

We are all created wonderful

Focus on Mental Health, pg. 27-30

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EDITORIAL

Some things that need to be said

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



As this issue goes to press, much of Canada is still practising measures to hold COVID-19 at bay.

Fatigue has set in; we're tired of thinking about it, talking about it and praying about it. Yet some things still must be said:

God did not cause this pandemic

COVID-19 is not God's punishment. We do not serve a fire-and-brimstone God, a cold-hearted deity who desires that humans suffer. God did not design the coronavirus to teach humans important lessons. This is not a test to see if we trust in God more than facemasks and physical distancing. (Yes, there is "smiting" in the Hebrew Scriptures, but we turn our eyes instead to Jesus, the most perfect expression of the Divine One.)

This is the time to remember that our Loving Parent is with us in this deadly illness, in the precious gift that is life itself. God is grieving with us in the fragility of human bodies and offering us the opportunity for patience and trust. Our God-given creativity is stretching to find new ways to connect with each other. Our God-given gifts are harnessed to solve the problems created by this novel coronavirus.

This is a time for wonder at the beautiful world and gratitude to its Creator, a time to sift out things that have weighed us down and to cultivate instead new habits of faithfulness.

We seek the truth

In the search for a cure, magical remedies are "revealed," some innocuous and others downright dangerous. While intentions might be good, their purveyors offer neither scientific grounding nor medical accountability. Alongside them are moneymaking schemes that are really scams disguised to look like helpful advice.

Poke around on Facebook and YouTube and you'll see the flourishing of conspiracy theories about who is really behind the coronavirus and what their hidden purposes are. These theories tie bits of science with a mishmash of political agenda and a smattering of religion. Sowing panic and confusion, pushers of conspiracies promote disinformation that perpetuates panic and hatred.

This is the time to listen to only the most reliable sources of information. It is the time to support solid scientific research and responsible medical counsel. This is the time to encourage careful journalistic reporting and statistical analysis. In an atmosphere of rumour and gossip, we must check information carefully and refuse to pass on conjectures and lies. We must strive for the truth.

We all could use a little mercy

In the face of this global illness, the human family is dealing with uncertainty, loss and grief. Physical pain, financial decline and potential death overwhelm our spirits. Some of us are managing to cope, but, in the process, our weaknesses and doubts are also revealed.

A song composed and sung by Mary Gauthier comes to mind: "Mercy Now." She sings of a father at the end of his life, a brother struggling with mental illness, a church and a country sinking into a "poisoned pit," all of whom "could use a little mercy now." You can listen to it online at bit.ly/mercy-now.

This points to Micah 6:8, a favourite of many Mennonites: "*He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*" (NIV). Justice and humility are a part of the Anabaptist tradition; sometimes we practise them in not-so-humble ways! But what does it mean, right now in the midst of this pandemic, to practise the second requirement?

The song goes on: "Yeah, we all could use a little mercy now / I know we don't deserve it but we need it anyhow / We hang in the balance dangled 'tween hell and hallowed ground / And every single one of us could use some mercy now."

This is the time to realize how much we need each other, the time to practise kind deeds along with much forbearance. This is the time to extend mercy to ourselves, to each other and to the rest of the world, the human sphere as well as the natural.

Speaking of mercy, check out this issue's Focus on Mental Health. The feature begins on page 4 and the stories start on page 27. You will see in them mercy expressed. ☸



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PHOTO: NEW DAWN EDUCARE CENTER

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Anxiety 4

In learning to live each day with the discomfort of anxiety, Lucia Eitzen, a counsellor in private practice in British Columbia, finds fear begins to shift to trust when she feels accepted and loved. "Acceptance and love calm my fears and energize me," she writes.



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FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH FEATURE

Anxiety

Living each day with the discomfort of uncertainty

By Lucia Eitzen

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

As the effects of COVID-19 grow, I am observing a variety of emotional reactions in myself and others. COVID-19 touches everyone's life. If it isn't personal illness or loss, we contend with separation, loneliness, deep uncertainty, inconvenient grocery shopping and accessing services that used to be readily available. Children are at home, incomes are at risk. We do not know how long this will last or how bad it will be. We live each day with the discomfort of uncertainty.

Of course, none of us has ever really known what will happen tomorrow, but we live as if we do. Now we are inescapably aware of what has always been true: We are mortal and vulnerable; we are not in control; we cannot know the future; and there is not a lot we can do about it.

These are uncomfortable thoughts. In a world focused on success, security and well-being, we are encouraged to pursue our dreams while ignoring our weakness and mortality. We overcome fear by:

- **Ignoring things:** Smile until you are happy.
- **Minimizing things:** It's not so bad.
- **Explaining things:** What I understand, I do not fear.
- **Distracting ourselves:** Let's do something fun.

Shifting from fear to trust

Behind these façades, anxiety levels were already high. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association

(CMHA), 5 percent of the population suffers from "anxiety disorders" causing mild to severe impairment. Statistics Canada figures from 2012 indicate that 8.7 percent of Canadians had a "generalized anxiety disorder" in their lifetime, and half of these experienced depression as well.

People coping with fear and anxiety swing back and forth between responses as the situation, and

perceptions of it, change. We panic. We grasp for assurances and control. We deny. We try to understand.

Here is something I notice in myself: The everyday, relatively domestic fear that sometimes stops me from doing something I'm initially drawn to has a restrictive feel and effect. Like brakes being applied to my wheels.

Suppose that I'm feeling this way, and I take time to reflect and sense deeply into myself—particularly in the presence of God or trustworthy human love—then what I usually experience is increasing calm, peace, trust, groundedness, well-being, spaciousness and a presence that I can rely on no matter the circumstances. My fear gradually dissipates. It was mostly fumes in my head.

But sometimes I will find a real and serious basis for my fear. My fear is serving a purpose. It is protecting me from doing foolish things that could put myself and others in danger. It keeps me safe. But if that protective function grows too strong, the fear becomes a prison. My brakes jam on. My life stalls, becoming constricted and limited.

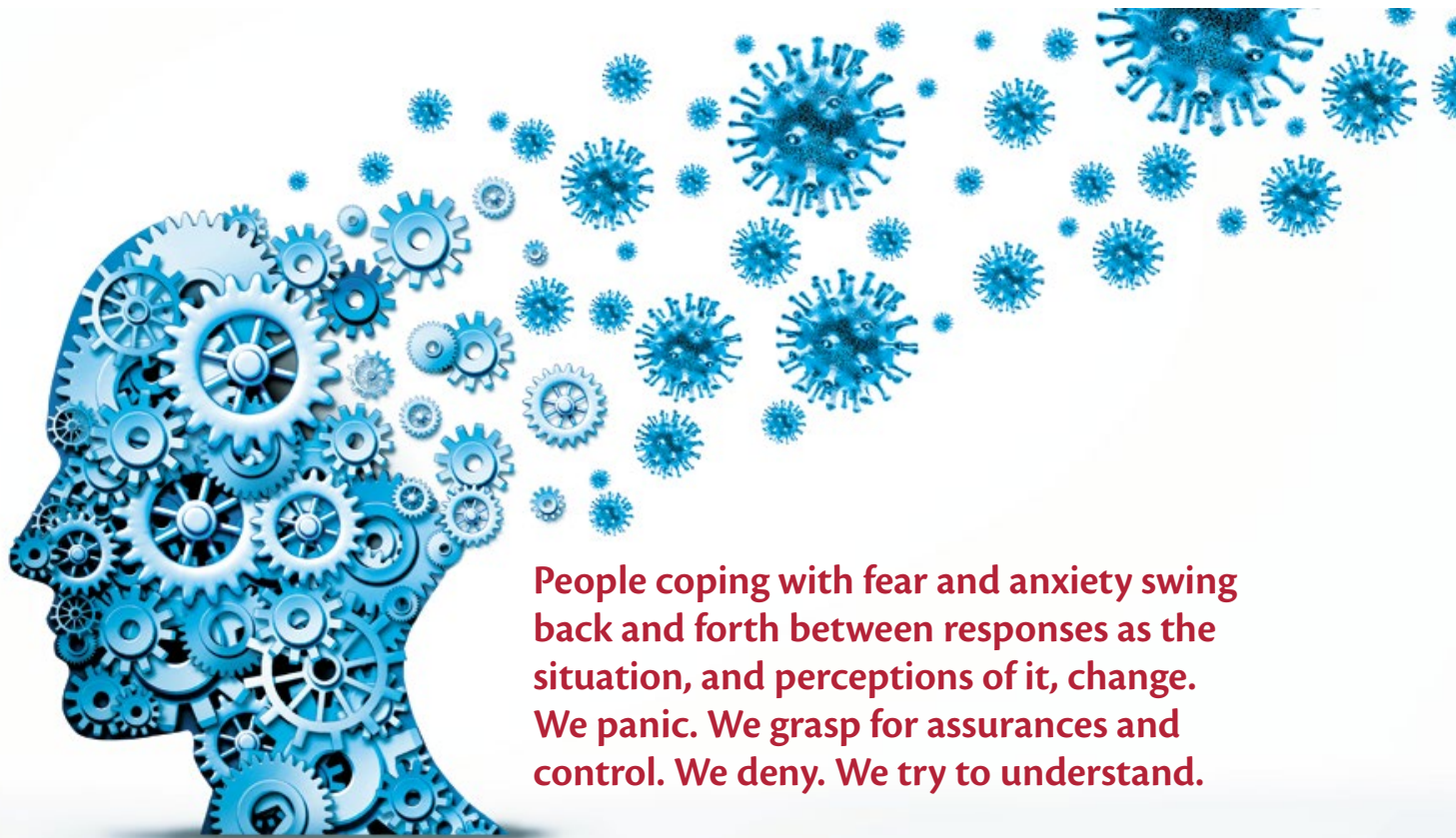
I think this is one reason why anti-anxiety medication is a popular response to these kinds of feelings. It eases them, and complete paralysis is averted. We continue to function. But there is also a problem. Medication can ease symptoms, but it cannot deal with the causes of fear and anxiety, and it can make it more difficult for us to find that real and useful purpose in what we are feeling.

By contrast, trust is an antidote to anxiety, to excessive and paralyzing fear. Trust gives me the confidence and

I find that fear begins to shift to trust when I feel accepted and loved. Acceptance and love calm my fears and energize me.

the courage to live with uncertainty and my awareness of it. I feel free to show up and be who I am. My potential is freer. And despite the circumstances, I feel that things will work out. Even if death is coming, it seems that I could face that, and, of course, death is eventually coming.

I find that fear begins to shift to trust when I feel accepted and loved. Acceptance and love calm my fears



People coping with fear and anxiety swing back and forth between responses as the situation, and perceptions of it, change. We panic. We grasp for assurances and control. We deny. We try to understand.

PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/WILDPixel

and energize me. At its most extreme, this is a feeling that can lead to the misguided sense that anything is possible. There is a risk of ignoring reality. That is to be guarded against, too. Although anything is possible for God, I'm human. I need to stay in touch with reality and its real dangers. At the same time, I need to surrender to God's love and purpose. The knowledge that, even if things turn out otherwise than I hope, I will still be loved, needs to be part of my reality.

Fear and trust are both needed for balance. Both wings are needed if the bird is to fly.

If I can settle into myself and look at my fears from a place of acceptance and curiosity, I can get a better sense of what my fear is really about. Then I can look clearly at both my fear and my trust, and bring them into balance. Remembering that I am loved soothes

my anxiety and gives me perspective, but without me turning a blind eye to the world I live in. It is like learning to swim, swim well and strongly with both arms, instead of trying to build an even bigger boat and pretending that a bigger boat will be unsinkable.

An opportunity to grow our trust

Not everybody experiences debilitating or chronic anxiety. And suffering from high anxiety is not a sign of spiritual weakness, lack of faith or spiritual deficiency. It is a particular kind of human challenge—quite a common one—and, like all challenges, it provides opportunity for us to grow. In particular, it is opportunity to grow our trust.

Of course, this won't happen overnight. We cannot learn to surrender our excessive fear and worry unless we learn to live with an awareness of it, and with a connection to what helps us to feel

loved and accepted.

Jesus said in John 16:33b: *"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart because I have overcome the world."* In other words, it is to be expected that we will experience troubles and fear, but we don't need to remain stuck in our fear. God's love for us is greater than our fear.

As Mother Julian of Norwich said, "All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well."

