

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

December 9, 2019 Volume 23 Number 22

Empower children

... end poverty

pg. 4

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## EDITORIAL

# Church publications: Which way to go?

TOBI THIESSEN  
Publisher



I know an intersection with three street signs: Eastglen, Westglen and Northglen. Delivery trucks sometimes end up at the wrong house for failing to notice which Glen they need. Making it worse, Eastglen and Westglen are semi-circles that connect to form one circle. You can turn East and get to West or vice versa. Sometimes, a driver pauses extra-long at the T, trying to figure out which way to go.

The magazine industry is at this kind of crossroads. All magazines and newspapers, secular and faith-based, have been approaching the intersection for some time. There are many possible ways to deliver content to readers: print, video, blogs, e-newsletters, social media, and more. Will one direction be more successful than another? Publishers need to generate revenue to sustain journalism, but revenue from subscriptions and advertising is declining. How thin can we stretch ourselves as we test multiple directions at once? The way forward is not clear.

Recently, three Christian publications have each turned a different direction at the T.

Our U.S.-based sister publications, *The Mennonite* and *Mennonite World Review* are merging. They plan to launch a new combined product late in 2020. *TM* has a large email and web audience. *MWR* has a broader audience appeal since it is independent of any Mennonite denomination. (*TM* is also

independent but is affiliated with Mennonite Church U.S.A.). By merging, the two publications share resources, reduce duplication and avoid competing for the same readers. With the new publication, they commit to providing “compelling, thought-provoking content from an Anabaptist perspective.” A merger is one direction.

Going a different direction is the United Church magazine. Formerly called the *United Church Observer*, it has been renamed *Broadview* to attract readers from outside the denomination. Independently governed, *Broadview* still receives some funding from the United Church of Canada and includes a section for denominational news. The publication promotes itself as “the voice of Canadian progressive Christians and those who share our core values.” Because of a big promotional budget to help launch *Broadview*, you may have seen it showing up on your local newsstand, in your social media feed or as a flyer in one of your other magazines.

And then there is the direction taken by the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, which is to cease publishing the *MB Herald* in January. The MBs cited budget cuts and low readership as reasons for the closure. In print since 1962, the *Herald* differs from the previous examples because it is not independent. It did have editorial freedom at one time. In recent years, though, *Herald* content was directed by conference leadership.

Critics of the decision believe that readership fell off because the magazine was no longer a place for independent church conversations.

John Longhurst, who got his start in journalism by working at the *Herald*, wrote in a Nov. 25 column published by *MWR*, “Healthy church publications are a denomination’s water cooler, its meeting place, an opportunity for people of different views to hear each other out and engage in productive dialogue and critique.”

*Canadian Mennonite* is at the crossroads, too. In 2019, we turned towards a stronger digital presence. We hired a full-time online media manager, Aaron Epp, to manage social media and content for the growing audience on our website. We published four digital-only issues of this magazine delivered by email, on top of the 22 print issues that were sent to subscribers. To make sure that print-only subscribers were not short-changed, we increased the page count of the magazine and published more content in total.

As this year draws to a close and we look to next year, the *CM* team prayerfully invites your continued support in this magazine’s mission “to educate, inspire, inform and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada.” We rely on your continued involvement to fuel this magazine’s ongoing journey. You show it with letters to the editor, submitting your own stories and photos, sending story suggestions to regional correspondents, and through your subscriptions and donations. You may have already donated in response to our fall fundraising drive. Thank you very much.

On behalf of everyone at *Canadian Mennonite*, we wish you a blessed Christmas. May Christ’s light shine in our hearts this season and throughout the coming year. ☸



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PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/LMGORTHAND

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This is the last print issue for 2019. Digital subscribers will receive a final issue, 23-22 Digital, on Dec. 18. To get your digital version, visit [canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital](http://canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital).

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## FEATURE

# Empower children ... end poverty

‘It is the attributes of children in their dependence, powerlessness, trust and hope that point us toward the community we need to rebuild’

By Derek Cook

**T**his year marked the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Fittingly, the theme of the 2019 Universal Children’s Day, held on Nov. 20, was “Acting together to empower children, their families and communities to end poverty.”

Despite decades of progress, millions of children remain trapped in poverty. According to the World Bank, around 385 million children live in extreme poverty across the globe. In Canada, poverty affects more than a half-million children, while in Calgary around 33,000 children live in poverty—enough to fill the city’s McMahon Stadium, where this year’s Grey Cup game was played.

What does it mean to live in poverty, especially if you

are a child? Our society has determined that child labour is not acceptable, so poverty among children becomes much more complex because it is detached from questions of personal accountability and even money.

A number of years ago, the Canadian Poverty Institute led a study to understand poverty from a child’s perspective. The study determined that poverty for a child involves four dimensions. First, there is the material dimension of poverty in which children lack the resources necessary to help them grow and thrive. Also important is the availability of supports and services that can help them develop to their fullest potential. At a deeper level, children often experience a poverty of relationships, especially when they are without older adults who can mentor and support them and be positive



HOMELESSHUB.CA/GALLERY/BAD-WORSE-CHILD-POVERTY-RATES-CANADA

Infographic created by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives based on 2006 Canadian census data.



POVERTYINSTITUTE.CA WEBSITE PHOTO

## Unlike their elders, who have more years behind than ahead, children and youth have the benefit of unlimited possibilities for their life.

role models. The deepest poverty, though, is the poverty of hope and dreams, when children can't envision a bright future for themselves or they can't see that they will have any purpose in it.

The poverty of hope is the most troubling. This has been eloquently stated by the young climate activist Greta Thunberg, who challenged adults at recent public demonstrations, including at the United Nations in New York City. "This is all wrong," she said. "I shouldn't be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you? You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words."

Yes, we look to our youth for hope. Christ holds up children as a model for people to look to if we want to envision the kingdom of God (Matthew 18:1-5; 19:13-15). This is a remarkable role reversal; typically, adults try to find role models for children, not the other way around.

There are four attributes of children that tell us something about the

kingdom of God:

- **The first attribute** of children is dependence.

As the centre's research into child poverty has shown, children are utterly dependent on others—on their parents, on the other people around them and on the supports that society provides for them. This is the meaning of the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child."

Often children also have a deep understanding of their dependence on God. Sadly, as children grow, adults encourage them to become independent, as though, on our own, people can individually provide what we most deeply require without the gifts of community, society and God.

- **Second, children are** often known for their powerlessness.

At a fundamental level, the right to vote begins at the age of 18, as does the power to make decisions apart from parents or guardians. Adults often tell children to be quiet and listen, which means youth can't offer a meaningful

voice in decisions, especially those that affect them. Many people have dismissed Thunberg as "a little child" who should just be quiet. Even as she gathered a large rally on the steps of the Alberta legislature, a convoy of trucks headed north to shout her down.

Yet Christ says that it is the powerless ones who have power, that the powerless will experience the kingdom of God. In a vision of the future kingdom, the prophet proclaims: "*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them*" (Isaiah 11:6).

- **The third important** attribute of children is trust.

Healthy dependence requires trust as a foundation. Unless damaged, trust is instinctual among children, who trust, first of all, their parents to provide for and protect them. Christ uses the relationship between parent and child as a metaphor for the relationship between people and God, inviting his disciples to call God "Father." Children also place implicit trust in their surroundings, and they require a stable and healthy environment in order to grow and thrive.

Trust is essential not only for children, but for everyone to live together in community. But as humans grow older, our trust seems to diminish. Research tracking levels of trust across the world, including Canada, shows remarkably low and declining levels of trust in our institutions and leaders. When trust is lacking, people cannot experience the kind of cooperation necessary to reassure young people that we are capable of preserving the future for them and all future generations.

- **This brings us** to the most important attribute of children: Hope.

Unlike their elders, who have more years behind than ahead, children and youth have the benefit of unlimited possibilities for their life. They have decisions yet to make and paths yet to choose. There is the hope for a future, a hope that Christ and the prophets also



call us to envision, as in the prophecy of Isaiah. Yet the cry of many youth is the opposite, decrying an apocalyptic vision of the future that the children and youth of this world did not participate in creating.

This is the tragedy of child poverty in all its dimensions. Poverty is ultimately contrary to the will of God, as it not only violates the lives of children, but also the childlike attributes that Christ calls his followers to emulate.

One of the important impacts of child poverty is that it disrupts what should be healthy dependent relationships. Disrupted relationships have long-term effects on children that persist well into adulthood. Poverty disrupts dependent relationships through abuses of power. When people grow to view themselves as independent of each other and God, this separation mars their identity and allows injustice to flourish. We abuse power when we fail to see each other as beings bearing the image of God.

When power is abused and dependent relationships are damaged, trust is broken. This extends to a lack of trust in God, whom we come to doubt as capable of providing. It also speaks to a broken trust between people, who see each other as competitors rather than as neighbours.

Broken trust in the people and systems that should provide and protect is the opposite of the kingdom of God. God's vision is for an interdependent community in which all needs are met and all people find meaning and purpose. Poverty typically robs people of both meaning and purpose, and, consequently, of hope.

Poverty closes doors and blocks pathways of opportunity. It prevents people from becoming who God has designed them to be. Poverty robs all of us of the gifts that God provides through other human beings. When poverty robs children of hope, it robs all of us of hope in a future that our children will inhabit.

"Why should any young person be made to study for a future when no one is doing enough to save that future?" asks Thunberg. "What is the point of

learning facts when the most important facts given by the finest scientists are ignored by our politicians?"

American author and evangelist Jim Wallis points out that the most vulnerable people in our society are the first to feel the effects of changes in our environment, be they social or ecological. It is up to us to pay attention, because these are the ones who point us toward the kingdom of God.

In Matthew 6, Jesus tells his disciples not to worry about how they were going to be fed, housed or clothed. Rather, he says, work for the reign of God and everything else will fall into place. So children point us toward a new reality that is not inhabited by the independent and powerful, but by those who recognize their interdependence with each other.

In this reign, people of all ages live out just and peaceful relationships free from exploitation and the abuse of power. This kingdom is marked by trust in God and

each other, with hope for the future—for our generation and the ones to come. If we work to build that kingdom, the rest will indeed be given to us.

