me be clear, I knew the data showing the dreadful consequences looming from still-growing carbon emissions, and that a rapid transition to other energy sources was required.

But I also agreed with our recommendation, for pastoral reasons. Some faithful Mennonites make their living and support families through employment in these industries, which are, at the same time, having a globally degrading environmental impact.

But equally faithful brothers and sisters around the world are already experiencing some of those impacts. And environmental degradation negatively impacts development work we fund through agencies like Mennonite Central Committee.

We need a specific dialogue about the morality/immorality of creation-damaging fossil fuels. And then, what action comes from following the Lord of heaven and earth? ☸



Randy Haluza-DeLay teaches at The King's University in Edmonton and attends First Mennonite Church there.

Et cetera

Sowing good deeds

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank reported that, in 2018-19, there were 212 growing projects that raised \$7.1 million for the work of ending hunger. Together, the projects totalled 6,425 hectares.

Photo: Gordon Janzen



PEOPLE

A plausible, persistent passion

A story of science, temperature and Mennonite history

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

On a spring morning in 1970, Henry Regier walked out of the residence assigned to guest lecturers at the University of Wisconsin and turned east. Student riots related to the Vietnam War had broken out on campus, and the night before National Guards with bayonets had deployed tear gas. Wanting to avoid the brewing violence that morning, Regier walked away from campus towards a used book store.

There, he happened upon a book by C.R. Van Hise, a former president of the University of Wisconsin. The 1911 book, which Regier still has, proposed that the combustion of large amounts of coal over

time would result in a milder climate.

“In the light of all my personal experiences and education,” Regier recalls, “I judged that Van Hise had stated a plausible hypothesis.”

Van Hise, as Regier notes, had built on discoveries of earlier scientists, like Eunice Newton Foote, whose 1856 paper discussed heat trap gases, and S. Arrhenius, who likened atmospheric carbon dioxide to a hothouse in the 1890s.

For Regier, the discovery of Van Hise’s book contributed to what became a nearly 50-year professional and personal interest in climate-related science and practice.

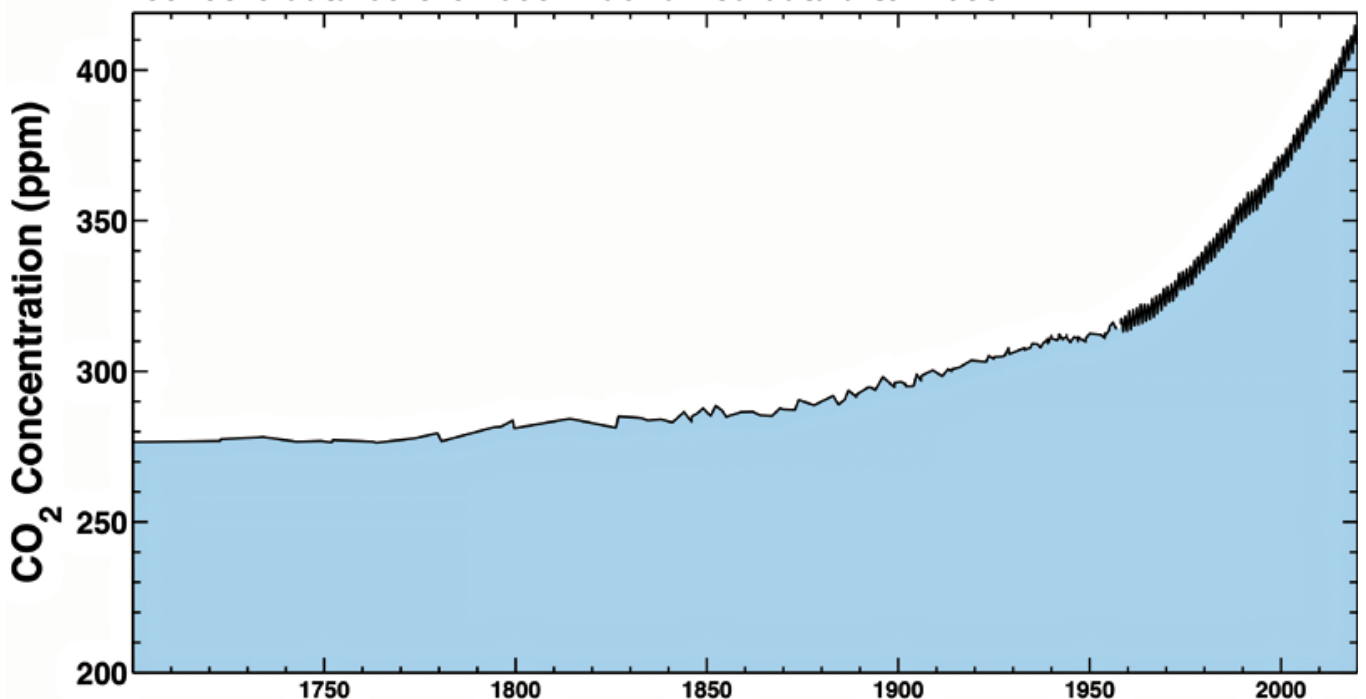
Now 89 and living in Guelph, Ont., Regier served as a professor of zoology and director of the Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Toronto. In 2008, he was named a Member of the Order of Canada for his contribution to the “protection and restoration of the Great Lakes,” and for his involvement in environmental stewardship internationally. He also served as author and peer reviewer for studies that were part of the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which was a co-recipient of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

Regier repeatedly emphasizes that his work relied on extensive collaboration with a range of other researchers. “I’m a *Mennische* farm boy who compulsively networked with many others,” he says via email, “sharing in successes and failures.” His ongoing academic work focuses on networking itself.

While the strained tones of climate activists may be warranted, the perspective of a seasoned scientist and ardently practical farm boy registers differently. As

October 24, 2019

Ice-core data before 1958. Mauna Loa data after 1958.



SCRIPPS INSTITUTION OF OCEANOGRAPHY CHART (CREATIVECOMMONS.ORG/LICENSES/BY/4.0)

The so-called ‘Keeling Curve,’ which indicates concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and ice over time, fascinates Henry Regier, who sees links between temperature and carbon in its various forms.

he shared at Niagara Christian Collegiate this past May, Regier sees science as a “persistent, disinterested pursuit of truth,” quoting T.A. Goudge, a former University of Toronto philosopher. Science is to be co-operative, rooted in observation and logical, and any conclusions reached are “intrinsically provisional and susceptible of further refinement or correction as inquiry is continued.”

This has been Regier’s approach to climate. His views have more depth and less edge than many climate campaigners. He matter-of-factly recalls dialogue with respected colleagues who hypothesized that the climate was cooling.

Regier notes that temperature was a thread in his life, well before Van Hise landed in his lap. He was born in “the first house that was built in a wild township of north-west Alberta” near the edge of what is now the oil patch. There, temperature mattered. Not only in terms of firewood supply, but which crops would produce there, something his father experimented with carefully.

The theme of temperature continued through his studies and then into his study

of how climate warming would affect fish.

Given the link between temperature and carbon in its various forms, Regier similarly traces his personal and family history in relation to carbon fuels, starting with his ancestors, the Koop Brothers, who burned coal in the process of manufacturing farm implements in present day Ukraine starting in the 1860s. Later, his mother, “turned over the manure blocks in the barnyard to dry them to serve as fuel in their home’s stove . . . even on the morning of her wedding day in 1919.” And on the family’s Alberta homestead in the ’30s, kerosene for lamps, and grease used for wagon axles and the like, were the only fossil carbons they used.

This sort of practical and historical approach has marked Regier’s career.

As science pointed increasingly to the stress that rapidly increasing global population was placing on the planet, Regier helped spearhead a group that organized a major 1968 “teach-in” on population, attracting world-class thinkers.

