

Level Ground

Mennonite Church

31216 King Rd.

www.levelgroundchurch.com

WORSHIP SERVICE

THIS SUNDAY

IS CANCELLED

See stories and columns on COVID-19's impact on the church on pages 4, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15 and 16

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EDITORIAL

The church has left the building

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



Recently seen online: a quote on a black T-shirt: “The church has left the building.”

The worldwide spread of the latest coronavirus has drastically changed the way we live and move in these days. We avoid public gatherings, including weekly worship and other church activities. People across the world are hunkering down at home in order to limit physical contact with others. Experts believe that this kind of separation will lessen the chances of the as-yet-incurable virus spreading, or at least will slow down its rate of contagion. This flatten-the-curve effort will help the medical systems better deal with the cases of COVID-19 that do occur.

Many Christians closed their church buildings out of civic responsibility and because of their commitment to care for others. In this time of crisis, loving your neighbour can mean staying apart.

Yet we are still called to “be” the church. Traditionally, Anabaptist Christians have recognized that the building is not the church. We gather for worship in a “meetinghouse” or the “church building.” As No. 1 in *Hymnal: A Worship Book* proclaims, it is “only a house, the earth its floor.” The building shelters “a body that lives when we are gathered here.”

Some of our Mennonite sisters and brothers already know this, as over the years they have met in homes, schools, camps, parks and coffee shops. The worship rituals, the proclaiming of God’s Word, the prayer, the sharing and the acts of hospitality sustain us, whether or not we meet in a space

deemed holy.

What does it mean to live as the church when we cannot gather in a building? We are discovering new ways of sustaining and practising our faith in an era of physical distancing. Practical, sensitive, creative and even humorous solutions are emerging from within our denomination and beyond. Groups are meeting through video conferencing, to stay connected and pray together. Congregations are offering recorded and livestreamed worship services. Churches are encouraging donations through online methods. Pastoral care is happening through social media, phone calls and notes.

In mid-March, Mennonite Church Canada posted a worship service on YouTube with music, prayers, a sermon and even a time for children. You can access it at mennonitechurch.ca, along with updated information. Also check out the websites of the five regional churches for links to resources and worship services: mcec.ca, menno-church.mb.ca, mcsask.ca, mcab.ca, and mcbc.ca. Signing up for their e-newsletters will keep you connected to regional resources.

A reminder: There are those among us who are not connected to the capabilities of the internet. Let’s extend love by “being church” with them in other ways.

As members of the worldwide faith community, we pray for those who choose to leave home to help others: the health-care providers, and the producers and providers of food and of other essential services. We also pray for

people who have no safe home to shelter in and for those who continue to work on their behalf.

Living in a time when the church has left the building, we heed the ongoing call to extend God’s gracious love to everyone. Another hymn says, “I bind my soul this day to the neighbour far way and the stranger near at hand, in this town and in this land.” What new ways can we find to practice that commitment?

Helping you connect

It is difficult to predict when our print magazine will reach your mailbox in the coming weeks. Some of our content appears on the *CM* website, so you can read it at canadianmennonite.org. Now would be a good time to sign up for a digital subscription, which gives you access to the entire magazine in a PDF format. (If you attend a congregation that is part of Mennonite Church Canada, your subscription fee is paid for collectively through the church.) You can add a digital subscription by emailing office@canadianmennonite.org with “Add digital” in the subject line.

In the spirit of staying connected, let’s share stories of Mennonites living out their faith during this health crisis. You can send them to our address (on page 3) or email them to submit @canadianmennonite.org.

Moving toward Eastertime, Christians remember the God who could not be contained by a tomb. No one can cancel Easter. May we live as faithful disciples until the time when we can again gather to sing “Up from the grave he arose!” ✎



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The sign outside Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., announces the stark reality of church closures due to health concerns. Read "In a time of uncertainty," our cover story, on page 15. For more on the pandemic, see pages 9, 10, 12, 13 and 16.

PHOTO: AMY RINNER WADDELL / CANADIAN MENNONITE

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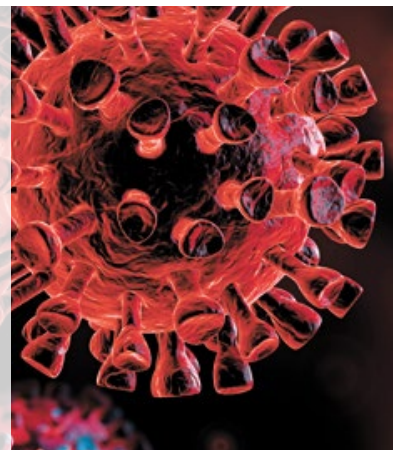
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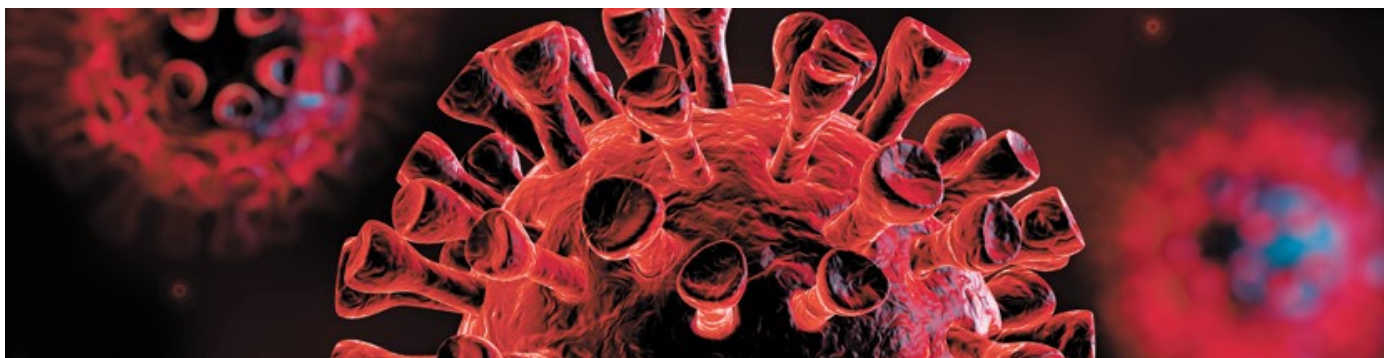
FEATURE

Love in the time of COVID-19

‘It’s an opportunity to walk—with one another, with our neighbours—deeper into the heart of God’

By Josh Wallace

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*



Thursday, as I sat down to a board meeting for the Micah Mission, a restorative justice organization in Saskatoon, I got the news that the Juno Awards show was being cancelled in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19. For months I’d been hearing the Junos hyped on CBC Radio 2 and seeing advertisements on billboards around town, where the shows were to be broadcast from. The Juno organizers made a costly—and wise—decision to try to get ahead of this pandemic.

Minutes later, a text message let me know that Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s annual delegate sessions were also being postponed. I heartily affirm the regional church leaders’ decision to seek to slow down transmissions that could overwhelm the health system (#flattenthecurve).

I paused to fire off a quick email to the members of a course I’m teaching to remind them that they were welcome to attend class that night virtually via Zoom.

Then I turned my attention back to the work of restorative justice on the Prairies: supporting Micah’s staff, hearing reports on Circles of Support and Accountability, Indigenous Awareness programming, and Person2Person visitation.

But it all felt a bit surreal with the threat of pandemic

looming over us.

Thursdays are my long day: early morning breakfast with university students, mid-day meetings and then teaching an evening course. When I got home last night I turned to the book I’ve been reading to unwind: Alan Kreider’s *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*.

I found my bookmark in a section entitled “Religion in response to crisis.” It begins: “In ancient society [and into the early modern world] a plague, although often dormant, loomed in the fears of people.” Kreider goes on to describe how “Christians and pagans gave different answers” to the presence and the threat of plague.

What answer are we giving?

In the last weeks, as first news and then fears about the coronavirus have spread, I’ve been concerned about many things: elderly and otherwise vulnerable friends, school cancellations and funerals.

I’ve sought to pray for the suffering of people far away, although, if I’m honest, I know my prayers have been vitiated by my own selfishness, lazy empathy and latent white supremacy. A friend called me out on how I only really start to worry when it’s the lives of people “like me” who are being affected.

Most of all—perhaps due to my vocation—I’ve

wondered about how congregations and Christians should respond. I've appreciated the best practices offered by Mennonite Church Canada's Pandemic Preparedness Guide (bit.ly/outbreak-resources) and the information provided by websites like flattenethecurve.com.

I've watched congregations in Canada and the United States post responses and make alterations to their worship: projectors instead of hymnbooks, elbow bumps instead of handshakes, livestreams instead of physical gatherings.

Cyprian's theological response

Alongside this very good and needed

habit of caring for one another in extremis: "[V]isit them, too; encourage them; provide bread and water for them."

Kreider concludes: "Cyprian responded to the crisis of the plague by urging the people to live lives marked by the *habitus* of patience—trusting God, living without being able to control the outcome, living unhurriedly, living unconventionally, loving their enemies."

Modern responses

We do not live in the ancient world. We're thankful for that. We're thankful for health-care institutions, anti-inflammatory drugs, germ theory. We're

the past month, local churches . . . have been forced into an extended period of self-examination, reflection and action." Pandemic has become the context for spiritual discipline.

Sng's *Christianity Today* article, "7 lessons from Singapore's churches for when coronavirus reaches yours" (bit.ly/7-covid-lessons) begins with notes on tech solves and copyright negotiations for churches choosing to livestream worship gatherings rather than congregate in person.

But these logistical concerns are accompanied by the "historic bells . . . at St Andrew's Cathedral in the heart of Singapore's civic district" and "phone

information, however, is there a place for a theological response to COVID-19? Is there something uniquely Christian about how we live in our time of plague?

Kreider describes how Christians in the North African city of Carthage responded to a pandemic in A.D. 251. He writes: "It was a crisis for the entire urban community of Carthage. How should the church respond?" The bishop Cyprian summoned believers there to live in a way "marked by courage and patience."

The ancient Christian tradition of mutual aid was alive in Carthage. Christians refused to "leave their suffering fellow believers to die without bread and water," Kreider writes. Cyprian, however, urged his congregation beyond traditional mutual care, what they might have called congregational best practices for times of plague.

Instead, he asked them to welcome their pagan neighbours, too, into this

thankful we know the value of hand washing. We're thankful for the distance and development that separate our 21st-century plague from Cyprian's plague in the third century.

But I sense that Cyprian and his church have something I want—something I need—now that I'm facing my own plague: courage, patience and love.

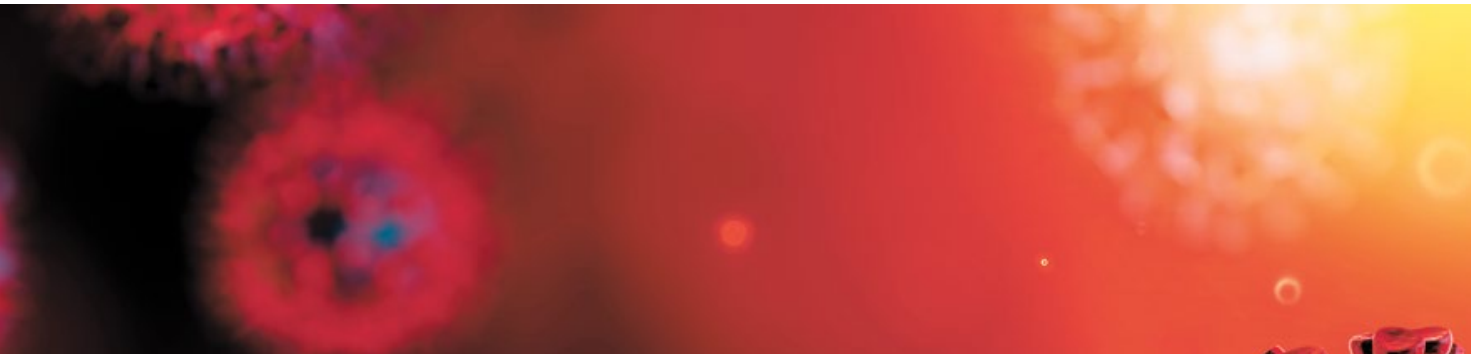
I woke Friday morning to a flood of voices weighing in on how the church should respond to COVID-19. Most rehashed the very good advice to do what health authorities say. A few, however, spoke to something more. They echoed that courage, that patience, that hope, peace, and love I need.