In the end, we work to heal the wounds that poverty inflicts on all of us when we allow damaged relationships to divide people one from each other and generation from generation. Ultimately, it is the attributes of children in their dependence, powerlessness, trust and hope that point us toward the community we need to rebuild. ❧



*Derek Cook is the director of the Canadian Poverty Institute at Ambrose University and serves as the representative of*

*Mennonite Church Canada on the Canadian Council of Churches' Commission on Justice and Peace. He attends Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary. This is adapted from a talk he gave at Ambrose University Chapel in Calgary on Oct. 22*

### ❧ For discussion

1. How much child poverty is there in your community? Is there a difference between experiencing a lack of money and living in poverty? How do the churches in your community serve disadvantaged children? Do you see a long-term solution to this problem?
2. Derek Cook writes that, according to the Canadian Poverty Institute, children living in poverty "often experience a poverty of relationships." He also states, "Poverty disrupts dependent relationships through abuses of power." Do you agree? What is the connection between poverty and unhealthy relationships?
3. Greta Thunberg, a young climate activist, has expressed despair about the future. Do the young people you know also have a gloomy outlook? Do we instinctively expect children to represent hope? How does the Christmas message express hope for you? Do you agree that children lose a sense of dependence on God as they mature?
4. According to Cook, the childlike attributes of the kingdom of God are dependence, powerlessness, trust and hope. Why is it challenging to aspire to these attributes? How important is it to build communities based on these qualities?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources at  
[www.commonword.ca/go/1874](http://www.commonword.ca/go/1874)

**CommonWord**  
 Bookstore and Resource Centre

## /// Readers write

### ✉ MCC recommendations for new federal government

*The following is a shortened version of a Nov. 8 letter sent from the Mennonite Central Committee Ottawa Office to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, with copies to the leaders of the four opposition parties.*

**As we look ahead, we suggest a few areas where we see opportunities for growth in Canada's response to forced migration:**

- **Identifying and addressing** the root causes of displacement. We urge you to dedicate diplomatic and financial resources to lead a global effort to identify and address these causes of forced displacement.
- **Increased commitments to international assistance.** We have appreciated your government's focus on supporting women and girls. We believe more efforts in this area, including a strong focus on organizations engaged in peacebuilding at a local level, can bear good fruit globally in dealing with some of the drivers of displacement.
- **Addressing the climate crisis.** We hear from global partners about the current impacts of the growing climate crisis on vulnerable communities and encourage the government to include climate adaptation funding as part of its foreign assistance.
- **Commitment to refugee resettlement.** We urge your government to continue to show leadership in providing resettlement at a time when resettlement spaces are in short supply.
- **Increase commitment to resettling United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) referred refugees.** We urge continued commitments to resettle those most in need of durable solutions through global processes, including a leadership role in support of the UNHCR.
- **Sustained leadership in promoting refugee sponsorship.**
- **Continued commitment to UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East funding.**

We also encourage the government to publicly uphold international humanitarian and human rights laws and standards in all Canadian foreign policy. These include:

- **Trade policy and practice in Israel and Palestine.** We are concerned by Canada's continuing trade relationship with illegal Israeli settlements in the

West Bank through the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement.

- **A re-examination of Canada's military mission,** Operation Impact, in Iraq and the surrounding region. We remain very concerned that Canada's continuing military efforts in the region are not only ineffective in addressing deep-seated conflict but also fuel further fragmentation and undermine the work of local peacebuilding organizations.
- **Accountability for the extractive sector.** MCC welcomed the announcement of the creation of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) but remains disappointed with the mandate of the CORE.

In domestic policy, MCC supports continued work on reconciliation and restorative justice, including the following areas:

- **Implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into Canadian law.** We ask that the government continue to uphold commitments to UNDRIP by introducing new legislation to turn the declaration into Canadian law, to the same standard or higher as that of Bill C-262.
- **Support for restorative justice initiatives.** We ask the Canadian government to continue to financially support these important initiatives and make restorative justice a priority at all levels of government.

Once again, we wish you well and assure you of MCC's prayers as you continue to provide leadership for our country. We look forward to ongoing engagement with you in constructive discussions on important public policy issues in the months and years ahead.

RICK COBER BAUMAN, WINNIPEG

*The writer is executive director of MCC Canada. To read the full version of the letter, visit [bit.ly/mcc-trudeau-recommendations](http://bit.ly/mcc-trudeau-recommendations).*



### ✉ Reader questions student's make-up

**Re: "Lessons from Narnia," Oct. 14, page 25.**

Is a white face much different than a black/brown face?

VICTOR HUEBERT, KINGSVILLE, ONT.

*The writer is a member of North Leamington United Mennonite Church, Leamington, Ont.*

### ✉ 'Let's do something before it's too late'

**Re: Climate strike articles, Oct. 14, pages 11 to 14, and "Hope comes from action," Oct. 14, page 32.**

I read with great interest the four pages devoted to the climate strike, in which thousands of people, mostly young, participated. Wonderful! Sadly only one article—"Hope comes from action: Grebelites strike for climate change"—mentions any action.

I urge *Canadian Mennonite* to devote a whole issue or an article per issue describing action. A good start would be to encourage all Mennonite churches to connect with the Mennonite Creation Care Network, whose newsletters are extremely informative.

Words are cheap. Let's do something before it's too late.

PETER SAWATZKY, WINNIPEG

### ✉ Media needs to provide 'a balanced picture' of Indigenous peoples

**Re: "Views on Indigenous land acknowledgements" Et cetera brief, Nov. 11, page 10.**

I grew up near one of the Blackfoot/Siksika reserves in southern Alberta. Some of their residents worked on our farm. We made friends, and I'm still in touch with some of them, including Gerald Sitting Eagle, an elder.

In recent times, we've had a kind of overload of negative attention placed on these fellow citizens of ours, who often find themselves in precarious situations. Most of the time we, as white people, are

willing to take the blame for residential schools, poor infrastructure services, and violence toward indigenous women, among others.

In my view, our media does not give us a balanced picture. We don't hear about the many "successful" Indigenous people, like Douglas Cardinal, a famous Indigenous architect, who credits residential schools for his success; the success of the Osoyoos Indian Band under the leadership of Chief Clarence Louie; and the fact that most violence perpetrated against Indigenous women is by Indigenous men.

I think it's time we took a very fundamental look at this Canadian problem. Most of my Indigenous friends agree that it would be a good thing if we did away with the Indian Act and the reservation system, perhaps allowing a transition period of about 10 years. After that, we would treat Canada's Indigenous citizens like any other immigrants, only they got here earlier than the rest of us.

Pride and dignity, so essential for human wellness, could then return to these beautiful people.

RICHARD PENNER, SASKATOON

*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](mailto: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

**Epp**—Peter Isaac (b. Oct. 26, 2019), to Kirsten Hamm-Epp and Ian Epp, Eigenheim Mennonite, Rosthern, Sask.

### Deaths

**Braun**—Anne (Willms), 89 (b. Aug. 5, 1930; d. Nov. 19, 2019), Lethbridge Mennonite, Alta.

**Falk**—Siechmund (Sig), 86 (b. Sept. 27, 1933; d. Nov. 12, 2019), Morden Mennonite, Man.

**Harder**—Jacob D., 92 (b. June 3, 1927; d. Oct. 24, 2019), First Mennonite, Edmonton.

**Hildebrandt**—Melita (nee Pankratz), 95 (b. Aug. 1, 1924; d. Nov. 21, 2019), in Camrose, Alta., Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

**Letskeman**—Abe, 88 (b. Feb. 24, 1931; d. Nov. 18, 2019), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

**Mireau**—Velma (nee Penner), 89 (b. April 6, 1930; d. Oct. 1, 2019), First Mennonite, Edmonton.

**Mukamba**—Esther Kasonga, 77 (b. July 16, 1942; d. Oct. 30, 2019), First Mennonite, Edmonton.

**Sawatzky**—Frank, 93 (b. July 4, 1926; d. Nov. 11, 2019), Steinbach Mennonite, Man.

**Schellenberg**—Edwin, 86 (b. July 15, 1933; d. Nov. 6, 2019), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Tiessen**—Ernest (Ernie) Walter, 85 (d. Nov. 12, 2019), Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

*Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to [milestones@canadianmennonite.org](mailto: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

## Freedom of speech for Christian media?

Kevin Barkowsky

**W**hat is our responsibility as followers of Jesus to media outlets?

Secular media outlets have a freedom-of-speech right to publish whatever their editor thinks will draw consumers to them. However, do Christian media outlets have the same right to freedom of speech? Or are Christian media outlets obligated by their personal walk with Jesus and their membership in his church to not publish information that could be detrimental to God's church?

Over the history of the church, there have been many controversial issues that have divided and destroyed the church from within.

The first was the issue of circumcision, 2,000 years ago. At the time, the Bible—which, back then, was only the Old Testament—said the identity marker for being an insider with God was male circumcision. However, the new movement of the Spirit was saying male circumcision was no longer the identity marker of who was in and out.

As you can imagine, this debate caused a very sharp division and had the potential to blow up the church. Paul

writes in Galatians 2:2 that he has had a private conversation with the leaders about it, *“so that our concern would not become a controversial public issue, marred by ethnic tensions, exposing my years of work to denigration and endangering my present ministry”* (The Message Bible). Having a public debate over something that was ultra-controversial would have damaged both Paul's work and Peter/James/John's work. The debate would have got way out of hand and damaged the church.

Divisive issues are like atomic bombs. We need experts to go in and diffuse the bomb, because, if we send everyone in, the bomb will blow up and take everyone with it.

The second wise decision Paul and his cohorts made regarding controversial issues is found in Galatians 2:9, where they extended the right hand of fellowship to each other. They each had different views, but rather than fight endlessly about it, they agreed to disagree, and extended their arms, essentially saying, “I embrace you and your stance, even though I think you are wrong. Let's find a way to at least work parallel to each other, so that God's

church doesn't get blown up by this issue, and his kingdom work can continue.”

In the end, who won the argument? Everyone did. The church did, because God's kingdom work continued and the church didn't get blown up.

The church will always have controversial issues. Instead of making ultra-divisive issues into public forums, where anyone can say anything, regardless of their lack of knowledge about the complexities and the implications of the resulting nuclear church fallout, Christian media outlets would do well to respect Paul's wisdom in Galatians and keep the divisive and destructive issues within trusted church leadership. Our churches depend on Christian media not to bomb the church by perpetuating division, destruction and bitterness. ☿



*Kevin Barkowsky is interim pastor of Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver, and Mennonite Church British Columbia's church engagement minister.*

## A moment from yesterday



At the Public Archives in Ottawa in 1968, Ted Regehr, head of the Government Records Section, standing, helps research assistant Ernie Dick locate government files related to Mennonites. The two were assisting historian Frank H. Epp with a monumental history of Mennonites in Canada project. Regehr remembers, “When previously Mennonite historians had relied mainly on Mennonite church, conference, community, family and personal papers, Frank asked us to identify relevant government records,” to provide a deeper understanding of the Canadian Mennonite story.

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



archives.mhsc.ca

## MIND AND SOUL

# Hope and optimism

Randy Haluza-DeLay

Christmas is the season when we talk about how the birth of the baby Jesus brings hope. Hope implies some sort of betterment to come. So Jesus is our hope. But hope for the future is a crucial question for many people in these days of political polarization, rising global inequality, global ecological degradation and growing issues of mental health. It's hard to be optimistic in the face of these facts.

Psychologists who study hope point out that it is not the same as optimism. According to research, people can be optimistic when the likelihood of something happening is higher. So optimism is related to probability. Hope is more about possibility. Hope motivates us to keep going in uncertain or negative circumstances because there still is a possibility of a positive outcome.

Loads of research show that hopefulness helps health. But remember, it needs evidence of the possibility of a positive outcome. It does no good to try to be optimistic when that evidence doesn't exist.