Regier’s scientific concern about population had a personal basis. After he and

his late wife Lynn had three children, they decided in 1961 that he would have a vasectomy, which was illegal at the time. The Regiers were later among various people profiled in a *Chatelaine* magazine article about vasectomies, and Regier was invited to work with the government on related policies.

Over several years of sporadic correspondence I have had with Regier, a term that continually re-surfaces in his stream of ideas is “praxis,” which Merriam-Webster defines as “practical application of a theory.” Regier talks about personal praxis, “Jesus praxis,” and, most often, “Mennonite praxis.” The latter points, in part, to the “voluntary democratic communitarianism” of his ancestors in the Polish wetlands, whose collective, conservation-minded care of the land could inform practice in today’s warming world.

In 1970, Regier considered the notion of climate warming a “plausible hypothesis.” Today, it is for him a personal passion rooted firmly in science and a centuries-old Mennonite heritage of practical caring. ☿

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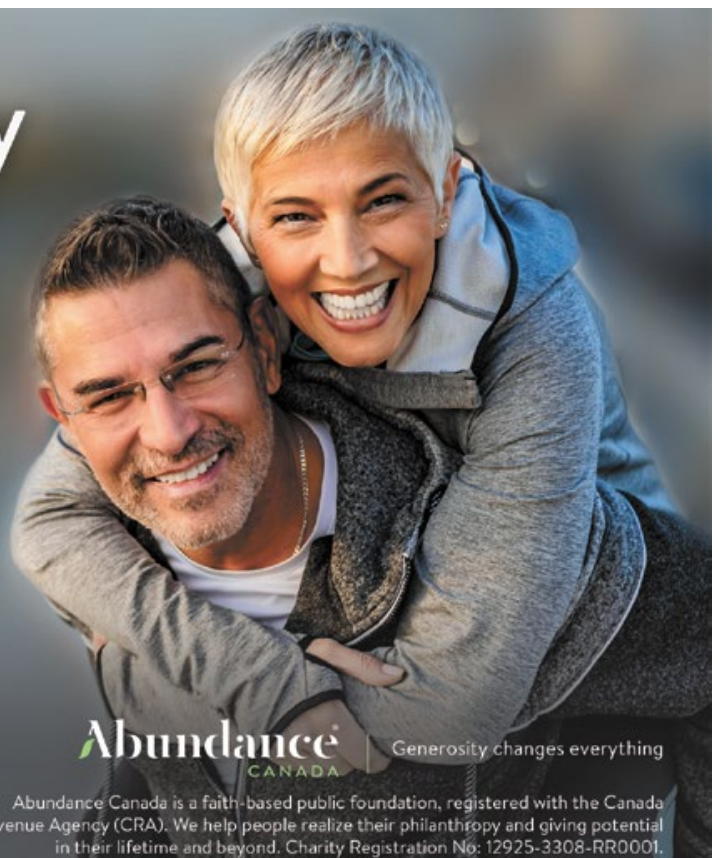
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'Jesus Christ is present here'

Mission Festival celebrates the work of retiring mission minister

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Jesus Christ is present here. Alleluia!" sang enthusiastic worshippers in many languages to begin the fourth annual Mennonite Church Eastern Canada multicultural Mission Festival, held on Oct. 26 at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener.

Worship leader Yoel Masyawong, the pastor of Grace Lao Mennonite Church in Kitchener, expressed his delight to see "all the nations come together," noting that 14 languages are now spoken in congregations across the regional church. Groups from various churches shared music and dance from their cultures as part of the worship time.

The Mission Festival was also an opportunity to thank Brian Bauman, who is retiring after 16 years as MC Eastern Canada's mission minister, and to bless Norm Dyck, who takes over the position at the end of the year.

Chung Vang, pastor of Chin Christian Church in Kitchener, spoke on behalf of the local multicultural cluster of pastors. He thanked Bauman for his support and for his "deep compassion toward God's



PHOTOS BY MOLLEE MOUA

Norm Dyck, right, the new MC Eastern Canada mission minister, presents Brian Bauman with a tribute T-shirt as part of retirement celebrations for Bauman held at the regional church's fourth annual Mission Festival at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener on Oct 26.



Women from First Mennonite Church's Hispanic community share a Colombian cultural dance at this year's fourth annual Mission Festival on Oct 26.

people." He said to Bauman, "The love of God flows to us from you."

Jim Loepp Thiessen, currently pastor of Floradale Mennonite Church, shared from his story of planting a church while Bauman was mission minister. He described Bauman as a supportive and patient listener with an "apostolic gift."

Som Phanpha expressed appreciation to Bauman on behalf of Laotian congregations for the seeds he planted, for his wise counsel and encouragement, and for the way he invested in the lives of others.

In a farewell blessing, Bauman reflected on the growth and diversity of the churches represented, saying, "Words cannot describe what I am feeling... that we are here in this place together."

Regional church staff wore T-shirts sporting Bauman's image and one of his favourite sayings: "Every neighbourhood

deserves a disciple-making peace presence." Dyck presented Bauman with one of the shirts, thanking him for his mentorship.

Referring to Ephesians, Dyck reflected on the mystery of how the church, bound together in the lordship of Jesus and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, can be one body. He noted that the "world continues to arrive" in Eastern Canada, "forever changing the dynamic of the church" in this part of Canada, and he celebrated how God is using "the rest of the world to reignite the passion of the church in North America."

The worship time ended with a service of communion and prayers of gratitude and blessing for Bauman and Dyck. The celebration continued with a potluck meal.

✎

Three generations find working for MCC a blessing

By Ken Ogasawara

Mennonite Central Committee Ontario
KITCHENER, ONT.

Bob Lebold made his first donation to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) when he was about 10 years old. It was Christmas, sometime in the late 1960s, when he tagged along to the MCC centre in Kitchener with his mom Elaine, who was the material aid supervisor. His task was to help sort and bale clothing to be shipped overseas.

The room was warm, so young Bob removed his sweater to cool off. It was a beautiful brand-new sweater he had received for Christmas from his parents. When the work was done a couple of hours later, he discovered his sweater was missing. “Was it a nice green one?” asked Floyd Martin, one of the volunteers. “Well, you just packed it in a bale. It’s going overseas!”

“Mom and Dad didn’t buy me another new one,” recalls Bob with a laugh.

The loss of his sweater notwithstanding, the work his mother did and the mission of MCC left an impression on Bob, and many years later he returned to MCC to take on the same role his mother had held, now called material resources coordinator.

“Coming back to the building that Mom worked in, it felt good,” he says. “And when I got the job, it was an answer to prayer. I felt like I belonged.”

Now retired, Bob remains in close contact with the current material resources coordinator—his son Jon.

“Honestly, I didn’t know that Grandma did this work back in the day until I called her to tell her about my new job, and she goes, ‘Oh, you’ve got my old job!’” says Jon with a laugh.

Beth Hovius, Jon’s sister, also works at MCC Ontario, in the revenue development department as a donor stewardship associate, where she makes sure that donors know that their generosity is making a real and lasting impact in the world.



MCC PHOTO BY SHOUA VANG

Jon Lebold, Beth Hovius and Bob Lebold agree that continuing the legacy of their mother and grandmother at MCC has been a blessing.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LEBOLD FAMILY

Laverne and Elaine Lebold, pictured in 2018.

Elaine has many fond memories of her 13 years at MCC, but her love for the work always comes back to two things: the mission and the people. “We felt like we were a family,” she says. “It was a feeling I’d never had before nor since. And I’ve had a number of jobs since. I just knew I was doing the thing I was needing to do.”

Elaine’s legacy at MCC Ontario includes not only her family following in her footsteps, but an insightful decision to start including what is now an icon of MCC in the shipments: the comforter. “Some of the shirts we received weren’t fit for shipping, so our ladies would cut those

shirts into patches and make comforters with them,” she explains.

Today, comforters are as symbolic and important as ever. Last year, MCC shipped 63,841 comforters from Canada and the U.S.