Edric Sng pastors a church in Singapore, a nation held up as a model of how to flatten the curve. This has meant stringent proactive measures of social distancing and quarantine. This has meant significant changes for congregations there. But Sng finds a different meaning in these events. He writes: "For

alarms go[ing] off across the island." These are a daily midday call to "all believers . . . to stop whatever they are doing for a moment of united prayer in the face of the COVID-19 threat."

LoveSingapore, another local Christian group, explains: "We need every believer to arise and seek God together for Singapore. A prophetic act, just like the ringing of church bells, summoning the faithful to action when their village or town is threatened."

In a season that reveals my propensity to curve in on concerns of my own health, my own pandemic preparedness and my own inconvenience, I need to hear stories from sisters and brothers around the globe. Churches in Singapore are standing in solidarity with, and materially supporting, migrant workers, taxi drivers and others forced out of work through public fear, ethnic prejudice and cancelled projects. I need to hear this. (*See saltandlight.sg/coronavirus for more stories.*)



A good friend's post also showed up in my social media feed Friday morning. Fred Liggin is a pastor in Williamsburg, Va. He also leads 3e Restoration, a nonprofit organization focused on accompanying neighbours living through homelessness and social displacement. I've learned a lot from Fred over the years. His post begins: "Let's remember that courage doesn't mean we are fearless, but that we will choose to not let fear control our lives and push us away from our neighbour who reflects the image of our God."

For me, this is the spiritual tension posed by COVID-19. My holy desire to care for my neighbour becomes an accomplice to my every impulse toward self-absorption, isolation and suspicion. Fear—of the person handing me my coffee in the drive-thru, of my neighbour chatting in the driveway, of my runny-nosed kids and the germs they bring home from school—dresses itself up as social concern. Instead of the image of God, all I see in the other person is a vector for contagion. All I see is a pandemic threat to our precarious human vulnerability.

My impure compassion might not matter much for my socially secure neighbours. But Fred reminds me that all vulnerabilities are not equal. He urges: "As people of faith, let's pray for the vulnerable among us. Let us less-vulnerable people be willing to serve and be present with them and for their families."

Fred's context, in part, is persons living in homelessness. A few days earlier, he posted: "Where do you go if you have nowhere to wash your hands regularly? Where do you go if your immune system is already compromised due to the wear and tear of chronic stress and trauma? Where do you go if you are already deemed disposable, where 'social distancing' is society's preferred option for your life?"

The more-vulnerable folks in my world are international students as well as elderly widows living far from family, temporary foreign workers who can't call in or work from home, the guys who lean on their CoSA groups for

emotional and material support. My impure compassion becomes an easy justification to carry on distancing myself from those I already ignore.

What does true compassion look like?

How are we to live with courage and patience?

There are some wonderful ideas out there. Easy ones, like "pandemic pals," who you check in with regularly. Easy ones, like phoning your neighbours when you can't or shouldn't meet them at coffee row. And there are beautiful ones, like the videos of quarantined neighbours in Italy singing together on their balconies.

But we also need the harder solutions (bit.ly/f-liggin-post), the more costly, the more prophetic. Text messages, social media and Netflix won't save all of us from what *Vox* writer Ezra Klein describes as an impending "loneliness epidemic" (bit.ly/vox-loneliness-epidemic). We need church bells and prayer. We need less-vulnerable folks

who strategically make in-person visits, who comfort the anxious or grieving in ways impossible when mediated by a screen or a telephone wire. We need holy home-care workers who will change bandages and help folks put on their compression stockings. We need to figure out how to do funerals well when we all need to stay two metres apart.

Patience and courage mean more than best practices. Love in the time of COVID-19 means more than social distancing—even while we seek to #flattenthecurve. For churches, for Christians, this pandemic is more than catastrophe. It's an opportunity for "self-examination, reflection and action." It's an opportunity to walk—with one another, with our neighbours—deeper into the heart of God. ☞



Josh Wallace is Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's interim church engagement minister.

☞ For discussion

1. What was the moment when you realized that the COVID-19 pandemic was real and would profoundly impact your life? What were your immediate concerns? What stories from the past or scripture passages have you found to be reassuring?
2. How has your congregation been responding to the pandemic? What is the biggest challenge? How have you been experiencing spiritual sustenance? Are there satisfactory ways for a congregation to gather in a virtual way rather than physically?
3. Josh Wallace encourages Christians to live with patience and courage in this time of crisis. What can we learn from the church in earlier times? Where do we most need courage and patience today?
4. Have you been experiencing loneliness in the midst of social distancing? What are some ways that we can reach out each other while keeping a safe distance? What might be some creative ways to handle a funeral or a wedding during this time of crisis?
5. Who are the vulnerable people in your community? How might you be able to support them in a safe way?

—By Barb Draper

See related Pandemic Preparedness resources at www.commonword.ca/go/1966

CommonWord
Bookstore and Resource Centre

/// Readers write

✉ MC Canada's 'limbs' are letting its 'torso' down

Re: "A call to strengthen our core," Feb. 17, page 4.

I am disappointed by the responses of the "limbs" to the cry of the "torso." We must do better.

Doug Klassen, Mennonite Church Canada's executive minister, was very gentle. Some congregations and nationwide church bodies are hurting. It is much more exciting to give to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Mennonite Disaster Service, and our schools and camps, than it is to support leadership, church development and other soft ministries.

The "limbs" have strong donor development programs, all of which are a direct hit at the idea of strong congregations and conferences.

Decades ago, MCC alumni "salted" congregations and regional churches all across the country. The service program changed, but nobody and nothing is replacing the "salt." Existing patterns have brought us to where we are now.

We used to say that we are a congregational people. Our agencies say they are based on the congregation, and receive people and money from the congregation. Are they not reading the writing the wall? Numbers, people, funds are all down.

Who is paying attention to the health of the garden by fertilizing, weeding and planning for new seeds? It seems that our "limbs" are carrying on, each in their own territories, hoping that business as usual will keep the garden in good shape. In our gardens here at home, that produces only weeds.

Let there be a meeting of these limbs—not about sharing and strengthening their own donor development—but about strengthening the torso, repairing and rebuilding the body, local, regional and nationwide. Fly the flag, sound the call.

RAY HAMM, NEUBERGTHAL MAN.

✉ Churches need to better appreciate their volunteering members

Re: "A call to strengthen our core," Feb. 17, page 4.

The reason I, and I suspect many others, are more passionate about Mennonite organizations than their own congregations comes down to an affirmation of gifts. When I donate my energy or money to a Mennonite organization, I often get a personal call or letter from someone in the organization who says, "Thank you. We really appreciate your donation, and can we count on you for your continued support?"

When members volunteered within our

congregation, occasionally there was affirmation, but most times when the term ended or the job was done, they just went on their way. Sometimes it was worse, and members were simply not asked to continue in a role they had done for years, leaving them wondering if they had done something wrong or if they were simply bad at that role.

But when it got really bad for me personally, and I was told that I was not welcome to volunteer for the congregation because "you didn't attend the Sunday morning service often enough and therefore you are no longer a member in good standing," I had enough. Even though I was well connected with other church members, occasionally attended Sunday morning, generously provided financial support and had been a member for over 30 years, I walked.

In the famous words of Popeye, "I yam what I yam, and that's all what I yam!"

The Mennonite congregation's loss was the Mennonite organization's gain. When will the leadership of congregations stop taking members for granted, be less judgmental, and learn to be better at affirming gifts?

JOHN PIERA, CALGARY

The writer attends Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary.

✉ Do projection screen enhance Sunday worship?

I ran across this quote a few months ago in a church magazine:

"How should [a screen] function in worship? What does having a screen in worship mean? These are not always the first questions asked by those who envision the endless possibilities for projector-screen technology in worship. In fact, we have discovered along the way that projector-screen technology's values can at times pull against some of our core values of worship. Keeping technology's possibilities and worship's core values equally yoked is a matter for ongoing discussion" (reformedworship.org/).

With screens being ubiquitous in society at large, it is easy for the church to embrace them, as well, without asking basic questions:

- **Does the use** of screens reduce or inhibit person-to-person interaction?
- **Do videos stifle** individual imagination?
- **How will singing** from a screen affect four-part singing?
- **Does using material** from online sources become an easy out to replace thoughtful, focused planning?

- **Do screens create** an intrusion on quiet meditation and silence?
- **Do we have** the skills and technology to seamlessly integrate the use of a screen into worship without taking away from the intended focus?

I wonder if we have let screens become part of our church and worship culture without really thinking through what values they are promoting. It seems to me that the church's mandate is to promote and encourage interaction between people, and it's important that everything we do in church enhances that effort.

KEN DRUDGE, KOMOKA, ONT.

✉ **MCC thanked for supporting grandparents' immigration to Canada**

Re: "Compelled by Christ to serve," Feb. 17, page 16.

As a descendant of Russian Mennonites who arrived in Rosthern, Sask., in 1923, I have always been fascinated about the logistics of how my grandparents came to Canada. The efforts of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) during the 1920s were truly heroic and their legacy enormous. I hope that MCC is acknowledged in Canada's immigration history.

JOANNE EPP (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ **Possible futures for RJC pondered**

Re: "Becoming a missional school," Jan. 20, page 24.

How about turning the land and the facility back to First Nations in the area, so they can develop their own high school. I am guessing there would be more than enough First Nations students within bussing distance of Rosthern Junior College (RJC) to make this feasible.

KATHY SHANTZ (FACEBOOK COMMENT)

I find it interesting that nobody ever asks the question: "Is the mission over?" It's like we think schools, organizations and churches are supposed to last forever.

JOHN LONGHURST (FACEBOOK COMMENT)

✉ **Teacher/pastor thankful for Bill Kruger's influence in his life**

Re: "A life of grace and holy impatience," Feb. 3, page 18.

As a teacher at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ont., from 1973 to 1977, I, too, was mentored by Bill Kruger, and I have meaningful memories of my time at Rockway and my relationship with him. His deep vision for Mennonite education and its relationship to the church has remained with me. Bill's gracious spirit and his fearless engagement with those things he believed to be important have shaped me and so many others.

My call to pastoral ministry was in part shaped by Bill's love for the church and respect for me.

I give thanks for Bill's life and for all the many ways God's Spirit was embodied in him.

ROBERT SMITH (ONLINE 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

Baergen—Benson George (b. Feb. 28, 2020), to Joshua and Melanie Baergen, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Deaths

Enns—Henry, 91 (b. April 17, 1928; d. Nov. 18, 2019), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Girard—Verna, 93 (d. Feb. 18, 2020), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Jantzi—Ruth (nee Gingrich), 91 (b. Nov. 21, 1928; d. March 1, 2020), Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Kroeger—Peter, 95 (b. March 7, 1924; d. March 2, 2020), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Nafziger—Idell (nee Jantzi), 90 (b. Sept. 3, 1929; d. Feb. 20, 2020), Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Wiebe—George J., 85 (b. April 9, 1934; d. Feb. 7, 2020), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

Beautiful and terrible connections

Elsie Rempel

“Know we are connected in ways that are terrible and beautiful.”