That's psychology, and it's focused on hope as an attribute of the individual. Surprisingly, there is precious little sociology of hope. It is not hard to imagine that it is easier to be hopeful

when others surround you with support. Besides health research, the small amount of sociology of hope research is on religion. Imagine that!

The problem with a psychological focus is that it makes people solely responsible for their individual responses to life's trials. But in a Christian understanding, hope is like love and faith, especially in a tradition in which the community has pre-eminent importance. These virtues are practised in the community setting. We cannot really express love alone. And we know that faith is supported in a community of believers. How many times have you heard the analogy that faith is like a log in a fire? Individual believers on their own are like a log pulled from the flames, quickly sputtering out alone on the hearth. We do feel more hopeful around others. So hope is fundamentally communal, not something psychological and individual.

However, if "keeping hope alive" is individualized, then all who have difficulty will be blamed for their own difficulties. This happens to people with mental-health struggles.

Again, this is the opposite of what the Christian community should do. If God's birth into the person of Jesus is a beacon

of hope, then the light beam is the human beings who are the followers of Jesus. Those human beings are to fill others with hope when they cannot do it themselves.

Unlike a strictly psychological understanding of hope, a sociological understanding also addresses the circumstances that extend beyond the individual. Some of these circumstances are not made by the individual, so hope for alternatives can't be psychological. They might instead require political action or social change. The existential crises of our time—climate despair or economic fears—will only be remedied by collective action.

Ghassan Hage, an anthropologist of Lebanese descent living in Australia during a time of rampant xenophobia, called society a hope-distributing mechanism. The problem is that it distributes hope more to some and less to others, because the evidence—a life free from discrimination—is unequally distributed. This is another way of looking at privilege. It enables some of us to be more optimistic.

In contrast, the Christian church should have a preferential option for those who are situated with less hope, and therefore it provides more hope to those people. Merry Christmas! ❧



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

## Et cetera

### A month of civil service to be required in France

Beginning in 2021, all young people in France will need to do a month of civil service (Service National Universel). French Mennonites are wondering about the implications of this new program, and are concerned that it could undermine what they teach their children and that it will encourage young people to join the army.

Source: *Christ Seul*, the magazine of Mennonites in France (July 2019)



## IN THE IMAGE

## ‘Tell God I say yes’

Ed Olfert

They come through the church door into the foyer. My limited vision can make out only their forms, but I recognize them, desperate folks who stop by on occasion to check out the food supplies available that day.

“Felix” and “Norma” (pseudonyms) accept my invitation to sit in my office. Felix, as usual, squats nearest the food box, and soon starts pointing out items that catch his eye, that would meet his needs.

His somewhat aggressive manner instills the question in me, “Who would I be in his shoes?”

Norma, meanwhile, has a need to talk. I know there are hardships in their lives. The two youngest of their four boys have been apprehended by Social Services. She hopes to have them returned by Christmas. She is a mother with a passionate love for her children. The oldest is being raised by her father, so she currently has only one at home, about 10 years old. Both Felix and Norma acknowledge their struggle with addictions, with Felix on a methadone program and Norma on a similar plan that she takes in pill form. They talk about how hard that is, and they admit there are occasional slip-ups.

Despite her love for her babies,

Norma doesn’t express blame, or even anger, at the system that has removed her children. Repeatedly, she talks about her effort to live well, to live clean. A year ago, she determined to stop hitting her boys, and that has gone pretty well.

Norma and Felix have both been sober for six years, but recalling the violence that their oldest witnessed from them brings tears of shame. She blushes with pride as she relates that her 10-year-old tells her she is pretty.

Norma proudly tells me that she is again pregnant. She is convinced that it is another son. She and Felix talk about their hope for taking anger-management and parenting classes. My encouragement is as strong as appropriate. She shares the excitement she feels for this new one in her life, her hope that she can parent with love and with strength. Her story includes many painful and angry chapters, but whenever she refers to the new life within her, her eyes brighten with hope. In those moments, I note her beauty.

Later that same day, a small choir gathers at our church to prepare for a Christmas program. A song tells the story of the angel appearing to Mary, inviting her to become part of the holy story, to have a role in offering hope to

the world. The song ends with the words, “Tell God I say yes!”

As the female voices close with those strong words, I am jolted back to Norma’s face. I see her bright and determined eyes. I hear her voice say “Yes!”

I don’t need my spirituality to be given legitimacy by magic. I don’t need Mary to be virginal or pure. What takes me to holy places is the determination, the light in the eyes, the passion.

I also know of the dangers of pregnancy mixed with drug use. I have no quick answers, no naïve need to predict perfect outcomes. The road ahead for Norma and Felix will continue to be fraught with hard realities.

But I sense holiness in the primal need of a mother to be a mother. I am in awe of the determination to nurture, to love, to protect.

I am reminded of the Mary who stands at the foot of the cross in tears. Norma has spent time there as well. She will again. None of these pictures need perfection or a suspension of reality to leave me in awe of the one who said, “Tell God I say yes!” ❧



Ed Olfert (p2ptheo @sasktel.net) receives holy gifts year-round.

## Et cetera

## North American thrift shops contribute to MCC relief efforts

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) thrift shops in Canada and the United States donated nearly \$19.3 million to the work of MCC in the 2018-19 fiscal year.

Source: 2018-19 Annual Report for MCC in Canada





## VIEWPOINT

# Playing with the Bible

Colin Friesen

**B**ack in 2018, I had pitched a relatively novel idea to the theological studies department for a thesis topic I was interested in. Sheepishly, I suggested writing a project that merged two interests that had become vital parts of my personal and professional life. Those happened to be video games and biblical studies.

If the topic of video games in *Canadian Mennonite* confuses you, then I ask you to be patient and allow me to explain.

My research looks at how video games interpret the Bible. Since communicating my topic, I have been pleasantly surprised by the positive reception, especially in the academic circles I frequent. After I received the blessing of the school to move forward, I began research, which involved studying how a Bible passage had been interpreted over time alongside an introduction to literature in game studies.

Over the past decade, I learned how the Bible had been interpreted differently by other people. Now my research has allowed me to survey a diversity of interpreters over thousands of years. Every writer brought their own method and style to the text, offering different ways of reading and interpreting. Everyone drew from the same book, yet the writers moved creatively within that space to emphasize how the text speaks in their reading.

One of the reasons why video games have captured my attention—unlike film or literature, both of which I appreciate—is the range of choices and interactivity video games offer. The ability to enter a fictional space and virtually participate in it engages and liberates the participant. Comparatively, you're not watching the movie; you are very close to being in the film.

Rachel Wagner, in her book



*Theology student Colin Friesen plays Gravity Rush 2 on his PlayStation 4 console.*

*Godwired*, writes about the intersection of religion and virtual reality. She notes that many different religious traditions are deeply interactive. In Christianity, including Mennonite traditions, it is common to celebrate and re-enact various events that Christians revere, such as the Nativity at Christmas or the Passion at Easter, not to mention the ordinances of baptism and communion. Even when rituals are practised infrequently, the interactivity between the participant and the elements is vital. As Wagner writes, “There is a long-standing and deep connection between stories and interactivity in religious life.”

In this way, video games and religion become unlikely companions. Religions and the rituals that give them context are designed to be interacted with by their adherents. Likewise, video games require players to interact with the content and engage with the narrative.

Yet Wagner has discovered another way to bridge the gap between the two fields. In an examination of stories, she provides a definition for “play” that is ideally suited for both video games and religion: “In games, play is the ‘space of possibility’ afforded a player to explore and make choices within the game’s systems. Thus, play determines how much flexibility is inherent within a

given religious system, worldview or system of interpretation.”

It is this kind of flexibility that I am being exposed to through my research. In the same sense that a person “plays” within a game, making their own choices and impacting the narrative, the writers and interpreters of the Bible “play” within the text, exploring the possible avenues of interpretation, leading to different outcomes and conclusions. While a video game and its systems represent the limits of what the player can do, the biblical text offers those same limits, or the “space of possibility.” This opportunity to play as it was intended, in community, offers rich, meaningful ways to engage with each other as we read Scripture and worship together.

Even for those who are not comfortable with “flexibility” in religious structures or interpretation, Wagner offers a sympathetic point. Early Christian writers thought it appropriate to include four versions of the gospel, each offering its own style, theological emphases and themes. This represents a canonical example of “play” within the pages of the New Testament.

Growing up, I thought video games were the farthest thing from my faith tradition, but I could not help but love playing video games. I always felt a tinge of guilt when I engaged in my favourite hobby. It has been refreshing to find common ground between my two passions. I’m excited to see where this takes me professionally and spiritually. ✎

*Colin Friesen is a husband, father and master’s level student at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont. Originally from British Columbia, he is slowly and hesitantly acclimatizing to Ontario winters.*

# Student launches *Macrina Magazine*

*Online journal features 'fresh philosophical engagements with an ancient faith'*

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

Manitoba Correspondent

WINNIPEG

At only 21 years old, Micah Enns-Dyck is the founder and editor-in-chief of a new online Christian philosophical journal.

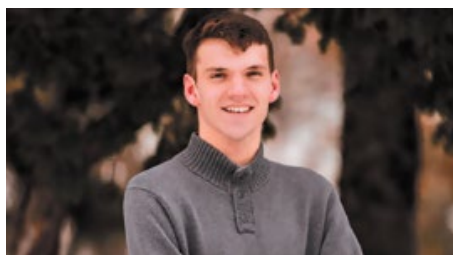


PHOTO BY LYNETTE GIESBRECHT

**Micah Enns-Dyck is the founder and editor-in-chief of *Macrina Magazine*.**

*Macrina Magazine*, which he launched on Oct. 26, features written work covering topics in the realm of philosophy and theology. Among the team of editors working on the project is a doctoral candidate and teacher in Australia, a master's student at the University of Cambridge in England, and a PhD candidate at Princeton (N.J.) University, to list the credentials of just a few. And theologians the likes of John Milbank and Natalie Carnes have endorsed the new digital publication.

Enns-Dyck, who is from Altona, Man., and grew up attending Seeds Church there, is in his fourth year of an undergraduate degree at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), where he is studying philosophy and theology.

The idea for the magazine stemmed from his meme page on Facebook, "Hauerwasian Memes for Pacifist Teens." The meme page, written about in *Canadian Mennonite* earlier this year, has gained more than 9,000 followers since its creation in April 2018.

"Over time, I've been amazed at how much influence the page has had," Enns-Dyck says. "People message me

through the page about how the page helped them learn about different sides of the Christian faith, or how they used to be hard-core evangelicals and they've sort of left that. . . . That was sort of the wake-up call."

He started to realize how many people he could reach, especially in combination with the audiences of his friends' meme pages, which have more than 10,000 followers in some cases. He started thinking about how he could do more with his audience, and use his platform in a more helpful and constructive way.

He brainstormed with his friends, who are administrators of other online meme pages, writers and students, and they came up with the idea of a magazine. He drafted a proposal and sent it to dozens of people he knew would be interested in contributing. "I ended up getting a really positive response, so that sort of propelled it to keep going," he says.