Mother Julian was a medieval English anchoress who lived walled up in a room attached to St. Julian's Church in Norwich, England. There was a small opening into the church, so that she could take part in services, and an opening to the outside through which people came to speak with her. This was a time of upheaval and devastation. During Julian's lifetime, the city suffered the Black Death, the Peasants' Revolt and

the vicious suppression of theological reformation. She must have counselled a lot of people in pain. Yet Julian's writings are full of hope and trust in God's goodness. In 1373, at age 30 and so seriously ill she thought she was dying, Julian received a series of visions of the Passion of Christ. She recovered from her illness and wrote of her experiences in *Revelations of Divine Love*.

Julian is known as a mystic, but she was not out of touch with harsh reality. Her writings are those of an intelligent, sensitive and very down-to-earth woman. Somehow, Julian maintained trust in God's goodness while living through horrors and addressing doubt, fear and deep theological questions.

Is it a paradox that when we find ourselves in the deepest pit of anguish we can experience God's love holding us even more tightly and intimately than on happier days? Or is it that we better understand the extent of God's love? Love is not tied to our happy moments or circumstances. To know that there is nothing God's love cannot reach (Psalm 139) and there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39) diminishes our anxiety and opens up space to be more fully present.

Fear promotes our survival

When COVID-19 started to take over our lived reality, I was part of a discussion group in which someone suggested that fear was our greatest problem. By resisting fear, this person argued, by not looking at what scared us, we would keep ourselves safe. I realized they were afraid, and this was their way of coping. But fear is not helped by ignoring what scares us. Fear is even useful; it promotes our survival. When fear and worry are out of balance with trust, then we have a problem. That is when we need to seek help.

Connecting with others and connecting with God calms and grounds us. Love and acceptance calm and ground us. They do not necessarily eliminate discomfort or change current circumstances, but they do change how we experience them.

If there are people in your life who care about you, notice that and cherish that. But sometimes, loving human relationships are not readily available, and our need for human understanding and care cannot be met. This is especially possible at a time of physical distancing. When human love and contact are not there, it is particularly good to know that God is always available. ❧



Lucia Eitzen is a counsellor in private practice; she is a member of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. To learn more, visit agapecounselling.com. She attends Langley (B.C.) Mennonite Fellowship.



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❧ For discussion

1. Lucia Eitzen writes, "Acceptance and love calm my fears and energize me." Is that true in your experience? How do we show love and acceptance to others? Does your congregation have ways of reaching out to members who might struggle with anxiety?
2. Eitzen suggests that there is danger in ignoring reality when we are fearful. When are we most tempted to disregard reality? Is limiting our intake of negative news a form of ignoring reality? Can you think of situations where an unwillingness to face reality led to harmful consequences?
3. "God's love for us is greater than our fear," writes Eitzen. What are some ways that we can regularly remind ourselves of God's love? How helpful have you found songs or memorized scripture in times of fear and anxiety? How important is prayer as a tool in facing fear? How much does regular corporate worship help keep our fears in check?
4. Do you find the current health crisis is increasing your anxiety? No one knows how this pandemic will play out economically, politically or physically. How much does this uncertainty trouble you? What is your biggest fear about the COVID-19 pandemic?

—By Barb Draper

See related Pastoral Care during COVID-19 resources at www.commonword.ca/go/1999

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/// Readers write

✉ Don't confuse a thrift-store receipt with a charitable receipt

Re: "Thrift shopper, peacebuilder," March 30, page 11.

This column raises a number of concerns in regards to how some may view donations/tithing, corporations/brands, and the mission of thrift stores:

- **A purchase at a thrift store** should not be considered a donation or part of one's monthly tithing. When you receive something in exchange for money, that's not making a donation. Thrift store receipts cannot be used as a charitable receipt for a Canada Revenue Agency income-tax deduction.
- **Thrift stores serve** people who cannot afford new off-the-rack clothing, individuals on limited incomes or some who simply wish to save money. If a shopper finds a great coat for an incredible deal, perhaps it was underpriced. If the shopper has the means to pay a bit more, then perhaps making a donation to MCC would be appropriate. However, to take that donation and say it's part of one's monthly tithing is a real stretch; they are only paying forward what the coat was perhaps worth.
- **Being non-profit, MCC** thrift stores still operate as a business on main street with store fronts. Their profits, or surplus for those that find the word "profit" offensive, are distributed back to MCC as a form of dividend that can then support programs for those less fortunate than we are. But let's not cringe at shopping at for-profit retailers or criticize those who do. Those businesses pay taxes that support health care, education, pave roads and much more that we all benefit from.
- **Let's not rush** to judge and condemn corporations for their business practices and motives unless we fully understand the facts, including the good and the changes they bring. It's easy for us, as consumers, to target corporations, yet we want them to provide low-priced goods, whether it be in a regular retail store or that which is filtered down to thrift stores at some point.

PAUL TIESSEN, SASKATOON

✉ Gratitude in this time of pandemic

I am apparently vulnerable. I'm chronologically categorized (senior), and I'm locationally challenged (I live in a seniors community).

But I don't feel vulnerable. My wife and I are both in excellent health, with robust energy, and are

significantly active in meaningful things.

Yet I recognize that I am 75 years old and I accept the definitions thrust upon me by the younger generations. And we are doing our best to align our lives with the multitude of guidelines that come at us from the federal, provincial, municipal and community jurisdictions.

I stand amazed at the sacrifices made on our behalf:

- **Front-line health-care workers** are like the soldiers of other times: willing to sacrifice their well-being, maybe to the point of death, for the welfare of the vulnerable they are serving. I hope when all is over, there will be hundreds of purple hearts for their sacrifice and thousands of medals awarded.
- **Political leaders** are putting everything on the line for us. I'm impressed by how young many of these folks are.
- **Medical officers** are thrust into the limelight and assigned an unprecedented degree of authority as worthy representatives of the best science we can muster. Essential-service employees are risking themselves for us. Groceries and food are still available. Pharmacists continue their patient work. Garbage is still picked up.
- **Businesses and corporations** are losing massive amounts of investment, yet entrepreneurs are offering up their own vulnerabilities for the sake of the vulnerable.
- **And then there** are the innumerable "little" things that so many—including family—are contributing. There are notes, video calls, emails, songs, food, services offered, walks and distractions created.

In a word, all we can say is: Thank you to each one. Latin Americans have a common saying that is very relevant here. It is simple yet profound: "May God repay you" (*Que Dios les pague*).

ROBERT J. SUDERMAN, NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

✉ War vocabulary is inappropriate for COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic may just be a nudge from our Creator that a gospel of peace and mutuality has redemptive relevance to a world that's on edge. Where there are leaders who invoke the vocabulary of war to aid us in confronting our anxieties, we who claim to be pacifists might find an opportunity to speak of love, not of confrontation.

For orators to weaponize what is essentially a

Good Samaritan moment has brought us Mennonites to a uniquely teachable moment, I believe.

Certainly, most of humanity “gets it,” but this is the time for the historic peace churches, especially, to echo the words of St. Francis: “Where there is despair, let me sow hope; Where there is darkness, light; And where there is sadness, joy. . . . Grant that I may not so much seek . . . to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive. . . .”

Journalists are constantly looking for “click bait” that will attract readers. Yes, we already have plenty of stories about people who are expressing heartfelt compassion—who are caring for the “other.” But what, in addition to this, does a stance of pacifism require of us under the present circumstances?

Here’s one aspect of the question: Emergency-room physicians are gently reminding us that the mustering of scarce resources to save the lives of pandemic victims is already delaying the treatment of many other patients with equally urgent medical needs. Perhaps the use of battle terms like “heroism” primarily serves a political agenda. Perhaps people of faith could affirm that the prognosis for themselves and their loved ones is in God’s hands, and that extreme medical intervention isn’t required. Why is language like “fought a valiant battle” deemed to be necessary at heaven’s gates?

KARL DICK, WATERLOO, ONT.

✉ **Mystery women may have names**

Re: “A moment from yesterday” photo, March 30, page 9.

I believe these three women are sisters of my paternal grandmother, Emma (Meyer) Burkholder, the wife of L.J. Burkholder. My father was Paul H. Burkholder.

- **The woman on the left** may be Eva (Meyer) Williamson (Mrs. Orm Williamson). They farmed in the Pambrun area of Saskatchewan.
- **The woman in the middle:** Mary (Meyer) Strong, who lived most of her life in the Gravenhurst area of Ontario.
- **The woman on the right:** Sarah (Meyer) Gamble (Mrs. Glen Gamble). The Gambles were involved with the residential Bible school in Pambrun for many years.

I speculate that sister Mary from Ontario may have been visiting her sisters in Saskatchewan at the time of the photo.

These sisters were all born in the late 1880s or early 1890s. The children could easily be Eva’s. Sarah

may have lived in the Herbert area in the early 1930s.

The photo was likely from the early 1930s, as the Williamsons returned to Ontario during the “Dirty Thirties.”

DAVE BURKHOLDER, STOUFFVILLE, ONT.

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

Brubacher—Benjamin John (b. March 24, 2020), to Jonathan and Laura Jane Brubacher, Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Guenther—Jane Elizabeth (b. April 9, 2020), to Joshua and Thea Guenther, Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Schlamp—Bauer Sterling (b. March 31, 2020), to Derek and Erica Schlamp, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Virostek—Porter Glen (b. April 12, 2020), to Craig and Melisa Virostek, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Deaths

Andres—Kathy (nee Ens), 77 (b. Jan. 5, 1943; d. April 9, 2020), Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Booker—Terrence (Terry), 80 (b. March 6, 1940; d. April 9, 2020), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Collis—Ian, 60 (b. June 25, 1959; d. April 10, 2020), Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.

Dyck—Richard, 93 (b. Nov. 10, 1926; d. April 17, 2020), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Hoepfner—Mary (nee Buhler), 96 (b. Dec. 15, 1923; d. March 18, 2020), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Klassen—Benno A., 88 (b. Oct. 9, 1931; d. April 14, 2020), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Martens—Helen, 92 (b. Feb. 21, 1928; d. April 9, 2020), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Steinman—Floyd, 82 (b. Aug. 24, 1937; d. April 6, 2020), Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Zacharias—Dave, 85 (b. June 5, 1934; d. March 11, 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

The presence of Christ

Andrea Enns-Gooding

Although our world is facing the challenge of COVID-19, I am so glad for the parts of life that remain unchanged. Every day brings press conferences with appalling numbers of the losses we endure, talk of restrictions and life that seems like it's in a state of flux. Yet, peanut butter, Netflix, and, of course, the Revised Common Lectionary remain.

Moving through the Easter season has brought its own challenges for all of us. How do we, as congregations, remain faithful in a time of physical distancing? How do we tell the stories that have shaped us into a faithful people for millennia? The whirlwind of facts, questions and anxiety builds around us. Yet whatever questions we may have, the narrative of Jesus remains.

The comfort of the Lectionary remains as well, and we find ourselves in John 20:19-31. These stories and more that we share over and over affirm us as we experience the whirlwind. But who is at the centre of the whirlwind?

Everything that the disciples have gone

through in the last week has led them all to this moment. The fear of the Romans and the religious leaders puts the disciples and their companions into one room, cowering. And Jesus appears in the room and speaks to them twice of peace: "Peace be with you."

Imagine that last week of their lives together. All the way back to the hopefulness of Sunday, to a beautiful supper, the betrayal and trials, the flogging and Peter's denial. All of the terror and horror leading up to seeing their gentle and fiercely good friend being hung up on a dirty Roman cross, his dignity gone. Jesus, dead on a cross. Their hopes dashed.

I didn't understand their lack of faith. The wretchedness of their terror after his death seemed so small. Didn't they know who they had walked with for three years? Why didn't they believe Mary Magdalene? And why wouldn't Thomas just believe?

Now you and I sit behind closed doors. And it's different than their worry. But I think that now that I have had a

chance—and I'll call it that, a chance to be afraid of an unseen menace that may "get" people I love—I am a bit closer to the disciples now. We are all sitting in a place we've never been before. Fear is real.

In the middle of the disciples' fear, Jesus did not proclaim judgment. He could have appeared in that room and laid down the law, but he didn't. Jesus, the only one who could have judged every one of those disciples, comes into their midst and proclaims, "Peace be with you." And then he breathes the blessing of the Holy Spirit into them, into their midst.

