

CANADIAN MENNONITE

January 20, 2020 Volume 24 Number 2



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EDITORIAL

Cultivating hope

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER



In the first days of 2020, our newsfeeds were full: confrontations over a pipeline in western Canada, devastating fires in Australia, an earthquake in Puerto Rico, the death of 176 people whose airplane was shot down and speculations of a possible war in the Middle East.

Many of us deal with the constant barrage of news—mostly bad—that threatens to overwhelm our spirits and paralyze our hands. How do we cultivate hope?

Leading up to the Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday, celebrated by many on Jan. 19 this year, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) called for a hope grounded in Jesus. This communion of almost 1.5 million Anabaptists from around the world chose as its theme, “Jesus Christ: Our hope.” The affirmation: “Even in the midst of deep troubles, we come together from around the world to follow Jesus, who gives us hope.” (See more online at bit.ly/2FR2jpk.)

Many North Americans live in a privileged reality, far from these current natural disasters and troubling violence. Yet, as citizens of the world and members of the worldwide body of Christ-followers, we too feel the effects of pain elsewhere and we search for hope.

Hope is an elusive thing—living somewhere between unrealistic optimism and paralyzing despair. We cannot magically drum up hope and yet it is part of our heritage as Christians. Here are some hope-cultivating practices:

Lament and gratitude

One of MWC’s suggested texts was Lamentations 3:21-26, a portion that acknowledges God’s steadfast love in a world gone awry. We need to take time in our corporate worship and in our personal lives to acknowledge the places where injustice and violence are flourishing. At the same time, we affirm with the prophet, *“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness”* (Lamentations 3:22-23). In cultivating hope, we acknowledge God’s good gifts and we will live in a spirit of thankfulness.

In gratitude, we can sing the beloved hymn, “Great is Thy Faithfulness,” watching for God’s hand at work in good-news stories of selflessness, courageous peacemaking and restorative justice. We say “thank you.”

Resting and waiting

“It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord,” affirms Lamentations 3:26. Psalm 62, another passage suggested by MWC, says, *“For God alone my soul waits in silence, my hope is from him.”* This resting and waiting are part of the practise of the Sabbath, an acknowledgement that we humans are ultimately not in control; God is the source of all power. In cultivating hope, we trust that God is acting in the world and that God will empower us for acts of faithfulness.

We can take mini-sabbaticals by stepping away from the computer, the smartphone, the newspaper and TV news. We disconnect, knowing that

God is larger than our human efforts.

Generosity and action

MWC also chose the gospel story of the four friends who carried the paralyzed man to Jesus for healing (Mark 2:1-12). Across Canada and the United States, supporters of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) took part in The Great Winter Warm-up, an effort to stock MCC’s storehouses with 6,500 comforters to be shared with people in vulnerable situations around the world. We offer hope by sharing our gifts with people in places of need.

We can stitch hope into an MCC comforter or volunteer with a charity doing good work in our own neighbourhood.

A final passage MWC suggested is the Apostle Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:15-19: *“I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.”*

New columnist

With this issue, we welcome Joshua Penfold, who will be writing under the theme, Tales from the Unending Story. Joshua has been sharing his explorations into Scripture with his Facebook friends and now he can share similar reflections with a larger audience. We look forward to learning about how his Bible reading intersects with his life as a disciple. Joshua lives with his family near Tavistock, Ont., and attends Tavistock Mennonite Church. You can read his first submission on page 12. ☘



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PHOTO: JILL OLFERT WIENS (ROSTHERN JUNIOR COLLEGE)

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FOCUS ON EDUCATION FEATURE



ROSTHERN JUNIOR COLLEGE PHOTOS BY JILL OLFERT WIENS

Rosthern Junior College teacher Zac Schellenberg uses his cell phone to take a selfie of students taking selfies.

Learning to live with technology

Teachers and students at Mennonite schools grapple with what it means to use technology for peace

By Donna Schulz

Saskatchewan Correspondent

The internet and the myriad technologies that have accompanied its rise to media supremacy have transformed the way people communicate. For better or worse they have also transformed education.

As principal of Rosthern Junior College (RJC), a Mennonite high school in Rosthern, Sask., Ryan Wood has seen the impact of technology in the classroom and in students' lives. "It's important that we help kids learn to live with technology," he says. "It's not going away."

But what does it mean for Mennonite schools to help students learn to live with technology? How do they

teach students to embrace Anabaptist peace theology and become peacemakers within the ever-present reality of the internet?

Today teachers and students can access a wealth of information and learning tools via the internet. It has replaced the library as a source of knowledge in many schools, and many teachers use the internet as a fun and interactive way to engage students in learning.

James Friesen is vice-principal at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate in Winnipeg, where he has seen students excited about learning when teachers use websites such as Kahoot! to create competitive quizzes. He has also

seen technology used as a community-building tool when students study together online.

At the same time, the internet has made teachers' jobs more complicated. Wood says he has seen "an uptick in depression, anxiety, dark thoughts, low self-esteem, irritability and difficulty focusing," and, although technology may not be entirely to blame, he says, "It's hard not to see it as a common factor." He adds, "We're engaged in a social experiment on our youth . . . and the early results aren't positive."

Many students participate in what Wood calls "unhelpful online chatter." The cell phone is used all the time to communicate a whole range of emotions. "It's in hand when they're happy, mad, hurt, or want to lash out or express joy—and it gets used for all of those things," he says.

Paul Peters, director of student life at Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) in Gretna, Man., says, "The never-ending connectedness and never-ending knowledge and information is overwhelming," adding, "That impacts how emotionally stable we might feel at times."

Peters thinks the speed with which information is shared can be problematic for youth. "There's never any time to sit and think in relationships, because [information is] always passed on to the next person pretty quickly."

Danette Adams, a guidance counselor and teacher at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ont., says, "We often see students using personal technology as a shield against the general anxieties of being an adolescent in a world that seems more frantic, ironically, because of the constant stream of information and interaction that technology supplies."

Teaching students how to have a balanced relationship with technology is important. Some schools, like Westgate and MCI, have "phone zones," where students are free to use their devices, and "no-phone zones," where they are not.

Adams says Rockway tries to create spaces and opportunities for students to have meaningful interactions without



The anonymity of the internet can make it easier to engage in bullying behaviour online.

their phones. "We have events where phones aren't needed," she says, "so that students can witness the power of balanced use."

In 2015, Adams's colleague, Sara Wahl, organized an event called Tech Time Out, during which teachers, students and their families committed to living without technology for a given time. Surprisingly, "the biggest resistance [to Tech Time Out] was from parents," says Wahl. "They were not sure how to navigate parenting without technology."

But perhaps this isn't so surprising. Peters says his MCI students would be quick to point out that technology use and the need for balance "is a human issue, not a student issue." Parents, students and teachers are all in danger of relying too much on technology. "We need to engage in ways that say we're all learning," says Peters.

MCI also had a voluntary social media and technology fast last May. Peters says the 11 students and seven faculty members who participated "could experience how countercultural

it was to not be using [technology]."

Teachers aren't the only ones who think a balanced approach to technology use is important. Students themselves see a problem with spending too much time on their phones.

Jackson Kosokowski, a Grade 12 student at RJC, says, "Technology can be very useful, but, if you use it too much, you can get caught up in it. Knowing when to take a break is important."

Talia Landgraft, a Grade 12 Westgate student, says, "Technology can enhance the way we work, study and connect, and should be used in schools." But, she adds, "We need to have time scheduled away from our screen to clear our minds and have our own thoughts."

Wood's daughter, Sarah, a Grade 10 student at RJC, recalls hearing that the average screen time among her classmates and friends was nine hours a day. "I remember how sad it made me when I heard that," she says. She tries to set limits on her own screen time, but concedes, "It's hard."

Taking a break from screen time is a good idea that can be difficult to implement. Erin Sutherland, a Grade 11 student at Westgate, articulates the dilemma many students face: "We use our phones more and more in class and that's why I need to use it while doing homework." But when using her phone for homework, she admits, "I often get distracted and use other apps."

The curse of cyber bullying

Another aspect of constant phone use that challenges teachers and students is cyber bullying. The anonymity of the internet makes it easy to be cruel, because, says Kosokowski, "People don't have a name or a face attached to their online profiles. [This] gives them a false sense of power" that can lead to bullying behaviour.

Adams says that Rockway looks at cyber bullying "through a restorative justice lens."

Similarly, Peters says that, when something hurtful appears online, his school works to "get the people involved in the same room to have a conversation."

While cyber bullying may be new to this generation, the solution has been around for a while. “Love is the answer,” says Wood. “Our mission always has been to love, and technology hasn’t changed that one iota.” He says there is a need to “call [bullying] out, but then be willing to talk to the people involved and show them better ways to communicate.”

Friesen has seen negative behaviours change quickly when identified. “Once you name these things as bullying or improper, people want to get [hurtful posts] down and restore relationships,” he says.

Teachers strive to prevent hurtful online behaviour. “We’ve done a fair amount of teaching about thinking before we post, share or send something to someone,” says Peters. “We encourage people to not act on their first emotion.”

“We’re constantly reminding students to be kind online,” says Wood. Sometimes being kind online means not responding to a text. “It’s a 2019 interpretation of turning the other cheek,” he says. “Someone has to stop the cycle of violence.”

Student relationships ‘not separate from technology’

Friesen says that students view their relationships differently than their teachers or parents do. “Their relationships with each other are not separate from technology,” he says. He has heard students talking about having to stand up to a person online. “Their online and physical realities are more meshed,” he adds.

Because technology is so much a part of students’ lives, Peters feels it’s important to acknowledge and affirm positive online behaviour. Social media, he says, “can be a way to encourage and uplift others and create a safe place for conversation,” adding, “We need to find ways of ironing out the kinks of learning it. If we just demonize it, we’re going to lose.”

Opportunities for face-to-face interaction without the use of the internet are significant when it comes to finding balance. Wahl sees this when

Rockway students participate in Mennonite Central Committee Ontario’s Toronto Ontario Opportunities for Learning and Service program. In the program, students meet and build relationships with homeless people. “Every time [students] come back they are so energized by that experience,” says Wahl. “It’s the triumph of human connection.”

RJC students have similar experiences through the school’s Alternative Learning and Service Opportunities program. Wood enjoys seeing how they use technology to share their experiences through slide shows in chapel or through videos and picture collages on social media.