Last week I lingered over this line in a poem by Lynn Ungar on Facebook as I pondered the COVID-19 crisis. I am living into this crisis in Germany, where the pandemic has struck ahead of North America, and have struggled between hunkering down and waiting it out, or flying in the midst of possibly infected crowds to self-quarantine at home in Canada.

My husband Peter and I arrived in January to spend half a year with the Weierhof Mennonite Church and Mennonite Forschungsstelle (Archives) as senior volunteers. The congregation is currently without a pastor and needed some help filling the resulting gaps. And archives, well, they always need someone to sort donated materials.

This small, rural community, in which Swiss Mennonites began to farm in 1682, is surprisingly connected to Mennonites around the world. A founder of the Mennonite World Conference came from Weierhof. Many

volunteers and partners for Mennonite Central Committee’s work in Europe came from here. They have received and sent many volunteers to Mennonite communities, and their private school has an exchange program with Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ont. Beautiful connections.

When I delivered a sermon on World Fellowship Sunday in January, I felt ever so connected with Canada as I preached from resources developed by Manitobans. In addition, *Leader Magazine’s* resources for Lent have helped connect the Weierhof faith community with North America and the church season. *Leader’s* Lenten themes and scriptures found their way into a devotional booklet and another sermon or two. More beautiful connections.

And now this rather terrible connection, COVID-19, which is also affecting you, dear congregations in Canada. Public gatherings here are largely forbidden. Only shops offering essential services remain open. Some people panic, others slow down. We take more

walks and reflect.

Yesterday, as we sat at a safe two-metre distance from each other, a 90-year-old widow reflected with me on how different this was from her wartime experiences. During wartime, at least people had been able to embrace and cry on each other’s shoulders. Clearly, the directive to stay physically distant seemed harsh, especially as her birthday approached.

At the same time, we are finding ways of connecting and reaching out. The worship committee decided to use Zoom for its next planning meeting. The streaming of congregation’s worship services, which had rather restrictive access regulations, is being opened up. Worship content will still be recorded in the church with five people there to sing, play organ, preach, pray and record. As I write this, this week’s Lenten theme, “Show us the rock of our salvation,” seems so relevant that we may just use it for next week’s service as well. So, even the terrible connection of this virus is the bearer of blessings.

Peace be with you as you weather beautiful and terrible connections. ❧



Elsie Rempel writes Lenten resources for Leader magazine.

A moment from yesterday



Photography in generations past was a very deliberate, expensive and intense hobby. Special equipment, such as chemicals, film, lighting and the camera itself, was needed. Photographers often had to develop their own photos, which meant they had to have a dark room. In this photo, the people were dressed for the occasion, and a rocking chair was taken outside and placed in front of the leafy hedge that provided a good backdrop. But who are these people? Sisters? Grandmothers with their grandchildren? Can you help identify this photo from circa the 1930s taken in Herbert, Sask.?

Text: Conrad Stoesz
Photo: Mennonite Genealogy Inc. Photo Collection



archives.mhsc.ca

THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

Being the church in risky times

Arli Klassen

As relatively privileged people living in Canada, there aren't too many times that we think about whether this action or that action might result in our death. Living in these pandemic times, though, reminds me of our years living in southern Africa near the end of official apartheid. We thought often then of whether doing this or that might result in death.

We lived in Maseru, the capital city of Lesotho. We were "the white family" in our entire neighbourhood. Violence was rampant. There was the everyday normal threat of violence because our white skin indicated wealth. There was the growing internal violence in Lesotho, trying to elect its first democratic government in 30 years, with all major parties using their militias. Then there was the apartheid-era violence, mostly directed against white South Africans. Who was to know we weren't South African, given our skin colour and very blonde children?

It was not safe to be out after dark. In our last year, we heard gunshots every night. Social unrest erupted several times, sometimes because of apartheid and sometimes because of Lesotho politics. We learned to live with risk and fear. We chose carefully about going to the grocery store, to the post office to

collect our mail, about where we went and who we were with. We knew the stories of people who had died in each of these everyday places.

We were surrounded by good neighbours. We did not have big fences or guards, not in our part of town where no one did. When armed thugs went through our neighbourhood one night looking for white South Africans, all our neighbours said, "There is no one in this neighbourhood." The next morning many came to check on us to make sure we were okay.

We were surrounded by the church. We represented the church through Mennonite Central Committee, and we worked in partnership with local church-based agencies addressing injustice and social change. Prayer and action were taken together, daily, hand-in-hand, to make explicit our Christian presence and approach.

There were days when I wondered why we were there and if we were making enough of a difference, or had enough to contribute, to risk our lives. Those continue to be difficult questions.

But we were surrounded, and so we kept going. We were supported as vulnerable people in the midst of a time of fear for everyone: neighbours, work colleagues and church. Sometimes it

was hard to separate church from neighbours and colleagues because we were all part of Christ's body.

Living in the midst of a pandemic reminds me of those times. Living with fear and isolation. Making decisions of where to go and who to be with. And yet we are surrounded by neighbours, colleagues and our churches. People looking out for each other. People taking care of each other. People reaching out especially for the most vulnerable among them to be sure they are okay. Being responsible within our context, taking risks to be the church.

This is our opportunity as the church today, here, there and everywhere. This is the witness of the body of Christ, the church, and has been for 2,000 years: that we love God and we love our neighbour as ourselves. Sometimes the church has had its most powerful witness during times of plague and illness. May our witness as the church be as strong today as it has been in times past. ✚



Arli Klassen is working from home in Kitchener, Ont., and connecting via the Internet, something they didn't yet have in Lesotho.

Et cetera

WCC reiterates standpoints against antisemitism

The World Council of Churches (WCC) stands firm in viewing "antisemitism as irreconcilable with the profession and practice of the Christian faith." "The WCC has long affirmed the right of the State of Israel to exist, within its internationally accepted borders," explains Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC's general secretary. Seeing recent sweeping allegations claiming that the WCC has eluded Israeli initiatives for dialogue, to instead "stray into anti-Semitic territory", Tveit says, "We denounce categorically all violence based on religion, ethnicity, race or any other dimension of a person's identity or belonging." "What is problematic is the tendency among some groups to describe any legitimate criticism of Israeli government policies as being motivated by antisemitism," he says.

Source: World Council of Churches / Photo by Albin Hillert



People gather to pray by the Western Wall in Jerusalem, considered as the most sacred and holy place for Jews.

THIRD WAY FAMILY

Thrift shopper, peacebuilder

Christina Bartel Barkman

I was walking to church for an event a few weeks back and stopped by our local Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) thrift store for my usual weekly peek and to say hello to the dear ladies who faithfully volunteer their time.

I thought I might actually be leaving the store empty-handed for the first time ever, but, of course, something caught my eye as I was near the exit: a warm, brown, long puffy coat with a furry hood, just my size and only \$5! I was so pleased with this perfect find that I wore it out of the store, feeling cosy, stylish and very thankful for the shopping habits I've been able to cultivate.

I can't even count how many times our local thrift store has provided exactly what I was looking for—like the many sweaters I found after moving back from the Philippines and not owning any winter clothes; the Nike high tops I snagged for my seven-year-old; the cat T-shirt my daughter wants to wear every day; the Luongo goalie poster my nine-year-old loves; the hockey stick my husband wanted; and the board games that made perfect Christmas presents for the kids—to name a few!

While the joy of a perfect find at a fraction of the price is reason enough to shop thrift, there are so many more

reasons our family buys most of our clothing, shoes, books and toys at thrift stores.

Buying from MCC Thrift (and other charity thrift stores—MCC just happens to be my favourite) is a donation to a charity, so I consider it part of my monthly tithes. This gives me a whole different perspective on shopping, and honestly makes my purchasing experience so much more enjoyable and stress-free.

When I do buy new—I searched four different thrift stores for size-8 kids sweatpants last month and finally succumbed to buying new ones—I cringe, knowing my money is likely going towards a big corporation, adding pollution to an already stressed ecology, and supporting low wages and poor working conditions for workers around the globe.

When I shop at MCC Thrift, my money goes directly towards responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. This means I am contributing to efforts like bringing clean water to a refugee camp in Chad, trauma counselling to children affected by the crisis in Syria, resettlement support for new refugees in Canada, and training in diversified agriculture

for farmers in Tanzania. This is important work that I get to partner with if I shop at MCC Thrift.

I have been following my friend's blog, Thrift Shopper for Peace (thriftshopperforpeace.wordpress.org) for years now and I love how she describes thrift shopping as a way of active peacebuilding.

On her blog she writes: "When I donate and purchase at a thrift shop, I'm keeping things out of a landfill—making peace with the environment. When I volunteer, I am part of a community of people that I might not interact with otherwise—making peace in my community. When I support a charity by donating, purchasing and volunteering, I am helping to build peace at home and around the world. Supporting a shop that enables people of all income levels to own things of value is, to me, a peace value as well. And it doesn't hurt that you save a ton of money when you shop thrift." ❧



Christina Bartel Barkman, with her four little ones and her pastor husband, seeks to live out Jesus' creative and loving "third way" options.

• Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, some MCC Thrift shops have made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend operations or reduce hours. To find out if your local store is open, visit thrift.mcc.org/mcc-thrift-response-covid-19/.

Et cetera



MCC Christmas bundles for overseas children

In 1946, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) began gathering Christmas bundles—packages for children that generally contained clothing, hygiene supplies, school supplies, a small toy and often a New Testament—to ship to Europe and other locations. From 1946 to 1978, nearly a million Christmas bundles were given to children in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. In 1958, Christmas bundles such as the one in this photo (names and exact location not known) were distributed at sites such as schools and churches in Jordan and the West Bank.

Source: MCC



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Fear not

Troy Watson

watched in disbelief as people feverishly filled their carts with toilet paper and bolted before someone could steal their treasure. In less than a minute, the toilet paper was gone and the mob dispersed. Except for one lady standing in front of a stack of six packages of toilet paper, protecting it from the envious eyes of those around her. She had “claimed” 180 rolls, approximately a year’s worth of toilet paper for her and her husband, who was making his way to her through the dissipating crowd with his cart.

The scene was so comically bizarre that I began laughing. This scowl-faced woman fiercely guarding her stash of toilet paper reminded me of Gollum in *The Hobbit* protecting his “precious.” My laughter eventually turned into judgment. A lot of other people needed toilet paper and had to go home empty-handed.

Then the Holy Spirit stopped me. Maybe she was purchasing it for a large group of seniors with health issues. It didn’t matter. Whatever her motive was, judgment belongs to God alone.

On my drive home, I realized that this incident was a microcosm of what happens on a much larger scale every day. There are people with millions, sometimes billions, of dollars, who protect their money stash as if their lives depended on it. They’re sitting on more money than they could reasonably spend, while people around them have none.

There are no easy solutions to wealth inequality, but it’s clearly unjust. It’s wrong. It’s ridiculous. It’s as bizarre as that lady protecting her loot of toilet paper.

Why do we hoard for ourselves at the expense of others? It’s fear. Underlying our greed and selfishness is the fear of “I don’t have enough.” Our deepest fear is “I’m not enough.”

Former U.S. president Franklin D.

Roosevelt famously said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” What a profound truth. Fear makes us do things we wouldn’t normally do. People who are characteristically kind and gentle are capable of horrendous atrocities when overwhelmed by fear. Nothing takes us into a state of “false self” more than fear.