Back then, shipments included homemade and store-bought soap, health kits, sewing kits and bandages, as well as once-a-year “Christmas bundles” for children between the ages of 4 and 16. These bundles included a blouse or jumper and a skirt for girls, or a pair of pants and a shirt for boys, as well as a pair of socks, a toy, a bar of soap, a comb and a toothbrush. These were all wrapped up in a towel and pinned with a safety pin.

“When we sent these Christmas bundles, we would receive cards of thanks,” Elaine says. Nearly 40 years later, thinking back to that gratitude makes her emotional. “And it almost breaks my heart when I think of how thankful these people were for so little, compared to what we had.”

As donor stewardship associate, the essence of Beth’s job is relaying that thanks from recipients to donors. “It’s such a great feeling to show donors that we all had a hand in this,” she says. “We couldn’t do this without the volunteers, without the donors. . . . It’s awesome!”

All four Lebolds agree that working at MCC was, and is, a blessing. “You forget that people call this a job,” says Jon. “It’s so rewarding.”

Elaine now lives in North Bay with her husband Laverne, but her heart remains close to the work of MCC. As for her children and grandchildren working at MCC, she feels what many Mennonites are shy to profess: pride. “I’m very proud that they are carrying on the torch that I started. And I want them to know that I’m extremely happy for them and I wish the Lord’s blessing on them every day.” ☘

NEWS

Trudeau 2.0

What the 2019 federal election means for church organizations

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

While many candidates in the fall election campaign appealed to the self-interest of voters, organizations devoted to the interests of others had their own take on the outcome. I asked a few such agencies for their assessment of the last four years and their hopes for the next four. I also looked at foreign aid and the lot of Canada's most prominent Mennonite politician.

MCC Ottawa

Anna Vogt of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ottawa Office says the 2015-19 government did well in terms of restoring funding for work with displaced Palestinians; appointing an Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise, who oversees Canadian-owned extractive companies abroad; and supporting Bill C-262, which would further commit government to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The bill ultimately died in the Senate before this fall's election was called. (See story on page 17.)

One disappointment for Vogt was the renewal of the Canadian military mission in Iraq.

Looking ahead, she would like to see the Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise given more independence and investigative powers. She would like to see renewed commitments to meet promises to Indigenous peoples, and she would like to see Canada take a lead role in work towards "a just peace in Palestine and Israel."

Vogt says the Ottawa Office is still developing its approach with respect to Indigenous peoples, climate change and restorative justice. An increase in staff capacity, first announced last January, remains on the horizon. This will be partly in response to MCC cuts to Indigenous and restorative justice capacity elsewhere within MCC earlier this year.

Foreign aid

In 1970, the United Nations agreed that nations should aim to spend 0.7 percent of their gross national income (GNI) on Official Development Assistance. That target was re-affirmed by the UN in 2015. Despite leading the push for the original target, Canada has never come near to meeting it. Last year, this country was at 0.28 percent. The closest it came was 0.47 percent, under Progressive Conservative prime ministers Brian Mulroney and Joe Clark.

During the recent election campaign, the Conservative party said it would cut foreign aid by 25 percent. The Liberal platform touted a 2018 increase of \$2 billion in aid and an unspecified further increase in 2019. According to election materials from the Canadian Council on International Cooperation, given that the \$2 billion is to be spread over five years and the 2019 increase is minimal, Canadian aid-to-GNI ratio will remain relatively unchanged in coming years, assuming GNI rises.

The New Democratic, Green and Bloc Quebecois parties all stated a commitment to the 0.7 percent target.

CoSA

In 14 communities across Canada, Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) staff and volunteers support sex offenders released from prison. Celebrating 25 years, CoSA's motto is: "No more victims—No one is disposable." Evidence shows it has been successful in reducing re-offence rates.

In June 2017, the federal Liberal government entered a five-year funding agreement, with \$7.5 million to be distributed to 14 CoSA operations across Canada over the five years. National CoSA coordinator Kathryn Bliss says the work under this arrangement is "going really well."

But with more funding, more could be done. Close to half of the 14 CoSA



PHOTO BY THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES

Justin Trudeau has another four years to make a mark.

operations are at or beyond capacity, and CoSA is not able to meet the demand for services across Canada. Bliss says \$7.5 million is the maximum available under that particular funding stream and funding is not renewable.

Looking ahead, Bliss hopes to continue good relations with government and the bureaucracy. She also hopes to find a new long-term sustainable funding mechanism when the current arrangement expires in 2022.

Saudi Arabia

Last year, Canadian arms makers sold more weapons abroad than ever before. Of particular note, sales to Saudi Arabia topped \$1 billion.

As Project Ploughshares notes in its materials: "Saudi Arabia has an appalling human-rights record and is a lead party in the war in Yemen, described as the 'world's worst humanitarian crisis' by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres. Evidence indicates that Saudi forces have used Canadian-made light-armoured vehicles in hostile actions, while other Canadian-made weapons have been diverted to Saudi-allied militias."

During the campaign, the Liberals said they are "continuing to review export permits to Saudi Arabia and no final decision has been made." They first announced

such a review in late 2018.

The NDP and Greens oppose arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Refugee resettlement

Response to the Syrian refugee crisis became a signature issue for the previous government, driven, in part, by the photo of three-year-old Alan Kurdi's lifeless body on a beach, which shocked the world in the lead-up to the 2015 election. Brian Dyck of MCC says the previous government met its commitment to settle 25,000 Syrian government-assisted and blended refugees. In the process, the government sent an important message, and, Dyck says, the bureaucracy became more efficient, out of necessity.

In terms of privately sponsored refugees, some of whom MCC helped facilitate, there were about as many settled in Canada in the last four years as in the previous 20 combined. The annual target now is 20,000, and processing times have been shortened.

Dyck hopes the new government will continue to keep levels of government and privately sponsored refugees at current levels. "Canada has a role to play in terms of leadership globally," he says, partly because the U.S. has significantly cut back its role.

Dyck also points to the importance of working with displaced people overseas and peacebuilding work that addresses root causes of displacement.

Independent

Also of note, former health minister Jane Philpott, whom Trudeau expelled from cabinet when she sided with Jody Wilson-Raybould in the SNC-Lavalin affair, finished third in the Markham-Stouffville riding, behind the Liberal and Conservative candidates. Philpott, who attends Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville, Ont., ran as an Independent.

In a statement the day after the election, Philpott said: "I still believe we can rise above the narrow confines of partisan politics, to work together on the biggest concerns of society and humanity. There are many who think it is naïve to believe that anything will change in politics. I hope, in time, we can set some of those sceptics free from the prison of the status quo." ❧

Saganash wants people to #takethepledge

Allies redoubling efforts to see Indigenous rights enshrined in law

By Beth Downey

Canadian Mennonite University
WINNIPEG

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) students, staff and faculty gathered on Oct. 16 to hear Roméo Saganash speak on how Indigenous political leaders are keeping up the fight to see the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) implemented into Canadian law.

During his visit, Saganash shared *This Fight Continues: 262 & the Declaration*, a film created by CMU alum Brad Leitch of Rebel Sky Media, documenting the story of Bill C-262. Following the screening and discussion, a number of students and community allies gathered in the Mennonite Church Manitoba offices to meet with Saganash, break bread, share their questions and make plans.

In 2017, Saganash introduced Bill C-262, a private members bill, to Parliament. The bill's intent was to fully enact all 46 articles of UNDRIP.

Thousands across the country, including CMU students, faculty and staff, threw their support behind C-262. With strong backing from MPs across the political spectrum, it passed three readings in the House of Commons and was adopted by Parliament in May 2018.

Despite this success, the bill failed this summer, "blocked" Saganash said, "by a handful of unelected Conservative senators."