Peace through technology

Students have no problem identifying ways technology can be used to build peace. Technology enables Sarah Wood to build friendships with RJC’s international students. “Google Translate helps me communicate with students who are just learning English,” she says.

And Landgraff says technology can be used effectively for building peace by “connecting youth and uniting them through common interests and issues.” She cites the Fridays for Future movement, begun by Greta Thunberg, as a movement that “gained traction through people sharing posts on social media.”

One certainty in the world of technology is change. “We’re recognizing that there’s so much flux in the way technology is being used,” says Friesen. “If we think we’ve got a handle on it now, next year it will be different.”

Does this mean that teachers will never get a handle on helping students learn how to live with technology?

Ryan Wood doesn’t think so. “The single, biggest tool against the negativity of technology is love,” he says. “Is it harming my neighbour? Is it harming me?” He believes that every text message can teach lessons on kindness, compassion and respect. “If we can teach kids to love,” he says, “as the church has always done—that’s the answer.” ❧

❧ For discussion

1. How has communication technology changed in your lifetime? What is the most profound change in how people interact and communicate with each other? How is new communication technology beneficial or destructive to interpersonal relationships?
2. Ryan Wood says that students who are constantly communicating with their phones can get caught up in “unhelpful online chatter.” Why is never-ending knowledge and information problematic? Why can it be unhealthy to regularly share unfiltered emotions?
3. If you were a school principal, what rules would you make regarding cell phones? How would you deal with cyber bullying? What technology tips would you add to the curriculum?
4. Do families and individuals also need rules for using technology? How do you regulate your own cell phone use? Is it important to take a “tech time out” at times?
5. What are some ways that the internet can be used to build community? What are some effective ways for congregations to use communication technology?

—By Barb Draper

/// Readers write

✉ High praise from a loyal reader

I look forward to reading *Canadian Mennonite*.

The contributions are usually wide-ranging, with sermon-based feature articles that I find uplifting and confirming. The Opinion section with its “Readers write” letters gives me an idea about what and how Mennonite people think. News from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) brings back memories from the time I was involved with MCC, and I like to read about problems and successes it has at the present time.

The columns by Troy Watson speak especially to me; they are relevant in content to our postmodern time, written honestly with clarity and humility. I also usually find Will Braun’s articles quite challenging.

I wish you wisdom and God’s guidance in putting the next issue together.

HELMUT LEMKE, VANCOUVER

The writer is a member of Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Vancouver.

✉ Freedom of speech a ‘controversial’ issue for readers

Re: “Freedom of speech for Christian media?” Dec. 9, page 9.

Um, really? Kevin Barkowsky thinks we should let leaders keep “controversial” issues secret? You know, like not disclosing abuse or misconduct by Roman Catholic priests, Southern Baptist pastors or Bill Hybels at Willow Creek? (The Roman Catholic sex abuse scandal was first broken by the *National Catholic Reporter*, a church publication, in the mid-1980s.)

Or keeping quiet about financial mismanagement, like what happened in the Canadian Mennonite Brethren conference or the Harvest Bible Chapel in the United States? Or how Mennonites kept quiet about the sexual misconduct of John Howard Yoder?

I could go on and on.

And who gets to define what’s controversial in the first place?

Sorry, but Christians of all denominations should be glad there is a church press keeping watch. Church leaders in the past have shown little or no interest in disclosing these issues.

And they should also be worried about the perilous state of those same church publications. What will happen if they all disappear? Then the Kevin Barkowskys of the world get to decide what

/// Correction

Glenn Brubacher is not a member of Kitchener (Ont.) First Mennonite Church’s Climate Action Working Group. Incorrect information appeared in a photo cutline on page 17 of the Dec. 9 issue. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

average members should know—or not know.

JOHN LONGHURST (FACEBOOK COMMENT)

What a bitter and distorted view of media in general.

“Secular media outlets have a freedom-of-speech right to publish whatever their editor thinks will draw consumers to them.”

I mean the rest of this opinion piece makes sense if you operate on this premise. I won’t be so foolish as to claim that yes—there is business/viewership involved—but the journalists, reporters and editors I know are not willing to prostrate themselves on the altar of views.

All the journalists I know work on trying to be as accurate as they can be, checking and rechecking sources, and ensuring that they are not contributing to misinformation. However, if you simply believe they are looking for hit pieces that subscribe to their own preconceived bias as their basis for every story, then I guess what Barkowsky writes makes sense.

As for Christian media, if you want to find biased media, look no further. Christian media is supported heavily by “Christian” money, which is primarily held by sources of a traditionalist mindset. As someone who has worked extensively in Christian media, I can attest that I have watched stories be actively killed because some donor would not like it.

I was never allowed to have a Canadian Mennonite University biology professor on to talk about Earth Day because they might say something about evolution or climate change.

No thank you. The church needs journalists who expose the dirty truth of leaders, like the prophets of old did.

KYLE RUDGE (FACEBOOK COMMENT)

What an interesting selective reading of that bit of scripture!

We seem to be elevating leaders while skipping neatly over Galatians 2:6: “*And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those leaders contributed nothing to me.*”

MATTHEW FROESE (FACEBOOK COMMENT)

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

This is incredibly disappointing.

At a time when many women, children, people of colour and LGBTQ+ people are struggling to tell their stories of abuse and prejudice, especially by church leaders, we are supposed to stay quiet and let our leaders handle it? We need our media (#truthandlove #powercorrupts).

JON BRANDT (FACEBOOK COMMENT)

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

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Balzerson—Helena Katherine (b. June 27, 2019), to Dan and Anna Balzerson, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.
Bender—Tiffany Marie (b. Nov. 18, 2019), to Christopher and Arlene Bender, Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.
Cressman—Poppy Elizabeth (b. July 6, 2019), to Garth Cressman and Elizabeth Akeroyd, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.
Enns—Oran Isaac (b. Dec. 1, 2019), to Joshua and Laura Enns, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.
Koop—Hugo Tilman Steiner (b. Feb. 13, 2019), to Becca Steiner and P.J. Koop, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.
Lantz—Oscar Orion (b. Nov. 29, 2019), to Eric and Katie (Ropp) Lantz, Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.
Metsa—Blair Isabella (b. Nov. 15, 2019), to Erik and Katrina Metsa, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.
Rempel—Stella Lynn Reesor (b. April 19, 2019), to Jessica and Steve Reesor Rempel, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.
Scott—Thomas Kenneth (b. Nov. 7, 2019), to Matthew and Melanie Scott, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Baptisms

Devon Surgenor, David Kampen Robinson—Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Dec. 8, 2019.

Marriages

Hunsberger/Wright-Gedcke—Eric Hunsberger and Ruth Wright-Gedcke, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont., May 4, 2019.
Martin/Thomson—Christina Martin and Kyle Thomson, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont., May 18, 2019.

Deaths

Ballantyne—Robert Alexander (Bob), 77 (b. April 19, 1942; d. June 21, 2019), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Brandt—Edwin, 98 (b. Aug. 21, 1921; d. Dec. 15, 2019), Faith Baptist Church, Vernon, B.C.; founder and member of Vernon Mennonite Church until its closure.
Brubacher—Aden S., 87 (b. Oct. 10, 1931; d. July 27, 2019), Zion Mennonite, Elmira, Ont.
Eby—Irene (Weber), 97 (b. May 31, 1922; d. Oct. 19, 2019), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.
Enns—Edward, 93 (b. May 13, 1926; d. Nov. 28, 2019), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.
Epp—Nelly (Braul), 92 (b. May 29, 1927; d. Dec. 9, 2019), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.
Klassen—Helen (Heinrichs), 86 (b. Dec. 14, 1932; d. Sept. 18, 2019), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.
Koslowsky—Martin, 79 (b. Aug. 28, 1940; d. Nov. 10, 2019), Springfield Mennonite, Winnipeg.
Loewen—Anne (nee Froese), 89 (b. Oct. 20, 1929; d. Oct. 19, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.
Neufeld—Harvey, 89 (b. Oct. 28, 1930; d. Nov. 20, 2019), Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.
Penner—Anne (Reimer), 91 (b. Nov. 1, 1928; d. Dec. 3, 2019), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.
Peters—Herbert, 90 (b. May 1, 1929; d. Oct. 4, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.
Schwartzentruber—Freda, 80 (b. Nov. 14, 1939; d. Nov. 27, 2019), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.
Shields—John ("Jack"), 90 (b. March 13, 1929; d. Nov. 13, 2019), Hanover Mennonite, Ont.
Thiessen—Ionna, 71 (b. Feb. 28, 1948; d. Oct. 23, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.
Wall—David, 91 (b. Dec. 15, 1927; d. Nov. 2, 2019), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.
Yantzi—Ken, 88 (b. March 12, 1931; d. Dec. 13, 2019), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

No longer predictable

David Martin

The church we inhabit today is a lot different than the one I grew up in. Whether it was an English congregation or a German one, the worship services tended to have a familiar look and feel. “Mennonite” was somewhat predictable.

No longer! The worship debates of the 1970s and ’80s pale in comparison to the variety of worship practices that we see in the church today. On the language front, we have moved from worship in two dominant languages in Mennonite Church Canada to 17 different languages. Our church family has expanded and, with it, our diversity. While new congregations and cultures have added to the rich worship palette, we have also experienced an increased range of worship and theological expression among our historic congregations.

Worship styles vary dramatically. In one congregation, prayer might include everyone in the congregation praying aloud at the same time; in another, worship dances and exuberant emotional expression may be the norm; in some, sermons are barely 15 minutes, while in

others, an hour is the expectation; and four-part harmony is a foreign concept in some of our Mennonite worship services.

Our Mennonite potlucks are changing, too. They now include Hmong spring rolls, Lao beef jerky and Cantonese chow mein, to name a few. As much as I love a nice warm *zwiebach* (rolls) with fresh butter or a tea ball rolled in sugar and dunked in maple syrup, I also love the new additions to the Mennonite table.

And, of course, it’s not just our food and worship that are changing dramatically; so is our theological expression. While we hold similar core theological convictions rooted in our Mennonite/Anabaptist faith heritage, the way we articulate them is becoming more diverse and our theological bandwidth is widening.

While this new level of diversity poses a significant challenge for the church, if we open ourselves to the Spirit and allow her to wisely steward this gift among us, it is also an incredible gift from God. Our biggest risk is to settle for a multicultural church in which we

admire our diversity from a distance, enjoy each other’s ethnic dishes, but, in the end, never build meaningful relationships.