The magazine publishes many kinds of written work, including essays, personal reflections, poetry and short fiction pertaining to theology and philosophy, although he says the topic is flexible. "We understand philosophy not as an academic discipline but as a way of life," he says. "We're just opening things up to the craft of thought and the craft of writing as such."

That's one of the reasons they named the magazine after Saint Macrina the Younger, a fourth-century ascetic. As the sister of two major saints of Eastern theology, Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Macrina was an influential figure in Christian history.

"She is a really interesting figure of piety but also . . . her vision of philosophy was very holistic. She was influential for the monastic movement," he says.

She embraced the concept of philosophy as a practice that encompasses all of life,

including hospitality, prayer, and caring for the sick and poor. "It's this very vibrant vision of what philosophy is that we often lose sight of if we think of it as this narrow practice of the mind, abstracted from the world," he says.

This posture has also been reinforced through Enns-Dyck's education at CMU. "Part of what makes this project possible is my education here, specifically the way in which the intellectual life takes form here at CMU, as this really vibrant, embodied discipline," he says. "Not just in the method of the university, but also in the professors who are influential in sparking this idea for me and thinking about philosophy in this way."

All the editors and designers working on the journal are people, or friends of people, whom Enns-Dyck has met on Facebook through his meme page. It has become a whole community. "There's a group of us that have a group chat. . . . We've been talking every day for like two years now, so we're pretty tight." He has even met some of them in person.

All the contributors working on the project do so for free. The issues alternate between having themes and remaining general, and each issue is released gradually over the course of a month, with several works being posted every week. ❧



**MACRINA MAGAZINE**  
Fresh Philosophical Engagements with an Ancient Faith

Discover more at  
[macrinamagazine.com](http://macrinamagazine.com).



# 'Live, love and laugh'

*Holyrood Mennonite Girl's Club meets monthly because 'God is fun!'*

Story and Photos by Joanne De Jong  
Alberta Correspondent  
EDMONTON

In 2001, Holyrood Mennonite Church sponsored four men who were living in a refugee camp in Ghana with their families due to a 14-year civil war in Liberia. Over time, the number of Liberian families in the church has grown.

At present, almost all the children in the church are West African, including four teenage girls, all from Liberia.

With their parents working shifts, forming a youth group was difficult. How could they get to the church, and all on time? Living in Canada generally means both parents are working, and the girls have a lot of family responsibilities in their mostly patriarchal community.

Since teenagers live in one culture at home and another at school, the question was asked, "How can the girls have a safe place just for them, where they can ask questions and grow in their faith as

empowered women in the church?"

The solution: Girls Club!

Once a month for the last six years, four to five Liberian girls are picked up at their homes and taken to the home of the club leader or the home of a woman in the church. First, they make a meal together. This can include fajitas, fried rice or maybe stuffed peppers. Everyone is given a task like chopping onions or setting the table, and music fills the kitchen.

This is followed by a Bible study, which often features a woman from the Bible. This year's theme verse is Luke 10:27: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbour as yourself."*

The evening ends with an activity. Sometimes it is a field trip, like going to an escape room or visiting a corn maze,

but often it involves learning something from a woman in the church. Ruth Goudreau taught the girls to crochet dish rags. Margot Brunn taught them to decorate Ukrainian Easter eggs. Lori Key taught them to paint on canvases.

In November, the girls learned to make origami birds and an airplane with a cockpit with Sue and Ron Taniguchi. This was trickier than expected, with "double tucks" and "inside-reverse folds." Young women from the Mennonite Voluntary Service Unit in Edmonton hosted the evening. They taught the girls to make a German traditional dish—*spätzle* (egg noodle dumplings)—which they baked with onions and cheese. It was fun to discover that the German young women knew the same "Superman grace" that the Liberian girls had learned at Camp Valaqua, so they sang it together before the



*The Holyrood Mennonite Girls Club goes to a farm and corn maze in October. Pictured from left to right: Venissa Tumbay, Tarnisha Snogba and Helena Chokpelleh.*





*Members of the Holyrood Mennonite Girls Club stop to get their photo taken on their way to a sand sculpture competition this summer. Pictured from left to right: Helena Chokpelleh, Venissa Tumbay and Tarnisha Snogba.*



*Sue Taniguchi, left, helps members of the Holyrood Mennonite Church Girls Club make origami birds and an airplane. Pictured from Taniguchi's left: Helena Chokpelleh, Venissa Tumbay, and Marie Bickensdoerfer, an MVS-Edmonton member.*



*The Holyrood Mennonite Church Girls Club learns to make traditional food (spätzle) from Mennonite Voluntary Service members. Pictured from left to right: Venissa Tumbay, Marie Bickensdoerfer, Malin Huber, Nina Schulze and Tarnisha Snogba.*



*Tarnisha Snogba proudly holds up her talking crow she made at Girls Club.*

meal. The girls asked the volunteers about their lives in Germany, and Ron about his Japanese heritage. African dancing took place in the kitchen. On the way home, one of the girls said, "That was so fun!"

When asked why they thought Girls Club was important, Helena Chokpelleh answered, "It's where we learn that God is fun!"

Tarnisha Snogba said, "Girls Club

matters because it helps us grow closer to God." She also loved learning to ski for the first time at the acreage of church member Carol Lint. "I put on the skis and then fell into a bush," Tarnisha said with a laugh.

Venissa Tumbay, who lost her mother two years ago in a car accident along with two of her mother's friends, said, "I like Girl's Club because we get closer with each other." She also loved making Valentine's

gift baskets at the Taniguchi home.

Tarnisha said the name of this article should be "Live, love and laugh" because that's what this club means to her. ☸

*Joanne De Jong is the main leader and organizer of Holyrood Mennonite Church's Girls Club.*

# Called to care for the Earth

*Inspiration for congregation's climate action comes from diverse voices*

Story and Photos by Janet Bauman  
Kitchener, Ont.

**A** lot of people are talking about it. Not a lot of people are taking action," according to Noa Baergen. So when it comes to the climate crisis, this 16-year-old is determined to act.

This fall, Baergen and her family were in Ottawa for a speed skating competition. They decided to go on to Montreal to join the climate strike on Sept. 27 that featured Greta Thunberg, the Swedish teen climate activist. Baergen was inspired by her speech, saying, "She's 16 like me. If she can do something, I can, too."

It turns out Baergen has a supportive mentor at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, who shares her passion for creation care. Julie Moyer Suderman described how they read a book together on climate change but were disappointed. "It was a lot of talk," said Moyer Suderman. So the pair decided to act. With encouragement from Rene Baergen, pastor and father of Noa, they invited people at church to join them. Twenty people signed up, and First's



**Noa Baergen, right, and Julie Moyer Suderman, a youth-mentor pair at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., have decided to take action by starting a congregational Climate Action Working Group.**

Climate Action Working Group was formed. The youth-mentor pair leads the group.

At their first meeting, members brainstormed actions that individuals, households and the church could take to

care for creation and mitigate climate change. There are "really encouraging ideas we could make real," Baergen said.

At the second meeting, they began to "move from brainstorming to put wheels on," said Moyer Suderman. People have different passions around climate action, including food production, transportation, political advocacy, energy use and waste reduction. At their next meeting they will divide into interest-based groups to actually get things done.

Baergen is blunt about her motivation for action. "I love the Earth," she said. "I don't want us to ruin it." She praised Thunberg for challenging politicians. "Someone needs to do that. . . . A lot of people my age who care about this are disappointed," she said, referring to the pace of change on climate action.

"We are called to take care of the Earth," Moyer Suderman added, "and to give hope in the midst of all this."

Glen Woolner, who joined First's



**Edwin Sittler, an Old Order Mennonite, watches as a machine he designed turns a windrow of compost.**



Climate Action Working Group, looks to an Old Order Mennonite friend, Edwin Sittler, for inspiration on creation care. Woolner took a group from the church to visit Sittler Compost Equipment on a nearby farm. Sittler, whose formal education ended at Grade 7, is a self-taught student of the soil, inventor and entrepreneur, who designed large-scale composting equipment that is sold globally.

Around a table in the farmhouse, Sittler, who is almost 80, told the group the story of how he became motivated to “farm without chemicals.”

After attending an ecological farmer’s meeting, he said he got “excited by the biology, . . . bought a pile of books and read almost non-stop for a while.” He experimented with compost recipes and attended conferences on soil management, concluding that sustaining healthy soil means protecting its biodiversity.

He is amazed at the intricate workings of the “biological system God made to nourish the soil,” and he said that people need to “work in harmony with it.” After looking at nematodes under a microscope, he said he was in awe. There is so much going on in the soil, he says. “I want to know who’s there and who’s doing what.”

Sittler’s recipe for compost is simple: straw, manure and green matter, with room for variations, like wood chips or leaves. He also uses minerals to help activate the soil’s microbes.

Turning a large pile of compost is labour-intensive, so Sittler began tinkering with a machine to do the job. Now, in local shops, workers build several sizes of composters to be pulled behind a tractor, that can turn long windrows of composting material frequently.

“Fifteen turns is my rule,” he said. In a matter of six weeks, he has humus—rich, black, healthy food for the soil. He told many stories about crops fertilized with compost outperforming crops grown in the conventional way.

He gave the group a tour of his compost mixing facility, and the shop where parts of the composters are made. Finally, he took the group out to a field to demonstrate his machine at work. In no time at all, the paddles on a spinning cylinder flipped over a windrow of compost.

As the group marvelled at the machine, he was quick to assure them that composting can be done on a smaller scale. “You can do it in an apartment with a five-gallon pail,” he said.



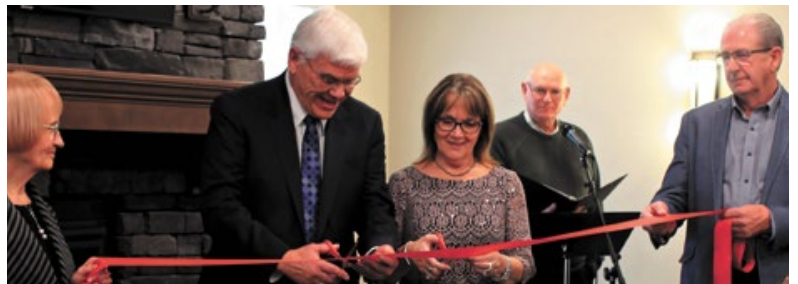
*Edwin Sittler, right, shows Glenn Brubacher, a member of First Mennonite Church's Climate Action Working Group, a handful of quality compost.*

Sittler and Baergen span the age and cultural spectrum of Mennonites, yet both are inspiring climate action at First Mennonite. %

## News brief

### Mennonite Nursing Home Complex opens 20-bed personal care home

ROSTHERN, SASK.—Two hundred guests, staff and board members gathered at Mennonite Nursing Homes on Nov. 17 to celebrate the grand opening of Sunrise Place. The 20-bed personal care home fills the gap in care between the complex’s 24-bed assisted living wing, known as Pineview Manor, and the long-term care provided in the 68-bed nursing home. In addition to its 20 rooms, Sunrise Place boasts common living, dining and recreation areas. The Henry W. Friesen Chapel links the personal care home to the rest of the nursing home complex. During the opening ceremonies, Willy and Harry Friesen spoke of their father’s tireless efforts to create a place where the elderly and disabled could be cared for. “He would be pleased,” said Willy, referring to the existing complex,



*Mennonite Nursing Home Complex board chair Armin Krahn and executive director Joan Lemauviel cut the ribbon to officially open Sunrise Place, while board member Agnes Epp, left, and former board member Eldrid Roth, right, hold the ribbon and board member Ted Janzen, second from right, looks on.*

“though he probably wouldn’t like having the chapel named after him.” Construction began on the \$3.5 million complex in the spring of 2017. While much of the cost of construction has been covered by donations and pledges, along with a \$1 million mortgage from Abundance Canada, there is still a \$50,000 shortfall that board members are hoping to raise in the near future.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ



# Understanding the impact of Agent Orange

*Saskatchewan couple learns about the work of MCC in Vietnam*

By Donna Schulz  
Saskatchewan Correspondent

**D**ecades after American military forces used Agent Orange to further their efforts in the Vietnam War, this deadly chemical continues to impact the lives of Vietnamese people.