Last week's CMU gathering was among the first in a planned series of such events, gathering support and advocacy for new legislation that will match or exceed the



CMU PHOTO

Former MP Roméo Saganash, left, and Steve Heinrichs, MC Canada's director of Indigenous-Settler Relations, second from left, and members of the CMU community meet on Oct. 16 in an effort to ensure that all 46 articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are implemented into Canadian law.

provisions of Bill C-262. While Saganash is no longer an MP, and does not plan to run again, he has passed the baton to Indigenous colleagues whom, he says, are running with it.

Steve Heinrichs, MC Canada's director of Indigenous-Settler Relations, is spearheading the campaign to galvanize and expand what grassroots support has already been raised by Bill C-262.

"It's not just [MC Manitoba] or MC Canada that are encouraging this, but a wide network of folks," Heinrichs said. "We're asking all Members of Parliament in all parties to pledge their support for new legislation."

Danielle Morton, CMU's spiritual life facilitator and co-host of the Oct. 16 event, said that plans are already in the works for a follow-up event to extend the conversations germinated at CMU. ❧

A fuller explanation of the AMBS presidential search

David W. Boshart 'is deeply committed to continuing to make AMBS a safe and hospitable place for all students': Marlene Kropf

By Sheldon C. Good
The Mennonite

Following the appointment of the next president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), details are emerging regarding what led the search committee to enter an “extended discernment” period and, in turn, what the search committee learned during that time.

The AMBS board of directors on Sept. 10 announced the appointment of David W. Boshart, who will begin as president of the seminary in Elkhart, Ind., on Jan. 1, 2020.

Bruce Baergen of Edmonton, AMBS's board chair, said in a Sept. 20 statement that two areas of constituent concern led the search committee to enter an “extended discernment” period—which lasted from July to September—to allow for further inquiry while it considered whether to appoint Boshart, who was announced as the search committee's candidate of choice on June 10.

The two areas of constituent concern, Baergen said, were Boshart's “preparedness to lead AMBS in strengthening its learning community to be inclusive and safe for LGBTQ+ students and employees and his commitments to the work of improving AMBS's policies and training for preventing and responding to sexualized violence.” Boshart affirmed the board's decision to engage in “extended discernment.”

In addition to the concerns, Baergen said, the search committee received “strong affirmation” for Boshart “from people who have worked closely with him in congregational, conference and denominational contexts.”

Baergen said one constituent concern was “related to the inclusion of people who identify as LGBTQ+ at all levels of church life and leadership,” and stemmed

from Boshart's “involvement with past Mennonite Church U.S.A. polity and decision-making processes in his prior conference and denominational leadership roles,” Baergen said. “Some constituents have expressed that his candidacy (now appointment) symbolizes the hurt caused to LGBTQ+ communities in the church through processes that have excluded them. We, and David, recognize this deep pain.”

Boshart met with the AMBS teaching faculty and the AMBS Intercultural Competency and Undoing Racism [ICUR] Team, Baergen said, noting that “feedback from the teaching faculty and a summary report from [the ICUR team] gave the search committee confidence in David's commitment to AMBS's work to undo systemic violence and oppression in its many forms.”

For Joanne Gallardo, a 2010 AMBS alum who is part of the leadership team of Inclusive Mennonite Pastors, an ad hoc group with more than 180 members that advocates for inclusion and affirmation of LGBTQ+ individuals in the Mennonite church, the search committee's confidence in Boshart is not enough.

Gallardo, in a Sept. 24 email to *The Mennonite*, said she “would like to hear from David his views on the inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons both at AMBS and in the broader church,” not just his support for AMBS policies regarding inclusion of LGBTQ+ students and employees.

She said she hopes “Boshart would be able to acknowledge and seek to repair past harms done” stemming from his time as a conference and denominational leader. “This leadership approach [to acknowledge and seek to repair past harms done] is one that was taught to me while

I was a student at AMBS,” Gallardo said.

In his statement, Baergen said the other constituent concern—regarding Boshart's commitment to improving AMBS policies and training for preventing and responding to sexualized violence—grew out of an anonymous letter submitted on June 16 to the search committee.

Barbra Graber, a leader in SNAP, an independent survivors network, said in a Sept. 19 email to *The Mennonite* that she submitted the letter to the search committee at the complainant's request. The letter alleges that, in 1988, Boshart, while employed in a staff position in another context, did not take action on the complainant's report to Boshart of a sexual assault occurring at the time of the report.

At an AMBS all-campus meeting on June 17 during a candidating visit, Boshart “noted that while he did not remember the incident, he believed the letter writer and named deep regret for his own apparent failure to act,” Baergen said.

AMBS hired FaithTrust Institute, a professional consulting firm, to work with the search committee.

Miriam Book, an AMBS board member and the search committee chair, said in an Oct. 15 email to *The Mennonite* that “FaithTrust Institute helped the search committee listen well to the letter writer and understand the context, issues and concerns that had been raised.”

Book—who expressed gratitude for organizations that advocate for sexual violence survivors and sexual violence prevention in the church—said, “There was a difference of opinion with the consultant about how to gather information from the broader constituency for the committee's work.”

“We, as a search committee, felt we had



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMBS

A view from the AMBS campus in Elkhart, Ind.

thorough methods for doing this, so we decided to keep moving forward,” she said. “FaithTrust Institute, without question, helped us. No process is perfect.”

Hilary Scarsella, a 2012 AMBS alum, visiting assistant professor of theology and ethics at Memphis (Tenn.) Theological Seminary, and director of theological integrity for Into Account, said in a Sept. 28 email to *The Mennonite* that the search committee’s decision “not to heed the advice of survivor-centred sexual violence consultants only raises flags around the institution’s commitment and/or ability to take sexual violence seriously.”

Baergen said in his statement that Boshart and the AMBS board have expressed their full affirmation of, and commitment to, the seminary’s Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures manual and its Statement of Renewed Institutional Commitment Regarding Sexualized Violence Prevention, Reporting

and Response, which was released in June by the AMBS Administrative Cabinet.

Scarsella and others have asked AMBS to make public its contract with FaithTrust Institute as well as the consultant’s findings and recommendations.

“Improving this process really just comes down to taking LGBTQ+ injustice and sexual violence seriously from the start,” Scarsella said. “The voices of survivors and queer people should have been given quite a bit more weight in the discernment process.

“I’ve spoken with so many survivors and queer people in the last weeks. . . . This decision [to appoint Boshart] is truly and actually hurting people. And that’s not going to cease to be the case when this story exits the news cycle. It’s going to keep hurting people, most of whom will handle that hurt out of public view, because the church is not demonstrating itself to be a trustworthy space into which

people who are hurt by sexual violence or LGBTQ+ injustice can speak.”

Jane Frederickson, executive director of FaithTrust Institute, said in an Oct. 2 phone interview, “We ended our consulting arrangement with AMBS on Aug. 5,” prior to the AMBS board’s appointment of Boshart.

Marlene Kropf, a search committee member and a Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) board member, said in an Oct. 11 phone interview, “[T]here was extraordinary collaboration between MEA, AMBS and Mennonite Church Canada in this presidential search, a good example in the church of giving a group authority to do something and then trusting their work.”

She said Boshart’s “record is perhaps more moderate or conservative than the current faculty at AMBS, but he is deeply committed to continuing to make AMBS a safe and hospitable place for all students.”

“Boshart and the AMBS faculty can model a way forward for a deeply divided church,” she said.

Book said the search committee took its work “very seriously and worked hard at following best practices throughout the discernment period.” She said she approached the “extended discernment” with an understanding that the search committee “would move forward with no predetermined outcome,” and “would be open to receive additional information and carefully discern what would be our final recommendation to the AMBS board of directors.”