In the New Testament, Paul describes a vision of the church in which there is no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, but one body that is focused on authentic, mutual relationships, and in which each part is playing its unique role and offering its special gifts.

This means more than buying spring rolls at the Lao fundraising event; it means being in a meaningful relationship with my sisters and brothers who look at the world differently than I do and who express their faith in words and rituals that are different from mine.

I believe God is inviting us to build relationships among our diverse churches so that, with integrity, we can learn from each other, genuinely share power in our church organizations and be enriched by our varied expressions of faith.

Just imagine what a truly intercultural church centred in Jesus Christ could offer Canadian society and the incredible feast that awaits us at the rich banquet table that God is preparing to nourish our faith and our souls. ☞



David Martin is MC Eastern Canada's executive minister.

A moment from yesterday



In 1984, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) held its annual meeting in Richmond, British Columbia. Pictured from left to right are board members Hugo Jantz, Leo Driedger, Henry P. Yoder, Bruce Janzen and Florence Driedger. Money is a form of power. With it, a person or organization can fulfill needs and wants. How does God want us to use this power? For decades, Mennonites in North America have pooled some of their wealth for projects such as MCC. Annual gatherings are held to report, seek advice and plan how to use this power.

Text: Conrad Stoesz
Photo: Charmayne Denlinger Brubaker / Mennonite Heritage Archives



IN THE IMAGE

Partying 'behind the wall'

Ed Olfert

Through the frantic Christmas season, I was part of many gatherings connected to churches, families, schools and workplace settings. All were good.

However, none were better, or more significant to the Christmas season, than the banquet sponsored by Parkland Restorative Justice for federal inmates and their volunteer visitors in Prince Albert. There were actually two such gatherings, held at the same time. One was at medium-security Saskatchewan Penitentiary, the other at the minimum-security River Bend Institution.

For more than 30 years, I have been part of these festivities. My current inmate friend is incarcerated at the penitentiary, so I attended the party "behind the wall."

What makes these times unique and important? They offer an evening of spiritual partying with those who are, for the most part, unaccustomed and unfamiliar with the celebration that is brought to them by volunteers. It is a reminder of their worth, their value—as friends and equals. The warmth is visible on faces throughout the gymnasium. The hearty meal is afforded through the generosity of the inmates

themselves.

The 2019 banquet was gratifying for another reason. As I looked around the large gym, I took note of three brothers, two sisters-in-law, a niece and a nephew. Most of them also have decades of involvement with this restorative justice ministry. There was humble pride in pointing out to my inmate friend, "And that's family, and that guy, and that one . . ." The Christmas banquet at the "pen" has become a family affair.

Besides the siblings present that night, a sister has also visited when the penitentiary housed female inmates. My wife Holly has many years of volunteering, as well as more than a decade on staff with the visitation program. Certainly, in reflective moments, that raises the question, Why? What is it about our family culture that makes this ministry a natural extension of how, and to whom, we relate?

Our father George never entered a prison, as far as I know. But he was one who included the outsiders, the unwashed, the lonely. He would have scoffed at the suggestion that this was a spiritual gift he offered and would have insisted, instead, that these were, in fact, the interesting people. If your shoes

were shiny and your suit was pressed, if your speech was peppered with "God words," my pa was intimidated and took his leave.

My mom told a story. Many years earlier, our father had invited a visitor for a meal. Jakob had never been in her house before and, as he ate, Mom took note that he had very few teeth, and that food fell out almost as fast as it was shovelled in. It was a distraction for my mother. "But Pa didn't even notice; he was too busy visiting!"

When we sit with Danny, or David, or Dee, or Russ—the list is endless—we sit also with Jakob. Our friends have been marked as "different." But when you offer and receive relationship, that difference pales. It becomes, instead, about friends who have new stories to tell, friends whom life has treated differently. When the stories are heard and respected, when laughter and affirmation are part of the relationship, when trust is built, then the world is moved to a gentler, safer place.

Over the decades, this has been a ministry that has energized, informed, delighted, challenged and educated me. It has raised new questions, and has pointed me to God. It's fun to do that with family. ✎



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

Et cetera

'Clean water is nothing less than a moral crisis'

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, pictured speaking during the closing session of the Amsterdam International Water Week late last year, said that "clean water is nothing less than a moral crisis and a moral challenge." The Amsterdam International Water Week is a global movement committed to a future in which a circular and sustainable water environment is achieved.

Source: World Council of Churches / WCC photo by Albin Hiller



MIND AND SOUL

Transformative experiences

Randy Haluza-DeLay

A thoroughly ragged and stained potholder has hung next to my kitchen stove ever since 1988. It was stitched together from scraps of cloth by some unknown Pennsylvania Mennonite. In those days, a group of women made potholders for every person who came through Akron, Pa., for a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) orientation before a term of service.

Regardless of where I've lived over those years, that potholder has hung on the wall next to the stove. Increasingly worse for wear, it shows the marks of curry spice, raspberry pudding and dashes of oil. It is seared from being placed on a still-hot burner. One housemate thought roughly stitching up the holes with white thread on that red and green cloth would be a nice thing to do.

The potholder is a constant reminder of the life-changing experience that transformed who I am as a follower of Jesus. Like many others in our churches at the time, I did a term of voluntary service with MCC. I had considered the Peace Corps, but I didn't want Uncle Sam to get the credit for my good works. Yes, I am an American. I wanted an international experience, so MCC sent me to Canada!

In fairness, MCC sent me to northern Saskatchewan, to live in a mixed-culture

community of town and adjacent First Nation reserve. While there, I served with a youth drop-in centre and street program. Public awareness of residential schools was just beginning.

I learned a lot about the dark underbelly of Canadian society and its racism, Indigenous peoples' resilience, and ongoing social problems. It was not an easy assignment. I was terribly unprepared to do such service.

That was not MCC's fault. It was because I was a privileged, young American boy. It forever altered my life's path—the least of which is that I have been in Canada for all but three years ever since. More importantly, I learned that individual ministry requires addressing social injustice, too.

How many of us have MCC experiences or experiences in service with other agencies?

I support MCC's greater focus on local partners rather than sending North American volunteers. It's more efficient. It's less paternal, although MCC has always had a top-tier reputation for the way it worked with people at project sites. It was getting harder to fill available positions. But we have to ask: What happens if experiencing MCC service is no longer "teaching"

many in our congregations?

The most profound forms of learning are often experiential. This is especially important for adult learners. Sometimes such occurrences can be transformational learning. That is a life-changing and deeply persistent new way of being, rather than just acquisition of knowledge.

According to research in this field of learning theory, to be truly "*transformed by the renewing of our minds*" (Romans 12) requires three elements: awareness of the problems of existing practices or the dominant culture; an alternative vision; and opportunities to directly experience alternatives in practice.

The first two tasks are relatively easy to do and can even happen in classrooms.

But what volunteers learned from their experiences changed the cultures of our congregations. They normalized the active service for which Mennonites are known. They informed our global awareness. The stories shared and lessons learned have been passed on to others in the pews. Other churches, though, do not have this culture of service and global citizenship. In MCC's centennial year we need to ponder what transformative experiences will continue to shape us. ❧



Randy Haluza-DeLay teaches at The King's University in Edmonton and served with MCC in La Ronge, Sask., from 1988 to 1990.

Et cetera

Repenting from greed opens path to justice

The Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly, held at the Presbyterian Church in Hualien in Taiwan (pictured) late last year, ended with calls to repent from greed and for Asian women to become advocates and catalysts of reconciliation, renewal and restoration in the world, communities and churches. Organized by the Christian Conference of Asia, the weeklong assembly agreed that the world would not experience justice and peace without repenting of its sin of greed. It also wants the churches to promote justice. The assembly was attended by more than 250 women. Among them were Taiwanese Aborigines who have a strong presence in the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

Source: World Council of Churches / WCC photo by Peter Kenny



TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

Eating God's words

Joshua Penfold

Two years ago I embarked on a Bible reading challenge. What started as an attempt to read the Bible in a year, morphed into a slower reading and reflection practice.

I realized I didn't want to read everything just to say I had. I wanted to engage with Scripture, wrestle with it, let it speak to me, challenge me, even confuse me. I wanted Scripture reading to be a treasure, not a task. I wanted the story of Scripture to interact with my story, recognizing they are two parts of the same grand unending story of God.

So I slowed down my reading and took to social media to share my reflections, encouraging response and interaction from others. I'm excited—and a bit terrified—to offer some of my reflections here as well.

Most recently I've been reading through the Book of Jeremiah.

"When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty" (Jeremiah 15:16, NIV).

The image of eating God's words is intriguing and lovely, like a delicious dish offered in the midst of a famine. I'm not sure if God's words were a delight, because Jeremiah was glad to see God's judgment coming to pass on a

sinful people, or if Jeremiah delighted in his relationship with God and hung on every word he received. Is it a spiteful delight or a devotional delight, or something else altogether?

Either way, this image makes me ponder how we interact or respond to God's words, or if we even give ourselves an opportunity to receive them.

This past fall, as job situations in our home changed, I became the primary meal maker. My wife's days are long and full, so I help my daughters with breakfast, make their lunch, and usually I'm home in time to have supper made so we can all enjoy it as a family.

It's been a joy to contribute to our family in this way and make space for Rebecca in her new job. I've even introduced a few new dishes to my family.

Meatless Monday has been a new endeavour, making falafels for the first time. The meal was received very differently within our family. The adults were excited to try something new, but my girls were terrified, reluctant and disappointed they had to venture into new culinary territory.

Could this be how we sometimes approach eating God's words? It didn't really matter to my girls that the adults

were gobbling up these new dishes, praising how tasty they were. They were not interested in trying something new, and its health factor didn't make a lick of difference.

How do we receive God's words? Through Scripture reading, prayer, music, spiritual conversations, nature, to name a few. How do we approach these activities? Do we reluctantly poke at them, like my kids at the table? Do we nibble the parts we're willing to try while avoiding the "gross parts," which may actually be the tastiest and most wonderful part of the meal?

Do we reluctantly eat some things because we're told they're healthy, or have our pallets matured so that we can appreciate the various flavours of Scripture: tasting the bitter, the tangy, the spicy, rather than just the sweet and salty that young taste buds prefer?