Friends, if there is fear among us, then let it be found by Jesus, just as he came among the disciples in that closed room, and let us receive the blessing of the presence of Christ yet again. ☩



Andrea Enns-Gooding is pastor of Zoar Mennonite Church, Waldheim, Sask., and a member of the MC Saskatchewan Council.

A moment from yesterday



The Canadian Foodgrains Bank had its beginnings in 1975 as the Mennonite Central Committee Food Bank. In November 1982, representatives of 10 Christian denominations met to discuss plans for an inter-church foodgrains bank. Among those at the meeting, pictured left to right facing the camera, were Frank H. Epp, J.M. Klassen and C. Wilbert Loewen. The new Canadian Foodgrains Bank Association was incorporated in May 1983. The five member agencies were the Baptist Federation of Canada Relief and Development Committee, Canadian Lutheran World Relief, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Today the Foodgrains Bank has three areas of work and contributed the following funds in 2018-19: food assistance (\$23 million), agriculture and livelihoods (\$13 million), and nutrition (\$2 million).

Text: Robb Nickel, Mennonite Heritage Archives volunteer
Photo: Robb Nickel / Mennonite Heritage Archives / MCC collection



IN THE IMAGE

Holy curious living

Ed Olfert

In late January, Eric Harder died at age 74. He was my friend.

I became acquainted with Eric 25 years ago, when I moved to Prince Albert to begin my ministry work. Both he and Velma were strong presences in the church. They offered leadership and encouragement in all the ways that a new pastor desperately needs.

Eric's career was that of a high-school teacher. It suited him admirably, because Eric lived his life with a curiosity that was boundless. When the church entered the world of refugee sponsorship, Eric was first on the scene. There was so much to learn.

For a number of years, some of the men of Grace Mennonite met on occasion for breakfast, conversation and prayer. We were mostly old, and, may I suggest, somewhat entitled white men, and I recall someone going off on a bit of a rant about all "those people" in the community who got things handed to them, who never learned how to work, instead of pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. Well, you've heard that rant.

Eric waited until that energy was spent before he offered his own.

"Most often, I'm embarrassed by the riches I've been given," he said. "I'm embarrassed that I have so much. I grew

up in a family culture that taught me a work ethic. My culture taught me that anything was attainable. I didn't choose that culture; I was born into it. That culture included a healthy spirituality. That culture valued education, and then offered me a wonderful job with responsibility, that paid reasonably and allowed me to feel good about myself. I'm most often embarrassed by the stuff that we've been able to accumulate."

To know Eric and Velma was to know that Eric's passion was much more than a countercultural rant. The good things that Eric and Velma accumulated—the large house with the red door, the cabin at the lake—were very deliberately shared with others. The cabin was shared with the Circle of Support and Accountability (CoSA) group for released offenders, where we enjoyed winter and summer fishing excursions.

And then there were the marvellous Christmas parties at the Harder home. That same CoSA gang, both offenders and volunteers, were treated to fabulous food and then parties in the basement.

Eric loved to organize Chinese gift exchange games, and it was during one of those games Eric had cleverly manipulated that a core member, instead of choosing the last gift, asked

his girlfriend for her hand in marriage.

Life for Eric was a mystery to savour rather than a load to carry.

Last spring, Eric told me that he was being tested for Alzheimer's disease. His father had walked through that valley some years earlier, and Eric's family showed tremendous grace as they journeyed with him. When it became his own story, Eric again showed a remarkable determination to be real, sharing that diagnosis with the CoSA gang, inviting conversation and questions about that reality.

We remember the day he told us, with obvious grief, that he was turning in his driver's licence. He had driven to the meeting that day, would go on to visit his friend in a care home, and the next day would offer up his right to drive. I know that was done with dignity.

As a teacher, Eric had become enamoured with poetry. In his last year, he introduced me to the poem "Flammonde" by E.A. Robinson. Look it up online at bit.ly/flammonde, enjoy it, giggle, and think of the lessons we can learn if we can only live in holy curiosity. ☼



Ed Olfert (p2ptheo@sasktel.net) suggests that, if you enjoy the poem "Flammonde," you would have enjoyed Eric Harder.

Et cetera

WCC supports Thursdays in Black initiative

On International Women's Day, March 8, the World Council of Churches (WCC) urged churches to join Thursdays in Black towards a world without rape and violence. "Gender justice must be the agenda of men as well as women," said Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC's general secretary, in a comment released on the occasion of International Women's Day 2020. "The WCC as a fellowship has a shared commitment to be a community of women and men rested equally in the image of God, and we seek for the benefit of all a just fellowship of women and men. . . . This is what God has called us to do in the most fundamental setting of our faith and life: to love God and one another as ourselves."

Source: World Council of Churches



MIND AND SOUL

What I learned from Ramadan

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

We were in the midst of the Christian season of Lent as I wrote this. Shortly after Lent ended and Easter came, Muslims began the season of Ramadan. The month-long period of daily fasting launched on April 23. The couple of years I have observed the season of Ramadan have been of stunning benefit for my Christian faith.

Ramadan is a time of spiritual reflection and heightened devotion for Muslims. This period of 29 or 30 days—the dates change every year, following the lunar calendar of 13 months—is marked by fasting, prayer, self-examination and community. The fasting is most well-known, just as giving up something for Lent is what most people understand about the Christian season. Each fasting period lasts from just before sunup to just after sundown. Believers are to refrain from food, any sort of drink, intimate relations, tobacco and other impurities, and are encouraged to give more to charity.

Ramadan fell across the summer solstice in the year that I fasted; the longest days of the Canadian year are long indeed! Fasting is not unusual for me, or for many other Christians. But abstaining from water or any other drink made this fast much more

strenuous in effort.

The rigour of the Ramadan fast was my first lesson. The discipline reduced my energy and concentration, so it provided appreciation for what Muslim co-workers and fellow Canadians may be experiencing for a full month. It also reminded me that, as a Christian, my holy days are holidays and I do not need to take vacation time to practise my religion.

Most Muslims break the fast each day with family, friends or fellow congregants in the *iftar* meal. My second lesson was that the daily fast was far more difficult because I had no one to celebrate each day with. The difficult things are easier when family or others share the journey.

In another year, I was to be at a month-long gathering of Christian scholars during Ramadan. Fasting would be awkward, so I decided to pray five times a day. This is another pillar of Muslim religious practice. Some liturgical and contemplative Christian traditions also set several specific times at which to pray the “divine office” that may include matins, midmorning prayer, vespers and so on. For Muslims, the five times are set according to the arc of the sun across the daily sky. The

specificity of the time reminds the faithful that God comes first, before any of the activities we might be engaged in. This attitude, and frequent prayer, would be something that Christians would value, I thought.

Two lessons also occurred that year. The first was the inconvenience posed by regular times for prayer, even among fellow believers! I set reminder alarms for lunch, and at morning and afternoon tea breaks, in addition to the early-morning and late-day times. But the days fluctuated enough to make these alarms disruptive. God interrupts our lives!

The second lesson was how wonderful this practice was for producing a sense of closeness to God. For several months afterward, I kept the routine, and now I am flabbergasted as to why I did not continue.

Lent and Ramadan are “disruptions” in the regularity of life. They interrupt the normal everydayness in which habits form without conscious reflection, and life becomes taken for granted. Like bumps in the road that, when driving late at night, disrupt the sleepy autopilot, we need these disruptor moments in our faith lives. ❧



Randolph Haluza-DeLay participates in several Christian-Muslim dialogue groups in Edmonton and co-taught

a course with a Muslim theologian at The King's University called Engaging Islam as Interfaith Encounter.

Et cetera



More than 800 teachers trained by TAP in Africa

In this 1967 photo, Teachers Abroad Program (TAP) participant Murray Snider works with students at a girls school in Kijabe, Kenya. In 1962, MCC began TAP to address the need for teachers in Africa. In the first year, 23 teachers served in Kenya, Zaire (Congo), Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Nyasaland (Malawi), and Nigeria. Through TAP, 800 MCC teachers taught in Africa over a 25-year period in church-run secondary and teacher-training colleges.

Source: MCC / Photo by Willard Claassen



TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

'You listened to my cry'

Joshua Penfold

Dear God: I'm really not sure what to pray or how to feel these days. I've become a strange blend of anxious and relaxed, concerned and content, grateful and restless, ambitious and listless.

Nothing really changes from day to day in my little life within these walls as I stay home. My biggest news is that I geared up with mask, gloves and hand sanitizer to go grocery shopping. Yet the news reminds me that the world out there is changing continually.

It's disorienting, dizzying and draining, so I turn off the news and ignore the world to try to regain my bearings, play with my kids and recover from this jarring jolt. But quickly my stomach sinks, like when you get carsick in the back seat from not looking out the window in a moving vehicle.

So I keep peeking out, looking out at the world often enough to prevent car sickness, and looking down occasionally to get relief from the dizzying world outside. I can't seem to do anything but cope and manage these revolving unseemly ailments.

And then I realize, God, that I don't know when I left you behind. I don't know how you fit into this equation. I have more time than before, yet I get

less done, including time with you. I'm realizing just how much I relied on my routine. I confess, God, it's taking time to figure out how and where to create space for us to meet together. I miss you.

I'm reading the story of Jonah, one of your servants who also left you behind, or tried to. Totally different circumstances, I realize, but I think I can share in his prayer. He, too, found himself confined, yet he was compelled to commune with you: *"In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help and you listened to my cry"* (Jonah 2:2).

I finally found, or made, a few minutes here to write this prayer. I pray with thanksgiving that I am healthy, well-fed and financially stable, but I know there are millions of people, billions even, from around the corner to around the world, who are facing not just the fear of instability, scarcity, poverty, hunger, sickness and death. They are experiencing it. My fear is their reality. I find myself treading in this brew of fear-wrought emotions, now mixed with guilt, and maybe shame, that I even feel this way while I'm relatively well-off.

But, for many, these aren't new

realities. They have always been there. I've simply become more aware of them because this pandemic has worn thin the veil that I've used to blind myself from the challenges of others.

I am only one person, God, and I know my struggles and anxieties are no less real just because others' struggles are greater. Help me, Lord, to hold them all in balance. Better yet, God, hold them with me, hold me in them.

I don't want you to take away the revelation of the challenging realities of the world, only take the paralyzing anxiety that prevents me from loving action, from peaceful resting, from passionate praying, and from actual abiding with you, the Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer.

Create in me a capacity to care for myself and others. Sustain in me the ability to see each moment as communion with you. Redeem in me all my thoughts and feelings to your glory, to my faithfulness and to the service of others. Thanks for always listening. Amen. ❧



Joshua Penfold
(penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) is staying home these days.

Et cetera

CPT seeks new Peacemaker Corps members

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) is currently accepting applications for membership in its Peacemaker Corps. The next Peacemaker Corps training session will be held from Nov. 12 to Dec. 11 in Sulaymaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan. Applicants must be at least 21 years of age and have completed a short-term CPT delegation or internship by Aug. 17 to be eligible for the 2020 training program. Qualified candidates may be invited to participate in the training that culminates in mutual discernment with CPT staff regarding membership in the Peacemaker Corps. Trained Peacemaker Corps members are eligible to apply for open positions on CPT teams. The training application deadline is July 15. Please direct any questions and send complete applications to personnel@cpt.org.

Source: Christian Peacemaker Teams



Candidates cover their round-trip travel and contribute US\$1,000 towards the cost of the training, including room, board, facilities and supplies.

VIEWPOINT

Singing solo is lonely

By Carl DeGurse

Never thought there would be Sundays without singing.

Like churches across Canada, ours has been shuttered as a precaution against the novel coronavirus. I understand why this must be, but I sure miss getting together and joining our voices.

We're a singing church, a trait that is often mentioned by first-time visitors, who typically say something like, "Wow, you guys sure like to sing."

Our enthusiasm for singing is passed from generation to generation. When babies are introduced to the congregation, they're welcomed with song. When these same babies are old enough to speak, they're old enough to sing with us. They grow up singing in Sunday school, in kids' club, in youth group and at church camps.

No one applauds our singing. It's not a performance. Rather, it's a way to practise unity by listening carefully to the voices around us and trying to blend as God's people.

We sing as a way to connect with something greater than ourselves. We sing with gratitude as we count our blessings. We sing with repentance as we remember how we goofed up in the past week.

But not this year. Our church was closed during Lent on doctor's orders.