“After careful consideration,” she said, “the committee reaffirmed its recommendation that David Boshart—with all his spiritual, theological and organizational gifts, his extensive experience in the church, and his humility and integrity—is the best person at this time to be the next AMBS president.” ❧

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Vietnam highlighted at MCC B.C. meeting

Legacy of boat people remembered

By Sharon Cymbaluk

Mennonite Central Committee British Columbia
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Those who attended Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C.'s 2019 annual meeting on Oct. 19 were treated to a Vietnamese cultural experience as they entered the gym at King Road Mennonite Brethren Church. Glowing paper lanterns, Vietnamese music and a gallery of photos from the Vietnam War era set the tone for the theme, "A journey of hope: Vietnam then and now."

In 1979, the Vietnamese boat people crisis spurred MCC and its supporting churches into action. MCC approached the Canadian government, and the Private Refugee Sponsorship Program was created. Since then, MCC has sponsored more than 12,000 refugees.

The day included stories and testimonies from several former Vietnamese refugees, including one of the first refugee families

sponsored 40 years ago.

Keynote speaker Claire Ewert Fisher shared about her time serving with MCC (1973-75), her evacuation with her newly adopted baby son and the ongoing work that MCC is doing in Vietnam. Fisher served with MCC in Vietnam with her husband, Wally Ewert, at the height of the war and was evacuated along with others as South Vietnam fell in 1975.

One of the lasting legacies of that war is the millions of people affected by Agent Orange, a chemical sprayed on crops and jungle areas by the American military to expose enemy troop movements and reduce their food sources. The chemical is linked to cancer, respiratory issues and severe birth defects. It is still present in the soil and water, and it continues to affect



MCC B.C. PHOTO

Mabel Paetkau, second from left, a former MCC refugee sponsorship coordinator, poses with the Quach family, who were one of the first Vietnamese families to arrive in Abbotsford, B.C.

individuals four generations later. MCC is working with local organizations to care for those impacted.

Jane Ngunu, MCC's program coordinator, also shared stories of service and hope at the annual meeting.

Heeding the words of Psalm 9:18, "For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever," MCC continues to serve in many forgotten places where people struggle to find hope. ☸



PHOTO BY KAY MUAS / TEXT BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

Women attending Mennonite Church British Columbia's 's annual fall retreat, held from Oct. 18 to 20 at Camp Squeah in Hope, enjoyed a weekend of sisterhood, enrichment and fun, including playing a group game (pictured). The theme for the weekend was "Gifted for purpose," with speaker, teacher and life coach Kelly Rader as the resource person; she led a workshop on spiritual gift inventory. Deborah Barkowsky also led two workshops on counselling. Attendance numbers were down this year, with 50 women registered for the weekend. This is one of two events that Mennonite Women in B.C. sponsor each year; the other is an Inspirational Day in the spring.

/// News brief

The Mennonite Story celebrates 40 years in St. Jacobs



Del Gingrich, right, longtime volunteer manager of The Mennonite Story, greets 89-year-old John Ruth, one of the visionaries who helped to shape the museum and visitor centre 40 years ago. Ruth spoke at the breakfast celebration on Sept. 28 marking its 40th anniversary.

ST. JACOBS, ONT.—Over the past 40 years, more than a million visitors have learned about Mennonites at a tourist information centre in the village of St. Jacobs. First called The Meetingplace, it opened in 1979 as a way to address the curiosity of tourists who came to see the Mennonites. Later known as the Visitor Centre, and finally as The Mennonite Story, its mission has been to creatively and respectfully share the history, culture and faith of the various Mennonites in the area and around the world. On Sept. 28, a breakfast celebration was held at Waterloo North Mennonite Church to mark the 40th anniversary, to hear memories from John Ruth, one of the visionaries who helped to shape it, and to honour Del Gingrich, the volunteer manager for 20 years, who will retire at the end of 2019. Tributes were also paid to the late Milo Shantz, a local business entrepreneur, whose vision, energy and financial support helped to make The Mennonite Story a reality, and to the many volunteers, managers, board members and church leaders who shared their time and expertise over the years. Gerry Horst, a former board member, will take over as manager in January 2020.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY JANET BAUMAN

/// News brief

'Coming out' as a church



Cupcakes of all colours of the rainbow were part of Charleswood Mennonite's 'coming out' service on Sept. 22.

WINNIPEG—On Sept. 22, Charleswood Mennonite Church celebrated “coming out” as a church that welcomes and affirms people of every gender and sexual orientation into its community, with a special worship service celebrating its newly created affirmation statement. Although Charleswood has had a welcoming attitude for years, it was important to make it explicit with a written statement, says Diana Epp-Fransen, who took the lead in organizing the service. “In the past, it was assumed that most churches were not accepting of gender and sexual diversity,” she says. “So if we say nothing, we risk that people might assume that we accept the status quo—that the LGBTQ+ community is too often not accepted in churches.” The worship service included a prayer of lament for how the church has hurt and alienated those in the LGBTQ+ community. The congregation invited other churches in Manitoba to celebrate this official step, and at least six other churches were represented. “[W]e are not simply saying that we accept people with diverse genders or sexual orientations. We are saying that we celebrate the gifts brought by people from the LGBTQ+ community to our church,” says Epp-Fransen. “Diversity makes our church better!”

—STORY AND PHOTO
BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

/// News brief

MC Saskatchewan explores theme of life together



Pastors Josh Wallace, left, Emily Summach and Garth Ewert Fisher discuss how communion helps enrich the life of the church.

ROSTHERN, SASK.—From beginning to end, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's Equipping Day was focused on the regional church's theme for 2019, “Deepening our walk with each other.” Guest speaker Tom Yoder Neufeld opened the Oct. 19 gathering, held at Rosthern Junior College, with thoughts on the church as a new creation. He used the metaphor of giving birth to describe how the church wrestles with difficult issues. “We don't know what the birth process might look like,” he said, “but let's be curious about whether some of the things that bug us might be signs of birth.” Seven workshops offered insights into a variety of topics, from supporting people in situations of harm to having courageous conversations with Indigenous neighbours. Members of Wildwood Mennonite in Saskatoon shared about their experience with using an inclusive Bible translation in worship, and a panel of three pastors discussed how the practice of communion has enriched their faith. Sharon Schultz and Andrea Enns-Gooding reported on their participation in MC Canada's mission consultation, held in March of this year. Todd Hanson explored what it means to be deeply connected to brothers and sisters across political, racial and cultural divides. Yoder Neufeld led a workshop entitled “Take up your cross! Patience as suffering each other,” in which he discussed how patience is critical to the life of the church. The day ended as participants shared in communion with one another.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

'If you're not hungry, your neighbour shouldn't be hungry'

Canadian Foodgrains Bank documentary celebrates female farmers

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

A full house of more than 200 people gathered at the Park Theatre in Winnipeg on Oct. 15, a day before the United Nations-designated World Food Day, for the release of a new documentary by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

The 23-minute film, *Common Strength*, documents the cross-continental meeting of two female farmers and highlights the vital role women share in ending hunger around the globe. The premiere featured a screening of the film, live music and a panel discussion with film subjects and Foodgrains Bank staff.

Almost half of the world's farmers are women, and Colleen Dyck and Lucy Anyango are two of them. Dyck, of Niverville, Man., visited Anyango at her farm in Busia, Kenya, for seven days last March. While the video crew followed them around, the two women worked in the dirt, went to the market and got to know each other.

Dyck and her husband Grant farm the 5,700 hectares of grain and oilseed that is Artel Farms Ltd. She is also the CEO of her own business, GORP (Good Old Raisins and Peanuts) Clean Energy Bar, and has four children. Artel Farms has been supporting the Foodgrains Bank for more than two decades. In 2015, the family started Grow Hope, an initiative with the Foodgrains Bank and Mennonite Central Committee that farms up to 120 hectares acres of sponsored land and donates the proceeds earned from the harvest. It has been running every year since then.

Anyango is a community health worker and farmer who grows crops on just under a hectare of land. She and her husband have five children. Through a Foodgrains Bank-supported project, she has learned conservation agriculture practices that

have increased her crop size and resilience, helping her to feed her family and sell the surplus. She is now a conservation agriculture trainer, and teaches these techniques to people in her community.