Like a child learning to appreciate eating different foods, it takes time, maturing, exposure and practise to learn to delight in eating all of God's words, or at least tasting them before deciding what we think. ☺



*Joshua Penfold loves reading this bewildering, bizarre and beautiful book called *The Bible*. He lives near Tavistock, Ont., with his wife Rebecca and two girls, Ellie, 9, and Ruth, 6, and is employed as a support worker for a number of individuals with various diagnoses.*

Et cetera

Retired Norway bishop risks jail over principles

Gunnar Stålsett, an 84-year-old former bishop of Oslo, pictured, was ordered to appear in court because he illegally employed a woman from Eritrea who had been denied asylum and wound up as an undocumented and rejected refugee. Norwegian police want Stålsett sentenced to 45 days in jail. Stålsett has been a member of the Norwegian Nobel Committee and is also active in international peace efforts. Stålsett told reporters that he was practising "a form of civil disobedience for which I'll take responsibility. It's directed at what I view as an immoral law. . . . I'm willing to take on that burden. It's nothing compared with what undocumented immigrants have gone through for decades in Norway. They live in fear every day."

Source: World Council of Churches / Photo by Hans Fredrik Asbjørnsen/Kirken



'175 years by faith'

St. Jacobs Mennonite Church honours the cloud of witnesses in its 175-year history

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent
ST. JACOBS, ONT.

In 1844, just under a half-hectare of land near the east bank of the Conestoga River was purchased from John Brubacher for the sum of five shillings. A log schoolhouse was constructed there, on what was then part of the Haldimand Tract and the traditional lands of the Neutral, Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The log structure was used for church services until 1851, when a wood-frame building known as the Conestoga Meeting House was constructed.

One-hundred-and-seventy-five years later, St. Jacobs Mennonite Church continues as a local expression of the body of Christ. The church is now located in the village of St. Jacobs, but its cemetery is still in use at the original site, in the unmarked hamlet of Three Bridges.

On Nov. 24, 2019, the congregation celebrated its 175th anniversary with a service of gratitude, remembering the "cloud of witnesses" that has gone before.

Using scriptures from Hebrews 11 and 12, the congregation centred its celebration on biblical and historical characters who, by faith, helped to shape its identity and particular expression of church. A reading called "175 Years by Faith" affirmed that the church stands "in a line of faithfulness and witness to God's leading."

A narrated slide show highlighted the history of the church, including its split from the Old Order Mennonite group in 1889, and its move into the village of St. Jacobs in 1915, to a parcel of land donated for a dollar by Samuel Good. It was there that a red-brick church was constructed, including a basement with space for children's Sunday school. The building has undergone several additions and renovations since then.

In 2015, a service of celebration was held in an upgraded and refurbished



PHOTO BY MARCIA SHANTZ

Three generations of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church congregants share a readers theatre called '175 Years by Faith' during a worship service celebrating its 175th anniversary. Pictured from left to right: Jonah Willms, Doris Kramer and Micah Jarvis sit on a bench from the 1851 meetinghouse at the church's original location in the unmarked hamlet of Three Bridges.

sanctuary to mark the 100th anniversary of the church in its current location.

Other significant events in the church's history include:

- **Opening members' homes** to support Mennonite refugees from Russia in 1924.
- **Helping to plant three Mennonite congregations:** Hawkesville; Zion in Elmira; and Waterloo North in Waterloo.
- **Supporting young men** who took up alternative service as conscientious objectors during the Second World War.

Over the years, strangers became friends as the church sponsored refugees from Laos in the early 1980s, who later gave birth to Grace Lao Mennonite Church in Kitchener. The congregation also supported and partnered with the Benin Bible

Institute in Benin, West Africa, and, most recently, supported refugees from Syria.

The growing diversity of the congregation was described in the readers theatre as "an ever-expanding gift."

The St. Jacobs congregation echoed wider church history as it wrestled with ethical, biblical and cultural questions that arose over the decades around fundamentalism, evangelism, separation from

the world, the wearing of prayer coverings by women, divorce and remarriage, relationships with the young men who enlisted during the World Wars, women in leadership, gender and sexuality, environmentalism, and Indigenous reconciliation.

The Nov. 24 service of celebration included an Eternity Sunday tradition of lighting candles in memory of those who have died. The commemoration included the great cloud of witnesses that worshipped in the congregation during its 175 years and continues to inspire the church at St. Jacobs to live by faith.

The morning ended with sharing "breads and spreads" in a time of fellowship. ☞

To view an anniversary video online, visit bit.ly/st-jacobs-175.



Mourning and blessing

Three congregations part ways with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

Story and Photo by Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

In September 2019, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada reported: “We announce with great sadness that River of Life, Calvary Church Ayr (Mennonite), and Milverton Mennonite Fellowship [all in Ontario] have left the MC Eastern Canada family. After healthy conversation with leadership from each congregation, we mourn their leaving and we bless and pray God’s best for each of them in their future ministry.”

Milverton Fellowship

Hans Peters, pastor of the Milverton congregation provided the following statement on behalf of its leadership team: “In the fall of 2016 and the spring of 2017, leadership of Milverton Mennonite Fellowship met with leaders of MC Eastern Canada and MC Canada. We discussed concerns we had with the stance and direction the Mennonite conference was taking on several issues. After these meetings, it became very clear to our congregation that on numerous matters concerning our core values and beliefs we

no longer were in alignment with those values and beliefs expressed by the leaders of MC Eastern Canada. In the fall of 2018, we changed our name to Milverton Christian Fellowship. After two-plus years of prayer and discernment, in March 2019 we voted to align ourselves with Partners in Harvest and their supporting congregations. As of the end of June 2019, all the ties with MC Eastern Canada were officially severed. Our prayers would be that God would bless both MC Eastern Canada and Milverton Christian Fellowship moving forward, and that the name of Jesus would be lifted high.”

According to its website, Partners in Harvest is “a worldwide family of churches partnering to spread the fire of God’s love, presence and healing throughout the nations.”

Calvary Church Ayr

The Ayr congregation is in the midst of a significant shift, becoming the Ayr campus of Calvary Pentecostal Assembly of nearby Cambridge. Facing dwindling attendance and volunteers who were burning out,



The sign in front of Calvary Church in Ayr, Ont., hints at the significant shift taking place as the church merges with Calvary Pentecostal Assembly of nearby Cambridge.

Calvary Church Ayr, which did not regularly participate in MC Eastern Canada activities, needed to address its future.

Several options were explored, according to Lloyd Oakey, who pastored at Ayr for the past 14 years, and now pastors at Zion Mennonite Fellowship in Elmira. Calvary Church considered sharing its facility or merging with another congregation, or closing and selling the property. After two-and-a-half years of discernment, it decided to join the Pentecostal Assembly, one of the churches it had reached out to. The vote was unanimous.

According to an article in *The Ayr News*,

the Pentecostal Assembly was inspired to “branch out” after Pastor Jeff Johnston attended a church planting conference, so the timing of the merger was good. Sharing the name “Calvary” makes the transition simpler.

The congregations will merge into one church with two expressions. An intentional transition is underway. In September 2019, the merger began with a “soft launch,” which involved fundraising and working on renovations and upgrades at the Ayr location. Pews have been replaced with padded chairs.

A large group from the Pentecostal Assembly in Cambridge committed to attend worship services and invest their time and talents in Ayr for a year, to boost numbers and create momentum. Interim pastor Mark Giancola stepped in. The official, public launch at the Ayr campus is set for Easter 2020.

The Ayr church began in 1954 as a Sunday school outreach by young people from Mannheim Mennonite Church. The first building was constructed in 1961. The current facility was built in 1990. Over its history the church has gone through several cycles of considering denominational change but never acted on it until now. Oakey says this time the congregation “felt they were too different to stay,” even though MC Eastern Canada “has lots of variety under their umbrella.” Calvary wants to be an

“evangelical, conservative, community church.” Oakey, who continues to pastor in MC Eastern Canada, says that parting with the regional church was amicable.

River of Life

River of Life began in 1995 through collaborative efforts of three MC Eastern Canada congregations. It withdrew from the regional church in May 2019. The leadership team at River of Life declined the opportunity to comment on its change in relationship with MC Eastern Canada. The church meets in downtown Kitchener at the former Zion United Church. ❧

Listening to those who have left

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

A Mennonite elder once told me, “We need to listen to people who leave the church.”

John Reimer (a pseudonym) is one such person. A soft-spoken grandpa, he recently left a Mennonite Church Canada congregation that professes open-mindedness and inclusivity. I wanted to know why.

Reimer had been at the church for a couple decades but felt excluded—not primarily because he is more conservative than his fellow church members, but because he experienced virtually no openness to discussion of differing views.

Reimer is well acquainted with both ends of the spectrum. Once a New Democratic Party member, he recalls differing with a particular party position and being shut down.

Over the years, Reimer says he “drifted more and more to the right,” (although, just like others I spoke with, he is not comfortable with the terms “left,” “right,” “liberal” and “conservative”).

Reimer says people unthinkingly subscribe to the views of the group they choose to identify with and then silence those who do question them.

Reimer feels these tendencies have grown worse over time. He came to a point of feeling “absolutely excluded from a group that prides itself in being inclusive.” In his understated way, Reimer deems this as “ironic, perhaps.”

His wish is not to be part of a church group that shares his views—he is similarly frustrated with the right—but, rather, he says: “I would love to be part of a community where there is openness to discuss different viewpoints.”

Reimer says he also found some MC Canada staff unwilling to discuss the concerns he had. Specific topics he mentioned in our conversation included climate, Indigenous relations and LGBTQ+ matters. The views he shared with me, he says he would not have felt free to share in his former congregation.

When asked what the left does not understand about the right, he says, “that the right has just as many good people.”

His message to Mennonites across the spectrum of belief is simple: “Think for yourself. Question. Don’t just accept the generally accepted view.”

Doug Klassen, executive minister of MC Canada, says we live in “anxious times,” and that makes us want answers to hold onto. In his life he has seen congregations that are “locked down hard and fast” at both ends of the spectrum, having left “relationship-based faith for the realm of ideology.” But that is not when we are most open to the Spirit; it is not a point of vulnerability.

He says that in anxious times we must live in prayer and contemplation, fostering a “rich inner life,” and looking to the “living Word of God, which is Jesus Christ.”

Our image of God is important. While the Old Testament was more about who is in and out, “Jesus worked the margins really hard,” Klassen says. “Jesus collected people around him.”