Garth and Claire Ewert Fisher travelled to Vietnam in July as part of a learning tour sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) British Columbia. They went, says Claire, “to observe the legacy of the American war in Vietnam.” In particular, they learned about the ongoing impact of Agent Orange and the ways MCC is caring for those impacted.

Garth is pastor of Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, while Claire, a former executive director of MCC Saskatchewan, is interim pastor of Rosthern Mennonite Church. The couple had been to Vietnam before. In 2009, they spent a month in the Southeast Asian country, visiting family and travelling.

But Claire also lived in Vietnam with her first husband, Wally Ewert, from 1973 to 1975. Together, they served under MCC in the areas of hospital support, agriculture and community development.

“During the war, three million Vietnamese were killed. Two million of them were civilians,” says Claire. “Today, three million are living with the after-effects of Agent Orange.”

American armed forces used Agent Orange to destroy crops that might feed the enemy and to strip leaves from trees that might hide enemy troop movements.

Trees started losing leaves within two hours of being sprayed, and people experienced burning skin. Long-term effects include skin diseases and cancers. At least 13 diseases are known to result from exposure to Agent Orange, including Parkinson’s disease, liver dysfunction, and mental and cognitive delays.



*Garth Ewert Fisher sits with a Vietnamese man during a home visit.*

Dioxin, a byproduct of Agent Orange, is known to cause genetic mutations, not only in those directly exposed to it, but in their offspring. Many Vietnamese parents are not able to bring pregnancies to full term, while others bear infants whose bodies are not formed properly, says Claire. Today, “the third and fourth generations of babies are born with problems,” she says.

Garth points out that, although trees have regrown, the chemical is still in the soil and in the country’s water system. And, as dioxin is extremely stable, it can continue to be present in the soil and water for many years.

Also, “dioxin gets into the fatty tissue of fish,” says Garth. When people eat the fish, they become contaminated. “Early on, people wouldn’t have been aware [of the dangers],” says Claire. “They were raising and eating fish.”

MCC works to improve the lives of those impacted by Agent Orange through physical and occupational therapies. The Ewert Fishers visited two rehabilitation centres and a few private homes to see how these therapies are making a difference in people’s lives.

Parents who bring their children to a



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GARTH AND CLAIRE EWERT FISHER

*This image, from the War Relics Museum in Ho Chi Minh City, shows the devastating effects of Agent Orange on the Vietnamese countryside.*



**Children who are impacted by Agent Orange receive physical and occupational therapy at a rehabilitation centre supported by MCC.**

rehabilitation centre must name a goal for each child. Some parents simply want their children to be able to say their own name and address. Others want them to develop skills that will enable them to live independently.

“Vietnam is under-capacity in occupational therapy,” says Garth, noting that, until recently, the country “had no facilities for training people in occupational therapy,” so students were sent to India to study. “Now a Dutch organization is trying to work with the government to set up local training,” he says.

Another place the couple visited was the Vietnam Friendship Village. The brainchild of American veteran George Mizo, Vietnam Friendship Village cares for children who are Agent Orange-impacted, training them in basic life skills and eventually jobs.

In addition to providing home and schooling for children, Vietnam Friendship Village hosts 40 Vietnamese veterans each month. While there, they receive a healthy diet of organic food, medical care, and occupational and physical therapy. “Most importantly, they come together and create community,” says Claire.

“[Visiting Friendship Village] was a very profound experience for me personally,” she adds, recalling the joy on one veteran’s face when he learned that she had lived in Pleiku, where he was from.

Although she once lived in Vietnam,

Claire says the places they visited on this trip didn’t bring back a lot of memories, as “the country has changed tremendously.” Garth adds that Vietnam has a very young population. The majority of its 98 million people were born after the war.

Agent Orange continues to make its presence felt, but the people of Vietnam do not dwell in the past. “The Vietnamese people are tremendously warm and engaging,” says Garth. “They don’t want to be portrayed as victims. I am amazed at their resilience.” ❧



**Garth and Claire Ewert Fisher travelled with MCC British Columbia executive director Wayne Bremner to Vietnam, where they were met with MCC Vietnam staff and volunteers. Pictured, from left to right: Nikolai Mazharengo, MCC Vietnam co-director; Beth Kvernen, MCC volunteer; Eva Mazharengo, MCC Vietnam co-director; Ba Vinh, Vietnamese reference group; Co Mai, MCC Vietnam staff; Wayne Bremner; Ba Bai, Vietnamese reference group; Claire Ewert Fisher; Josh Kvernen, MCC volunteer; and Garth Ewert Fisher.**

## News brief

### MCC Ontario workshop empowers bystanders to act



**Alicia Cappadocio, left, and Jean De Diu Basabose serve as volunteer leaders during a three-hour Training Active Bystander workshop offered on Nov. 18 as part of MCC Ontario’s Restorative Justice Program.**

KITCHENER, ONT.—Many people have witnessed harm done to someone else, but most don’t know how to respond. To overcome this, Training Active Bystanders, a part of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario’s Restorative Justice Program, held a workshop in Kitchener on Nov. 18 to teach people how to safely intervene. Rod Friesen, program coordinator, and two volunteers led a group of 19 people of various ages in a three-hour workshop to empower bystanders to act when they witness problematic behaviour. An active bystander is defined as someone who acts to stop the harm being done, in contrast to passive or complicit bystanders, who might ignore, accept, approve or even join in the harmful activity. There are serious consequences when bystanders remain passive, according to the workshop leaders; it allows harm doers to divide people, and makes it easier for them to harm others again, and passive bystanders shut down their empathy and sense of responsibility for others, and become more passive over time. Left unchecked, this can lead to genocide. But active bystanders have a positive ripple effect on society, according to the leaders, who acknowledged that it is not always easy to be an active bystander, since it calls for moral courage and sometimes even physical courage to intervene.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY JANET BAUMAN



# Niagara Christian Gleaners repurpose food

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

The Niagara Network Hub of Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) recently toured the Niagara Christian Gleaners facility in Smithville. The new non-profit organization aims to divert nearly 3,200 kilograms of produce each day from the local landfill by chopping, dehydrating, packaging and shipping fruits and vegetables to areas where the food is needed. While this concept is not new to Ontario, it is the first such plant in the Niagara Peninsula.

Pete Wierenga, general manager of the Gleaners, led the MEDA group through the plant that opened in September 2018, with production beginning last December. The plant relies on 75 volunteers each day to wash and prepare the fruits and vegetables for chopping/dicing and drying. The plant has two chopping/dicing machines and one commercial dehydrator.

The fruits and vegetables come from local farmers and grocery stores; from as far away as the Holland Marsh in Bradford;

and from wholesalers like Streef Produce, a large farming operation in Princeton.

There is nothing nutritionally wrong with the food, Wierenga said. However, there is a limited market for less-than-perfect produce. Such downgraded and surplus food eventually goes for cattle feed or is discarded into landfills.

The Gleaners' produce acquisition team ensures that a steady supply of fruits and vegetables is donated to the facility. The team has been able to develop a strong food donor relationship, with a trucking company helping with transportation.

A fellowship room is part of the community building, and each day starts off with devotions. Volunteers, including many high school students, come to help regularly; sometimes there are three generations of the same family working side by side. Each volunteer adds more than 200 servings of food to the Gleaners' daily output.

Each box contains 20 packages of dehydrated fruits or vegetables, which are available at no cost to aid organizations that distribute them to areas where food security is a challenge. Niagara Christian Gleaners partners with organizations in the countries receiving these shipments of dried food, including Hope and Healing

International in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), whose shipment totalled nearly 650,000 servings. In Pignon, Haiti, the shipment is part of a school nutrition program that feeds more than 1,000 children a day.

Supported by 60 local churches, it took about a year to raise the money to build the plant. Services and materials were donated by local contractors. Wierenga said the Gleaners' project speaks to anyone who wants to help others, regardless of religious affiliation.

In early July, a number of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario staff visited the Smithville facility and met with its board about possibly working together to send shipments of food boxes to Indigenous communities in northern Ontario, where the high price of food, triple the price of food in the Niagara Region, limits how much people can afford to buy.

MEDA tour participants viewed the first shipment of dried food that was being sent to Timmins as part of this new MCC-Gleaners partnership.

The first shipment, consisting of 80 boxes of dried vegetables and 40 boxes of dried fruits, was sent to the Timmins Food Bank recently. From there, boxes are



PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

Fruit comes out of the Niagara Christian Gleaners' food chopper.



Chopped fruit sits on trays ready for the dehydrator.



Boxes in the warehouse are ready for shipping.





PHOTO BY PETER DAVIS

*Dehydrated fruit packages sit on the shelves of the South Porcupine (Ont.) Food Bank.*

being sent to food banks in South Porcupine, Cochrane, Hearst, Kapuskasing and Kirkland Lake.

According to Lyndsay Mollins Koene, MCC Ontario's Indigenous Neighbours Program coordinator in Timmins, these food banks are strong regional partners with MCC, and share large donations such as this to ensure northern Ontario's First Nations residents have access to healthy and nutritious food. ❧

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# 'Seeking a common witness'

*Mennonite and Reformed reconciliation in a global perspective*

By J. Nelson Kraybill  
Mennonite World Conference  
ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

**R**eformed and Anabaptist are branches from the same tree," said Hanspeter Jecker, a Mennonite theologian from Switzerland. "Anabaptist convictions that once were controversial—such as the voluntary nature of church membership and rejection of capital punishment—are now accepted by many Christian groups. Centuries of opposition have turned to reconciliation."

Five centuries after Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli suggested Anabaptists be "cast to the ravens," Anabaptists from Mennonite World Conference (MWC) are joining spiritual descendants of Zwingli from the World Communion of Reformed

Churches (WCRC) for a series of formal conversations culminating in 2025. They will review what divided the two groups in the 16th century and identify ways the churches can reconcile and collaborate today.