Churches are usually safe sanctuaries when the world seems bleak. A heartening side effect of belonging to a faith community is that all have rituals and traditions for supporting members through the big events of life, both good and bad: births and deaths, marriages and divorces, coming of age and moving to the nursing home.

But these rituals and traditions are at odds with physical distancing. With all the fear and suffering resulting from COVID-19, it's a time when we most need our faith families, but we've been forced to disperse. Call it the pandemic

paradox: Being together is the best way to cope with hardships caused by the virus, but the virus is the reason we have to stay apart.

When we're not threatened by COVID-19, the comfort of physical touch abounds in our church family, with lots of handshakes and full-on hugs. Now we can't hug from two metres away.

We all have mail slots in the church foyer, which are used to receive notes from our church friends. These notes—the best ones are handwritten on nice

Being together is the best way to cope with hardships caused by the virus, but the virus is the reason we have to stay apart.

stationery—console us in times of difficulty or thank us for doing something right. The church is now locked, so we can't get at our mail slots.

The church kitchen is often a busy hub, where apron-clad volunteers prepare food that brings the church family together to share a meal that's liberally flavoured with fellowship. The grills and coffee pots are now gathering dust.

We regularly visit members who are in hospital, in nursing homes, or those who are shut-ins. But now, we're all shut-ins.

Yes, the restrictions of COVID-19 have prompted some of us to keep in contact with phone calls and emails, but those modes of communication are cold comfort compared to the face-to-face friendliness of engaging with friends at the weekly coffee hour.

Several of us tried to sing together on Zoom recently, but it was a disaster, although a funny disaster. None of us knew that the app doesn't allow all parties to sing simultaneously, so the attempted singalong ended in giggles

because we could hear only one singer's voice while the livestreamed video showed the other participants moving their mouths soundlessly, like fish.

During Holy Week, we had held tight to one final hope that, even with the physical distancing restrictions, there was still a way to get together. Our church traditionally kicks off Easter Sunday morning with an outdoor sunrise service, in which we gather at dawn and stand atop a hill in a Winnipeg city park and sing to the rising sun, sometimes with accompaniment from honking geese.

After our church building was closed, we initially thought we could still sing on Easter morning on a hill, standing far enough apart to respect the distancing decree. But on March 27, it was announced that public gatherings in

Manitoba could not be larger than 10 people. That ended our last chance to celebrate Easter together this year.

While isolated from our church family, I worry most of all about how they're managing. They include frontline health workers, small-business owners seeing their financial futures plummet, and people with pre-existing health problems for whom contracting COVID-19 would likely be a death sentence.

With about 500 members in our church, it's possible one or more will test positive before this is over. And the rest of us can't be there to sing with them through their despair.

Many lessons will emerge from this pandemic, but I've already learned one lesson: Singing solo is lonely. I long for the church doors to open, so we can gather and again make a joyful noise. ✎



Carl DeGurse is a member of Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. A version of this piece was published on April 11 in the Winnipeg Free Press.

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VIEWPOINT

God's call for our church and mission

César García

“The church will slow down the work of Mennonite Central Committee [MCC],” someone told me at the 2008 MCC New Wine, New Wineskins consultative meeting in Winnipeg. “If we want to be a more effective NGO [non-governmental organization], we need to act independently from the church,” he continued.

Yes, the church may not be very effective in fulfilling NGO standards of professional management and structure, but it nevertheless embodies God's method of real and long-lasting social transformation.

Furthermore, from the Anabaptist point of view, mission is done by the church in the world as a witness to Christ. It cannot be delegated to specialists or independent institutions.

Both MCC and Mennonite World Conference (MWC) share this viewpoint, undergirding years of collaboration.

Shared histories

Both MCC and MWC started in response to violence and persecution that Mennonites were facing in Europe and Russia in the 1920s.

MCC began in 1920 as a service arm of churches in North America to support Mennonite refugees affected by war and famine in present-day Ukraine.

In 1925, MWC emerged as a way of bringing Mennonites together, affirming a cross-cultural faith in Jesus capable of overcoming nationalism and racism.

Over the course of their histories, both MCC and MWC emphasized inter-Mennonite solidarity, shared leaders, supported each other and connected churches around common goals. These converging purposes arise from the Anabaptist ecclesiological understanding of mission.



MCC PHOTO BY ILONA PAGANONI

Damaris Guaza Sandoval of Colombia facilitates a workshop on self-esteem for a Grade 4 class at the Francisco Morazán School in La Ceiba, Honduras.

Mission at the centre

Christ ushered in a global and multicultural eschatological creation. It overcomes nationalisms and other boundaries, facilitating interdependence, care and love for one other. By becoming a global communion, MWC manifests this eschatological reality today.

As a global church in the Anabaptist tradition, MWC is a place where all member churches sit together with mutual authority regardless of their ethnicity, financial capacity and Anabaptist distinctives. It's a place where theology, service, education, peacemaking, church planting, health care, pastoral care, worship, ministries of women and youth, and other ecclesial activities happen globally and cross-culturally. It is a global alternative community to the states of this world.

Inter-Anabaptist collaboration

New possibilities of global, inter-Anabaptist collaboration have emerged over

the past decade between MWC, MCC and other Anabaptist agencies, in the Global Anabaptist Service Network. They include coordinating multi-agency responses to natural disasters or other crises, serving jointly in cross-cultural ministries, supporting national churches in creating their own service structures, and helping Anabaptist service agencies build their own capacity.

As we look to MCC's—and soon MWC's—second century, let us dream together about multicultural Anabaptist teams serving together to provide relief, education, health, peacemaking, church planting and social development. That is God's call for our church and mission. ✎

César García is MWC's general secretary. The full version of this article will appear in the fall 2020 issue of Intersections: MCC Theory and Practice Quarterly, published by Mennonite Central Committee. Used by permission.

Columbia Bible College graduates class online

'Joyful celebration' despite absence from campus due to COVID-19

By Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Graduation for Columbia Bible College's class of 2020 looked a little different this year. Rather than proudly walking across the stage in cap and gown to receive their diplomas, the graduates took part in a virtual online commencement ceremony on April 18. The college had dismissed classes earlier in the year due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

"This graduation is like none other in the history of Columbia," said Bryan Born, the college's president, in his opening remarks. "Even though we cannot gather together in a large auditorium, we want to joyfully celebrate with our 2020 Columbia graduates."

In his address, Ken Esau, a biblical studies professor, urged the graduates to "seek first God's kingdom" in all things, including summer plans and future vocation and educational goals. Esau blew a shofar (ram's horn) three times during his speech to illustrate the three purposes the ancient Hebrews sounded it for:

- **To gather** God's people together in community.
- **To announce** God's attack on the enemy, which Enns defined as the death and destruction that have ultimately been defeated by Jesus.
- **To announce** a celebration, the year of jubilee. "Seek first God's kingdom. Can you hear the shofar blast?" he asked.

Included in the program were class member Wes Braun performing an original song based on Psalm 140, and an address by valedictorian Jessica Stefick, who said that, in light of the current global situation, she found herself caught

"between excitement and lament, a sacred tension." She talked about finding herself taking three postures—remembrance, gratitude and hope—even while feeling a sense of incompleteness. "God is faithful in a time such as this," she said.



SCREENSHOT BY ROSS W. MUIR

Ken Esau, professor of Old Testament at Columbia Bible College, blows a ram's horn as he addresses the graduating class on what it means to seek first God's kingdom.

Each graduate was honoured with a display of their photo and a listing of the certificate, diploma or degree earned.

The ceremony concluded with a benediction by Stan Bahnman, retiring dean of students. "We are grateful to have journeyed with you and are excited for what God has in store for you in these coming days and years," he said. ❧

/// #COVIDkindness

Virtual fundraiser is a literal success



SCREENSHOT BY DONNA SCHULZ

A second virtual choir made up of current RJC High School students performs 'Life in a Northern Town,' with footage from a recent parade of frontline workers through the streets of Rosthern, Sask.

ROSTHERN, SASK.—Choirs and Cakes is an important fundraiser for Rosthern Junior College (RJC High School). When the March event was cancelled due to COVID-19, the school's staff and supporters decided to host a virtual event instead. During the online fundraiser, which streamed live on April 26, a 38-voice virtual choir made up of alumni and friends of the school performed "This Still Room." Another virtual choir, combining the voices of current students, sang "Life in a Northern Town." The online concert also included musical selections recorded prior to the pandemic. Interspersed between songs were updates from staff and testimonials from students, alumni and supporters. A light-hearted segment directed at students watching from home featured principal Ryan Wood lip-syncing a medley of songs, such as "All By Myself," "I'm Mr. Lonely," "The Sounds of Silence," and "I Think We're Alone Now." Seated in the school's empty rehearsal hall, Wood prefaced his performance by telling students, "The place feels pretty lonely without you." In previous years, the event included a live auction of cakes donated by school supporters. This year's event, by contrast, featured three cakes, a frozen meat package, a springtime picnic basket and a gift certificate for a catered meal for four, in a 24-hour silent auction.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

‘We are one body’

MC Eastern Canada annual gathering focuses on unity during a time of transitions

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

“We are one body in Christ . . . even when scattered. We are members of one another. We can still encourage and pray for and learn from each other.”

With these affirming words, Arli Klassen, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s moderator, drew on the theme of unity in Romans 12:5 to welcome more than 160 participants to a shortened and simplified annual church gathering, held online on April 25 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In her written welcome to the gathering, she wrote, “We remind ourselves that we are and remain the church, whether we are gathered or scattered. We in [the regional church] together are part of the Body of Christ, scattered over cities, neighbourhoods and streets, like salt and yeast, which do their best work when they are scattered.”

Singer/songwriter Bryan Moyer Suderman echoed the theme by singing “You’re Not Alone,” emphasizing solidarity in

suffering and hope.

David Martin, who will retire from the role of executive minister after serving the regional church for 15 years, said he is impressed at how churches, pastors and regional church staff have adapted to the physical distancing realities of the COVID-19 era, and have found creative ways to be the church. He also shared his assurance that “God is present and walks with us right in the neighbourhood.”

Participants in the virtual gathering met in smaller break-out groups to share how their churches are adapting worship and staying connected.

Doug Klassen, MC Canada’s executive minister, and Garry Janzen, MC British Columbia’s executive minister, brought greetings and encouragement from the nationwide community of faith. Doug Klassen affirmed how regional churches are growing beyond geographic and Eurocentric lines to become a “global body.”

Great is your faithfulness: milestones and transitions

A number of church anniversaries and staff transitions were named, as well as the mix of hope and sadness as several new churches joined and others withdrew membership in MC Eastern Canada.

Staff transitions include:

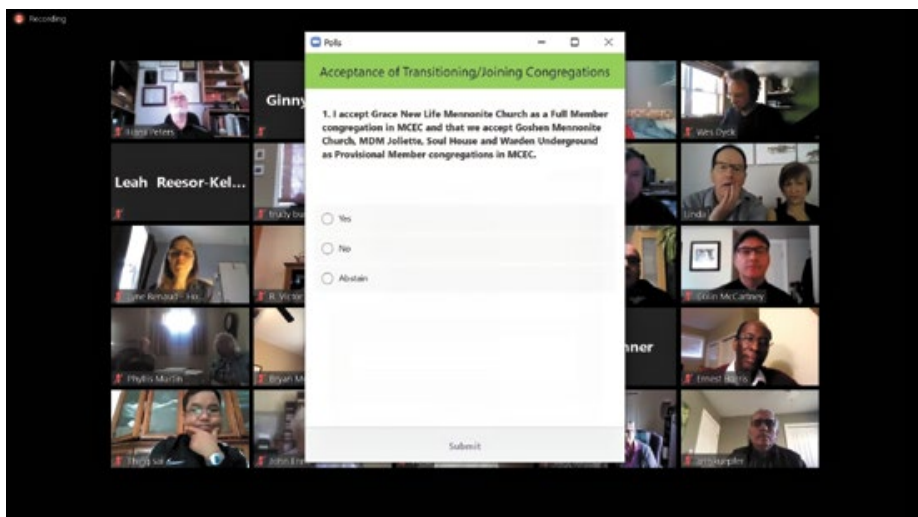
- **Fanosie Legesse** was hired as intercultural mission minister, to foster relationships and bring cultural awareness to the regional church’s community of congregations.
- **Michel Monette** was hired as catalyzer minister, to coach new leaders and congregations in Ottawa and Quebec.
- **Leah Reesor-Keller** was hired to begin as executive minister at the end of the summer, after Martin retires.