Having started his current role last June, Klassen comes on in the wake of numerous congregations having left MC Canada.

Reece Friesen belongs to one of those churches. He is associate pastor of Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., which left partway through the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process a few years ago. It is still a part of MC B.C.

Like John Reimer, Friesen has felt excluded by those professing inclusion, but, unlike Reimer, he says it was the “allowance of differing views,” not the absence of such allowance, that led to departure. Ironic, perhaps.

The “differing views” in Friesen’s case were MC Canada’s stated adherence to the one-man-one-woman position on sexuality and its simultaneous recommendation to leave room for testing of alternative understandings.

For Friesen, the Bible is definitive on

this point. But I called him not to talk about positions per se, but how we deal with differences.

First, he notes that God created an amazingly diverse world and called it good. Difference of God’s creating is to be celebrated. And it is to be distinguished from difference that results when humans deviate from God’s ways. These are to be dealt with by means of loving, respectful, humble, relational “church discipline,” starting, as per biblical guidance, with one person simply talking with another.

In the case of the BFC, Friesen says MC Canada tried to keep everyone happy, tried not to offend anyone, tried to include everyone. And this trumped adherence to biblical truth. “People getting along,” he says, “is not the highest of all Christian values. . . . Sometimes we do have to part company,” as happened in the Bible.

He recalls regional church leaders coming to Eben-Ezer. They listened, nodded, prayed together, and Friesen says he and his colleagues felt like they had been heard. But later this rang hollow.

He felt as though Eben-Ezer has continually been invited to be part of the broader church but really only if they leave their beliefs at home. “It does not work to use language that says we want to have a relationship with you,” he says, “if that relationship includes censorship or exclusion.”

In his view, “the gospel of tolerance is a very poor guide.”

Friesen draws clear lines when it comes to faith, and one of those lines is that no person is to be rejected or disrespected, regardless of differences. We cannot say or act as though we are better than others. His passion for connecting in a spiritually meaningful way with a broad range of people is evident.

I asked him, as a pastor in a church that has left MC Canada, what message he has for the rest of us. His reply: “I encourage people to completely abandon the language of tolerance and rights.” ❧

Connecting through coffee and conversation

Home Street Mennonite Church welcomes in neighbours

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Every Sunday morning at Home Street Mennonite Church, two ushers hand out bulletins and seat guests for the worship service. But an hour earlier, a group of “Third Ushers” is already busy, welcoming in the church’s inner-city neighbours.

Third Usher, now called Coffee & Conversation (C&C), has been running for 15 years, providing hospitality through coffee, food and conversation to anyone who walks through the Winnipeg church’s doors.

Ten or so volunteers take turns, in pairs, organizing the fellowship time that runs during the church’s Sunday school hour. Sometimes people coming in from the street will listen in on the adult education class, and congregants often pick up mugs and join tables after the session is over.

“For us, it’s a matter of knowing what is church?” says Bert Siemens, C&C’s coordinator, about why the church runs the program. “And for a lot of the people

who’ve come for coffee, they’ve seen our church as their community, too. . . . They feel it’s a safe spot.”

The organizers never know who is going to show up; it could be three or 15, says Esther Epp-Tiessen, the church’s mission coordinator and a C&C volunteer. There are many regulars, though, people who keep coming back over and over, and have developed deeper relationships with church members as a result, she says.

Some of them occasionally stay for the worship service and one person even became a church member, although that is certainly not the goal of the group, says Siemens.

Home Street is located in a poor neighbourhood in downtown Winnipeg. Most C&C participants come from within walking distance and live in the area, although some of them walk a long way.

“There’s one man who walks all the way from St. Boniface almost every Sunday,” Epp-Tiessen says. That’s at least four

kilometres each way.

The initiative began in 2005 out of a desire to respond to people who came to the church doors asking for help. It was thought up by an intergenerational group of about 15 people within the church that had formed the year before, with a desire to be more regularly involved in the neighbourhood.

“We learned a lot in those first years about how to listen deeply, how to build bridges across socio-economic divides, and how to create a safe space within our church building,” says Pastor Judith Friesen Epp, who was one of C&C’s founders.

Most of their neighbours “have had a hard life. The stories they share are sad stories,” Epp-Tiessen says. Just in the last several months, a few people who used to attend C&C died tragically. But “there are also times we laugh a lot and have fun together,” she says. “I’m often struck by the incredible resilience of some of these folks, given what they have lived through.”

“I think it’s made us a bit more aware of . . . issues of poverty and accessibility to basic things like showers and washroom facilities, and what it means to be without a home for some people, the home being either a physical thing or a community,” says Siemens.

“We have learned one another’s names, shared our stories and seen the face of Christ in each other,” says Friesen Epp. “The ‘issues’ of poverty and injustice now have faces and names and stories.



HOME STREET MENNONITE CHURCH WEBSITE PHOTO

Home Street Mennonite Church is located in the heart of Winnipeg’s inner city.



PHOTO BY ESTHER EPP-TIESSEN

A star blanket, sewn by an Indigenous women's collective in Winnipeg, hangs in the Coffee and Conversation space at Home Street Mennonite Church. It symbolizes the congregation's commitment to be treaty people and to strive for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

This constantly raises the questions, 'What is our role and responsibility as a worshipping community in this neighbourhood?' . . . 'How do we actively work for justice together?'

"We, as a church, have gained a lot through C&C," says Epp-Tiessen. "We've learned and received a lot from the people who come. It's not just something that we do for others, it has also been a blessing for us."

In addition to C&C, Home Street hosts an annual block party; distributes food hampers for Winnipeg Harvest, the city's food bank; and actively works at Indigenous-Settler reconciliation. In 2018, the church endorsed the Make Poverty History Manitoba initiative, "Winnipeg without poverty: Calling on the city to lead."

Created in partnership with people living in poverty, the plan contains 50 recommendations for municipal action, addressing issues such as housing, transportation, food security, policing, reconciliation and more. Home Street members signed on in an effort to support systemic policy changes that could help build a more just city, asking Mennonite Church Manitoba to encourage other churches to do the same. ☘

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**CANADIAN
MENNONITE**

Advent marketplace 'brings it all to life'

Story and Photo by Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent
LISTOWEL, ONT.

The invitation goes out on the first Sunday in September. Some people sign up right away. Others need a nudge or a shoulder tap. But by December some 80 people from Listowel Mennonite Church have agreed to play costumed roles in "An Advent journey: Marketplace." Many are young adults, teens and children as young as 8.

Another 45 volunteers help behind the scenes with baking, making crafts, assembling the set and providing a meal for the performers. It is a multi-generational, whole-church effort to create an interactive, hands-on experience of the sights, sounds, smells and people of first-century Bethlehem for the wider community.

Visitors are led through their 45-minute Advent journey by a Roman centurion. The first stop is a room in the church basement, where a storyteller sets the context for Jesus' birth. The journey continues through a church building transformed with murals, props, costumed characters, and even live animals, to reflect first-century Palestine and the Bethlehem of Jesus' birth.

Visitors meet the prophet Isaiah, Mary, Elizabeth and Joseph, and hear brief vignettes from the Bible stories about Jesus' birth. They stop for refreshments at the inn and then spend 15 minutes in the busy Bethlehem marketplace, where shops are set up around the town well.

Each visitor gets a bag of coins to spend on spices, sweets and wood, pottery, leather or textile crafts, or the services of a scribe. Bartering is encouraged! There is even a character, dirty and dressed in rags, begging for a few coins from passersby—all of it under the watchful eye of Roman centurions.

Finally, visitors enter a quiet stable, complete with sheep and a donkey, lit only by a candle, to find Mary, Joseph and



Robert Hutson, left, and David Ayala offer services as scribes at their stall in the busy marketplace of Listowel (Ont.) Mennonite Church's hands-on experiential Advent journey.

the baby Jesus. After hearing the story of Jesus' birth, they are invited to light a small candle and carry the light of Christ with them as they go.

Ron and Mary Weber have been involved in Marketplace since the beginning. Back in 1993, Mary was chair of the Christian education committee at Listowel Mennonite, and she wanted to do something "outside the box." After a tip from Eleanor Snyder, Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada's Christian education minister, Mary got access to the Marketplace program. Eager to try something besides a traditional Christmas pageant or a live nativity, she called a meeting and recruited volunteers. They packed out two Sunday shows and had to add two more evening performances.

From 1993 to 1999, Marketplace ran

every year. In 2000, the congregation took a break while renovations were ongoing at the church.

Since 2001, Listowel Mennonite has done Marketplace every other year. Little has changed in the script since that first year. Props and costumes are reused each year. And many people request to play a favourite role.

Ron used to play a costumed role, but now he helps out behind the scene. He says they usually welcome between 1,100 and 1,800 guests through Marketplace each year they do it. In 2019, 238 people came through on Sunday evening, bringing the total to 1,300 for the weekend. To keep all those people moving on schedule is a logistical challenge. It takes four Marys, two Josephs and many centurions keeping a close eye on the time!

The Marketplace endeavour has brought out the creativity in the congregation and the community. An artist painted the backdrops. A local potter sets up his wheel in the marketplace to demonstrate his craft. Another person, who knows Hebrew and has participated in archaeological digs in Israel, provides historical and cultural expertise.

The Webers describe how the whole experience “helps to bring us together . . . it builds community in the congregation.”

Working together so intensely on a project means getting to know people better, and seeing them grow and mature. “All generations get something from this,” Mary says.

Nancy Frey, who joined the pastoral team last September, was amazed at the transformation of the church building. She also notes that children can’t wait until they are old enough, at age 8, to be involved.

“It has put us on the map,” Mary says. “Nobody knew the Mennonite church was here,” she adds, referring to its location on a quiet street on the edge of town.

Now, after running Marketplace for so many years, and participating in the Relearning Community program offered through Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, the church has initiated a free weekly community dinner to which everyone is welcome.

‘The centre of our faith’

Congregations seek God's voice in 2020

By Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent

Congregations in Mennonite Church British Columbia are greeting the new year with efforts to deepen spirituality and to hear God’s voice more clearly through group study and Bible reading.

Learning more about Jesus is the goal at Peace Church on 52nd in Vancouver for the new year. Members of the congregation are challenged to read one chapter of the gospels every day in 2020, which means that all four gospels will be covered four times throughout the year.