One of the primary things the risen Christ sets us free from is fear. Christ

out fear. God’s love and fear cannot co-exist within our conscious experience of reality.

John continues: *“If we are afraid . . . this shows we have not fully experienced God’s perfect love.”* Fear is an alarm, reminding us to tune into the divine Spirit, to breathe and become aware of “God with us” and “God within us.” Fear demonstrates our need to intentionally

Then the Holy Spirit stopped me. Maybe she was purchasing it for a large group of seniors with health issues. It didn’t matter. Whatever her motive was, judgment belongs to God alone.

doesn’t set us free from hardship, suffering and death. Lots of good people suffer. Everyone dies eventually. What Christ sets us free from are the powers of sin, suffering, evil and death. And their primary power over us is fear.

About six months ago someone grieving the loss of a loved one told me, “People fear death like it’s the worst thing that can happen. But there are worse things than death.”

That really hit me. As I reflected further, I realized that he was right:

- **To live in** fear of death is worse than death.
- **To live in** fear of rejection is worse than rejection.
- **To live in** fear of failure is worse than failure.
- **To live in** fear of change is worse than change.

I John 4:18 says: *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”*

Fear is a natural response to danger and the unknown, but when we discipline ourselves to stay in tune with the divine Spirit, we open ourselves up to God’s transformative love, which drives

and prayerfully open up our inner beings to God’s love. We can tell when we’re doing this because our fear fades.

Sometimes we need therapy, medication and other assistance to help us deal with fear and anxiety. But, for most of us, most of the time, an effective long-term solution to fear is a dedicated daily discipline of consciously tuning into divine presence and choosing to remember that *“God is my shepherd, I don’t lack anything . . . even if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I have nothing to fear.”*

Faith is daring to “fear not.” It’s the spiritual discipline of choosing to trust God regardless of how things appear. Faith is the practice of not being afraid. Even if all the worst-case scenarios happen, we won’t lose our joy, peace, hope, security, contentment and freedom. Not if we’re finding those things in God, first and foremost. That’s what true faith is. ❧



Troy (troydw@gmail.com) is learning to “fear not.”

PERSONAL REFLECTION

'Greater love has no one . . .'

The story of the plague village of Eyam

John Longhurst

“Greater love has no one than to lay their life down for their friends,” said Jesus.

That’s an amazing thing for anyone to do. But what about a whole village laying down its life for people it doesn’t even know?

That would be extraordinary. Yet that’s what happened more than 350 years ago when a pandemic came to the tiny village of Eyam in England. It’s a story worth revisiting today as anxiety about coronavirus spreads around the world.

It was in September 1665, when the local tailor in Eyam received a bolt of cloth from London. At that time, London was dealing with a terrible outbreak of bubonic plague, also known as the Black Death.

Unbeknownst to the tailor, the cloth was infected with fleas carrying the plague—which nobody knew until people started getting sick. This included the tailor, who was dead in a week.

Understandably, when they heard the news the 350 or so residents of the village wanted to flee to other towns to get away from the disease.

But the village’s new Anglican priest, William Mompesson, convinced them not to go. He preached a sermon pleading with them to stay to prevent the plague from being spread to other towns and villages in the vicinity.

He added that, if they stayed, he would stay, too, doing everything he could do alleviate their suffering.

The residents of Eyam agreed with their priest; they decided it was their Christian duty to stay quarantined until the disease had passed. They sealed themselves inside their village and awaited their fate.

A boundary made of stones was



PHOTO BY MICHAEL BECKWITH /
BIT.LY/CCLICENCE2-0

The Rose Cottage, located in the historic ‘plague village’ of Eyam, England, where more than 250 of the village’s 350 residents died of the Black Plague between 1665 and 1666.

created around the town—nobody from inside was allowed out past the stones, and nobody from the outside could come in.

They made arrangements with other communities to leave food and other supplies on the stones; money washed in vinegar (believed to disinfect the coins) was left on a well outside the village for payment.

After a year, the plague burned itself out. But it killed more than 250 people in Eyam before it left, including the wife of William Mompesson. The cemetery was so full that the dead had to be buried in nearby gardens and fields.

According to historians, the brave actions of the villagers prevented the plague from being spread to other places—but at a terrible cost.

In a BBC interview, Dr. Michael Sweet, a disease specialist at the University of Derby, said the decision by the villagers to quarantine their village “significantly reduced the potential of the spread of the pathogen. Without the restraint of the villagers, many more people, especially from neighbouring villages, would more than likely have succumbed to the disease.”

The current rector in Eyam, Reverend

Mike Gilbert, said in an interview: “There was definitely that hope of heaven that kept them going, but it was phenomenally difficult to simply face it. It wasn’t a nice way to die . . . it is almost overwhelming to think what it must have been like. I suspect fear stalked them every day of their lives.”

Today, Eyam is known as the “plague village.” It has a plague museum that tells the story of that terrible time and the villagers’ noble sacrifice.

Outside the town, the well and a boundary stone can still be seen, and the graves of the plague victims inside the churchyard and surrounding area are testaments to the sacrifices made by so many villagers.

Today, as COVID-19 sweeps the globe, people are worried and places of worship are wondering how to cope. Nobody is now expected to make the same huge sacrifice as the villagers of Eyam, but their act of selflessness can still be an encouragement of great love for people. ❧

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

PERSONAL REFLECTION

What makes us Mennonite?

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

“Talking about ‘a’ Mennonite identity seems passé,” wrote Marlene Epp in 2018. Still, Epp, a member of a pre-eminent family of Mennonite historians, is more than willing to talk about Mennonite identity.

Discussion of what holds us as Mennonites together does indeed seem clichéd. And impossible. We range from buggy drivers to prominent politicians. Our surnames range from Wiebe to Wenger to Abede, as in Deselagn Abede, president of Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia, the largest Mennonite body in the world.

Despite the complexity of our diversity, people are eager to return to the old question of identity.

Recently, nine of us at my church—Pembina Mennonite Fellowship in southern Manitoba—did just that. Responses varied, but as people spoke about family histories, learning early Anabaptist stories in Sunday school, more-with-less, and conscientious objectors (COs) they knew, the conviction in their voices struck me. Everyone has a story to share.

And, of course, we talked about last names, the telltale, and often messy, dividing line between people of Russian or Swiss ethnic lineage and people who choose to be Mennonite.

Michael Pahl (not Pauls), fits into the latter category. While teaching New Testament at Prairie Bible College in Three Hills, Alta., and working on a doctorate in theology from the University of Birmingham, he came to the realization that his beliefs aligned most closely with Anabaptism, which he learned about in a church history course.

Now he pastors Morden Mennonite Church in southern Manitoba.



His primary allegiance, he says, is to Anabaptist beliefs more than the Mennonite church per se. For him, those beliefs centre on commitments to Jesus, community and peace. We put Jesus at the centre of our reading of Scripture, and our ultimate allegiance is to Christ, not Caesar or worldly powers, he explains. As for community, Pahl gives Mennonites high marks for being caring, challenging and egalitarian.

The commitment to peace is where things become a bit more hazy. It goes back to the 1500s, when some—not all—persecuted Anabaptists returned good for evil. They eschewed the sword and professed love for their enemies.

Later, that turned into a refusal to participate in war, at least by a significant number of Mennonites. But, since the COs of the 1940s, the emphasis on peace has become less prominent and less focused, with definitions of peace-making broadening to include a range of social-justice and conflict-resolution measures.

For Sandy Plett of Pembina Mennonite, peacemaking is at the core of the Mennonite focus on stewardship, creation care, justice and service. She names it as one of three Mennonite distinctives, along with service and simplicity. For Plett, this grows out of years of study at Mennonite schools, volunteering with Mennonite Central Committee abroad and in thrift stores, and work with Mennonite camps.

Abe Warkentin is part of a group behind a CO monument and statue of Dirk Willems at the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum in Steinbach, Man. Willems, who escaped from the prison where he was held for his Anabaptist beliefs in 1569, famously turned back to rescue his pursuer, who had fallen through the ice of a nearby pond.

Willems was recaptured and later burned at the stake.

Warkentin sees Willems’s example of “returning good for evil” as an iconic example of Jesus’ “way of peace.” He is concerned that Mennonite churches are losing this peace message.

Marlene Epp, a professor of history and peace and conflict studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., also talks about the stories from the 1500s—stories of persecution, believers baptism and separation. In an interview, she said that, while a definitive Mennonite “core” is increasingly elusive, what is shared is a collective “memory of origins,” even if those old stories lead us in different directions.

For Epp, the peace position is complicated, as it has often not extended to violence against women, corporal punishment, racism and anti-semitism.

She also notes that Mennonite orientation largely centres on the congregation, and that can sometimes prevent us from looking more broadly. Sharing stories with Mennonites abroad—particularly through Mennonite World Conference—and with non-Euro-Canadian Mennonites in Canada has expanded the sense of Mennonitism.

While pinning down a definitive set of Mennonite beliefs is fraught, perhaps we can at least identify the tensions and questions on which much of Mennonite identity has centred. How do we follow Jesus practically? (Service is a word we use a lot.) How do we navigate the tension of being “*in the world but not of the world*”? (Here lie questions of technology, simplicity and separation.) How do we deal with power, both among ourselves (priesthood of all believers) and when the world threatens (non-resistance, separation of church and state, and love of enemies, if we still have those)?

For Epp, the task is not to nail down answers, but to bring a curious and compassionate ear to the great diversity of stories that swirl around them. ❧

COVER STORY

In a time of uncertainty

COVID-19 prompts churches to rethink gatherings

Story and Photo by Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent

With the spread of the COVID-19 virus prompting provincial health authorities to recommend social distancing, including public gatherings not to exceed 250 people, Fraser Valley Mennonite churches scrambled to react appropriately for the third Sunday of Lent on March 15.

Mennonite Church British Columbia's chair, Gerry Grunau, sent a letter on March 13 to all member congregations, acknowledging the difficulty of maintaining Christian fellowship in a time of uncertainty, while understanding the need to limit group gatherings.

"MC B.C. believes that participating and leading in our local communities means standing in solidarity with the people working hard to limit the seriousness of this virus," wrote Grunau. "From a public-health perspective, cancelling our gatherings for a short time increases the health-care system's ability to deal with any outbreaks by slowing down transmission."

Eben-Ezer Mennonite of Abbotsford remained open for worship on March 15, as did Point Grey Mennonite Fellowship, a small congregation in Vancouver.

Among those who suspended services were Crossroads Community and Eden Mennonite in Chilliwack, Yarrow United, Level Ground and Emmanuel Mennonite churches in Abbotsford, Langley Mennonite and Bethel Mennonite in Langley, Peace Mennonite in Richmond, Living Hope Fellowship in Surrey, and Sherbrooke Mennonite in Vancouver.

Some congregations took creative steps to keep fellowship on Sunday morning even if their doors were closed. Vancouver's Peace Church on 52nd encouraged its members to gather in small groups in homes. A posted link on the church website gave worship guidelines for "Love in the time of the coronavirus," including prayers, songs and readings.

Cedar Valley Mennonite in Mission closed its doors on the morning of March 15 but live streamed music and a message so members could participate remotely.

Chinatown Peace Church in Vancouver also held a live watch party for worship with the message, "The cross and COVID-19."

In a statement to *Canadian Mennonite*, Garry Janzen, MC B.C.'s executive minister, said, "I am very thankful that our congregations and their leadership are taking seriously the directions from our B.C. health minister, premier and provincial health officer. We have been finding ways to abide by the directives of self-isolation for those who have travelled from outside the country and social distancing for everyone else.