Five churches joined the regional church. Welcomed into full membership was:

- **Grace New Life**, a congregation of approximately 45 people who meet in the heart of Hamilton. They worship in both Lao and English.

Welcomed into provisional membership were:

- **Mennonite Disciple Mission**, Joliette, Que., a group of approximately 60 people who meet in Joliette, Que. They are part of Mennonite Disciple Mission (MDM), an association of congregations who worship in Swahili.
- **Goshen Mennonite Church**, a group of approximately 40 people who meet in Ottawa. Goshen is also part of the MDM association.
- **Soul House**, a house church of 10 to 20 people who meet in Scarborough, Ont.
- **Warden Underground**, a church primarily focused on youth and young



SCREENSHOT BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER

Delegates to the MC Eastern Canada annual gathering voted electronically on motions presented as poll questions in the virtual meeting held on April 25, through Zoom, a videoconferencing application. After the voting was completed, results were immediately available onscreen.



PHOTO BY LUKE REESOR-KELLER

Leah Reesor-Keller, the incoming MC Eastern Canada executive minister, is pictured at her computer while participating in the regional church's annual gathering, this year via Zoom.

adults that seeks to pour God's love into its neighbourhood in Toronto.

A litany of release and words of mutual blessing acknowledging God's faithfulness were shared for the following Ontario churches that withdrew their membership from MC Eastern Canada:

- **Calvary Church**, Ayr.
- **Kingsfield-Clinton and Kingsfield-Zurich** Mennonite churches.
- **Living Water** Community Christian Fellowship (now Living Water Fellowship Church), New Hamburg.
- **Maple View** Mennonite Church, Wellesley.
- **Milverton Mennonite** Fellowship (now Milverton Christian Fellowship).
- **River of Life** Fellowship, Kitchener.

Four people from the churches withdrawing membership were present to share in the litany.

Two churches have closed:

- **Jane Finch Faith Community**, Toronto.
- **Église évangélique mennonite de**

Joliette, Joliette, Que.

'Courageous imagination' needed for the future

Plans for the future of MC Eastern Canada were shared. Financial manager Sean East noted that giving from congregations declined again this past year. The deficit was covered by drawing on a reserve fund. Going forward, East recognized that all congregations are "feeling the pinch of COVID," and he said that budgeting in the new, unpredictable reality is like "hitting a moving target."

Delegates approved a spending plan for the next year, with a projected deficit to be covered by reserve funds.

East cautioned the regional church to "start walking back spending in a controlled way," to avoid more drastic changes in the future, and he encouraged churches to communicate their financial realities to the regional church.

Reference was made to several video reports reflecting ministry highlights from the past year in the areas of mission, leadership, youth ministry and international witness.

Arli Klassen highlighted a recommendation from the Youth Dream Team, which has worked at discernment for two years developing a Legacy Initiatives Fund proposal to hire a full-time youth minister.

Reesor-Keller closed the gathering by referencing the hope she finds in Isaiah 43:19. She called on MC Eastern Canada to "trust that God is doing a new thing . . . making a way forward." She said, "Courageous imagination is a holy practice we need" in order to "dream and imagine new ways of being."

Regional church leaders hope for an in-person gathering on Nov. 14 to bless and honour Martin in his retirement, and to focus on some broader agenda issues that came out of the listening process done by the search committee tasked with hiring the new executive minister. ❧

News brief

Willowgrove guarantees camp programming this summer

Before COVID-19, not-for-profit Willowgrove offered summer camps, outdoor education and seasonal events in Ontario from its Willowgrove Day Camp and Outdoor Education Centre in Stouffville and Fraser Lake Camp in Bancroft. In order to maintain its mission but move its work online, Willowgrove has created Camp@Home, a unique online camp experience that allows children and youth to have personal, genuine camp connections under the supervision of a live counsellor. Each day, campers log on from home for a three-hour condensed camp schedule. Alongside their peers, campers participate in various interactive camp-wide competitions, in addition to smaller focus groups of skill-based sessions, including environmental education, art, peace and social justice, and fitness. But what really makes this program unique is in the "cabin time." Twice a day, campers break off into small, age-specific groups that function as their online cabins. These groups remain consistent throughout the week to provide campers with the opportunity to meet new friends, build confidence, and develop meaningful relationships outside their usual circles. Camp counsellors supervise via live video, leading discussions in cabin, offering mentorship, and cheering on their campers during each activity. Recognizing the gravity of the current economy, families are provided with a "pay what you choose" fee structure that offers \$4, \$8 and \$12 an hour options. The program is currently set to begin in June, but it may start earlier due to popular demand. For more information, visit campathome.ca.

—WILLOWGROVE



CAMP@HOME

'We remind ourselves that we are and remain the church, whether we are gathered or scattered.'
(Arli Klassen)

Deepening their walk with each other in spite of social isolation

Saskatchewan delegates reflect on life under COVID-19

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent

After a year spent exploring the theme, “Deepening our walk with each other,” Mennonite Church Saskatchewan continued, inadvertently, to ponder what this means during its annual delegate sessions (ADS).

When COVID-19 forced the postponement of the regional church’s annual general meeting, slated for mid-March, planners scheduled a virtual meeting, via Zoom, for April 25.

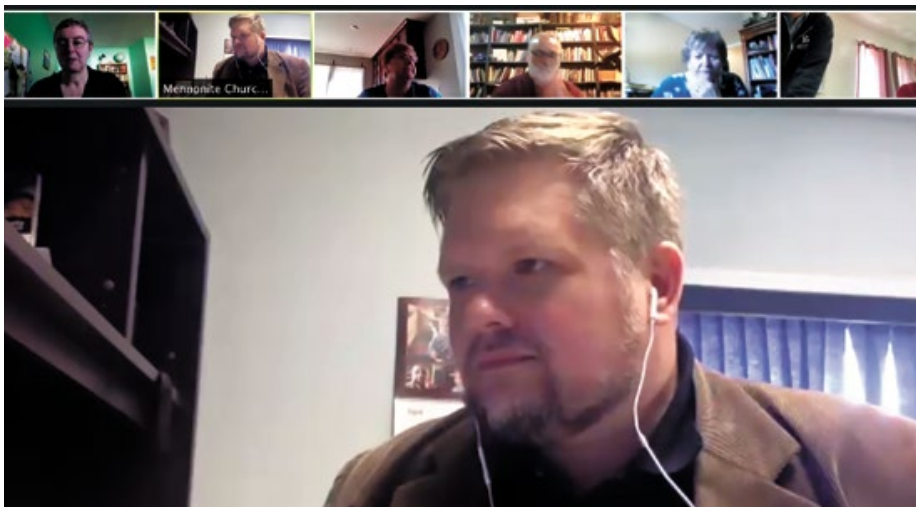
Seventy-eight delegates and guests met online to hear reports, approve a new slate of nominees and vote on a new budget for the coming year. Changes to the regional church’s bylaws, introduced at the 2019 delegate sessions, were also approved.

After moderator Terry Stefaniuk adjourned the business session, Ryan Siemens, MC Saskatchewan’s executive minister, invited representatives from each church to share, in three minutes, how their congregations have been impacted by, and have adapted to, social isolation.

While all congregations miss Sunday morning worship together, most have turned to computer technology to enable them to meet and be spiritually nurtured in a different way.

Many people expressed gratitude for the worship services offered through MC Canada. A number of congregations, including Eigenheim and Osler Mennonite, prepare their own pre-recorded services every two weeks and encourage congregants to tune in to the MC Canada services on alternate weeks.

Some smaller congregations, such as Eyebrow and Pleasant Point, meet for worship via Zoom. Others, like Langham and Aberdeen, use Zoom for mid-week coffee and visiting times. Both Rachel Wallace of Eigenheim and Claire Ewert Fisher of Rosthern Mennonite offer faith



SCREENSHOTS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Ryan Siemens, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s executive minister, invites congregational representatives to share how their churches are coping with and adapting to social isolation.

exploration classes for their youth via Zoom.

While the video-conferencing app works well for those with computers, pastors have to use other means to communicate with those without access to technology.

“How do you connect with people who don’t connect electronically?” wondered Bruce Jantzen, pastor of Laird Mennonite. He admitted that some in his congregation are afraid of technology.

And they’re not alone. Lisa Martens Bartel, a lay leader of North Star Mennonite in Drake, said there is a real divide in her congregation, with those over 40 saying they feel intimidated by Zoom, while those under 40 use the technology comfortably.

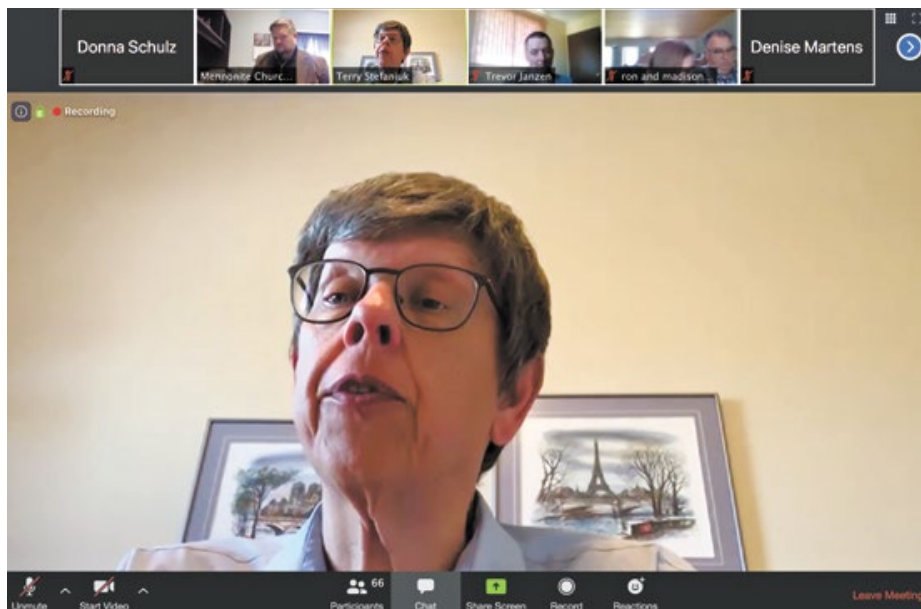
Rod Suderman of Saskatoon’s First Mennonite, Andrea Enns-Gooding of Zoar Mennonite in Waldheim, and Ed Olfert

of Grace Mennonite in Prince Albert all said they print their sermons and either deliver or mail them to congregants who don’t have computers.

On the other hand, many expressed gratitude for the technology that allows members to stay connected with one another. Trevor Janzen, co-chair of Tiefengrund Mennonite, near Laird, said that technology is enabling his congregation to “keep in touch with distant members better than we ever have.”

And Ben Buhler, chair of Osler Mennonite, noted that broadcasting worship services has doubled church attendance.

A number of people shared about special Easter services. Carrot River Mennonite joined with the Catholic and United churches in their community to host a Stations of the Cross service via Zoom on Good Friday. And Aberdeen Mennonite held a drive-in Easter Sunday service in



Terry Stefaniuk, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's moderator, welcomes delegates and guests to the regional church's 2020 annual delegate sessions.

the community arena parking lot.

Most people said they are staying connected with one another by phone.

"We've discovered that our smart phones are really phones," said Garth Ewert Fisher, pastor of Mount Royal Mennonite in Saskatoon. He added that families are "stepping up" and using their phones to keep in touch with each other.

A number of pastors spoke about how difficult it is to have a death in the church at this time. Suderman said he has conducted a number of graveside services. The Ewert Fishers conducted a funeral service at Mount Royal Mennonite that streamed online. Garth said that only five family members were present in the sanctuary with the pastors, but that "149 terminals were tuned in online."

Participants expressed both compassion and humour as they talked about dealing with social isolation. Lorraine Bentham of Pleasant Point Mennonite said the pandemic is giving her congregation "understanding of what it's like to live in isolation," adding, "It gives us empathy for our seniors."

Pastor Kevin Koop (pronounced "cope") of Carrot River Mennonite, quipped, "We're feeling cooped up, but we are coping."

"We are coping" seemed to be a common thread for many, but Emily Summach,

pastor of Langham Mennonite, wondered about the sustainability of these new coping strategies, saying, "The appeal of connecting electronically is waning."