“This is a simple, beautiful way to live into our commitment that ‘Jesus is the centre of our faith,’ and it’s also an easy challenge to jump on board with a few days, weeks or even months into the year,” church leadership wrote on the church’s website. “The point is not perfection or ticking off some box labelled ‘good Christian who reads her Bible,’ but simple soaking ourselves in Scripture, and letting our Saviour inspire our imaginations as we seek to be revitalized.”

Cedar Valley Mennonite Church in

Mission is also encouraging members to read the Bible with a reading plan that began the first week of January and goes through Easter week. “Reframe 2020” focuses on moving through the harmony of the gospels as it follows the life of Jesus chronologically. “In this new decade we want to centre our focus on Jesus Christ and build a foundation on his life and teachings,” says the church website.

Level Ground Mennonite Church of Abbotsford will be facilitating a three-week course on “Listening to God” on Tuesday nights from Feb. 11 to 25.

Steve Klassen of Mark Centre, a Christian spiritual retreat centre in Abbotsford, will lead the weekly sessions. Participants can expect to be inspired and grow in confidence through hands-on and interactive experiences as Klassen teaches about common ways of hearing from God. It is hoped that the sessions will be beneficial for personal growth, peer support roles and leadership development. ❧



Most important for Mary is how the hands-on teaching experience of Marketplace “brings it all to life—the true meaning of Christmas for everyone.”

“God has been calling and leading through all this,” she says. “We never dreamed we would still be doing it after all these years. We haven’t felt God saying no yet.” ❧

News brief

New course puts mission into context



Josh Wallace

Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg is partnering with Mennonite Church Saskatchewan to offer a master’s level course called Mission in Perspective. Josh Wallace, former pastor of Warman (Sask.) Mennonite Church, is teaching the course, which focuses on developing a contextualized approach to mission. “Mission is something we talk about in very different ways from church to church,” Wallace says. “It will look very different in Warman than it does in Saskatoon or in Drake.” The course includes a study of mission history, from the early church to about 1900. It also examines mission in the context of the Settler-Indigenous experience. Finally, the course will look at current conversations around mission in the broader church. Wallace says the course is “practically oriented . . . for people in, or contemplating, ministry.” For this reason, the students’ final project will have them develop an approach to mission that is specific to their particular contexts. The course, which began on Jan. 9 and runs until April 2, is the second master’s level class CMU has offered within MC Saskatchewan. In the fall of 2019, Susanne Guenther Loewen, co-pastor of Nutana Park Mennonite, taught a course called Peace, Violence and the Atonement. Hers was a pilot course in what the regional church hopes will become a master of divinity distance-education program.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

PEOPLE

Enduring art, active faith

Three generations of artists share their stories

Story by Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
EDMONTON

Many individuals dream of writing a book, but it's not often that an entire family writes a book together. Three generations of artists from the Proudfoot family compiled a book of short stories, essays, paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints and poetry. It was published in February 2019 by Friesen Press.

The idea began with Robert Proudfoot, a member of Edmonton First Mennonite Church for the last 29 years, who worried that the writings and paintings of his mother Norma would be lost. Robert writes fiction and nonfiction, and his daughters are very creative. His youngest daughter, Alicia, recently graduated with a master's degree in fine arts from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, N.S., and his older daughter, Annora, plays multiple musical instruments and writes poetry.

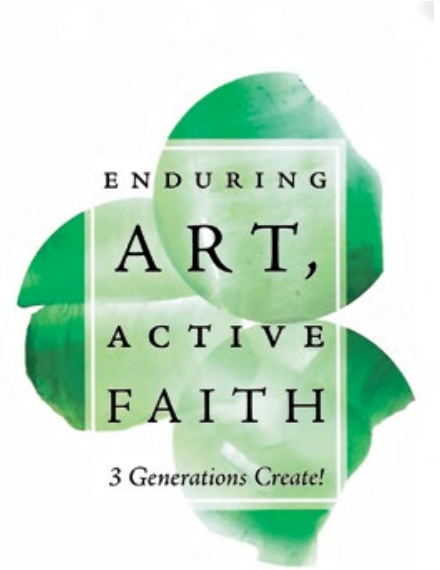
According to Alicia, "My father had a dream of bringing all our creativity together. A keepsake we could share with others." Robert mentioned how their faith journeys intersected with their creative endeavours,

just as God creates to communicate with us.

The only family member who doesn't consider herself to be an artist is Valerie, Robert's wife, who describes herself as the audience for the art. In order to participate, she did co-write one chapter with her friend Donna Entz. Valerie (nee Braun), was born in Didsbury, Alta., and grew up as a Mennonite pastor's kid while her father David Braun served as General Conference minister for the province.

The cover of the book, *Enduring Art, Active Faith: 3 Generations Create!* was designed by Alicia, who thinly sliced and layered pieces of Irish Spring soap for the "clean and fresh" book cover.

Alicia likes her art to include an element of playfulness while exploring complex topics. Her master's thesis involved making couch art. Her many pieces playfully explore the family couch to show how society is uncomfortable with illness. As a harp player, she has even made a couch harp, which was displayed in the Hernandez Art Gallery in Milan, Italy.



Robert G. Proudfoot



PHOTOS BY ALICIA PROUDFOOT

Proudfoot family portrait of 2018: (left to right) Annora Proudfoot, Robert Proudfoot, Valerie Proudfoot (nee Braun) and Alicia Proudfoot.

Among her other accomplishments is a 2017 commissioned sculpture for the West Fraser Performing Arts Centre, which replaced the Roxy Theatre after a fire in 2009 in Hinton, Alta. The piece was entitled "The Spectator in Retrospection." Alicia leaves for Italy in the summer of 2020 to sculpt a one-metre yo-yo from a slab of marble, through a grant from the Alberta Association for the Arts.

Annora, a massage therapist, plays guitar, piano and trombone. The book includes multiple pieces of her poetry, originating from diary entries over a decade. When her father asked her to choose a few selections for the book, she found it interesting to see the repeated themes of faith and relationships. She found herself inspired to have another look at her faith journey and chose to be baptized at Edmonton First Mennonite Church in July 2019 at the age of 29. At

her baptism, she read one of her poems that speaks of her view of God, free will, community and the journey of faith.

Robert loves to write and he contributed a variety of nonfiction and fiction pieces collected over his lifetime. Having worked for many years as an environmental scientist, he is now self-employed and has more time to reflect.

The book is divided into four parts and includes the family's experiences with Mennonite Central Committee in Nigeria from 1988 to 1991. It covers diverse themes with serious topics such as racism, Valerie's struggle with bipolar disorder, and the loss of family farms, as well as some lighter topics such as a story about a giant radish.

Many wonder if "Proudfoot" is an Indigenous name, but it is actually Scottish. Robert's family has been in Canada for the last 200 years. Choosing to become a Mennonite and a pacifist was somewhat difficult, says Robert, as his family has a long history of participating in war.

Enduring Art, Active Faith: 3 Generations

Create! was a two-year project. It is a hodge-podge of offerings, Valerie says, "there is definitely something for everyone!" ☸

The book can be borrowed from CommonWord or purchased through the family's website: proudfootfamilyart.ca.



A couch harp created by Alicia Proudfoot was on display at the Hernandez Art Gallery in Milan, Italy.

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/// Staff change

Pastoral transition in British Columbia



Jon Reesor became lead pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church, Langley, B.C., in October 2019. Previously, he served at Fort Langley Evangelical Free

Church as associate pastor. Reesor graduated from Northwest Bible College in Portland, Ore., and he and his wife Emily spent six years teaching English and serving in a church in South Korea. He graduated in 2014 with a master of divinity degree from ACTS Seminary at Trinity Western University in Langley. Reesor says he has a “passion for people to hear God’s truth in a way that is practical and engaging,” and that he “has a heart for the next generation, having worked with youth in some capacity for over 15 years.” He and Emily are the parents of son Ezra.

—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

/// Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Manitoba



Karen Schellenberg began a full-time position as interim pastor at Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg on Jan. 1. She recently completed an 18-month intentional interim

pastorate at Fort Garry Evangelical Mennonite Church, also in Winnipeg, on Dec. 31, 2019. Schellenberg holds a master’s degree in biblical and theological studies from Canadian Mennonite University.

Kevin Drudge began as 3/4-time lead pastor at Covenant Mennonite Church in Winkler on Jan. 1. He holds a master of divinity degree in pastoral ministry from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. Drudge was assistant pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Winkler from 1993 to 2003 and has been working at Pioneer Wood Designs in Winkler for the past 11 years.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



/// Staff change

Pastoral transition in Saskatchewan



Josh Wallace resigned as pastor of Warman Mennonite Church, effective Jan. 19. He has served the congregation since August 2012. He and his wife Cindy

are hoping to plant a new Mennonite Church Saskatchewan congregation in Saskatoon. The new church plant will be “a very simple church” that will meet in homes and will be “focused on table fellowship,” says Wallace. It will be open to university students who have not found a home in other congregations in the city, he says. Wallace, who earned a master of divinity degree at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill., received support from MC Saskatchewan’s Ministries Commission to attend a church-planting course in 2019.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ



PHOTO BY JOANNE DE JONG
‘So why do you volunteer at the MCC Thrift Store in Edmonton?’ Terri Buttrey, right, a regular volunteer, answers without missing a beat, ‘Because this is my happy place!’ In 2018, the store was told there would be a huge rent hike so it found a new location on the north side of the city. Surprisingly, rent on the new place was less and sales went up. Current manager Linda Bartel left, says, ‘Sales in 2019 were the best ever in the history of the store.’

FOCUS ON

Education

Worship apprentices provide a resource for the church

Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO, ONT.

Every Tuesday, a diverse team of University of Waterloo students gathers for prayer, small group discussion, song teaching and worship-service planning. These students are part of the Worship Apprentice Program offered by Conrad Grebel University College's Music Department as a skill-building opportunity within the Church Music and Worship Program.

This program includes a practical course, a scholarship and attendance at a worship conference. The practical course offers experience in developing and leading church worship services. Students put their theoretical knowledge to work when together they design and lead two very different types of services at churches during the course.

"One factor that inspired the Worship Apprentice Program was the desire to give students the chance to develop their skills in worship leadership," says Professor Kate Steiner, director of the Church Music and Worship Program. "Students at the University of Waterloo are capable leaders, which means that those who are engaged in worship will end up in leadership positions in their churches. We wanted to give

students a broader perspective on worship and time to reflect before they take up those leadership positions."