"In our age of technology, we are creatively finding ways of meaningful connection electronically, and we are very thankful for these resources. We will need to pay close attention to care for those who are lonely and don't have access to new technology. We will probably have to just pick up the phone a little more often and call people." ❧



The sign outside Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., announces the stark reality of church closure due to health concerns.

News brief

Renewal 2027 and MWC Executive Committee meetings cancelled due to COVID-19



World Health Organization map listing COVID-19 infections around the world in early March.

With the World Health Organization using the word "pandemic" to describe global infection from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), Mennonite World Conference (MWC) leadership cancelled the March Renewal 2027 public event and April Executive Committee meetings, both originally scheduled to take place in British Columbia. "We are cognizant of our global witness," said César García, MWC's general secretary. "We are choosing safety by postponing this event. Our Executive Committee members come from around the world; we would not want them to inadvertently transmit infection to a region of the world not currently affected, especially in regions with more precarious health care." The Renewal event—"Jesus Christ, our hope: Intercultural conversation and celebration"—has been postponed until 2022. The Executive Committee will meet online to make the most urgent decisions. The Executive Committee meetings preceding the General Council and Assembly 17 in Indonesia in 2021 will be extended in length. "We regret not gathering together face-to-face and meeting with local church members in British Columbia," said Nelson Kraybill, MWC president. "Although we trust God to keep us in health, we also believe God asks us to be prudent and to care for the vulnerable. In a case of global infection, this means staying at home."

—MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

Heading home early

COVID-19 forces pastor from Burkina Faso to cut his North American visit short

Story and Photo by Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent

When Pastor Siaka Traoré packed his bags for his trip to Canada and the United States in early March, it never crossed his mind that almost every event and visit he had planned would be cancelled.

He had prepared to go Winnipeg; Edmonton; Seattle, Wash.; and Abbotsford, B.C., but only made it as far west as Edmonton before rebooking his flight to go home, after all his remaining engagements, including the ones in Edmonton and Calgary, were cancelled due to COVID-19.

“I think this crisis tests humanity and shows us how we are weak, even though we think we are strong,” he said. “Everyone has fear. It is time to turn towards God. If you have God, you won’t panic.”

As chair of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Deacon’s Commission, Traoré made the trip to attend MWC meetings in Abbotsford together with 50 Assembly 2021 organizers from around the world, but he also felt it was a great opportunity to say thank you to all the missionaries who have served in Burkina Faso over the last 42 years.

“I really wanted to thank them personally for their power and presence, and for using their gifts in Burkina Faso to build the kingdom of God,” he said.

He was also looking forward to seeing the four remaining Mennonite pioneers who began the work in Burkina Faso in 1978 with Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM). “There are now almost a thousand Mennonites following Jesus in Burkina Faso thanks to these early pioneers,” Traoré said.

He got to see Donna and Loren Entz, who currently live in Edmonton, but he missed out on seeing Dennis and Jeanne Rempel, who live in Seattle.

Traoré, pastor of Église Évangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso in Bobo-Dioulasso,



Siaka Traoré, a Mennonite pastor of the Eglise Evangelique Mennonite in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso.

talked about how he was disciplined by the Mennonites. He became a Christian in 1979, at the age of 24, after asking God directly about the way to paradise. He had bought a copy of the Bible and loved it. As he read through the New Testament, he discovered the Lord’s Prayer and started to pray it daily, but he hungered to know more. He attended Maranatha Bible School and then connected with AIMM missionaries in Ouagadougou, just 20 kilometres from his village.

The directors of AIMM invited him to join the work and he never regretted saying yes. “One thing I love about the Mennonites is their strong biblical teaching,” he said. “I like the emphasis on

living as disciples of Jesus Christ. Their commitment to humility and simplicity. The power of the Mennonite attitude towards nonviolence.”

For many years, Traoré was in charge of a Mennonite Central Committee peacebuilding program in West Africa. He loved the work but mentioned that, no matter what he did, he was “first a pastor and last a pastor.” His greatest joy is seeing the change in people when they commit their lives to Jesus Christ.

He said he also enjoys seeing people of different faiths changing from enemies into friends, which is a great need for prayer in Burkina Faso. In the last four years, there have been multiple terrorist attacks that have resulted in the deaths of more than 70 Christians.

Even the chief of Burkina Faso’s army is quoted as saying, “Many talk of cursing the terrorists, but we need to love the terrorists. Pray for the change of the hearts of the terrorists; they are our children.”

Before returning home, Traoré asked that Canadians pray for peace in his country. He also left a message for Mennonites in Canada:

“It is true that we are in trouble. But you are all welcome. Come visit. Don’t abandon us. Be calm and do not fear. I would like to leave you with Exodus 14:13-14. ‘And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians, whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”’”

**‘Everyone has fear. It is time to turn towards God. If you have God, you won’t panic.’
(Siaka Traoré)**

People of Burkina Faso call for prayer

Mennonite World Conference

Terrorist attacks have displaced 700,000 in the West African nation of Burkina Faso. Many in the country say that what they most need is prayer.

“Only God can help us find a solution; it will not come by military force,” a provincial governor in the city of Bobo-Dioulasso said. He spoke when 150 religious and civic leaders gathered to greet a Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Deacons delegation composed of Siaka Traoré of Burkina Faso, Jürg Bräker of Switzerland, Jean Paul Pelsy and Didier Bellefleur of France, and J. Nelson Kraybill of the United States, who visited Burkina Faso in February.

Since 2016, pastors and churches in Burkina Faso have suffered lethal attacks. But mosques, municipalities, police, schools and other entities of social cohesion have also been hit. Two-hundred-thousand children cannot attend school, and starvation threatens because farmers cannot plant or harvest.

Respect for diversity

A spokesman for the president of the Muslim community in Bobo-Dioulasso told the gathering that his people seek peace, saying, “Respect for diversity is at the heart of Islam, and diversity is an expression of the Creator. God wants us different, but together.”

He thanked the Mennonites for their support, and quoted Isaiah 58: *“Is this not the fast that I choose . . . to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house?”*

In a separate gathering, Mennonite pastors indicated that violence has reduced trust across society. Churches must be careful since spies sometimes pose as seekers, they said.

“In the past, you could organize church

events freely,” said Abdias Coulibaly, president of Église Évangélique (Mennonite church). “But now you have to plan security.”

Some congregations only meet in homes.

Suffering together

“You have risked your lives to come and show us support,” Traoré told fellow delegation members. “If a member of the body

Act of love

The emperor received the delegation in his palace seated under a sculptural tree. “The leaves of the tree above you bear the words ‘peace,’ ‘reconciliation,’ ‘harmony,’ ‘pardon’ and ‘love,’” a delegation member said. “Christian scriptures say that fruit of God’s Spirit is love, joy, peace. We serve Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and seek the same as you.”

Mennonite pastors in Bobo-Dioulasso told of their congregations’ struggles.

The delegates thanked the emperor for his reconciling work in helping move Burkina Faso to civilian rule in 2015, and they assured him of their prayers. The emperor answered in the Mòoré language: “Thank you for coming to this country. This act of love shows that you truly are men of God.”

When the delegation met the archbishop, he quoted an African proverb: “One finger cannot gather flour to make a meal.” Fingers and hands must work together to cook just like people of diverse religious and cultural traditions must work together, he said, noting that

guns are not manufactured in his country but come from outside. “We call on the international community to help stop that,” he said.

Starting with prayer

Delegation members were impressed with the determination of religious and civic leaders to collaborate for peace, the courage of Mennonite leaders, and widespread recognition that violence has spiritual roots.

“In [Western] societies, prayer often is symbolic,” said Bräker, “and people just want to go out and do the ‘real thing.’ That’s not where people of Burkina Faso start.” ☞



PHOTOS BY J. NELSON KRAYBILL

A choir sings at a Mennonite church where the MWC Deacons delegation worshipped in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

is suffering, all members suffer with it.”

MWC visitors repeatedly heard that the turmoil is not primarily a Muslim-Christian conflict. Some attacks come from Islamic extremists, but others have criminal motivation related to drugs or human trafficking. High unemployment makes young people susceptible to radical ideology.

In addition to meeting with Mennonite pastors, MWC delegates met privately in Ouagadougou, the capital, with senior staff of the Federation of Churches and Mission of Burkina Faso. They also had conversations with the Roman Catholic archbishop and with the Mogho Naba (emperor) of the Mossi people, who constitute 40 percent of the nation’s population.

'I have hope now'

Learning trip to Philippines builds relationships

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

Twelve people from East Zorra Mennonite Church, near Tavistock, Ont., knew they would be impacted by their 10-day learning tour to the Philippines in early January. What they didn't expect was how much their visit would impact the Indigenous people they met.

"I have hope now," one of the local coffee farmers told the group from East Zorra.

Larry Kropf of East Zorra noted how the tour members repeatedly found themselves on both sides of the equation of

couple and the communities they work with, noting that it was all about learning and building relationships.

The group stayed in Davao City, Mindanao, learning about organizations the Pantojas established, and meeting local people impacted by their work.

Dann leads PeaceBuilders Community Inc., a ministry that trains leaders and volunteers in peacebuilding, conflict transformation and restorative justice. PeaceBuilders works with religious,

Philippines.

Joji leads Coffee For Peace, an inclusive development corporation to help make coffee farming a profitable business, protect the environment and support peacebuilding efforts. The company uses coffee as a tool for reconciliation between corporations, tribal groups and the government.

The East Zorra group was introduced to the fledgling coffee industry, met with the PeaceBuilders board for dialogue and prayer, and visited three Indigenous tribes.

The Obo Manobo Tribe gave the travellers a tour of a coffee farm, and a geo-thermal energy system powered by heat from a volcano. PeaceBuilders negotiated a fee the energy company pays to the tribe in exchange for rights to the land. Members of the tribe invited the East Zorra group to their sacred meeting spot, where they formed one circle and prayed together.

The Bagobo Tagabawa Tribe invited the East Zorra group to take part in a celebration that included dancing, music, food and prayer. Most of the families in this community were living in tents because their homes were damaged by earthquakes. They hope to develop their tribe as quality coffee producers, working towards an economic-ecological balance, food security and sustainability.

The Talaandig Tribe is surrounded by



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WAVES.CA

Participants in East Zorra Mennonite Church's learning trip to the Philippines are pictured with MC Canada Witness workers Dann and Joji Pantoja, left and right, in front of the Coffee for Peace sign.

"extending and receiving of God's love."

The learning tour grew out of a relationship the Ontario church has with Dann and Joji Pantoja, Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers in the Philippines since 2005. For a decade, East Zorra has offered prayer and financial support, and hosted the Pantojas when they came to Canada to share about their ministry.

Caleb Leis, a young adult, was so impressed by the peacebuilding work of the Pantojas that he decided to join the learning tour to see it for himself. He sensed how much their visit meant to the

civic, political and business leaders for just and nonviolent transformation in the





The East Zorra Mennonite Church learning tour group gathers at the Davao City welcome sign, in the Mindanao region of the Philippines, where they visited tribal groups and witnessed the peacebuilding efforts of MC Canada Witness workers Dann and Joji Pantoja.

some of richest land in the Philippines, clear cut for corporate farms that continue to encroach on their tribal land. Here, too, PeaceBuilders negotiated payment for the rights to the land, which will help to make the community viable and sustainable.

The East Zorra group noticed “significant similarities” to Canada’s relationship to Indigenous people. Pastor Ray Martin said they found themselves “cheering for” the Indigenous people they made relationships with, but it made them ask, “How are we cheering for the Indigenous communities around us?”

Martin said that he was impressed by the way the Pantojas “really zero in on relationships,” in a politically unstable country with religious divides and tensions with tribal groups over land rights. They try to hear the voices of all people and find common ground. They are not in the Philippines to convert people or build a church. They are there “to incarnate the love of God,” Martin said.