Following this time of sharing, delegates heard reports from MC Saskatchewan committees, the schools, camps, nursing home and restorative justice agencies that the regional church supports, as well as Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan and MC Canada's International Witness.

Scheduling congregational sharing ahead of reports from organizations was intentional. "First and foremost, MC Saskatchewan is the churches [that comprise it]," said Siemens. "And it was good for the organizations to hear what our churches are going through—it's easy to think our own struggles are the only struggles—and for us to hear from the organizations and get a broad scope of work we're doing."

"This was the first ADS where we heard from all congregations represented," he said. It seemed important to do, he said, since "last year's business is pretty much irrelevant. We have more pressing things on our minds."

In a parting comment, Sharon Schultz, pastor of Eyebrow Mennonite, said, "God is surely moving among us. I am so glad to be a part of MC Saskatchewan." ❧

❧ Briefly noted

University Menno Office damaged by fire

WINNIPEG — The Inter-Mennonite Chaplaincy Association's Menno Office suffered extensive smoke and water damage after a fire blazed outside the University of Manitoba's University Centre on March 13. No one was



Mark von Kampen

injured in the fire, but the Menno Office will be unavailable for use for at least six months during restoration, with the possibility of being permanently relocated to another building on campus, separating it from its neighbouring chaplaincies. Mark von Kampen, the Mennonite chaplain, reported that the office's frequently used musical instruments, as well as some books and other items, were saved. However, the furniture and other items are most likely damaged beyond repair from the smoke. Since the Menno Office is not officially part of the university, its contents are not covered by the university's insurance. This means it will have to find the funds to cover these additional expenses caused by the fire, while a fundraiser planned for this fall simultaneously faces potential disruption in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chaplaincy Association adds this to its usual financial challenges, which are due in part to reduced contributions from Mennonite Church Manitoba, its main source of financial support. "I continue to reassure students who express concern about the future of the Menno Office, that I'm confident that we'll get through all this. I like to believe that problems always bring new opportunities," von Kampen says. The Chaplaincy Association is a joint ministry of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference and MC Manitoba.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Kids talk COVID-19

Compiled by Will Braun
Senior Writer

CCOVID-19 has permeated the collective psyche. And although kids may not be watching *The National* or spending their coveted screen time on the Health Canada webpage, COVID-19 is on their minds. I asked several parents to ask their kids—aged 5 to 13—about the new reality. Below are some of their responses, verbatim.

What is hardest about the way we live since COVID-19?

- **Not seeing** friends as much. (Most kids listed some version of this.)
- **Getting antsy.**
- **Libraries** are closed.
- **Not being** able to hug Grandpa.
- **So many** people have died. (A few kids mentioned this.)
- **Not being** able to celebrate stuff, like my birthday.
- **Being stuck** with my brother and sister.
- **It's hard** to do school when there is the distraction of having a younger sibling at home.
- **Using screens** all the time for school.
- **Not being** able to see our grandpa and grandma in Oregon.
- **Having to** be with my siblings all the time.

What is best?

- **More time** to connect with family.
- **Chance to** slow down.
- **Weekends** are not as busy.
- **Opportunity to** do things in a different new way, even though I liked the way things were before.
- **There's no** good parts.
- **Not rushing.**
- **More time** to draw.
- **Fun stuff** like having a treasure hunt and playing computer games.
- **I get to** be home schooled again.
- **More free** time.
- **That there** isn't seven hours of school, and I get to do more screen time.
- **Not having** to answer questions in

- front of the classroom.
- **Playing games** online with other families.
- **Less tears** shed at school.
- **More home** time.
- **My dad** is working upstairs, so we get to see him more.
- **We don't** have to wake up so early.
- **No school.**
- **It's good** for climate change.
- **I can** read lots.
- **Feels like** a cold summer holiday.
- **More kitty** time.



PHOTO BY WILL BRAUN

Matoli and Zavi Braun deGroot enjoy the rhythms of farm life during the pandemic.

What advice do you have for other kids?

- **Even if** things get really bad, you can try to find at least one thing that's good.
- **Be lazy** 'cause you can.
- **Play outside** more.
- **Just deal** with it.
- **Self isolate;** don't touch your face.
- **Do a** video chat to see your friends.
- **You can** have a birthday party by having friends drive by your house

and they can leave gifts on the driveway, [and] you can leave gift bags for those that drive by.

- **Don't be** mean to your parents.
- **Learn something** new; we have lots of time for that. I've learned to hula hoop while walking and how to do a cartwheel.
- **Go outside** and play once you're done your chores.
- **Get your** parents to come to the park and run around with you.
- **If you** are not used to homeschooling, take lots of breaks, especially outdoors, and ask for chocolate.
- **It's going** to be over.
- **Play a** game with a family member.
- **Eat candy.**

What advice do you have for parents?

- **Don't freak** out. . . . Don't let the worries get to you; it's not as bad as it seems.
- **Do something** interesting with your kids.
- **Connect with** your family in a way you wouldn't have before.
- **Calm down;** adults are too scared about coronavirus.
- **Make more** crepes.
- **Unlimited screen** time.
- **Don't go** waste your money on toilet paper and hand sanitizer.
- **Let your** kids be free and let them play *Legends of Zelda*.
- **Respect the** rules and stay home, because people are getting hurt.
- **Make sure** your children do their school work; they can be easily distracted when there are younger siblings at home.
- **Go to** the park with your kids and play soccer.
- **Keep yourself** safe, keep your kids safe and keep the earth safe.
- **Read the** Narnia series to your family.
- **Let your** kids go wherever the heck they want.
- **Let your** kids sleep in or else they'll be grumpy.
- **Help your** kids do math.
- **Bake for** your kids.
- **Don't let** the kids stay up too late.
- **Watch movies** every weekend. ☺

A new kind of 'whiteout party'

Pastors start movement to show support for essential-service workers

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

Over the past two years, thousands of Manitobans have gathered in the streets of Winnipeg to cheer on the Winnipeg Jets in the hockey playoffs. Many were hoping to don their all-white outfits and join these “whiteout parties” again this spring, but the novel coronavirus prevented that.

Instead, a new kind of “whiteout party” has spread across the province. On April 3, two Winnipeg pastors—Karen Schellenberg, interim pastor of Charleswood Mennonite; and Moses Falco, pastor of Sterling Mennonite—started the #whiteoutMB movement.

It encourages people to show support for essential-service workers by decorating their homes and yards with white, putting white hearts and messages of encouragement in their windows, and posting pictures of their displays on social media with the hashtag.

The idea for #whiteoutMB came after Schellenberg dreamed about it. At the same time, she says, “I started to realize that this uncomfortable feeling I was feeling in relation to the pandemic certainly is grief.”

The movement is an effort to combat her feelings of grief and helplessness, and do something tangible to support frontline workers from her home. Falco responded enthusiastically to her call for help. Their actions received considerable media attention from CBC and the *Winnipeg Free Press*, among others.

“I’ve heard feedback from health-care people, saying things like, ‘I got in my car after work, and it had been a really tough day, and I looked up and I saw hearts in the window,’ and that brought them to tears,” Schellenberg says.

Paper hearts have spread throughout southern Manitoba too. Tracy Enns



PHOTO BY MOSES FALCO

The home windows of Moses Falco, pastor of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg, who started the #whiteoutMB movement with Karen Schellenberg.

decorated the windows of her workplace, BSI Insurance Brokers Ltd. in Carman, after she saw Schellenberg’s social-media posts.

“I thought it was a great idea,” says Enns, who attends Carman Mennonite Church. “I feel like, when we’re in times of turmoil or crisis, one of the most important things that we can do is come together and support each other. I thought this was probably one of the most obvious and easiest ways to do that.” She chose her office because it’s directly on the main highway that goes through town.

“I don’t know what I expected people would think,” Schellenberg says. “For me, I think it was just the ability to do something, and then invite others to do the same, and see what happens. And isn’t that what the goodness of God is all about anyways—just throw it out there and see where it goes.”

#COVIDkindness

An Easter ring-and-run



PHOTO BY ASHER WARKENTIN

On behalf of Springridge Mennonite Church in Pincher Creek, Alta., Jason Martens, right, rings the door bell and runs away after dropping off an Easter surprise for Linden and Deloris Willms.

PINCHER CREEK, ALTA.—When Springridge Mennonite Church in Pincher Creek realized worshipping together on Easter Sunday—a day of resurrection joy and celebration—was not going to be an option due to COVID-19, people started to ask, “What can we do to make it feel special, even in a small way?” That’s when the idea of delivering Easter baskets came up. Pastor Tany Warkentin contacted church members and asked if anyone would be willing to donate something for Easter baskets. If yes, she would pick up the items left on their doorsteps, assemble them, and deliver them to each congregation member who felt comfortable receiving a delivery on the Easter weekend. Church members generously filled the Easter bags with tomato plants from a member’s nursery, homemade paska loaves and cinnamon buns, canned *Pluma moos* (fruit soup), chocolates, flower bouquets, and little boxes of homemade shortbread with icing and sprinkles included for decorating. In addition, members wrote personal notes and letters to include in the bags. On April, Warkentin and the kids delivered the Easter gifts to the townspeople and Jason Martens to the country folk. At each home, they rang the bell and then ran away to at least two metres. The first-ever Easter ring- and-run!

—BY JOANNE DE JONG

'In This Together'

Discussing the future of an inclusive church

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

Shortly before COVID-19 made public meetings impossible, 23 people gathered in the basement of Hamilton (Ont.) Mennonite Church, together with remote groups in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Calgary, to discuss the future of the In This Together: LGBTQ+ Anabaptist Network of Canada. The idea for the network came about after an event put on by Pastors in Exile last April called "Beyond binaries: Creating an affirming church."

A group of people met after that event to continue conversations about the safety and inclusion of LGBTQ+ or gender, sexual and relationship diverse (GSRD) people in Anabaptist congregations, anticipating that some sort of network could be a place for LGBTQ+ Anabaptists to feel welcomed and represented.

Out of this discussion, a committee was formed. This small group met several times over the next months, dreaming about how to create a network that connects people, provides resources for individuals and congregations, and raises awareness.

The In This Together name was chosen as a nod to the rainbow buttons that helped people show solidarity with LGBTQ+ people at the Mennonite Church Canada gathering in Saskatoon in 2016, as

they commit to building safer Anabaptist communities across the country.

The group drafted statements reflecting the network's vision, mission, values and objectives, but recognized the need to broaden the conversation to include a larger, more diverse group of people



IN THIS TOGETHER COMMITTEE PHOTOS

Participants gathered at Hamilton (Ont.) Mennonite Church on Feb. 29 for an initial meeting of the In This Together: Anabaptist Network of Canada, to further the conversation about the safety and inclusion of people who are LGBTQ+ in Anabaptist congregations.

representing a wider geographic area. Invitations were sent to those who had added their names to a mailing list at the "Beyond binaries" event, and at the nationwide church gathering in Abbotsford, B.C., last summer. Others were invited by word of mouth.

people in their communities.

- **Cultivating** a list of inclusive worship resources to be housed on a website, similar to that of the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests (bmcglbt.org).

The committee acknowledges that much more work needs to be done. A more diverse committee will eventually need to be formed to see this initiative come to fruition. ☘

Individuals or congregations interested in participating in this initiative can contact inthistogethernetwork@gmail.com.



From a news release provided by the In This Together Committee.



A group from Edmonton joined remotely in the In This Together: Anabaptist Network of Canada conversation about the safety and inclusion of people who are LGBTQ+ in Anabaptist congregations, held on Feb. 29.

'I hear you, I see you'

Youth leaders called to be authentic with youth

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent

“Youth need to experience God for themselves. . . . We need to offer Jesus to our youth,” said Michele Hershberger, a Bible and ministry professor and department chair from Hesston (Kan.) College with experience in youth ministry and postmodern culture, at a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada youth workers event, held earlier this year before COVID-19 distancing. “They need to be alongside adults who are authentically living out their faith,” and who are willing to talk about faith without giving easy answers, she said,

The retreat, held at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp in New Hamburg, Ont., included pastors with responsibility for youth, youth workers and sponsors, alongside Jean Lehn Epp, the regional church’s interim coordinator of youth ministry resources, now in her second year of intentional discernment around the future of youth ministry.