Dyck had no idea what to expect when she got off the plane and stepped onto a continent that she had never been to before. But she quickly realized that there were core similarities between herself and Anyango.

"We are both mothers," she says. "[Lucy] works the land, she is a farmer, and we both depend on the weather for our livelihoods."

There were plenty of differences, too, which led to eye-opening experiences. Scenes of Dyck shrieking as she killed a chicken for the first time, and struggling

to carry a water jug on her head while Kenyan women easily balanced theirs without using their hands, elicited laughter from the audience.

A difference Dyck didn't expect was the barriers that Kenyan women in agriculture face. Women are often restricted from owning land or making decisions about what to do with it. "Often women will go to seminars and learn about better farming practices, but then they find it difficult to implement new practices because, as a woman, they don't have a lot of say in those matters," she says.

Research done by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations says that, if women farmers had access to the same resources that men do, their yields would increase by as much as 30



PHOTO BY MEAGAN SILENCIEUX

Colleen Dyck of Niverville, Man., right, visited and worked with Lucy Anyango on her farm in Busia, Kenya. '[Lucy] is a role model not just to her community, but to me,' says Dyck.

percent, and global hunger would decrease by up to 17 percent.

Despite challenges, Anyango is resilient and strong, working tirelessly to improve life for her family and community. "She is a role model not just to her community, but to me," says Dyck.

The Canadian film crew felt lucky to have been welcomed so warmly by the Kenyan community, says Meagan Silencieux, the Foodgrains Bank's public engagement officer. They worked with a team of local filmmakers, whose knowledge of the language, culture and country was invaluable for the filmmaking process.

Dyck, too, was impacted by the radical hospitality shown to her by Anyango and her community. "It's made me take pause and consider how I welcome visitors in my own community," she says. It has inspired her to turn off the radio, put down her phone and get to know her neighbours.

Gordon Janzen, the Foodgrains Bank's Manitoba and northwestern Ontario regional representative, encourages churches and small groups to watch the documentary and allow it to open up discussions.

Food justice is an issue of faith because "food is distributed unequally around the world, and, while hunger is present in Canada, there is a disproportionate number of hungry people in other parts of the world," he says. "I think it takes eyes of faith to see that hunger rather than ignore

it. Faith propels us into action."

"We've all been created equally in the eyes of God and he loves us all the same," says Dyck. "The greatest command is to love your neighbour as yourself. If you're not hungry, your neighbour shouldn't be hungry."

Common Strength is available for people to host viewings across Canada. For further information on hosting a screening, email foodjustice@foodgrainsbank.ca.



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Becoming a work of art

'Deepening our walk with each other,' theme for continuing education event

Story and Photo by Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

Tom Yoder Neufeld likens God's work with the church to an artist who creates a beautiful work of art out of things others have thrown away.

The professor emeritus of religious studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., spoke at Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's recent continuing education event.

Upwards of 26 pastors and other participants gathered at the Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan offices in Saskatoon for two days of learning with Yoder Neufeld. Held on Oct. 17 and 18, the event took as its theme the regional church's focus for 2019: "Deepening our walk with each other." (*See news brief on page 21.*)

"We haven't attended deeply to what it means to be a member of the church," Yoder Neufeld said. "You're part of a recycling project, thrown together with people

you can't stand, by God's design."

In Ephesians 2, Paul speaks of how God brought Jews and gentiles together in one body. "We are God's masterpiece," said Yoder Neufeld. "God is conceptualizing out of this alienated humanity a work of art, created to do good works."

As members of one body, believers are called to walk in unity. Pointing to Ephesians 4, he said, "Unity is not our goal. We are already united in Christ." Rather, he asked, "What does it mean to make every effort to walk in unity?"

Yoder Neufeld likened walking in unity to prisoners chained together. Walking this way "chafes, hurts, pulls and yanks," he said, "and it requires every bit of bearing each other and caring for each other."

Members care for each other as they "take off the old human and put on the new human," said Yoder Neufeld. Citing

Colossians 3, he noted that the new human dons new behaviours—humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance—with love worn over all of these like an overcoat. In adopting these behaviours, the new human is imitating Christ.

Philippians 2 likewise encourages readers to imitate Christ by emptying themselves as Christ did. "We're not going to get anywhere near deepening our walk with each other until we get that dynamic," he said.

"If we're going to walk together deeply, [we're] going to have to come to terms with being vulnerable," Yoder Neufeld said. "If I think of you as better than myself . . . it includes the vulnerability that I may be wrong and the possibility of my own change."

Truth is another significant aspect of walking together in Christ. In Ephesians



Tom Yoder Neufeld, standing, describes the church as God's recycling project. Speaking at MC Saskatchewan's continuing education event, Yoder Neufeld led participants in exploring Paul's writings and Jesus' teachings, to learn what it means to walk deeply together.

**‘If I think of you as better than myself . . . it includes the vulnerability that I may be wrong and the possibility of my own change.’
(Tom Yoder Neufeld)**

4:15, there is a phrase that is translated into English as *“speaking the truth in love.”* Yoder Neufeld said, “We don’t have an English verb for truth,” adding that a better rendering might be “truthing in love.” Speaking the truth has to do with words, but “truthing” has to do with character and relationships.

In addition to Paul’s writings, Yoder Neufeld also explored with participants Jesus’ teachings in Matthew 18. Like the Sermon on the Mount, he said, this chapter is a compilation of Jesus’ teachings. But the well-known verses 15 to 20 on church discipline seem stylistically out

of place.

The chapter begins with the disciples asking Jesus who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus places a child in front of them and tells them they need to become like that child if they want to enter the kingdom.

Then, in verses 6 to 9, Jesus warns of the danger of leading *“one of these little ones”* astray. Yoder Neufeld suggested that “little ones” refers not only to children, but to anyone who is “vulnerable in the community.”

This teaching is followed in verses 10 to 14 by the parable of the lost sheep. While

the lost sheep is usually thought of as one of the little ones described in the preceding verses, Yoder Neufeld said, “Don’t identify too quickly who the lost sheep is.” He asked, “Is it possible that the abuser is the lost sheep? What would it mean for Jesus to go after that one?”

Verses 15 to 20 outline a procedure for dealing with someone who sins, but Matthew places it right after the parable of the lost sheep. Taken in this context, Yoder Neufeld said, “These verses then become a means of retrieval.” Holding a sinner accountable is a way of showing love, he added. The end goal is to win the sinner back.

Finally, in verses 21 to 22, in response to Peter’s question about how many times he should forgive, Jesus replies that forgiveness should be limitless. “How often do we have to forgive?” asked Yoder Neufeld. “Every time someone offends.” ❧



LEAMINGTON MENNONITE HOME PHOTO

The 2019 Gala Committee members are pictured at this fall’s Leamington (Ont.) Mennonite Home event that raised \$80,000 for the refurbishing of the retirement residence’s dining room and adjoining servery, which is already underway.

Should pastors have friends in their church?

Mennonite Church Alberta explores healthy boundaries

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
DE WINTON, ALTA.

When Don Baergen, an elder at Holy-wood Mennonite Church in Edmonton, heard that Mennonite Church Alberta was hosting an Equipping Day on healthy boundaries, he decided to go since he had never received formal training at work or in the church. Baergen also works at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers.

“Ministry with different cultures means boundaries are not always the same,” he said. “Some cultures are freer with physical and emotional expression and some are not. When it comes to hugs, I just stand there and let them decide!”

Although the impetus for the Equipping Day event was to talk about sexual boundaries, the workshop led by Marilyn Rudy-Froese, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s church leadership minister, covered a wide range of topics.

The workshop was held on Oct. 19 at Trinity Mennonite Church in De Winton, with 30 pastors and lay leaders in attendance.