The impact of the trip is still being felt. Leis was inspired by how Filipinos have

rebounded from natural disasters. “We complain about little things,” he said. Now, “I feel like I can get over the small stuff.”

The Pantojas name the life, character, work and teachings of Jesus as the ultimate source of energy that sustains their peacebuilding and development work. This inspires Martin to grow in his faith. “It’s lived. It’s a 24/7 thing for them,” he said. “Seeing someone trying to live out their peace theology in another context helps us to ask, ‘How do we do that in our context?’” He added, “If the church isn’t

transforming the community around it, why is it there?”

The learning trip has challenged the East Zorra congregation. According to Kropf, the church’s commitment to the Pantojas “has intensified significantly,” and it hopes to eventually buy Coffee for Peace’s coffee when it becomes compliant with export regulations. East Zorra continues to ask how it can extend God’s love locally and globally. ☺



PHOTO ABOVE: Participants on a learning tour to the Philippines from East Zorra Mennonite Church listen to an elder from the Talaandig Tribe, right.



PHOTO LEFT: Participants on a learning tour to the Philippines from East Zorra Mennonite Church gather with the Bagobo Tagabawa Tribe as part of celebrations that included dancing, music, prayer and food. The tribe hopes to establish itself as quality coffee producers.

Looking forward during a time of transition

MC Manitoba focuses on next steps at annual gathering

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
ALTONA, MAN.

“Where are we headed? What are the challenges we are facing?” At the 2020 Mennonite Church Manitoba annual gathering, the regional church focused on these big questions it is addressing in the coming year.

More than 170 attendees, including the highest delegate count in seven years, took part in the gathering at Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church on March 7. It was a day filled with fresh cinnamon buns, worship, discussion and reporting on how the church is moving and working.

MC Manitoba congregations are entering a time of transition. This was reflected in the three mid-day discussions delegates could choose from: the new executive minister search, the strategic plan for Camps with Meaning, and communications within the regional church.

Ken Warkentin, executive minister for the past nine years, has resigned and will complete his term in June. Following his desire to once again work in pastoral ministry, he will be starting as intentional transitional pastor of Jubilee Mennonite Church in Winnipeg in August. Warkentin shared about his time as executive minister and the issues the church has faced while he was in the position, ultimately expressing deep gratitude for the staff and churches. “You are a beautiful body, and in you I see Jesus Christ,” he said. A search committee is working to find a leader to fill his position.

Camps with Meaning’s vision for the future includes developing Camp Assiniboia and launching a capital campaign to raise funds. Some of those plans include completing construction of the lake, building a retreat centre and new pool, relocating the ropes course, creating a gap-year program and hiring more staff



PHOTOS BY DARRYL NEUSTAEDTER BARG

The minutes, board actions, nominations slate and budget at this year’s MC Manitoba annual gathering were all approved.

to manage increased capacity.

Communication within MC Manitoba is evolving as it says goodbye to *Frohe Botschaft*, its weekly German-language radio broadcast, which started airing in 1956. The regional church has decided to end the ministry, produced and hosted by Dorothea Kampen, due to a decline in the number of listeners. Staff are brainstorming what could replace *Frohe Botschaft*, such as a podcast.

The regional church also communicates through a weekly newsletter and a new website. Andrea De Avila of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg suggested that MC Manitoba further explore the world of social media in an effort to connect more with younger people.

The 2020 budget, which was approved by a vote at the gathering, is virtually the same as the 2019 budget. However, the financial report shows that the 2019 fiscal year ended with about a \$20,000 deficit. Moderator Gerald Gerbrandt wrote in the report book that balancing the books must be made a priority this year. MC Manitoba “is not first of all about money, but . . . as any organization with staff, it must balance its books in order to thrive,” he wrote.

Congregational giving was actually higher than anticipated, for which Warkentin said he was grateful. The shortfall came rather from individual and corporate donations.

Board member Richard Klassen

explained how the board had to create the budget virtually in the dark, with no financial statements to go on for quite some time, which caused significant frustration.

This was caused in part because MC Manitoba has been changing the way it presents its financial statements for the past two years, in order to better align with how MC Eastern Canada and MC Canada present their statements, as part of an overall harmonizing of reporting standards across the regional churches and nationwide church.

A task force will examine how the situation can be improved in the future.

A question asked by Dorothy Fontaine, the regional church's director of mission, prompted the most animated discussion of the day among delegates: "What is your church's charism [identity, core gift]?" Coming up to the microphones, delegates shared the strengths they appreciate about their churches: excellent music, a thriving



Gerald Gerbrandt, MC Manitoba moderator, left, and Ken Warkentin are pictured at the regional church's 2020 annual gathering. Warkentin will be leaving his role as executive minister after nine years in the position.

young adult group, a pastor who is a good teacher, social justice work and rich fellowship.

Many expressed their appreciation for this time of sharing and a desire to continue communicating these reflections. One way this happens is through *Canadian Mennonite*, which was also the focus of a key question of the day: "How will we pay for the magazine?"

MC Manitoba pays less than half the price per subscription of any of the other regional churches. Many delegates, upon learning this, expressed a desire to bring

News brief

Team Canada wins world junior curling championships

The winners of the 2020 World Junior Curling Championships are from Altona, Man. What's more, skip Mackenzie Zacharias, second Emily Zacharias and coach Sheldon Zacharias all attend Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Along with the rest of their team—third Karlee Burgess, lead Lauren Lenentine and alternate Rachel Erickson—the Zacharias family represented Canada at the championship games in Krasnoyarsk, Russia, from Feb. 15 to 22. With a record of nine wins and two losses during the week, Canada beat Korea 7-5 in the final for the gold medal. The team went undefeated in both the provincial and national championships in January, held in Dauphin, Man., and Langley, BC, respectively. This was the team's first season together. It was the first world title for the Zachariases. "It honestly feels incredible to be able to call our team the world champions," says Mackenzie. "This has been a dream of ours since we started curling when we were little. I am just so thankful every day that God has given me so many opportunities through this sport."

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



PHOTO BY SHELDON ZACHARIAS

Pictured from left to right: Rachel Erickson, Lauren Lenentine, Emily Zacharias, Karlee Burgess and Mackenzie Zacharias.

MC Manitoba's support in line with that of the other regional churches.

A few big topics remained unaddressed at the end of the day and were brought forward in a question period.

Erwin Warkentin of Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, noted that the three-year moratorium on conversations of LGBTQ+ inclusion in the church ends this year. He asked whether there would be a plan for what happens next, once the ban is lifted, as none was mentioned at the gathering.

Ken Froese of Pembina Mennonite Fellowship expressed disappointment that relationships with Indigenous peoples were hardly mentioned, since the report on the subject was not presented. He said Manitobans often leave the actual building of relationships to a few select people, but everyone needs to be involved in these conversations.

The day of discussion and fellowship ended with communion, reminding participants that, as the regional church looks ahead into the coming year, it looks ahead together, united as the body of Christ. ✎

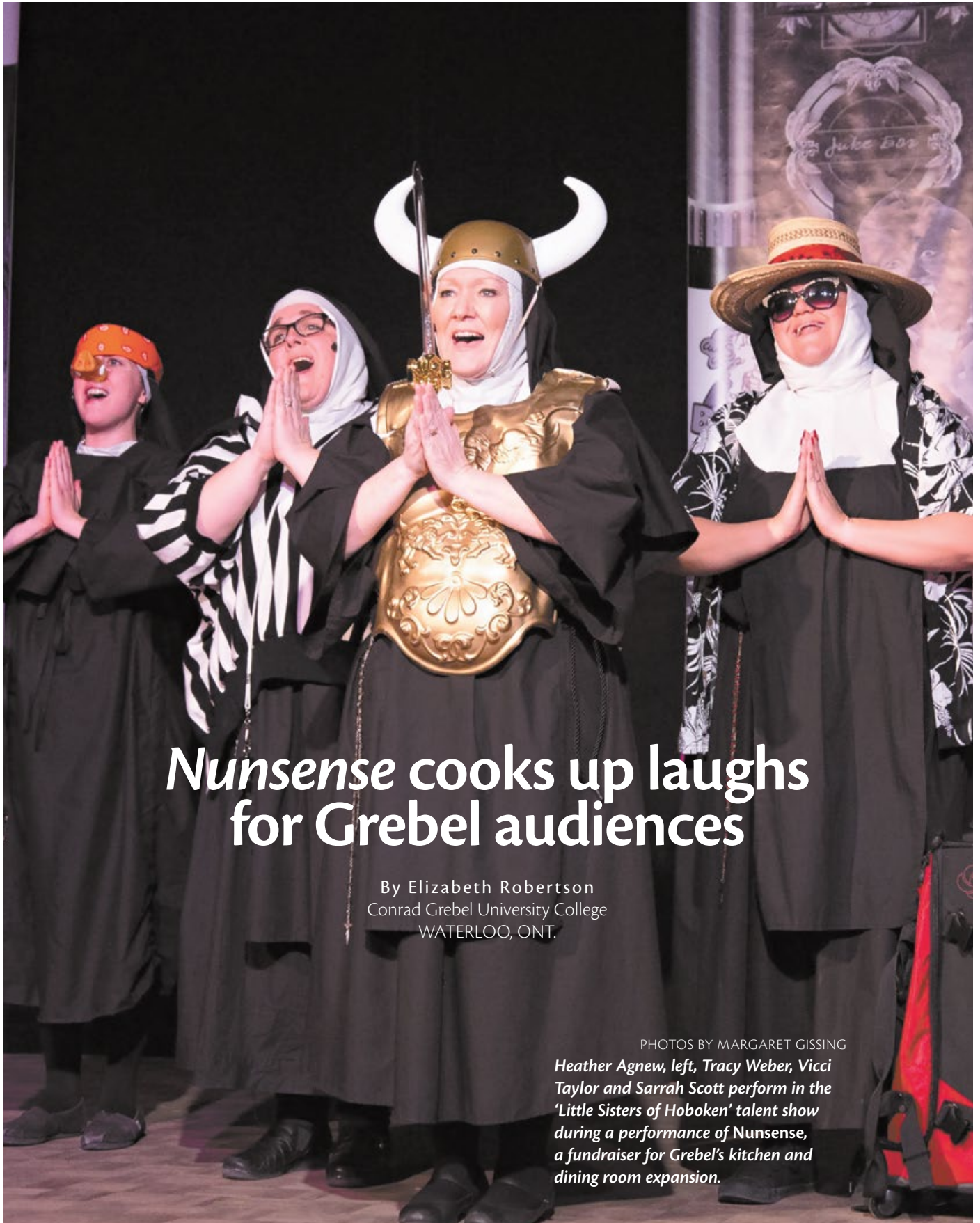


Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth allows young people (grades 10 to 12) to engage their faith questions, develop their passion for ministry and test their leadership gifts.

The program includes:

- 16-day group experience in Elkhart, Indiana, in July
- 100-hour congregational experience with a mentoring pastor

FIND OUT MORE:
Visit amsb.ca/explore



Nunsense cooks up laughs for Grebel audiences

By Elizabeth Robertson
Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO, ONT.

PHOTOS BY MARGARET GISSING

Heather Agnew, left, Tracy Weber, Vicci Taylor and Sarrah Scott perform in the 'Little Sisters of Hoboken' talent show during a performance of Nunsense, a fundraiser for Grebel's kitchen and dining room expansion.



Alison Enns, co-producer of Nunsense, plays Sister Mary Amnesia as she shows off her ventriloquism skills.



PHOTO ABOVE: Vicci Taylor, as Reverend Mother, teaches the audience how to be a proper nun.