At last year’s regional church gathering, Lehn Epp said that “programs are not enough,” and shared a “provocative proposition” for youth ministry: “investing

in intentional, unconditional relationships with youth, walking with them towards a fearless faith in Christ Jesus.”

The retreat was part of exploring what living into this proposition means.

Hershberger emphasized that youth are drawn to authentic people and authentic relationships, and that Anabaptist/Mennonite distinctives, like community, should mean that youth are integrated into all aspects of work, play and worship. Youth, like all people, are looking for a place to belong, where they can have a voice and a place that reflects their concerns.

She challenged youth leaders to let go of the theology of youth being “lost” to the church. While youth are “living in a culture of disorientation,” and find it difficult to have hope, they are longing for authentic relationships with others who are also authentic. “We are being called as churches to stop ‘playing’ church.” The challenge, she said, is to work at being authentic faith communities that are called to love, hear people’s stories and send the message to youth, “I hear you, I see you.”

She acknowledged that there is a need to

name and grieve the loss of traditions, but there is some urgency to make “deep adaptive change,” and to work with youth to do it, sharing the power involved in shaping new faith communities. The church brings with it into the future all the gifts of its Anabaptist faith, like service, justice, peace, community, discerning Scripture together and embracing diversity.

The youth leaders present shared and encouraged one another by discussing where God has surprised them in youth ministry, what challenges they face and how they find support for their work.

At the end of the weekend, they participated in a playful “cape blessing,” which Lehn Epp described as “reminding us of the sacred work that we do, as if we are super heroes. Yet we fully rely on God’s power and not on our own. When we feel overwhelmed or feel that we have fallen short, we are reminded that we are enough and [we are] covered with the love of God.”

With files from a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada news release.



PHOTO BY BRENT MUSSER

Participants at an MC Eastern Canada youth workers retreat, held before COVID-19 distancing at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, take part in a super heroes’ cape blessing, reminding each other that they are covered with the love of God. Michele Hershberger of Hesston (Kan.) College, in the purple and white cape, was the resource person.

National historical society roundup

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada met in Quebec on Jan. 17 and 18 and discussed several new projects, including a history book of Mennonites in Canada since 1970 and a cross-Canada celebration of the centenary of the arrival of Russian Mennonites in 2023.

• **Building on** the Society's November 2018 history conference, "A people of diversity: Mennonites in Canada since 1970," it invited Brian Froese and Laureen Harder-Gissing to co-author a book on Mennonites in Canada from 1970 to 2020. Froese teaches history at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, and Harder-Gissing is the archivist-librarian at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont.

• **Plans are** proceeding for the Russlaender Centenary Project. The main feature of the commemoration will be a cross-Canada train trip in 2023, beginning in Quebec City with stops and events planned across the country. Participants can choose to be on all or any of the segments of the journey, or be involved when the travellers arrive in their part of the country.

• **The Society** also chose to recognize the migration of Mennonites from Canada to Mexico and Paraguay in 1922, the largest ever mass emigration from Canada. Events, exhibits and a conference are planned for 2022.

• **This year**, the Society's Award of Excellence was presented to Lucille Marr in recognition of her contributions in research, writing and teaching about Mennonites and



PHOTO BY BARB DRAPER

Laureen Harder-Gissing, right, presents the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada's 2020 Award of Excellence to Lucille Marr.

Brethren in Christ in Canada; her work on the Society's executive; and her role in the founding and ongoing work of the Société d'histoire mennonite du Québec.

• **The Society's** new executive includes: Laureen Harder-Gissing, president; Conrad Stoesz, vice-president; Jeremy Wiebe, treasurer; Barb Draper, secretary; and Bruce Guenther, member-at-large. ☘

Online Courses Offered

DOES RELIGION CAUSE VIOLENCE?

Instructor:
William Cavanaugh
June 8-12 and 15-19
1:30-4:30 PM CST

LEADING IN AN AGE OF POLARIZATION

Instructor:
David Brubaker
June 8-12 and 15-19
9:00 AM-12:00 PM CST

RECONCILING STORIES: INDIGENOUS LAWS AND LANDS

Instructor:
Niigaan Sinclair
June 1-5
9:00 AM-12:00 PM
and 1:00-4:00 PM CST



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The gift of giving time

By Maria H. Klassen
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Many people have given their time to volunteering, but few have a record of volunteering for the same organization for 46 years. Margie Steingart has that distinction. She has volunteered for the Christian Benefit Thrift Shop in St. Catharines, Ont., since it opened in January 1974, making her, at the age of 93, the oldest volunteer there.

Steingart worked at the first store that opened on Pelham Road. At that time, several area Mennonite churches each took one month to provide service at the store. As a member of St. Catharines

of the stores until 2009, which involved scheduling a manager for each day of the week. She was there when a board was established, and she served as a board member for many years.

Having been born in Canada, she was not a recipient of the generosity of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), which was established just a few years before she was born, and had its first project in Ukraine. But she totally embraced the purpose of thrift stores:

- **To raise funds for MCC.**



MCC 100 STORIES FOR 100 YEARS PHOTO

After 46 years, Margie Steingart still works at the Christian Benefit Thrift Shop in St. Catharines, Ont.

United Mennonite Church, she willingly signed up for her church's month, becoming a daily manager each Friday.

She was there when a second store was opened in 1975, located on Facer Street. An expansion at one of the two stores occurred in 1985. The store locations changed several more times over the years, until it was decided to combine both stores into one location. This move took place in 2010, and that store is still located on Grantham Avenue.

Steingart was head manager of one

- **To sell** donated items at a reasonable price.
- **To be** a friendly, caring presence in the community.

She did not hesitate to sign up to volunteer all those many years ago. And she is still on the list of volunteers, having thoroughly enjoyed her many hours at the store and being blessed to have given her gift of time. ❧

News brief

Longtime EMU mascot passes the torch



EMU PHOTO

Herm, the Eastern Mennonite University mascot, is pictured with possible future students at a recent Homecoming Fall Festival.

HARRISONBURG, VA.—Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) announces the retirement of Herm, the school's mascot, effective at the end of the 2019-20 academic year. Known less by his official moniker of Herm the Fourth, Herm is completing his 22nd year as the biggest—and most loveable—fan and cheerleader of the EMU Royals. "It has been a great honour to serve the EMU community for the past 22 years," the silent Herm wrote in his resignation letter. "I will always cherish my time here, cheering on our Royals athletic teams, supporting this community's amazing events, and frolicking on this beautiful campus." Of his reason for retiring, he says, "My speed and agility are no longer a match for today's athletes, and with my limited tech skills I have fallen behind in my abilities to stay 'hip' with our student body," an ironically dated reference to current lingo. "Herm, we will miss you!" says EMU president Susan Schultz Huxman.

—EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

/// Staff change

MWC hires new chief development officer



Shirley Redekop began as chief development officer, a half-time role at Mennonite World Conference (MWC) on March 23. An American living in Canada, she brings a range of competencies in the field of development as she joins the team working at MWC's office in Kitchener, Ont. She has served several roles in her local congregation, the nationwide church in Canada and with several Mennonite organizations. She has worked with people from many cultures, including Laotian, Cambodian, Vietnamese (in a camp in Thailand), diverse refugees in Canada, and Mennonites from Mexico. She has been involved with tours to Benin, Tanzania, Greece, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand and India, and to MWC assemblies in Asunción, Paraguay, and Harrisburg, Pa. "Even with all our diversity of culture, language and practice, our Anabaptist theology draws us together as a family of faith through Christ's love and sacrifice for us," she says, adding, "Our theology of service, peace and shared convictions is what our broken world needs at this time."

—MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

/// Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Ontario

Steph Chandler Burns

began her current role as associate pastor with a focus on children and youth at Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo in January. She completed a master of theological studies degree at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo in 2017 and has worked in various ministry-related roles at Bloomingdale Mennonite Church and Mennonite Central Committee since then.



Quenton Little began as pastor at Agape Fellowship in London, Ont., in February after pastoring for 15 years with the Anglican Church of

Canada, including at two small congregations south of Saskatoon during his undergraduate studies at St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan. He completed his master of divinity degree in Ontario and then pastored a four-point parish in rural Saskatchewan for four years before becoming the rector at All Saints Parish in London and later at St. Mark's as well. This past year he became a reserve military chaplain in London with the 4th Royal Canadian Regiment, providing spiritual support and mental-health education to the troops.

Melissa Miller began as interim pastor of Pioneer Park Christian Fellowship in Kitchener in January. Previously, she served both as a



long-term and interim pastor in congregations in Mennonite Church Manitoba as well as an interim pastor in the United States. She earned her master of divinity degree in 2006 from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (now Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) in Elkhart, Ind., and was the former Family Ties columnist for *Canadian Mennonite* for 17 years. On behalf of MC Canada, she has been co-chairing the Anglican-Mennonite dialogue since 2017.



Len Rempel was ordained on Jan. 26 at St. Agatha Mennonite Church, where he has served as pastor since October 2016. He also works

as chief operating officer of Mennonite World Conference and he previously worked for 11 years at Ten Thousand Villages. He studied at both Waterloo Lutheran Seminary (now Martin Luther University College) and at Grebel in the master of theological studies program. During his studies he did a pastoral internship at East Zorra Mennonite Church in Tavistock.

Dave Rogalsky began a one-year term as supply pastor at Bloomingdale Mennonite Church on Feb. 24. He previously served in long-term and interim pastoral assignments in MC Eastern



Canada, and as interim pastor at the Church of the Good Shepherd (Swedenborgian), in Kitchener. He also spent 12 years as the Eastern Canada correspondent for *Canadian Mennonite*.



Nick Schuurman was ordained on Jan. 19 at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, where he currently serves as lead

pastor, after previously serving there as youth and co-pastor. He has also served as a pastor of First Hmong Mennonite Church in Kitchener. He graduated from McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ont., and is continuing his studies at Grebel, doing research related to cognitive disability and Anabaptist ritual.

Kendra Whitfield Ellis was ordained on Feb. 9 at Waterloo North Mennonite Church in Waterloo, where she has served on the pastoral team



for two-and-a-half years. She is currently the minister of pastoral care and youth ministries. She previously pastored at Floradale Mennonite Church from 2008 to 2015. She completed her master of theological studies degree at Grebel in 2004.

—BY JANET BAUMAN

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Immigrants in crisis

Newcomers experience unique mental-health challenges during COVID-19

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent

According to Lule Begashaw, psychotherapist and team lead at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, the mental-health team is seeing a big increase in requests for help since the COVID-19 outbreak. She says that “newcomers are a vulnerable population that has definitely been overlooked.”

Due to Alberta government funding cuts, the waiting list for counselling is getting longer by the day. “Clients struggling with mental illness should be cared for in a timely manner,” she says. “The unavailability of care should not be tolerated.”

Unique concerns of refugees and immigrants include depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) related to their experiences with war, violence and torture. A study done by the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* discovered that immigrants and refugees experience 10 times the amount of PTSD than does the general population.

Begashaw also notes that many refugees from Syria were forced to remain behind locked doors in fear of being shot in the street. As Canadians are all being asked to remain at home in self-isolation, many newcomers feel their level of anxiety rising.

That being said, Amena Shehab, a Palestinian refugee who was born in Syria, says their homes were not safe during the war either. “It was not safe in the street or the home,” she says. “At any moment your home could be bombed or hit with a missile. . . . Although I know everyone has different triggers, for me, the COVID-19 brought back the fear of not knowing who is my friend and who is my enemy.”

In Syria, she didn’t know whom to trust and now she doesn’t know who is safe and who isn’t when doing something as simple as going to the grocery store.

These comments are similar to



PHOTO BY NAFKOT BEGASHAW

Lule Begashaw is a psychotherapist and team lead at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers.

Begashaw’s, who says that, for survivors of war, when anxiety and panic increase, trust decreases. In addition to PTSD, many of her clients experience flashbacks and constant worry, and are unable to sleep. On top of this, they now have the added pressure of teaching their children at home, with limited English and technological skills.

Mental health often becomes a low priority for many newcomers, and this can cause a ripple effect. “If the parents are suffering, the children are suffering,” says Begashaw. “Family violence becomes a big concern.”

There are many barriers for newcomers when it comes to seeking help with their mental-health issues. The list includes: stigma, language, cost, childcare and transportation, so the Mennonite Centre offers free mental-health care in the clients’ own language along with childcare onsite.