"I was drawn to the opportunity to explore how the best elements of worship from multiple traditions could be combined into a single accessible and transformative service," says Mykayla Turner, a music and health studies student. "I hope that the knowledge and experience gained through this program will make me more confident while leading worship."

Matthias Mostert, a peace and conflict studies and French student, says of the understanding he has gained: "Being exposed to different styles of worship through relationship with my classmates, rather than through a textbook, has broadened my appreciation for the spectrum of Christian worship styles and the people who bring them to life."

"The students that participate in this program are the future of the church in North America," says Steiner. "Every time I meet with these students I get really excited for the future. They are intentional, thoughtful, engaged students, who come with a variety of insights and desires for



GREBEL PHOTO BY MARGARET GISSING

Students in the Worship Apprentice Program at Conrad Grebel University College come from a wide range of academic programs and church denominations. Pictured from left to right: Chris Fischer, left, Professor Kate Steiner, Matthias Mostert, Eunice Femi-Gege, Mykayla Turner and Rowan Martin.



GREBEL PHOTO BY FRED W. MARTIN

Students in the Worship Apprentice Program at Conrad Grebel University College—pictured from left to right: Rowan Martin and Eunice Femi-Gege—tested their skills by leading worship at St. Agatha (Ont.) Mennonite Church on Nov. 17, 2019.



GREBEL PHOTO BY FRED W. MARTIN

When students in Grebel's Worship Apprentice Program led worship at St. Agatha (Ont.) Mennonite Church last November, Colin Friesen, left, a master of theological studies student, joined them and gave the message. Also pictured, from left to right: Rowan Martin, Matthias Mostert, Yeabsra Agonfer, Eunice Femi-Gege and Mykayla Turner.

worship. We see this program as an opportunity for churches to rejuvenate their worship or to reach out beyond their usual song set." ❧

Churches interested in hosting a service planned by students in Grebel's Worship Apprentice Program can contact Kate Steiner at ksteiner@uwaterloo.ca.



FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Becoming a missional school

RJC looks to alumni and churches to help shape its direction

By Donna Schulz

Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

Rosthern Junior College has been a steadfast presence in Mennonite education for almost 115 years. However, decreasing enrolment has prompted the school's administration and board to rethink what the school is all about.

With a current enrolment of 64 students—compared to 150 or more from the late 1930s to the early 1950s, according to the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online—and a budgetary shortfall of around \$300,000, principal Ryan Wood admits there is a need for “blunt transparency,” and says, “We’ve never really fully named the problem. To

When RJC was founded in 1905, Mennonites on the prairie frontier were a German-speaking minority deeply concerned about maintaining their faith and way of life. In *Education with a Plus: The Story of Rosthern Junior College*, author Frank H. Epp writes, “Mennonite leaders assumed that their own schools were absolutely essential for the preservation of Mennonitism.”

But this year only one-third of RJC's students come from families connected with a Mennonite church or families of alumni. Two-thirds have no prior connection with the church or the school.

Mennonite, says Wood. As well, a growing number of them are international students and new Canadian students.

Although fewer students coming from Mennonite homes may look like a problem to some, Wood sees it as an opportunity. “We’re inherently missional, in the sense that we’re inviting people to a radical community and a fundamentally different way of seeing the world,” he says.

Wood sees an inconsistency in the way churches view the school as compared with the way they view church camps. Both Mennonite Church Saskatchewan and MC Alberta have been staunch supporters of their camps because they see them as places of mission, he says.

Youth Farm Bible Camp, for example, is supported not for being a Mennonite camp for Mennonite campers, but for providing camping experiences for special needs adults and children from Indigenous communities.

“I would like it if RJC was celebrated for its missional posture—for being a Mennonite school for the world,” Wood says.

Forrester agrees. “RJC was started to keep Mennonite faith and culture alive,” she says. “There is an underlying mission there that is [still] very much the same.” Only now, instead of being a high school for Mennonite students only, RJC is becoming “a Mennonite school for the global student,” she says.

Even as Wood and Forrester are sounding a wake-up call to the church, they are celebrating the many good things happening at the school, and the missional potential they hope will make good things happen well into the future.

“We have plenty to be thankful for and we are coming from a position of relative strength,” says Wood. He lists “a young, innovative staff” and “students who are actively engaged in our programming”



PHOTO FROM RJC'S FACEBOOK PAGE

RJC students increasingly come from non-Mennonite families. Rather than seeing this as a problem, principal Ryan Wood sees it as an opportunity.

not name it is to not be helpful.”

So what is the problem?

“At the core of the challenge is finding students when traditional markets are drying up,” he says.

“We can no longer say that alumni will send their kids,” says board chair Tammy Forrester.

These days many students come from Christian denominations other than

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

among the things to be thankful for, along with “a supportive church and alumni community,” who have contributed generously to “recent capital upgrades to our dorms, fields, dining hall and classrooms.”

As churches change their perceptions of RJC, they may need to let go of long-held expectations. “If we’re going to take that missional perspective,” Wood says, “we need to serve the needs of those who join us.”

“When we take the choir to churches we’re stretched financially and in terms of energy,” he says. “We can’t afford to spend our time singing in churches that

‘I would like it if RJC was celebrated for its missional posture—for being a Mennonite school for the world.’ (Principal Ryan Wood)

don’t have students to send.” Rather, he says, “We need to go to the highways and byways and invite others in.”

This means the choir may be singing at hockey games or in shopping malls rather than in churches on Sunday mornings. “If we stop visiting churches and go to other places, are we abandoning the church or are we finally being the church?” he asks.

To facilitate this shift to a more missional perspective, and hopefully turn the school’s fortunes around, RJC is seeking financial and prayer support from alumni and churches. They are inviting supporters to consider sending their children to RJC or, if that’s not possible, to sponsor other students who wish to attend.

“We want to grow the school to a stable 100-student enrolment, making us less dependent on financial aid and more financially sustainable in the short and long term,” says Wood. “We want to continue to be a vibrant, Christian educational community, where we train students in preparation for lives of faith, service and peacemaking.” ☞

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PERSONAL REFLECTION

Strangers become friends at college

Katrina Steckle

Conrad Grebel University College

My older sister met her best friend at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., in 2013. They were paired together as roommates for their first year, and lived together in their second and fourth years as well. I remember my sister coming home from school on the weekends and telling amazing stories about the fun she and her roommate were having at Grebel. These stories made Grebel seem like it might be a good place for me.

Flash forward to Sept. 5, 2016, as I arrived at Grebel for my move-in day. The parking lot was full of anxious and excited incoming students, and I knew that one of them would be my roommate for the next eight months. Although I was nervous about the idea of sharing a room, my sister's stories reassured me that having a roommate could be great.

Those reassurances turned out to be true. While my first-year roommate didn't end up being my best friend, we lived together peacefully. I knew that I could always chat with her about classes and assignments,

head down to the cafeteria for dinner with her, and attend every exciting Grebel event with her. It was comforting to know that, after a late night of studying, I could return to a warm, friendly residence room.

Grebel's thoughtful roommate pairing process also resulted in a rewarding experience for Hannah Bernstein, a second-year student in nanotechnology engineering. "I was nervous about if we would get along, if she would be too loud or too quiet, and more, but it ended up being an incredible experience, she says.

"Having a roommate can require compromise with sleep schedules, having guests over, and how much cleaning is done in the room. You learn to be accommodating," says Max Chute, former don and fourth-year chemical engineering student. "Being a roommate teaches you to be more attentive to the feelings of others around you and gives you opportunities to practise conflict resolution skills."

When I look back on my own experience, I'm so glad that I had a roommate during



PHOTO COURTESY OF KATRINA STECKLE

Katrina Steckle, left, is pictured with her first-year Grebel roommate, Madeleine Graham.

my time in the Grebel residence. I'm the kind of person who loves having my own space, but my roommate kept me from isolating myself when I first started university, and I have fond memories of study breaks and late night chats that were filled with laughter. ❧

Katrina Steckle is a Conrad Grebel University College student studying psychology and English.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Their stories showed me how to be brave

Hannah Larson

Mennonite Central Committee

In the last few months with Mennonite Central Committee's Serving and Learning Together program, I have thought often about how we all use stories to communicate. And how sometimes I have found myself wishing I could politely use a bookmark to pause someone's story when I wasn't that interested in it.

I've agonized over accidentally choosing the seat next to the friendly commuter on public transport or the extremely talkative colleague during lunch break. I've dreaded becoming the audience of one for these unprompted personal monologues. I

remember how I used to scrunch my forehead and squint my eyes to model listening, even though I wanted to retreat into my own mind and not hear a single word.

But here in northeastern India, I have been reminded that it is no small thing for someone to tell a story. As I live here and work for a health organization providing support to people living with HIV-AIDS, I now find myself scrunching my forehead and squinting my eyes out of physical strain to understand what the Hindi speaker is trying to communicate to me. Although I am a foreigner asking about a highly

stigmatized and deeply personal health condition, the program participants always inspire me with their willingness to share about their experiences.

These participants must trust the interpreter to translate accurately and must trust me not to betray the details they provide or the confidentiality of their status. Thanks to their bravery and the generosity of my interpreters, I have been privileged to learn so much from the stories they choose to tell.

Sharing requires vulnerability, courage and a community that is willing to listen. As I've moulded my thoughts through a new

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

country, new culture and new language, sharing becomes increasingly difficult. It is tempting to bookmark myself and simply observe.

I've been surrounded by people living with HIV-AIDS who share their experiences, their family members who are committed to helping me memorize the family tree, and colleagues struggling through English sentence construction to

share their views on topics like arranged marriage.

Thanks to their stories, though, I feel I can be braver in my expression despite the temptation to retreat. And through storytelling, the people of my community have been able to define themselves in their own words, and I have been able to understand, be understood, love and feel greatly loved as a result. ❧

It when students take a moment out of their day to step into my office just to encourage me, or offer me a gift of thanks. I've watched Jesus at work when our students take the time to listen and empathize with each other. It's when a student celebrates a friend getting a role in the school musical, even if it was the same role they were hoping for. I see it everywhere.

Here at MCI, it's an ongoing journey of learning together what it means to show the love of God to one another in all we do. ❧

PERSONAL REFLECTION

'Nobody is perfect and that's okay'

Paul Peters

Mennonite Collegiate Institute

I often get asked what draws me to work at a small private Christian school in Gretna, a small rural town in Manitoba. The answer is quite simple: because of the people. It's not always easy, but I can always find ways to point towards God at work.