Conrad Grebel University College presented *Nunsense*, an off-Broadway hit musical comedy, over four days in late February. This comical tale was mounted as a fundraiser for Grebel's Fill the Table campaign for the college's kitchen and dining room expansion.

Lisa Hagen, director and musical director of the show, took music courses at Grebel and returned to provide the

imaginative leadership for this musical comedy.

The cast included Grebel staff, parents and friends.

Alison Enns co-produced the show and played Sister Amnesia in the production. She was joined by Sarrah Scott, Tracy Weber, Vicci Taylor and Heather Agnew.

The staff-initiated event raised more than \$8,500 for the campaign. ☘

PHOTO BELOW: Alison Enns, left, Vicci Taylor and Tracy Weber cook up laughs in the convent kitchen.



A time to reminisce

Menno Simons Centre says farewell to current location

By Henry Neufeld
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
VANCOUVER

The Pacific Centre for Discipleship, which owns the Menno Simons Centre in Vancouver, has decided to sell the student building and prepare to build a larger student residence on the edge of the University of B.C. campus.

The current Centre has provided a pathway, seeking to help students integrate their academic studies, faith and discipleship through Christian community.

Evan and Janice Krieder, among the original founders, paid tribute and gave prayers of thanks for the 12 couples who served as residence coordinators over the 34 years. "They made the place work," said Evan.

Bethany Parsons, the present residence coordinator, said the Centre thrived on food, diversity and support. A student survey indicated the value of weekly community meals. "Eating together is most important," she said, "including the collaboration in meal preparation."

A current resident commented on "moments of joy, laughter, sadness and deep

reflection." The diversity came from students from various countries, as well as denominations. "I came in lonely and found a place to share experiences. . . . I love the late-night debates." Support is almost built in; the rooms are tiny, being previously occupied by nuns, so more time is spent in the common space. "It's okay to be interrupted."

Making community happen is up to each one, and student retreats helped facilitate togetherness. Students who are new to Vancouver have said the Menno Simons Centre provides support and a sense of home.

John Friesen, another of the original founders, described the challenge in 1986 when realtor Oscar Klassen advised them that the Sisters of Charity of Halifax were dwindling in numbers and that

the Catholic diocese wanted to sell the convent associated with the Our Lady of Perpetual Help school nearby. The price of \$600,000 was problematic and the Mennonite group had no funds. Borrowing at 13.5 percent interest was scary.

The small group approached the B.C. Mennonite Brethren and the then General Conference Mennonites for financial assistance. Both conferences refused. People from the founding group put up their own property as collateral to facilitate the financing, and the convent was purchased.

The nuns were pleased that it went to an education-oriented group. Knowing that the Centre would continue to serve educational needs helped swing the decision in its favour. Significant support also came from Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, which has met in the Centre's chapel since its inception.

Prayers of thanks were offered for forward-looking and risk-taking founders who sacrificed for the establishment of the Centre.

A new facility is planned in a new setting with the same spirit of wanting to offer students an opportunity to experience being in community with other Christians. ❧



PHOTOS BY EVAN KREIDER

John Friesen, one of the original founders of the Menno Simons Centre, speaks at the farewell celebration for the facility, held on March 14.

At a "Farewell to Menno" on March 14 for alumni and supporters, Kevin Hiebert, the Centre's board chair, described the afternoon's agenda as bittersweet, "a time to reminisce and look forward" after 34 years at Menno.

The Menno Simons Centre served as a student residence since 1986 and, like all property, it aged and required updating. With accommodation for 24 students, the building was not large enough to sustain a major renovation. The Centre has purchased the Pentecostal and Lutheran properties, and is in the process of getting zoning and architectural approval for a facility that it is hoped will accommodate up to 70 residents.

It's a major project, described by one board member as "casting ourselves into the wilderness."



The chapel at the Menno Simons Centre in Vancouver has served as a meeting place for Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship since 1986.

GATHERING AROUND THE TABLE

A big heart filled with butter tarts

By Barb Draper
Editorial Assistant

Barry Reesor is widely known for the generosity with which he shares his famous homemade butter tarts. He calls it his “butter-tart ministry.”

Although he is a computer guy who works in network infrastructure, he also enjoys baking, and the coworkers at his office frequently benefit from his big heart. They recognize the white container that he carries the tarts in, and they are known to lobby him for a taste whenever they see it. Barry is fair-minded so he restricts them to one tart per person, although in very special circumstances they can take one home for their partner.

In the fall of 2019, Barry and his wife, Lori Guenther Reesor, were interviewed in a video produced by Abundance Canada, in which they talked about their approach to generous giving. When it came time to launch the video, Barry brought along some butter tarts to share with the gathering, including the crew. They were a big hit. The videographer took a bite and said appreciatively, “I’m being ministered to.”

Because Lori eats gluten-free food and their son is allergic to eggs, Barry’s family cannot eat his famous tarts, and that’s how he got started giving them away. Each Christmas, his neighbourhood in Mississauga, Ont., gets together for a Christmas party, and Barry’s tarts are eagerly anticipated. Last Christmas, they disappeared so quickly that he decided to run home to refill the plate.

The year that Barry’s daughter Emma became engaged, he brought butter tarts when they went to visit his daughter’s future in-laws. Now they expect butter tarts every year. At Emma’s wedding, Barry made 150 tarts and put them on a custom-made stand as a showpiece. Later that year, he also made butter tarts for a co-worker’s wedding—he just changed



PHOTO COURTESY OF BARRY REESOR

For his daughter’s wedding, Barry Reesor made a tower of butter tarts.

the ribbon on the tart stand to match the colour scheme.

For many years, Hamilton Mennonite Church hosted a Ten Thousand Villages sale and Barry would make tarts each year to help raise funds.

As happens with an experienced baker, Barry has learned to modify his recipes through trial and error. Although butter tarts are his signature food, he often makes cherry tarts so that his son can enjoy them. He has experimented to the point where he can also make gluten-free pastry.

To make sure that the quality of the food he shares is always consistently high, Barry has some tricks of the trade. One year he received a marble rolling pin for Christmas and that seems to work well. He has discovered that a plastic cutting board or silicon mat works for rolling out the dough thinly. The texture on the board traps a small amount of flour that keeps

the dough from sticking.

He usually makes the pastry a day in advance and stores it in the refrigerator to keep it cold before rolling it out. If he doesn’t have time to do that, he puts it in the freezer for a few minutes while he assembles the filling ingredients.

Connecting with others and building community work well when there is food to share, and Barry has discovered that he can share God’s love through his butter-tart ministry. ✂

With files from Lori Guenther Reesor.

The recipe for these butter tarts can be found at canadianmennonite.org/butter-tart-ministry.



PHOTO BY ZACH CHARBONNEAU

The end of February marked Randy Lepp’s official retirement from the MCC Thrift on Mill store in Leamington, Ont., after three-and-a-half years in the position, so the store threw him a party. Customers, volunteers and staff were invited to enjoy coffee and cake, and sit for a chat with Lepp before his big send-off. In his retirement, Lepp plans to take some time to travel and dive deeper into his passion of grandparenting. Pictured at right is the new general manager, Cindy Epp.

A lifetime of taking pictures

Saskatoon senior reflects on his love of photography

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

Henry Harms once owned a thousand cameras. He still has a closet full of them. They bear witness to a life-long love of photography.

Harms was 9 when he bought his first camera—a Baby Brownie Special. As a boy growing up on a farm near Hague, Sask., he would go to Saskatoon to watch ball games at Cairns Field. He purchased the camera at a store next to the ball diamond.

Harms's love of photography was always closely linked with sports. In the early days, he took pictures of the Osler Monarchs' ball games. But, he says, "I didn't take a lot of pictures because it was expensive."

Harms and his wife Joan had four children, all of whom were involved in sports. His youngest son, Randy, played softball.

Harms always took his camera to his son's games.

"When Randy's team went to the midget softball finals in Halifax, I went along," he says. "I rented a car and went to all the tourist sites and took pictures."

Early in his career as a high school teacher, Harms worked for two years as dean of boys at Rosthern Junior College (RJC).

There he met a Grade 10 boy who didn't quite fit in with the other students. The boy was interested in photography, so Harms taught him how to print pictures.

Years after retiring from teaching, Harms worked at a Saskatoon photography shop called The Darkroom. One day a man walked in with film to be developed. Harms describes him as "a hippie-type guy who drove a Volkswagen van." He recognized his former student right away, although the man didn't know him.

"He told me his stories, how he had done photos for *National Geographic* and had travelled to Africa and Europe," says Harms. "I asked him, 'What spurred you to do this?'"

"He said his parents sent him to RJC and a teacher there had given him a chance," says Harms. He asked the man, "Would you recognize that teacher if you saw him?" That's when the man recognized Harms as his former dean.

When Harms retired from teaching in 1993, he worked as a freelance photographer for a company that did student portraits. He also did family portraits but he didn't enjoy either of those jobs.

So he went to a Saskatoon automobile dealership looking for work. They asked if he wanted to sell cars. He said no. What he wanted was to travel to small towns around Saskatchewan and find out what the dealership could do for people to help them remain in their communities.



PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Henry Harms proudly displays a camera that once belonged to Esther Patkau, former missionary to Japan and long-time spiritual care director at Bethany Manor, where Harms lives.



PHOTO BY HARRY HARMS

Henry Harms's photo of the demolition of a grain elevator in Osler, Sask., was taken in 1999.

Initially, the owners laughed at the idea. Two weeks later, they hired him.

For two years he travelled the province, asking people how the dealership could serve them better. Along the way, he took lots of pictures.

Harms took those rolls of film to The Darkroom to be developed.

"I would develop my own pictures and also helped with others," says Harms. One day the owner said to him, "You're working here all the time anyway. You might as well earn a pay cheque." When Don's Photo bought out The Darkroom, Harms kept working.

Through the years, he took pictures of family events and community life. "I come from a big family," he says, "so there were lots of weddings." Studio photographers were expensive, and Harms took pictures on location at affordable prices, so his relatives and friends hired him instead.

But one of his great loves remained



The Traffic Bridge & S.S. City of Medicine Hat - June 7, 1908

PHOTO BY HARRY HARMS

Henry Harms restored this historic photograph of the sinking of the S.S. City of Medicine Hat when it struck the traffic bridge in Saskatoon in 1908.



PHOTO BY HARRY HARMS

This photo of the UofS Huskies men's basketball team shows Henry Harms's skill at capturing athletes in action.

photographing sports teams. Professional photographers would "sell the rights to three pictures for \$99," he says. "I took pictures and gave them to the coach. They could get pictures for free."

Eventually, word of Harms's skill and generosity reached the University of Saskatchewan, and he was asked to photograph the university's teams. "When the UofS approached me to take pictures at

sporting events," he says, "Joan and I got staff cards. I took my camera along and we got in on all university events free."

"I never did get rich taking pictures because I wanted people to have pictures rather than making money [for myself]," says Harms. Although he charged enough to cover his costs, he says he "thought of it as a service for family and friends."

Harms, who is 82, enjoys restoring and

retouching old photographs, helping to preserve history.