The Reformed movement includes Presbyterian, Congregational and other denominations that trace their lineage to 16th-century Zurich. WCRC leaders meeting in Switzerland earlier this year hosted an MWC delegation during their annual gathering. Jecker and MWC Faith and Life Commission members John D. Roth of the United States and Tom Yoder Neufeld of Canada joined general secretary César García and president J. Nelson Kraybill in their meeting with WCRC representatives.

"With this dialogue, a 500-year-old Bible study, in which both of our communions once found their beginnings, is being reconvened," said Yoder Neufeld. (A Bible study conducted by Zwingli inspired Felix Manz, Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock and others to part ways with Zwingli and found the Anabaptist movement.)

Participants from WCRC and MWC are beginning several years of periodic conversations under the rubric of "Seeking a common witness: Restoring our family to wholeness."

Tension between Zwingli and his radical disciples brought

persecution and martyrdom to Anabaptists. Reflecting on this painful history, Roth confessed that Mennonites became comfortable with thinking of themselves as victims. But that does not fit well with the subsequent and current reality, he said.

Mennonites and Reformed Christians have had meaningful interaction for years, but they have not formally reviewed the shared history or named common ground for the future globally. "Mennonites must not remain anchored in the past," Roth said. "We are truly sisters and brothers with Reformed people."

Chris Ferguson, the WCRC's general secretary, said his people have a "tragic and broken past" with Mennonites. "It is time for right remembering and reconciliation. Both groups started in a united movement that broke into disagreement."

The Reformed communion "is badly in need of the peace message of the Mennonite church," he said.

In Zurich, Reformed and Mennonite participants walked together to sites related to the shared beginnings of the two churches. At the place on the Limmat River where Felix Manz and other Anabaptists were drowned, Swiss Reformed Pastor Peter Detwiller recounted that a 1952 attempt to put up a memorial plaque at the site for the Anabaptists was denied permission, but in 2004 city officials granted permission. Anabaptist groups from around the world now visit the martyrdom site.

In a closing statement, WCRC participants said, "We recognize how theology and spirituality can be abused to foster hostility and violence. We commit to the dismantling of such theologies and spiritualities, and to the advancement of theologies that seek the dignity and respect of all life. It is from this stance that we take up a dialogue with Mennonite World Conference." ❧



PHOTO BY J. NELSON KRAYBILL

**John D. Roth, left, Reformed Pastor Peter Detwiller, César García and Tom Yoder Neufeld visit Reformed and Anabaptist sites in Zurich earlier this year.**



# Growing forgiveness

*Swiss Mennonites and government officials plant a tree to acknowledge forgiveness sought and forgiveness given for past wrongs*

By Tim Huber  
*Mennonite World Review*

It took about 490 years for government officials in Bern, Switzerland, to ask for forgiveness for persecution of Anabaptists in the region. It took less than two to get a response from Swiss Mennonites.

Delegates from every congregation in the Swiss Mennonite Conference (SMC) gathered to offer forgiveness to the government of the canton of Bern in a ceremony at Église évangélique mennonite Tavannes earlier this year.

The celebration of reconciliation between Mennonites and government officials concerned persecution of Anabaptists in the region—including 40 executions recorded in *Martyrs Mirror*—that took place between the 16th and 18th centuries.

Christoph Neuhaus, Bern canton state councillor and director of church affairs, surprised Mennonites nearly two years ago when he offered an apology and asked for forgiveness at an event in Bern's city hall organized by Bern Mennonite Church and the local Reformed Church parish.

"I apologize tonight for all that has been done to the Anabaptists in our canton," said Neuhaus, who, at the time, represented the state side of the Reformed Church's close relationship to the canton government. "No one can undo what was once done. But we can see what has been. Record it instead of casting it out."

SMC general secretary Jürg Bräker said the action followed the mayor of Zurich identifying past persecutions as wrong in 2004 and asking for forgiveness. "We were delighted with the request for forgiveness," Bräker said.

Unprepared for the request, SMC discussed internally how to respond to a matter that predominantly affected people centuries earlier.

"We are aware that we cannot really speak for those who suffered under

persecution," Bräker said. "But we know they followed Christ, and we can trust that they would have answered, 'Yes, we forgive.'"

While the Mennonites' desire to develop a joint declaration with the canton was not possible, SMC did develop its own statement: "Swiss Mennonites express hope that these steps to reconciliation might free up cooperative energies for peace and justice, which will bring benefit to our land and beyond its borders."

The statement draws parallels between past persecution of Anabaptist nonconformists and marginalized groups on the fringes of today's society. It calls on the state to respect and protect space where faith communities function peacefully.

Looking inwardly, the SMC declaration confesses guilt and pledges to critically assess the consequences of Mennonites' "nonconformist posture."

"We confess that our search for forms of life and community that are oriented to Jesus' life has, at times, led to a smug knowing-better and unjustified claims to moral superiority," it states. "The striving for a life consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ has not always sought for peaceable relations with everyone living in the land."

Bräker said the stories of past persecution have been retold so much that they have become part of Mennonite identity and they influence relations with the state.



PHOTO BY RAPHAËL BURKHALTER

**Christoph Neuhaus, left, Bern canton's state councillor and director of church affairs, and Lukas Amstutz, the Swiss Mennonite Conference co-president, plant a linden tree as a symbol of reconciliation earlier this year at Église évangélique mennonite Tavannes.**

While the act of forgiveness is an opportunity to remind the government such oppression should never happen again, it also requires a commitment by the Mennonite community to reflect on how "dissident movements" contribute to—or impair—peaceful coexistence.

In addition to representatives signing the declaration, and speeches from SMC officials and canton dignitaries such as Neuhaus, both parties picked up shovels to plant a tree together.

"The emphasis of the celebration was to look into the future and what we both can contribute to living together that is oriented toward just peace," he said. "A tree has to grow. . . ."

"We planted it together, emphasizing that we both toil the same soil—a common society—but with different instruments." ❧

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# Fun and fundraising at goods and services auction

By Walter Paetkau

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
LANGLEY, B.C.

Raising funds for missionary or international purposes has been a tradition among local congregations for decades. That tradition has carried on at Langley Mennonite Fellowship, a congregation of some 100 participants, most recently on Nov. 16.

It was an enjoyable family event, with food and drink at the tables while participants checked out the items and responded to the auctioneer's friendly banter. The first part of the auction was for children, who bid eagerly for their desired items with play money and engaged in the raffles from a host of toys and books to choose from.

Adults chose from items such as a night out for dinner, an evening Scrabble event, handcrafted items, homegrown fruit, an evening on a boat, tea in a garden, baking, books, games and more.

The auction raised \$6,983 to be allocated to four projects: one international and three local.

This year, the international project chosen was the training of Vietnamese pastors in Vietnam through Mennonite Church Canada's International Witness. The North American Mennonite Fellowship has planted churches there since the early 1990s and continues to do so.

Nhien Pam, pastor of Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Vancouver and president of the North American Vietnamese Evangelical Fellowship, is directly involved with the Vietnamese ministry. Supporting the Vietnamese ministry is also a recognition of the 40th anniversary of the coming of Vietnamese refugees to Canada.

The local projects include The Five and Two ministry, Youth for Christ Unlimited, and a Langley Mennonite refugee family.

The Five and Two ministry volunteers provide a meal every third Sunday of the month to homeless people in Langley at the local Vineyard church.

One of the Langley members is on staff with Youth for Christ Unlimited, which aims to remove social, physical, emotional and spiritual barriers for young people and to provide experiences within and outside the inner city.

The church is continuing to support a refugee family that it has sponsored for more than a year, after the family ran into some unexpected financial challenges.

"[This] is an event that brings many things to our church," says Pastor Ian Funk. "It raises money, it's fun, it accents [our] mission/outreach, it celebrates our community, it highlights the gifts of many individuals, it encourages creativity and further social interaction, [as] many of the auction items are invitations to other social events in one another's homes." ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF GARRY JANZEN

*Ministries in Vietnam benefited from the November goods and services auction at Langley (B.C.) Mennonite Fellowship. One of those ministries includes a new church plant in the neighbourhood of a music store owner in Saigon, second from left, who is returning to the Mennonite church after the lifting of persecution. The lifting of the persecution is mostly due to Nhien Pham, second from right, who built connections with the local authorities and helped them to change their attitude towards the Mennonite church. At left is MC. B.C. executive minister Garry Janzen, and at right is Pastor Hong, president of Evangelical Mennonite Church Vietnam.*

# 'He lived his faith'

*AMBS professor emeritus Willard M. Swartley remembered for prolific scholarship, faith and humility*

By Annette Brill Bergstresser  
Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary  
ELKHART, IND.

The Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) community is grieving the sudden loss of a beloved colleague, teacher, mentor and friend. Willard M. Swartley, professor emeritus of New Testament, died of natural causes at age 83 on Nov. 6, 2019, in Goshen, Ind. He had lived with a heart condition for many years.

Swartley, who retired from AMBS in 2004 but continued to be a regular presence on campus, will be remembered for the ways in which he lived out his deeply rooted faith in Jesus, both within and beyond his academic work. Those who knew him speak of his gentle and humble spirit, his pastoral presence and his consistently encouraging nature, in addition to his intellectual curiosity and numerous contributions to biblical and peace scholarship.

"Willard was an exceptional and widely respected biblical scholar and a committed teacher," says Beverly Lapp, acting president and academic dean. "He lived his faith, looking after those who were struggling in life, and he believed in the work of Christ and the church to increase God's kingdom here and now. He loved AMBS so very much."

From 1978 to 2004, Swartley was a professor of New Testament at AMBS. During his tenure, he also served as academic dean (1979 to 1981; 1995 to 2000), acting president for half a year (1996), and director of AMBS's Summer School (1990 to 1993; 1995 to 2000).

He was actively involved in fostering scholarship for the church, serving as director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies (IMS), AMBS's research agency, for more than a decade (1979 to 1988; acting, 1997 to 1999). At IMS, he was also editor of the Occasional Papers series (1981 to 1988); and co-editor with Ben

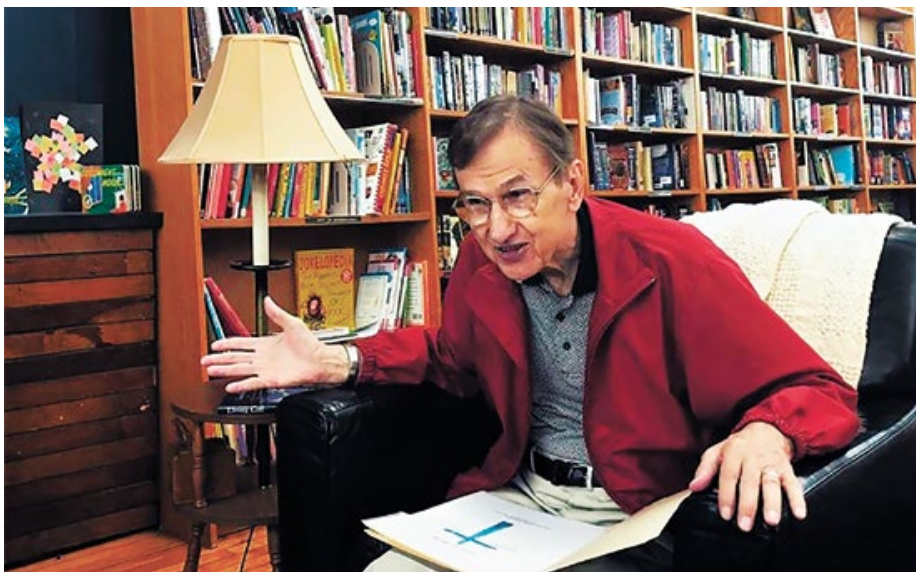


PHOTO BY BEKAH YORK

**Willard Swartley discusses his newest book, *Jesus, Deliver Us*, on Sept. 7, during a book-signing event at Fables Bookshop in Goshen, Ind.**

C. Ollenburger, retired professor of biblical theology, of the Studies in Peace and Scripture series (1990 to 2006). His final book, *Jesus, Deliver Us*, published earlier this year, is the 16th volume in the latter series.