Baergen said he was surprised at the level of debate around the topic of whether pastors should be friends with people in



PHOTOS BY HELENA BALL

Proving you’re never too young to learn about healthy boundaries, Pastor Will Loewen and his son Sebastian sit together at this year’s Equipping Day at Trinity Mennonite Church.

the congregation or whether it is more appropriate to keep a professional distance. How does a professional who is called to love, which is generally a messy

business, create healthy boundaries?

Discussion was also had around hiring congregants to do jobs in the home: What if the person does a poor job or the church has to let the person go? Is it appropriate to receive gifts from congregants? Sometimes strings can be attached, but rejecting a gift can be hurtful. One participant only accepts gifts up to \$25.

The concept of relationships as a sacred trust really hit home with Baergen, and he appreciated the reminder that personal relationships with God and with others are sacred, and push people to take healthy boundaries seriously. During the session, participants were taught that “not all boundaries are negative. Boundaries can be positive, just like fences serve a purpose.”



Participants sit at round tables and discuss how to have healthy boundaries at this year’s Equipping Day, held at Trinity Mennonite Church. Pictured from left to right: Coreen Froese, Brenda Tiessen-Wiens and Jeanette Thiessen.



Marilyn Rudy-Froese, left, MC Eastern Canada's church leadership minister, chats with Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, executive minister of Mennonite Church Alberta, at this year's Equipping Day at Trinity Mennonite Church.

Rudy-Froese also addressed the relationship between those with power and those who are vulnerable. Multiple participants appreciated the reminder that congregants can often transfer onto the office of "pastor" negative or positive feelings based on experiences from the past.

Part of creating healthy boundaries is discerning the risk level of different situations, she said. One activity involved participants moving closer or farther away from signs on the wall that said "high risk" or "low risk." An obvious example was, if a male pastor repeatedly visits a single mom going through a crisis, is it a high-risk or low-risk situation?

Other scenarios were less obvious. If a congregant, who happens to be a policeman, unknowingly pulls over the pastor for speeding, and, once he realizes it is the

pastor, lets him go, should the pastor accept the gift?

Pastor Will Loewen of Trinity Mennonite Church in De Winton noted how, over time, the Mennonite church has tightened its boundaries around pastoral ministry and loosened it around membership. "It struck me as interesting that, in the past, the Mennonite church has been weak in setting up healthy boundaries between pastors and congregations, but were strong about who can and cannot belong," he said. "Now it is reversed, with

congregations making it a priority to reach out to those on the margins."

According to Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, executive minister of MC Alberta, the issue of healthy boundaries is being recognized nationally as an important issue to be addressed, since unhealthy boundaries can cause a lot of damage in the church and community. "Healthy boundaries make for healthy relationships, and having healthy relationships [is] important, for both our faith communities and our witness in the world," he said. ☞

News brief

Evangelicals join in this year's Muslim-Christian Dialogue

EDMONTON—A Common Word Alberta, the Muslim-Christian committee that organizes and hosts the annual Muslim-Christian Dialogue sponsored by Mennonite Church Alberta and other partners, decided to do two things differently this year:

- It worked on inviting more evangelical Christians. The committee had experiences with multiple Christian communities that were not comfortable with Muslims praying in their space, so for the first time organizers rented a neutral, non-religious space where all could participate with ease. This fit with the theme of the event, "Heart of hospitality."
- It showcased its interfaith book club and monthly scriptural reasoning gatherings, to encourage interfaith activity throughout the year. Thirty people signed up.

Chaplain Ibrahim J. Long, a spiritually integrative counsellor and religious educator, spoke about the rich tradition of hospitality in the Muslim tradition, and Scott Sharman, an Anglican theologian and priest, spoke of the equally rich tradition of hospitality from the Christian tradition. Donna Entz, North Edmonton Ministry worker with MC Alberta and Mennonite Central Committee Alberta, talked about one first-time participant who shared how she learned that "not all Muslim women look like Muslims." Entz felt this was a sign that the dialogue was achieving its goal of breaking down walls and stereotypes. The seventh annual event attracted 150 people on Oct. 26.

—By JOANNE DE JONG



PHOTO BY JOSEPH ABRAHAM

Recently elected Conservative MP Tim Uppal, left, drops in to support the seventh annual Interfaith Muslim-Christian Dialogue held in Edmonton on Oct. 26. Sharing the table is Marjorie Wright.



Jake Froese, left and friend Don Baergen enjoy discussing this year's Equipping Day topic, 'Healthy boundaries.'

News brief

'Discovering God's heartbeat' one story at a time

More than a hundred Mennonite Church Eastern Canada junior youths and their leaders participated in Make a Difference Day at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, near New Hamburg, Ont. Speakers Jordan Thoms and Jon Folkerling spoke on the theme of "Discovering God's heartbeat," sharing some of their own experiences of God and the journey that led them to work with Warden Underground, a church that focuses on reaching youth and young adults in a government housing neighbourhood in northeastern Toronto. Participants were invited to consider their own stories, and how they intertwine with God's story and other people's stories. God's heartbeat could be felt throughout the day in the echoes of the drumming circle, singing during worship and in the sounds of games. The day ended with a challenge to go and make a difference one story at a time. The day was supported by MC Eastern Canada, Conrad Grebel University College, and Silver Lake and Hidden Acres Mennonite camps.

—BY JANET BAUMAN, FROM A REPORT BY JEAN LEHN EPP



PHOTO BY ANDREW DYCK

Junior youths and their leaders form a drumming circle during a workshop at Make a Difference Day at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp on Oct. 6.

News brief

'Choose welcome'



Jobina Masyawong, left, Anisa Panyadeth and Latavia Ricketts, all from Grace Lao Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., perform a traditional Laotian dance as part of the 40th anniversary celebrating the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program in Canada.

BADEN, ONT.—On Oct. 20, Steinmann Mennonite Church hosted a celebration in honour of the 40th anniversary of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program in Canada, an arrangement Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worked out with the federal government to help churches sponsor people fleeing devastating conflicts in Southeast Asia in the late 1970s. The event, called Across Rivers and Oceans, was a reunion of former Southeast Asian refugees, their sponsors, settlement workers, and government representatives who helped to develop the program. It was an opportunity for former refugees to offer heartfelt thanks and to describe the gift of friendship that continues to this day with sponsoring families and churches. It was also an opportunity to hear about the history of the program from those who helped to shape it. According to William Janzen, who worked for MCC at the time, by the end of 1980, 70,000 Southeast Asian refugees were helped, half of them through the new private sponsorship program. Of the 600 Mennonite churches in Canada, more than half submitted sponsorship applications. Moses Moini, MCC Ontario's current refugee program coordinator, emphasized the ongoing need to help the millions of displaced persons around the world, saying, "The need to choose welcome is at its highest."

—STORY AND PHOTO BY JANET BAUMAN

News brief

Bible study works at decolonizing scripture



A Bible study in Winnipeg is asking the questions, "How is our faith shaped by our history?" and, "Can we decolonize how we read the Bible?" Kelsey Enns, pictured, leads the group in reading, examining and discussing Scripture, with the help of resources like *Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization*, edited by Steve Heinrichs, director of Indigenous-Settler Relations for Mennonite Church Canada. Enns, who attends Home Street

Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, started the Bible study on Sept. 17 through the Student Christian Movement of Canada. Although the group's target audience was initially students, attendance numbers have been low. Enns welcomes anyone who is interested in the topic, regardless of age, faith, identity and background. "It's a conversation that people more generally need to engage in, I think," he says. "Also, my experience in Mennonite churches is that we might stereotype older congregants as not caring about this stuff. But they can be interested, too." The group meets every Tuesday evening at 6:30 p.m. at the Mennonite Church Manitoba offices in Winnipeg until Dec. 3. For more information, contact winnipeg@scmcanada.org.