Our hope at Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) is to create an environment that takes learning beyond the classroom. We hope our students will grow in their understanding of God, while experiencing a community that builds character and integrity. Every year, we have the chance to meet with student leaders to help map out their hopes and dreams for the new school year. This year, our students worked hard to develop what they like to call their "student manifesto" that was inspired by Jesus' words in Mark 12: "In this school we strive to be inclusive, open minded, selfless and willing to try new things. We also recognize that nobody is perfect and that's okay."

In their discussions as a group of leaders, they were inspired by the unconditional grace and love of Jesus. They wanted fellow students to know that, no matter what, when you enter this space we want you to feel loved and have a sense of belonging. In a small way, this was their way of paraphrasing Jesus' greatest commandments: "Love God, and love your neighbour as yourself."

We're halfway through the year, and I

have already seen the power of this love at work in our hallways. Jesus is being made real. I've seen it through the care students have offered fellow students as they walk through health concerns. I've experienced

Paul Peters is MCI's director of student life.



MCI PHOTO

MCI student body and staff praying for a peer at annual Red Rock retreat.

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Calendar

British Columbia

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

Feb. 14-29: MCC B.C. winter banquets: (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.

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

Alberta

March 20-21: MC Alberta annual delegate sessions.

Saskatchewan

Feb. 29: Silent retreat at the Ancient Spirals Retreat centre, south of

Saskatoon. More details to follow.

Manitoba

Until March 14: Art exhibit at Mennonite Heritage Gallery, Winnipeg, "Mother Earth and Her Lovers: repair and maintenance."

Feb. 5: "God and the multiverse," a public lecture about understanding the cosmos, at CMU's Marpeck Commons, at 7 p.m. Speaker: Deborah Haarsma, CMU's scientist-in-residence and the president of BioLogos.

Feb. 11-12: 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: Discover Outtatown, an off-campus visit day for prospective students, at CMU, Winnipeg, at 8:30 a.m.

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

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

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

March 29: Guitar and handbell

ensembles, at CMU's Laudamus Auditorium, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Ontario

Jan. 30: MennoHomes annual general meeting at 50 Kent Ave., at 2 p.m. The newest project will be officially announced. Call 226-476-2535 for details.

Jan. 31-Feb. 1: Conrad Grebel University College Bechtel Lectures: "Food and faith: Mennonites farming locally and globally. (31, at 7:30 p.m.) Paul Plett screens his film "Seven Points on Earth," followed by discussion and reception. (1, at 9 a.m.) "Farmers breakfast panel." For information or to register for either event, visit bit.ly/bechtel-2020.

Feb. 17: Family Day open house with lots of activities at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. See website for details. RSVP to info@hiddenacres.ca or call 519-624-8602.

Feb. 20: Grade 10 night at the University of Waterloo and Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, from 5:15 to 8:30 p.m. Start with a pizza dinner at Grebel, then learn about its residence and academic programs. To register for dinner, email pbartel@uwaterloo.ca.

Feb. 20-23: Conrad Grebel University College, in partnership with Aha! Productions, presents "Nonsense: The Musical" in the Great Hall: (20, 21) at 7:30 p.m.; (22) at 2 and 7:30 p.m.; (23) at 2 p.m. Proceeds will go to Grebel's "Fill the table" campaign to expand its kitchen and dining room space. To order tickets online, visit uwaterloo.ca/grebel/nonsense.

Feb. 22: 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

Classifieds

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Employment opportunity On-Site Caretaker



Camp Koinonia Inc. is accepting applications for On-Site Caretaker(s). We seek a responsible individual, couple, or family to carry out regular maintenance duties at Camp Koinonia.

Responsibilities include maintenance of camp facilities, clearing snow and monitoring drinking water. Additional tasks may include housekeeping, maintaining cross-country ski trails and hauling firewood.

On-Site Caretakers serve as the "face" of Koinonia to guest groups, making them feel welcome and responding to any concerns regarding rental facilities. Successful candidates will be friendly, motivated, eager to learn, and resourceful. Candidates must be able to communicate effectively with managers and staff members.

Hours: 10 – 20 hours/week during rental season, up to 40 hours per week during summer (May - August).

Wages: Starting wage \$15/hour, based on experience

Camp Koinonia is a year-round retreat center and summer camp located in the beautiful Turtle Mountain Provincial Park, 20 km from Boissevain, Manitoba. Camp Koinonia is a non-profit organization, managed by a board of volunteers.

Please direct inquiries and resumes to Matt Heide, General Manager, at campkoinoniamatt@gmail.com or call (204) 534-8268.

www.campkoino.ca

Church, Kitchener. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

Feb. 23: Menno Singers presents an afternoon hymn sing, at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

March 6: An evening of jazz in support of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, at Hirut Café and Restaurant, Toronto, at 7 p.m. Featuring the Tom Reynolds Trio. For more information, visit grebel.ca/TMTC/events.

March 12: J. Winfield Fretz Visiting Scholar Lecture, "Where moth and rust destroy: Archives and the contest over Anabaptist information," at

Conrad Grebel University College Chapel, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m. Speaker: David Y. Neufeld, who holds the 2019-20 J. Winfield Fretz Fellowship in Mennonite Studies. For more information, visit grebel.ca/events.

March 13: "Technology and peacemaking," a Grebel church youth event, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, at 6 p.m. For more information, visit grebel.ca/events. To register (by March 9), email rjdejong@uwaterloo.ca.


March 21: March break open house at Conrad Grebel University College and the University of Waterloo, Ont., from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, visit grebel.ca/events.



**Employment opportunity
Associate Pastor**

Bethel Mennonite Church (Winnipeg, MB) is seeking a full-time Associate Pastor to lead and inspire children, youth, young adult and young family ministries. This position begins summer, 2020. Processing of applications starts on January 31, 2020.

For more information, please visit the Bethel website at bethelmennonite.ca or mennochurch.mb.ca.



**Employment opportunity
Full-time Lead Pastor**

The Glencross Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church is currently looking for a full-time Lead Pastor.

Qualities that we are looking for:

1. Self-motivated with good communication skills.
2. Someone that has a strong desire to see our church grow by investing in people and reaching out to the unsaved.
3. Pastoral experience is preferred, but all applicants will be considered.
4. Agreement with our EMMC statement of faith.
5. We are a rural church with a heart for missions, located about 5 miles southeast of Morden, Manitoba, with an average Sunday morning attendance of 300 people.

For further information or to submit a resume, please contact Ken at kenk1@mymts.net or 204-362-3994.



**Employment Opportunity
Pastor**

Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, a vibrant urban congregation in Kitchener, ON invites applications for a full-time Pastor position, with a start date in the summer of 2020. The pastor's responsibilities include leadership in the areas of worship/public ministry, pastoral care and administration. The pastor is also the leader of a team, which includes a half-time Pastor of Faith Formation (currently open, to be filled once the full-time Pastor is found), a half-time Missions, Peace and Justice and Outreach Worker and a half-time Music Director. Go to www.stirlingmennonite.ca for more information about the congregation.

More information about the full-time Pastor position can be found at www.mcec.ca/ministry-opportunities. For further inquiries, contact Marilyn Rudy-Froese, Church Leadership Minister, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca



**Employment opportunity
Vice Principal**

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate invites applicants for the position of Vice Principal. Rockway is a dynamic Christian school of more than 280 students from many faith backgrounds and countries, that walks with students as they become responsible, reflective, compassionate and globally minded learners.

The Vice Principal is a Senior Administrator who is part of a five-member Administrative Team. This person is responsible for maintaining a positive learning environment and managing student discipline; managing the day-to-day operations of the school; providing educational leadership for program and instruction of students, and supporting Faculty. This is a full-time position effective August 2020 and includes a benefit package.

Required Skills, Knowledge and Attributes:

- Understand and be committed to Rockway's Mission
- Foster strong inter personal relationships between students, parents, faculty and staff
- Possess strong administrative skills including an ability to create systems for day-to-day operations
- Alongside the Principal, assist in faculty supervisions and goal setting
- Teach one course in one's area of expertise
- Demonstrate a strong understanding of the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum, Ministry documents and current educational trends
- Be an active and collaborative member of the Rockway Faculty and Administrative Team

Required Education and Work Experience

- Bachelor of Education (at least 5 years of teaching experience)
- Ontario College of Teachers Certification (or Equivalent) with Intermediate or Senior Qualifications
- Minimum three years of experience in educational leadership, preferably as a Vice Principal
- Preferably completed Principal's Qualifications for Public Education or Private School's Principal Qualification Part I and II.

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter, resumé and three references to employment@rockway.ca by Sunday, February 2, 2020. While Rockway values all applications, only those candidates who qualify for an interview will be contacted.



PHOTOS BY HEATHER WEBER

Charlie Bradley, played by Jaren Klassen, insists that he doesn't want to be in the church Christmas pageant directed by his mother, in the St. Jacobs Mennonite Church production of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, based on the story by Barbara Robinson.



Imogine (Tina Cressman), Gladys (Lucy Derksen) and Ralph Herdman (Zach Cressman) react with surprise and confusion when they hear the Christmas story for the first time.

St. Jacobs Mennonite stages *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent
ST. JACOBS, ONT.

Some 80 people from all ages were part of staging *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* at St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church on Dec. 21 and 22. The 1950s era story tells how the rough and tumble Herdman kids end up with all the main roles in the annual Christmas pageant, much to the chagrin of the

regular congregants. In the end, the Herdmans, who had never heard the Christmas story before, end up helping everyone else experience the story of Jesus' birth as if for the first time. Proceeds of more than \$5,100 from the congregation's production were donated to Woolwich Community Services. ☸



Grace Bradley (Melinda Metzger), left, who gets stuck directing the Christmas pageant full of the rough and tumble Herdman kids, reads the Christmas story to the Herdmans, who have never heard it before. Imogine (Tina Cressman), who plays Mary; Gladys (Lucy Derksen), who plays the angel of the Lord; and Ralph (Zach Cressman), who plays Joseph, react with ideas of their own about how the story ought to go.



Imogine (Tina Cressman), left, Gladys (Lucy Derksen) and Ralph Herdman (Zach Cressman) catch the true meaning of Christmas as they play the roles of Mary, the angel of the Lord, and Joseph, respectively, in the church Christmas pageant.