He still enjoys taking pictures, although he doesn't take as many as he once did. "What do I do with them?" he wonders. ☞

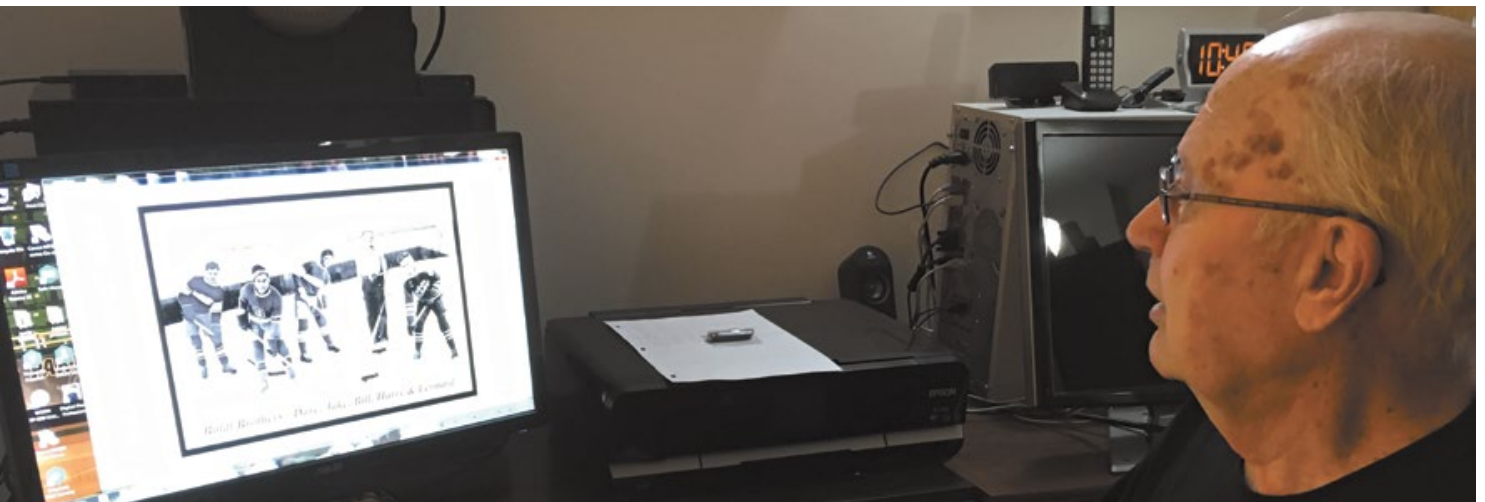


PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Henry Harms enjoys using digital technology to create new photographs. Here he shows a composite photo he created depicting five Boldt brothers from Osler, Sask.

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Is technology on 'Team Human'?

Leaders and educators explored Anabaptist perspectives on digital culture at AMBS earlier this month.
canadianmennonite.org/digitalfaith



Having Jesus for dinner

On the CM blog, B.C. writer Leane Winger reflects on relationships and hospitality.
canadianmennonite.org/blog/winger-dinner



Watch: Worship led by Mennonite Church Canada leadership

In this time of social distancing, watch a 45-minute worship service delivered by MC Canada.
canadianmennonite.org/video/march22



'In this together'

In This Together: LGBTQ+ Anabaptist Network of Canada met at the end of February to discuss the future of an inclusive church.
canadianmennonite.org/ittogether

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CANADIAN Mennonite

Schools Directory featuring Conrad Grebel University College

Associate households represent Grebel community off campus

By Elizabeth Robertson
Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.

The Associate Program is a unique opportunity for University of Waterloo students who live off campus to benefit from the community at Conrad Grebel University College. While staying involved with clubs and leadership opportunities on the Grebel campus, many of these students also choose to experience community living with fellow Grebelites in off-campus houses and apartments during their last years of study.

These Associate households may be born in different ways. Sometimes Grebelites will simply look for a place to live with other friends and roommates who are moving off campus. Some Waterloo houses have been Associate households for as long as anyone can remember. When one student leaves for co-op or after graduation, another takes their place for the next term. Many of the residents in these households have continued to house different configurations of Grebel Associates over the years.

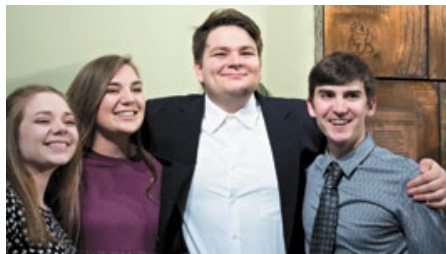
Andrew Cullar lives in one such Associate household. The environment and business student says that he and his roommates “already have a similar preconceived idea of how to live in community,” as they had previously been Grebel residents.

They brought this experience into their off-campus sub-community as they divide

up responsibilities and stay connected with on-campus events.

Cullar says that Grebel’s on-campus community continues to be an important part of their lives. “Having a solid friend base and ways to stay active is great for my mental health, especially being far from home,” he says.

When their own household is quiet, Associates can head over to Grebel to experience the always bustling college community there.



Andrew Cullar, right, and fellow Associates enjoy Grebel’s end-of-term banquet.

Some Waterloo houses have been Associate households for as long as anyone can remember.

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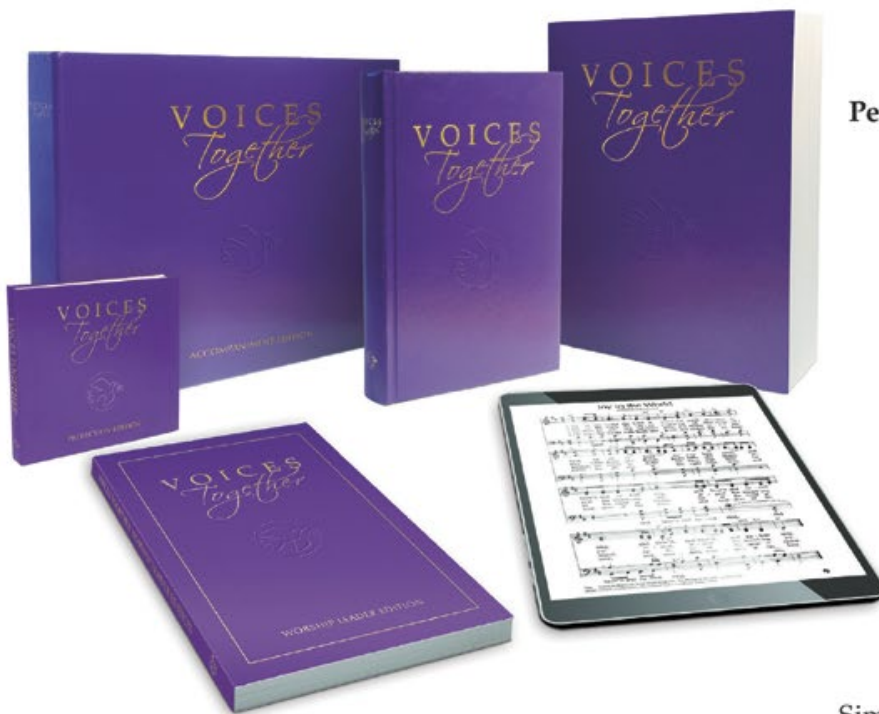
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Calendar

Please Take Note

In an attempt to keep COVID-19 from spreading, some of these events may have already been postponed or cancelled. To be sure, contact the organizers in advance.

British Columbia

April 17: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. holds its annual general meeting, at Ricky's Country Restaurant, Abbotsford, at 1:30 p.m. For more information, visit mhsbc.com.

May 3: After 34 years, Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship worships for the final time at the Menno Simons Centre in Vancouver, at 10 a.m. For more information, call 604-228-8911.

May 10: Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship begins services at St. James Community Square, Vancouver; entrance off Trutch Street. For more information, call 604-228-8911.

Saskatchewan

May 2: Shekinah needs woodcutters proficient with a chainsaw to help fill the camps firewood reserves, at 9 a.m. Lunch and snacks will be provided. RSVP to 306-945-4929.

Manitoba

April 18: "Speaking of faith: Spirituality and language" conference, at CMU, Winnipeg, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Keynote speakers: Carolyn Klassen and Andrew Dyck. For more information, call 204-487-3300.

April 30: Enjoy "a day away" at Assiniboia Camp and Retreat Centre, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Activities include hiking, outdoor activities, music, and more. To reserve a spot, call 204-864-2159.

May 13: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's community work day. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

May 27: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's junior-high spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

Ontario

April 7: Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir open house, at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church: (6:30 to 7 p.m.) for families with children aged 6 to 9; (7:30 to 8 p.m.) for families with children aged 9—Grade 4—to 14. For more information, email imcc.conductor@rogers.com.

April 20-24: MCC's meat canner visits Elmira for five days, at the Elmira Produce Auction Centre. To volunteer, visit elmirameatcanningproject.ca or call Keith or Dianne Snyder at 519-669-4084.

April 24-25: MC Eastern Canada annual church gathering will now be a video streaming event. Theme: "A gentle whisper." For more information, visit mcecc.ca/event.

April 27: New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale fundraising dinner, at Bingemans in Kitchener, at 6:30 p.m. To reserve tickets, call 519-745-8458.

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



Classifieds

Employment Opportunity



Employment Opportunity Administrative Coordinator (AC)

The Anabaptist Peace Centre (APC) is looking for an individual to give leadership to its emergence and development. The APC is a new venture in Kelowna, B.C., that has grown out of First Mennonite Church. The centre is a place where like-minded organizations can partner together to share space, and host events and activities that reflect a commitment to justice, equity, care for the planet and reconciliation with Indigenous nations.

Overview

This position is an exciting opportunity for someone who has an interest in unique ways of engaging communities. The AC will initiate, develop and oversee partnerships and collaborations of APC. The AC will have a foundational understanding of the goals of the APC and ensure that programs reflect principles of reconciliation and justice.

This will be a 0.50 FTE position beginning June 1, 2020.

To inquire or apply, send an email and resumé to the First Mennonite Church Board: kfmc@telus.net by April 24, 2020.



You can make a difference.



MCC BC seeks a **Director of Development and Advancement**. This full-time position will provide leadership in developing and implementing strategies that generate awareness, relationships, engagement, support from the MCC BC constituency and the broader public. All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to personal Christian faith, active church affiliation and non-violent peacemaking.

For full job description and to apply visit mccbc.ca/openings. **Anticipated start date, June 1, 2020.** For more information, contact Sophie Tiessen-Eigbike MCC BC HR Manager at 604-851-7729.

Old Bibles given new life

Saskatoon congregation holds rededication service for former pew Bibles

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

When Saskatoon's First Mennonite Church started projecting Scripture readings on the screen at the front of the sanctuary, Pastor Rod Suderman noticed that congregants were no longer reaching for their pew Bibles.

The Revised Standard Version Bibles dated back to 1976. Suderman and the church's worship committee knew there wasn't any point in keeping them if they weren't being used. So they thought of having some sort of decommissioning service.

Suderman had heard that Lois Siemens had written a litany for a similar service for the residents of Bethany Manor, where she serves as spiritual care director. So he called her up and asked if he could use the litany.

Meanwhile, a congregant told them about a man named Clair Ziolkowski with Beautiful Feet Ministries. Ziolkowski



PHOTO BY MELITA PENNER

Clair Ziolkowski of Beautiful Feet Ministries and his wife Virle prepare to pack pew Bibles from First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. The Bibles will be used by students at a Bible college in Malawi.

could ship their pew Bibles to a Bible college in Malawi.

So, instead of a decommissioning service, the congregation held a rededication service. On Feb. 16, using Siemens' adapted litany, the congregation rededicated their pew Bibles for future service in Malawi.

Five stacks of five Bibles each sat at the front of the church. As they read the litany, five individuals came forward to hold the stacks of Bibles. After the benediction, the congregation sang "I Love to Tell the Story," the hymn that was sung at the original pew Bible dedication back in 1976.

As they left the sanctuary, congregants were invited to take the Bibles that were in the pew racks and carry them out. They followed the five Bible carriers into the foyer, where they presented their Bibles to Ziolkowski. ☸