A huge barrier in many cultures is the stigma attached to people seen as having a mental illness or seeking psychiatric care. “If you are identified as having mental illness, there is the fear of being deported or losing your job,” says Begashaw. Forty percent of the Mennonite Centre’s clients are children, and parents worry people will find out, or the school will

put something on their record, if mental illness is suspected.

It is often hard for newcomers to trust, so therapists have to do a lot of reassuring regarding confidentiality and they try to re-frame treatment as “just working on a problem.” Sessions are held in the same building as English-as-a-second-language classes and daycare centres, so when newcomers arrive for an appointment no one knows why they are there.

Like in most organizations, due to COVID-19, appointments are now happening online. Before social distancing, the Mennonite Centre had many creative programs—including equine and art therapy groups—that didn’t depend solely on language. Now it has had to come up with alternate ideas.

One therapist will speak about an issue with a client online and then wait as they draw or paint what they are feeling. They then finish the session discussing the piece.

Play therapy was a common technique with children. Now online, they may be asked to find a container in the house and then place an item or toy in the container that represents what they are feeling. This gives the therapist “an eye into their inner worlds,” says Begashaw.

The experience of newcomers is complicated, with different struggles, stories and triggers.

For Shehab, the thing that scared her the most was when people started to hoard toilet paper. “I felt like the vibe of war was all around me,” she says. “Why were people hoarding toilet paper? Was there something I didn’t know? It made me feel really unsafe.”

Begashaw, an Ethiopian immigrant, offers some suggestions on how to support newcomers struggling with mental-health issues:

- **Visit if you can.**
- **Support children** by offering to tutor or donate supplies.
- **Teach English.**
- **Listen and connect** with refugees or immigrants you know, as this will ease their burden. ☺

FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Choosing to be present

Serving mentally-challenged people means supporting and empowering them, and learning from them

By Angelika Dawson

Communitas Supportive Care Society
ABBOTSFORD, BRITISH COLUMBIA



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREW ARDELL

Andrew Ardell brings a global perspective to his work at Communitas Supportive Care Society.

Andrew Ardell is a friendly person who smiles readily and is thoughtful in his conversation. He cares deeply about the people he serves and is aware of how much he gains from the relationships he has made through his work with the Communitas Supportive Care Society. This positive perspective is borne out of years of service experience around the world and here at home.

Ardell has lived and served in Southeast Asia, Ukraine and Bolivia, as well as in Prince George, B.C. He has worked with organizations like Mennonite Central Committee. Today, he is studying to become a social worker and is working with Communitas, serving people who live with mental-health challenges through a service called Supported Independent Living (SIL).

Ardell is bringing his global experience to his local context. He can still remember the experience that changed his worldview. At the young age of 13, serving with his parents in Cambodia, he began to see that he didn't have all the answers. He realized that the people with whom he interacted had as much to offer him as he had to offer them.

"That experience reshaped my understanding of what it really means to serve people," he says. "It changed how I looked at support and empowerment."

This reshaping was reinforced by his subsequent service experiences. In each context, he found resilient people working at creating authentic communities. "I truly

experienced reciprocal relationships, where people living with severe trauma were finding ways to support and serve me," he says. "It was very humbling."

His experiences in service and his current schooling also impact his current work with SIL. Even now, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ardell supports a number of people who have lived with mental-health challenges nearly all of their adult lives. Bringing a different perspective, encouraging new habits and setting realistic goals are a few of the ways that Ardell tries to support these individuals. He sees each encounter as an opportunity to help change the trajectory of their lives.

"Each conversation, text or meeting can help lift someone up and empower them to new heights," he says. "I may not ever get to see where they end up, but I get to support them as they change the trajectory of the rest of their life."

COVID-19 has impacted Ardell's working life in a few ways. He has begun working part time in one of Communitas's group homes, supporting two children living with mental-health challenges. Alongside of this work, he continues to engage with the adults he serves and now regularly connects with by phone or the internet. He has also been able to come up with new ways for people to use their gifts and stay connected, developing art projects and other creative ways for people to stay engaged even while they are apart.

When asked how anyone could support someone living with mental-health challenges, he says that genuine relationships are key. "I wish people could know that their presence in someone's life really has power," he says. "You don't need a degree or any special training to be someone's friend. Being with someone isn't complicated, you just have to choose to be present." ❧

**'You don't need a degree
or any special training
to be someone's friend.'
(Andrew Ardell)**

FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

COVER STORY

We are all created wonderful

Mennonite World Conference

Health work first brought Mennonites to Taiwan in 1948 through Mennonite Central Committee’s relief work, but there was also local interest in starting a church. The Mennonite presence in Taiwan today—the Fellowship of Mennonite Churches in Taiwan—has its roots in both health and church planting.

New Dawn Educare Center is part of that legacy. This award-winning centre for adults with developmental disabilities has a vision to “empower

(Continued on page 30)



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW DAWN

New Dawn Educare Center caregivers and clients make dumplings.

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FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

**ONLINE NOW!**at canadianmennonite.org**Chaplain-turned-pianist brightens care home**

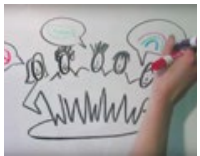
Winnipegger Lisa Enns reflects on her work with the elderly during COVID-19.

canadianmennonite.org/covidchaplain**Watch: New video highlights thrift shop's impact**

A new video showcases the incredible work of volunteers at the Brandon (Man.) MCC Thrift Shop.

canadianmennonite.org/video/brandonthrift**COVID-19 impact on world hunger cause for high concern**

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is working to meet the food needs of people around the world.

canadianmennonite.org/cfgbcovid**Watch: Illustrating social action**

A Conrad Grebel University College student created an illustrated reflection on how the school has been socially and politically active in recent months.

canadianmennonite.org/video/illustrated*(Continued from page 29)*

people with disabilities to live a life of independence, holistic personal development and health.”

In 1977, Canadian Mennonite missionaries Otto and Elaine Dirks began a centre to care for children with disabilities who had been abandoned. Today, New Dawn supports children and adults with mental disabilities, with day care, residential care and an employment program.

“New Dawn . . . is crafted to accommodate the multifaceted needs of individuals and families affected by intellectual disability,” says Shu-Yui (Mamie Chiu), New Dawn’s director. “We believe that all people are wonderfully created. We all are different, and we all have limitations.

“In serving the mentally challenged within a Christ-centred community, we enjoy the pleasure of most fully reflecting the image of our Creator,” she adds.

A pastor serves on the New Dawn staff team, ensuring that spiritual care

Today, New Dawn supports children and adults with mental disabilities, with day care, residential care and an employment program.

is part of the whole-person support the centre offers. Residents gather for worship every Friday. New Dawn’s location in a mountainous region offers opportunities for farming and conservation activities—holistic care that extends to the environment.

In October 2019, New Dawn was recognized for its quality work, receiving a Presidential Cultural Award for humanitarian dedication, and it had the opportunity to give a speech on selfless love and care at a Next 20 Festival forum.

The Taiwanese Mennonite fellowship, which is an MWC member church, formally established its first congregation in 1955. It currently reports 1,630 baptized members in 22 congregations. ❧

Many people are struggling with self-isolation. Help *Canadian Mennonite* be the tie that binds.

Donate today at canadianmennonite.org/donate or call 1-800-378-2524



UpComing

New dates for New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale

NEW HAMBURG, ONT.—After cancelling its regularly scheduled New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the organizing committee has announced two new events to be held in its place:



The New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale 2020 feature quilt—'Fire Island Hosta Queen'—was quilted and donated by Louise Hamilton.

- "Spring into auction: 100 quilts for 100 years of MCC," an online event where the public can bid on a special collection of 100 quilts curated by the Relief Sale's quilt committee, begins at 10 a.m. on May 30. Photos of the 100 quilts can be viewed at nhmrs.com/quilt-catalogue. Those who want to bid on the quilts or watch the auction should check regularly at nhmrs.com for information on how to digitally connect.
- A one-day sale will now take place at the New Hamburg fairgrounds on Oct. 17. "We haven't forgotten about the physical sale," says John Reimer, who chairs the Relief Sale's organizing committee. "At our meeting last week, the... organizing committee was heartened by the willingness of the many volunteers and sponsors to continue to support the work of MCC."

—NEW HAMBURG MENNONITE RELIEF SALE COMMITTEE

MCC centennial conference postponed to October 2021

WINNIPEG—In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the academic conference, "MCC at 100: Mennonites, service, and the humanitarian impulse," has been postponed to next year. Originally planned to coincide with the centennial of the creation of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the conference will now be held from Sept. 30 to Oct. 2, 2021, at the University of Winnipeg. The centennial conference will present papers that examine the past, present and future of MCC. Established by North American Mennonites in 1920, to aid famine-ravaged Mennonite communities in the former Soviet Union (Ukraine), MCC has grown to embrace service in more than 60 countries. It has brought together a wide variety of Mennonite groups, including Brethren in Christ and Amish, and it has been a force for global ecumenical and interfaith partnerships. The conference will reflect on the Mennonites' response to the biblical call to love one's neighbour through practical acts of service, with papers written from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

—By ROYDEN LOEWEN



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal

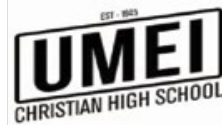
Employment Opportunity
Pastor (0.5 FTE), start date: August 2020

The Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal is a small, diverse and welcoming congregation in the heart of Montreal. Being the only English Mennonite church in the area, participants come from many parts of Montreal and beyond. With four universities nearby, we are invigorated by students who make MFM their church home while in Montreal.

The Fellowship is searching for a half-time pastor, as our current pastor is retiring (summer 2020). Responsibilities include giving a meditation two Sundays per month, pastoral care and working with the elders group and church council as our congregation seeks God together in the context of this lively city.

To learn more go to mcec.ca/ministry-opportunities or contact pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca.

mfmtl.org



Employment Opportunity
Music Director (Part Time)

UMEI Christian High School, a dynamic Christian Anabaptist school serving students in grades 9-12, that teaches and prepares students to live a life of purpose for Christ, invites applicants for Music Director (part time).

We seek a part-time secondary school teacher. You must be innovative, hardworking and an enthusiastic teaching professional. You must have a sound understanding of the Ontario secondary school curriculum, excellent subject knowledge and love teaching choral music in a Christian environment.

Highlights of being part of the UMEI team:

- Working with small classes – aver. class size is 12 students
- Part of a close knit community
- Teachers are encouraged to create a program unique to their passions

The position will involve teaching and assisting in extra-curricular activities; coaching experience would be an asset. The successful applicant will be a motivated individual inspiring students to love learning and excel in music. For a job description or to submit a resume and cover letter, please contact the Principal, Sonya Bedal at principal@umei.ca.

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Making sense of God's story

RJC students contemplate their place in the biblical narrative

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

Although the halls and classrooms of Rosthern Junior College (RJC High School) are empty now because of the COVID-19 pandemic, a few short weeks ago they were filled with life, as students and teachers met for the school's annual Deeper Life Days.

On March 5 and 6, with the help of three guest speakers, they explored the theme, "God's story, our story: Making sense of the Bible." Vice-principal David Epp described the theme as "broad, universal and global, but also particular to each one of us."

Each speaker was asked to write a summary of God's story in 115 words. These summaries, said Epp, served as "on-ramps on which to have conversations" about the Bible.

Rachel Wallace, pastor of Eigenheim Mennonite, described God's story in terms of an arc encompassing past,



PHOTO BY HTOO BO PAW

Rosthern Junior College High School students sing together as part of the school's Deeper Life Days.



PHOTO BY JILL OLFERT WIENS

Chad Moir, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Rosthern, Sask., standing, shares his understanding of God's story with students at Rosthern Junior College High School during the school's Deeper Life Days.

present and future.

Chad Moir, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Rosthern, spoke of the universality of Scripture, but also its power to shape individuals.

Ric Driediger, a local businessman and former pastor, talked about how each person is called to live as an example of God's love.

After hearing the three speakers, students were invited to write their own 115-word summary of God's story.

"For some of our students, the story is deeply known," said Epp, "while, for others, they are thinking about it for the first time."

He cited Canadian Mennonite University professor emeritus Gerald Gerbrandt, who says that one of the fundamental things about God's story is that it does not narrow, but is ever widening and becoming more inclusive. ☞