Swartley earned a doctorate in New Testament Studies from Princeton (N.J.) Theological Seminary in 1973; a bachelor of divinity degree from Goshen (Ind.) Biblical Seminary (now AMBS) in 1962; and a BA from Eastern Mennonite College (now University) in Harrisonburg, Va., in 1959.

Swartley was also the New Testament editor for the Believers Church Bible Commentary series (Herald Press), and editor of 20 other books, including *Politics of Discipleship and Discipleship in Politics: Jürgen Moltmann Lectures in Dialogue with Mennonite Scholars* (Cascade, 2006); *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament* (Westminster/John

Knox, 1992); and *Perspectives on Feminist Hermeneutics* (IMS, 1987), with co-editor Gayle Gerber Koontz, professor emerita of theology and ethics.

Prior to coming to AMBS, Swartley was professor of New Testament at Eastern Mennonite College (now University) (1971 to 1978), where he also served as dean (1976 to 1978). He also taught at Conrad Grebel College (now University College) in Waterloo, Ont., and Goshen College.

Willard M. Swartley was born on Aug. 6, 1936, in Doylestown, Pa., to William Henry Swartley and Ida Myers Swartley, the youngest of their eight children. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Mary, of Goshen; their two children and six grandchildren. ❧

For more photos, visit [canadianmennonite.org/swartley-obit](http://canadianmennonite.org/swartley-obit).





## GATHERING AROUND THE TABLE

# Christmas Eve tradition brings comfort and joy

By Leona Dueck Penner  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Celebration is necessary for survival. It renews the spirit and recreates hope. It nourishes and strengthens both giver and receiver, and it helps to lighten the crosses in our daily lives. That's what our friends at the Christian Council of Mozambique taught us over and over again in the 1980s, when Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) provided food relief during a time of devastating civil war in their country.

At our farewell, they served us a lavish feast prepared by staff who spent hours searching for chicken from a market across town, vegetables from someone's struggling garden, and rice and Coca-Cola from the foreign currency shop. Then, when the feast was ready, our plates were piled high and we were urged to eat until our stomachs were fit to burst. Meanwhile, we knew that some people at our table would be hungry the next day. That was one of the most painful, precious and joyful times of our lives.

These days, in the midst of political upheaval and growing concerns for the future due to climate change, we, too, cannot give in to anxiety and despair. We must continue to celebrate the birth of new possibilities with expressions of hope, love and joy, around food, song and cheer, as our Mozambican friends exemplified. Jesus also celebrated around food.

In 1973, I first made tourtière, a French-Canadian meat pie, at the beginning of our second MCC Teachers Abroad Program assignment in Zambia. As the holiday

season approached, we were feeling homesick, so we decided to make a Canadian meal, hoping this "taste of home" might also help our two preschool sons develop a bit of Canadian identity.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEONA DUECK PENNER

**Rob Penner and Rielle Goulet eagerly await the Penner family Christmas Eve tradition of tourtière in 2011.**

This pie recipe, discovered in an old Purity Flour cookbook, soon became the centrepiece of our family's Christmas Eve celebrations. Served with sides of Manitoba wild rice pilaf and french fries, along with a rich array of multicultural delights, such as African kale and *kapenta* (fish) relish, Vietnamese spring rolls and English mincemeat tarts, contributed by guests who were also missing home, the meal reflects something of the cultural mosaic that is part of the Canadian dream.

Over time, this pie has undergone many transformations. It has become healthier and more earth-friendly, with less meat and more vegetables in the filling, and gluten-free options were suggested by family

and friends, including a daughter-in-law with French-Canadian roots who grew up with this tradition.

One thing remains the same. Each time we've shared this dish with friends in Canada and abroad, our lives have been enriched by their responses. For example, on Christmas Eve at home in Winnipeg in 1977, Alphonse, a shy, young Chipewyan friend who stayed with us while his mother was in hospital nearby, picked up Peter's guitar after supper and softly sang the carols he had learned as a child.

Then he enchanted our wide-eyed young sons with stories of Christmas on the trapline: a menu that included bannock, perfectly preserved frozen cranberries from beneath the snow, and whatever meat was available, such as pickerel, ptarmigan, caribou and rabbit, roasted on a spit. And the gifts always included mitts and moccasins, made of soft deerhide, beautifully beaded by his mother.

By the time his tales were done, all of us, like the "children of the forest free" in the "Huron Carol," were paying homage to "the Holy Child of earth and heaven," who brings us comfort and joy each Christmas as we celebrate the birthday of hope and new possibilities for peace on earth, good will to all. "*In excelsis Gloria.*" ❧

For the recipe, visit [canadianmennonite.org/tourtiere](http://canadianmennonite.org/tourtiere).





### /// Staff change

#### MC Manitoba executive minister tenders his resignation



**Ken Warkentin** announced his resignation after almost 10 years of service with Mennonite Church Manitoba, at the Nov. 18 meeting of the regional church board. He expects to serve as executive minister until June 2020. "These have been years of tremendous personal growth and learning, years of joyful collaboration with board, staff and constituency, and years of wonder as I watched what God has done and might be doing in the church and Manitoba and beyond," he wrote in his letter of resignation. "Ken has provided excellent, sensitive leadership to MC Manitoba in a period of significant transition," says board chair Gerald Gerbrandt. "His many years of pastoral experience gave him a love for the congregation, which shaped the way he performed his role. We will miss him very much." Warkentin came to MC Manitoba on Jan. 1, 2011, after 29 years of pastoral ministry in three Mennonite Church congregations and one non-denominational congregation. Warkentin's passions for the Mennonite community and peoplehood were sharpened in this time. "When I began at MC Manitoba, two large agenda items lay before us: the reorganization of our camping ministry, and the beginning of the conversation on LGBTQ+ inclusion," he said. "I didn't anticipate the depth to which the reorganization of Mennonite Church Canada, our nationwide church, would become part of my work. A focus on congregational health became a passion for me, as we worked through these significant changes."

—MENNONITE CHURCH MANITOBA

### /// Briefly noted

#### Steve Heinrichs the new vice-chair of CPT steering committee



**Steve Heinrichs**, Mennonite Church Canada's director of Indigenous-Settler Relations, is the new vice-chair of the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) Steering Committee. He had been on the committee for about a year prior to starting the new role in October. It is a two-year position, the first year in the role of vice-chair and the second in the role of chair. Heinrichs says his job, generally speaking, is to make sure the committee holds to CPT's values and goals. The committee is responsible for holding the organization accountable to its mission, vision and values; connecting with constituents; working on funding and budget; and appointing the executive director, among other tasks. He first got involved with CPT in the early 2000s while working in Palestine. It is how he got into working with Indigenous-settler relations. "It was being over there in Palestine and learning about the ongoing settler-colonial realities and the occupied territories that, all of a sudden, a light went on in my heart and [I thought], 'Oh my goodness, these same kind of dynamics are at play in Canada, and I haven't had eyes to see them.'"

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

### /// Staff change

#### MWC development officer stepping down



**Arli Klassen**, chief development officer of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), is stepping down from her fundraising and strategy casting position at the end of January 2020. She came to the role in December 2012 after serving as binational executive director of Mennonite Central Committee. "It has been a joy to serve the global Anabaptist family in this role," says Klassen. "However, in order to invest more time in my regional church [Mennonite Church Eastern Canada] and other board work, I am releasing this role." "We appreciate Arli's tremendous hard work as chief development officer," says César García, MWC's general secretary. "Her capacity to relate well in intercultural settings served MWC well in developing and maintaining sustainable funding. MWC staff and church leaders she worked with are grateful for her calm and compassionate leadership." Klassen will continue to serve MWC part-time as coordinator of regional representatives, a role she took on in 2015.

—MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

# Big steps

*Student makes a planet-friendly move to Grebel*

By Katrina Steckle  
Conrad Grebel University College  
WATERLOO, ONT.

**A**ndre Wiederkehr moved into the Conrad Grebel University College residence at the University of Waterloo in September in a unique way. He biked.

The second-year science student and his brother biked the 90 kilometres from their home near Mildmay, Ont., to Grebel in Waterloo, a trip that took them nearly eight hours. As for how he transported

everything that he would need to live at Grebel, Wiederkehr says simply: "I towed my belongings in a homemade bike trailer."

He originally built the trailer for camping and hauling purposes, and says the idea of using the trailer to move back to Grebel occurred to him after he started building it. He says he was able to carry out this decision because of his consciously

chosen lifestyle: "I have a good bike, an appropriate trailer and a body adapted to biking long distances." He has been using his bike for an increasingly large part of his transportation over the last few years.

His care for creation has inspired his choice to travel largely by bicycle. "My faith in the generosity and love of God the Creator informs a lot of what I am trying

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PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDRE WIEDERKEHR

**Andre Wiederkehr moved into the Conrad Grebel University College residence at the University of Waterloo in September in a unique way. He biked with his belongings in tow from his home near Mildmay, Ont., a 90-kilometre trek.**

to do with my life,” he says. “Travelling by bike in an attempt to avoid damage to creation is one of those things. Using my body and mind in this way is an act of gratitude and respect for the gift of the created world and an attempt to show loving care for my neighbours both in space, as they suffer from fossil-fuel-driven wars, and time, as future generations will inherit a polluted world with an altered climate.”

Wiederkehr’s home church, Hanover Mennonite, and the small, unconventional farm that he calls home have also shaped the way he wishes to care for creation.

What surprised him most about the trip to Grebel was how much physical energy it took to tow the weight of his belongings for nearly eight hours. He says, though, that often the most challenging part of long bike trips is setting one’s mind to it: “I think this applies to many changes that we need to make regarding environmental problems: there are many worthwhile things we can do if we will only commit ourselves fully. This wasn’t some kind of isolated, symbolic action, but part of a logical progression in changing my lifestyle holistically.”