—STORY AND PHOTO NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



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Impressive work at Hutterite art exhibit

MaryLou Driedger explores a recent Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery exhibit on the CM blog.

canadianmennonite.org/blog/mld-hutteriteart



Watch: Doug Klassen addresses MC Canada

"Mennonite Church Canada is alive and well," MC Canada's executive minister says in a short video released last month.

canadianmennonite.org/video/dkupdate



Voices Together committee holds final meeting

The committee working on the new Mennonite worship and song collection met for the tenth and final time last month. This is what happened.

canadianmennonite.org/vtfinal



Meserete Kristos College at 25

As it marks its silver anniversary, what impact is Meserete Kristos College having on Ethiopia?

canadianmennonite.org/mkcsilver

Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service seeks candidates to be on our board. Rather than engage in a formal nomination process, we're trying to build a pool of potential candidates from Canadian Mennonite churches.

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Calendar

British Columbia

Until Feb. 8, 2020: "Faces of Jesus," A Metzger Collection exhibit, at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford. Open Wednesdays, Fridays and the second Saturday of each month, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Nov. 30: "Emerging communities: A learning party," a New Leaf event, at the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster's synod office, Vancouver, from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Speakers: Jared Siebert and Elle Pyke. For more information or to register, visit newleafnetwork.ca/events.

Dec. 7, 8: Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir: (7) at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (8) at St. Philip's

Anglican Church, Vancouver. Both concerts at 7:30 p.m. In support of the Menno Simons Centre.

Feb. 28-29, 2020: MC B.C. Lead conference and annual general meeting, at Cedar Valley Mennonite Church, Mission.

Alberta

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

June 5-7, 2020: MC Alberta women's retreat.

Saskatchewan

Dec. 19, 21: RJC Christmas concerts: (19) at Knox United Church, Saskatoon; (21) at RJC at 7 p.m.

Manitoba

Nov. 25: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate holds its annual general meeting, at 7 p.m.

Nov. 28: CommonWord book launch of "Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity," at CMU's Marpeck Commons, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Nov. 29-30: Out-of-province campus preview for prospective students, at CMU, Winnipeg.

Nov. 30: "Christmas at CMU," Winnipeg, showtimes at 2 and 7 p.m.

Dec. 1: Winnipeg First Mennonite Church Choir and orchestra present Mozart's "Coronation Mass," and Magnificat settings by Stanford, Mozart and Schubert, at the church, at 7 p.m.

Dec. 7: "Choose your own

adventure trip" raffle, in support of Mennonite Heritage Village. Five trip options to choose from. To purchase tickets online until Dec. 6, visit bit.ly/mhv-affle.

Dec. 7: CMU Festival Chorus and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra present Handel's "Messiah," at the Winnipeg Centennial Concert Hall, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit my.wso.ca/messiah.

Dec. 7, 15: Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church Adult Choir and the Exaudi Chamber Choir present Bach's "Magnificat: (7) at Evangelical Mennonite Church, Steinbach, at 7:30 p.m.; (15) at Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg, at 11 a.m.

Dec. 9: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate holds its Christmas concert, at Westminster United Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

ServiceLinks

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mds.mennonite.net

Jan. 26, 2020: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate open house, from 1:30 to 4 p.m.

Jan. 30-31, 2020: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's junior-high students present three one-act plays, at the Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Jan. 31, 2020: CMU campus visit day, at 8:30 a.m.

Jan. 31-Feb. 1, 2020: Opera and musical theatre workshop, at the Laudamus Auditorium, CMU, Winnipeg, at 10 a.m. each day.

Feb. 11-12, 2020: "ReNew pastors and ministry leaders conference, at CMU, Winnipeg, at 10 a.m. each day. Keynote presenters: Andy Root and Thomas Yoder Neufeld.

Feb. 22, 2020: Discover Outtatown, an off-campus visit day for prospective students, at CMU, Winnipeg, at 8:30 a.m.

March 6, 2020: Music therapy coffee house, at CMU's Marpeck Commons, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

March 17, 2020: Finale of the Verna Mae Janzen music competition, at CMU's Laudamus Auditorium, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

March 28, 2020: Jazz at CMU, in the Great Hall, at 7 p.m.

Ontario

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

Nov. 16: Fairview Mennonite Home hosts its annual handicraft sale, at the home in Cambridge, beginning at 9 a.m. Includes a bake sale and tea room, and much more.

Nov. 16: Nithview Christmas bazaar, featuring a bake sale, silent auction, community vendors and a tea room, in New Hamburg, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Nov. 16: MCC peace conference, at Bethany Community Church, St. Catharines, begins at 9 a.m.

Nov. 16: "Innovate networking day," at Floradale Mennonite Church, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. A ReLearning Community event.

For more information or to register, visit bit.ly/2nlxOXV.

Nov. 22-23: Annual "Spirit of Christmas" event, at Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig, featuring juried craft show, Ten Thousand Villages booth and tea room: (22) from 6:30 to 9 p.m.; (23) from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Nov. 23,24: Soli Deo Gloria Singers present "Longing," a choral concert: (23) at UMEI, Leamington, at 7:30 p.m.; (24) at Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For tickets, call UMEI at 519-326-7448 during school hours.

Nov. 27-29: Credence & Co. presents "The art of mindful mediation," with Betty Pries, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information or to register, visit bit.ly/2m8lbUM.

Dec. 1: Lifted Voices will sing Christmas music at the Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call Laurence Martin at 519-504-4591.

Dec. 8: Menno Singers perform "Haste ye!—Christmas anthems," with the Menno Youth Singers, at

Trillium Lutheran Church, Waterloo, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

Dec. 15: Pax Christi Chorale presents jubilant choral masterworks by Bach, Vivaldi and Durante, at St. Andrew's Church, Toronto, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit paxchristichorale.org.

Dec. 15: "Sing-along Messiah," with Menno Singers, orchestra and soloists, at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

Dec. 21,22: St. Jacobs Mennonite Church presents "The Worst Best Christmas Pageant Ever," a Christmas comedy for the whole family, at the church at 2:30 p.m. each day. For tickets, call 519-664-2268.

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.



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Willowgrove has several program streams: Outdoor Education, Day Camp, Facility Rentals, Fraser Lake Overnight Camp, and is a KAIROS Blanket Exercise partner organization. The position will begin January/February 2020. Affordable rental accommodation is available on the Willowgrove 100 acre property. We are seeking a person with strong relational and organizational skills, with financial management and leadership experience.

For more information and a job description visit our website at www.willowgrove.ca. For questions, or to send an application, contact Board Chair, Freda Burkholder, Freda@willowgrove.ca. Application deadline is November 30, 2019.



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Meaningful way to dispose of unwanted Bibles

Story and Photos by Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
DUCK LAKE, SASK.

Tim Martens carefully unwraps a pair of tattered-looking old books. One is an ancient German Bible, its text printed in fine Gothic script, the other an old *Gesangbuch* or songbook.

Martens believes these worn and frayed tomes, no longer wanted or needed by anyone, deserve to be treated with respect. To that end, he has begun what he calls The Bible Collection Project. He is collecting old Bibles and hymnbooks, and storing them for the time being in a cabinet in his home. Books that can be mended or aren't too badly damaged can be given away, but those that are too worn or damaged are simply stored for the time being.

When he has accumulated more than he can store, Martens plans to give the old books a respectful burial, offering words of thanksgiving for the role they have played in the faith lives of their owners.

Martens, who attends Eigenheim Mennonite Church near Rosthern, feels that most people wouldn't want their grandmother's old Bible to end up in a landfill or even in recycling. He hopes that what he is doing will fill a need for those who are downsizing and don't know what to do with these volumes. He is working with thrift stores in the area to arrange for collection and pick-up of old Bibles and *Gesangbuchs*. ❧



PHOTO ABOVE: An old German Bible, top, and *Gesangbuch*, once treasured by their owners, are now part of Tim Martens' Bible Collection Project.

PHOTO LEFT: Tim Martens wraps an old German Bible and *Gesangbuch* with care. He eventually plans to give the books a respectful burial.