Andre sums up his actions: “I don’t think that what I did is particularly special. It’s within the reach of almost everyone. So I would encourage you to look for big steps you can take in your own life. I’ll keep looking for them in mine.” ❧



## ONLINE NOW!

at [canadianmennonite.org](http://canadianmennonite.org)



### Creation care as self-care

Zoe Matties, program manager at A Rocha Manitoba, offers five self-care practices that are also creation care, on the CM blog. [canadianmennonite.org/blog/zm-selfcare](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/zm-selfcare)



### Learning to farm with droughts and deluges

Mennonite Central Committee workers are helping farmers in Nepal adjust to a new environmental reality. [canadianmennonite.org/droughtdeluge](http://canadianmennonite.org/droughtdeluge)



### Theology for a climate emergency

A recent lecture at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg offered actionable theology for the age of climate change. [canadianmennonite.org/climatelecture](http://canadianmennonite.org/climatelecture)



### Watch: MC Eastern Canada church helps Montreal’s homeless

Hochma, a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation, is home to Care Montréal. Every night, the outreach program opens its doors to the city’s homeless. [canadianmennonite.org/video/hochma](http://canadianmennonite.org/video/hochma)

May Christ’s light  
shine in our hearts  
this season and  
throughout the year.  
Merry Christmas!



CANADIAN  
MENNONITE



## Calendar

### British Columbia

**Jan. 18, 2020:** "Great Winter Warm-up" comforter-making event, at Ross Road Community Church, Abbotsford, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; in aid of MCC's international relief efforts.

**Feb. 5-29, 2020:** MCC B.C. winter banquets: (5) at Kelowna Gospel Fellowship; (7) at Sardis Community Church, Chilliwack; (8) at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond; (14) at South Abbotsford MB Church; (15) at North Langley Community Church, Langley; (21) at North Peace MB Church, Fort St. John; (22) at Westwood MB Church, Prince George; (29) at United Mennonite Church, Black Creek. For more information, visit [mccbc.ca/events](http://mccbc.ca/events).

**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

**Jan. 9-April 12, 2020:** MC Saskatchewan and CMU present "Mission in perspective," a master's-level course "exploring our place in missions," at the MC Saskatchewan office in Saskatoon, from 6 to 8:45 p.m. each Thursday. Instructor: Josh Wallace To register, visit [mcsask.ca/registrations/](http://mcsask.ca/registrations/).

### Manitoba

**Jan. 18, 2020:** "Great Winter Warm-up" comforter-making event, at North Kildonan MB Church, Winnipeg, beginning at 9 a.m.; in aid of MCC's international relief efforts.

**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.

**March 29, 2020:** Guitar and handbell ensembles, at CMU's Laudamus Auditorium, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

**March 30, 2020:** Community Concert Band performance, at the CMU Chapel, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

**March 31, 2020:** Open house for prospective students, at CMU, Winnipeg, at 8:30 a.m.

**April 3:** "Spring at CMU," a fundraising event, at CMU, at 7 p.m. Presentation by Mary-Jane McCallum, the 2020 Pax Award winner.

**May 11, 2020:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's bursary banquet, at the Canad Inns Polo Park, Winnipeg. For more information, visit [westgatemennonite.ca](http://westgatemennonite.ca).

### Ontario

**Dec. 15:** Pax Christi Chorale presents "A Baroque celebration" of jubilant choral masterworks by Bach, Vivaldi and Durante, at St. Andrew's Church, Toronto, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit [paxchristichorale.org](http://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](http://mennosingers.com).

**Dec. 20-22:** Listowel Mennonite Church presents "An Advent Journey Marketplace." Tours take place: (20,21) from 7 to 9 p.m.; (22) from 2 to 4 p.m. and from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

**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.

**Jan. 18, 2020:** "The church is for belonging: Stories about inclusion, disability and faith," an event for MC Eastern Canada pastors, chaplains and congregational leaders, at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, from 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information or to register, visit [bit.ly/2XpYNoZ](http://bit.ly/2XpYNoZ).

**Feb. 22, 2020:** Menno Singers present an afternoon hymn sing, at 3 p.m., and an evening hymn service with Matthew Boutda, the 2018 Abner Martin Scholarship winner, at 7 p.m. Both events at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener. For more information, visit [mennosingers.com](http://mennosingers.com).

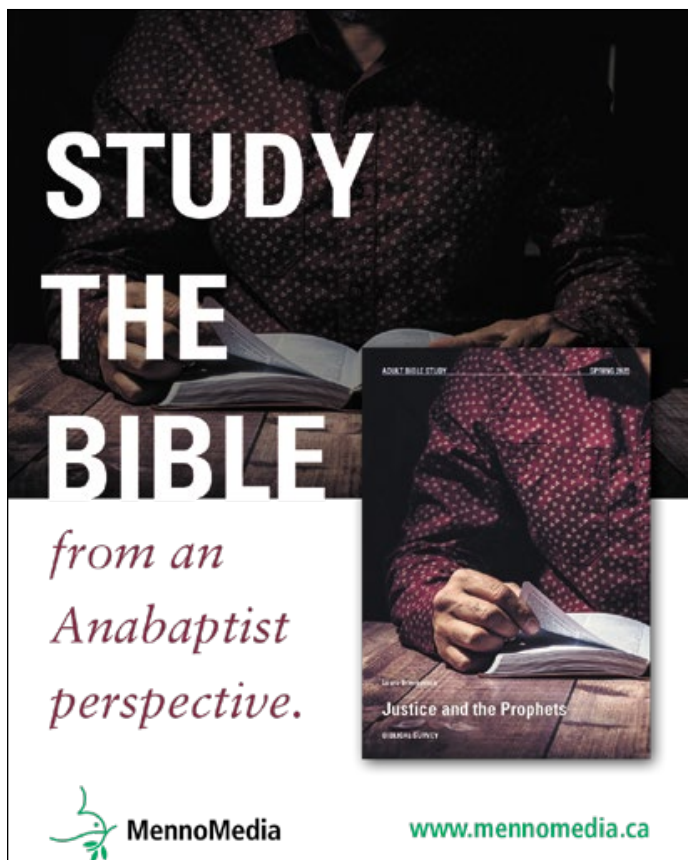
**Feb. 23, 2020:** Menno Singers present an afternoon hymn sing, at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit [mennosingers.com](http://mennosingers.com).

**March 29, 2020:** Menno Singers perform "Creation is a Song: Songs of Water, Wind and Earth," at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit [mennosingers.com](http://mennosingers.com).

**April 26, 2020:** Pax Christi Chorale presents the Toronto premiere of "Considering Matthew Shepard," at the George Westin Recital Hall, Toronto, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit [paxchristichorale.org](http://paxchristichorale.org).

**May 2, 2020:** Menno Singers perform "Operas in the Aria," with soprano Sarah Dufresne, at First United Church, Waterloo, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit [mennosingers.com](http://mennosingers.com).

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



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## Classifieds

### Employment Opportunities



**Charleswood Mennonite Church**

**Pastor (full-time)**  
**Start Date: January 1, 2021**  
 Winnipeg, Manitoba

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

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



**Westwood COMMUNITY CHURCH**

**Employment Opportunity**  
**Lead Pastor**

Westwood Community Church in Winnipeg, MB is seeking a full-time Lead Pastor. The Church was founded in 1979 with a current attendance of approximately 150. Westwood serves all ages, has a blended worship style, is raising up young leaders, and hosts many community events.

The Lead Pastor will be responsible to facilitate the development of WCC's vision and lead the Church toward the vision. The Pastor will do this primarily by setting the spiritual tone, by biblically oriented preaching and teaching, and by equipping the Church toward maturity in Christ. The Pastor should be committed to the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith and to living a lifestyle consistent with that confession.

For more information, please visit our website at:  
**www.westwood.mb.ca**

Interested applicants should submit a resume with references to **wccpastorsearch2019@gmail.com**. We are looking to start processing applications at the beginning of 2020.

**Employment opportunity**

**Executive Minister**

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada invites applications for Executive Minister. The Executive Minister will be a leader who inspires and leads pastors and congregations across the MCEC community of faith. Primary areas of responsibility will include strategic planning, promoting the health and spiritual vibrancy of Anabaptist congregations, and leading a staff team as they make disciples, grow congregations, and form leaders.

The applicant for this full-time position will be a strong team builder and a skilled communicator with excellent listening skills. They will work with the senior staff team to create and realize MCEC's strategic plans.

Applicants will have a demonstrated commitment to Anabaptist theology and a love for Christ and the church. Experience with senior leadership teams and spiritual leadership would be an asset. Experience in intercultural settings and the ability to speak more than one language would be an asset.

The start date is flexible but preferably Summer 2020. Resumés are accepted until January 3, 2020. MCEC also welcomes nominations for this position.

The Search Committee will be holding Focus Groups prior to interviewing candidates to get input from the community.

For more information, the full position description, or to submit an application or nomination, contact:

Arli Klassen, MCEC Moderator  
 Brent Charette, MCEC Operations Minister  
 Email: search@mceec.ca



**Employment opportunity**

**Intercultural Mission Minister**

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada invites applications for Intercultural Mission Minister. The Intercultural Mission Minister will be a leader who inspires and leads pastors and congregations across MCEC to fully embrace the call to be missional church. Primary areas of responsibility will include missional church development, in particular with new Canadian churches and church plants.

The applicant for this full-time position will be a strong team builder and a skilled communicator with excellent listening skills. They will work closely with the Mission Minister leading in the development of MCEC as an intercultural church body. The applicant will encourage integration and interconnectedness within churches by being present to listen, observe and encourage.

Applicants will have a demonstrated commitment to Anabaptist theology and a love for Christ and the church. Experience in pastoral ministry would be an asset. Experience in intercultural settings and the ability to speak more than one language would be an asset.

The start date is flexible but preferably Spring or Summer 2020. Resumés are accepted until January 17, 2020.

For more information, the full position description, or to submit an application, contact:  
 Brent Charette, MCEC Operations Minister  
 Email: bcharette@mceec.ca





# CPT creates Turtle Island Solidarity Network

Christian Peacemaker Teams



CPT FILE PHOTO BY KATHY MOORHEAD THIESSEN

***Indigenous land defenders and allies march at Standing Rock Indian Reservation that straddles the border between North and South Dakota during a protest in 2016.***

In the wake of the closure of the full-time Indigenous People's Solidarity Team earlier this year, due to necessary budget cuts at Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), the new Turtle Island Solidarity Network, comprised of reservists who are engaged in Indigenous solidarity and decolonization, has been created.

Turtle Island is the Indigenous name for North America.

The new network will strive to take part in actions, be available for accompaniment, provide opportunities for education and advocacy, and work in coalition with other groups. By working together across Turtle Island, the network will work to erase the colonial border between Canada and the United States.

This two-year pilot project will enable reservists to network and include the advocacy they are already doing as part of CPT. At the same time, CPT will support them through networking calls and opportunities for advocacy.

The mandate of the new network is to encourage Indigenous solidarity within CPT and its constituency through:

- **Indigenous solidarity:** Actions, events, accompaniment, petitions and advocacy.
- **Settler education:** “Undoing oppressions” workshops, resources on dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery, and presentations to educate CPT’s constituency.
- **Coalition-building:** Support Indigenous rights and the struggles of CPT’s partners.
- **Undoing settler colonialism:** Providing guidance to the CPT body on how it can undo settler colonialism—including the Doctrine of Discovery and ideology of *terra nullius*—within the CPT organization. ☘