

CANADIAN MENNONITE

August 17, 2020 Volume 24 Number 17



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EDITORIAL

Potluck faith

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



Every year around this time, the congregation I belong to makes plans for Gathering Sunday. After a summer of sparser attendance at worship services, our gathering on the first Sunday after Labour Day is always a celebration, a reunion for those of us who vacationed outside the area and for those who stayed put during the summer. We join in the uplifting congregational singing, and every household contributes to the plentiful potluck lunch afterward.

But this year, things will be different, because of the pandemic. Since March, my church has been meeting primarily through pre-recorded services and Zoom meetings. A task force is working on guidelines for when and how we might have larger in-person meetings again. I suspect that enthusiastic congregational singing and a bountiful potluck table will not be on the list of recommendations.

At a church potluck, we experience life together in a concrete way. There are new sights, smells and tastes, as we encounter dishes prepared in other kitchens. Those who brought little, or nothing, still eat well. Sitting around the table together, the generations mingle for conversation about life beyond the church walls—our activities, passions, struggles and successes.

A church meal provides opportunities to serve, starting with the cooks and bakers who share out of the bounty of their garden or pantry. There are those who literally serve the food, and those who clean up after the meal.

In these strange times, special occasions, like weddings, farewells and funerals, are different without food. We long for the joy of eating together—around the potluck table and at the Lord's Table.

Some vital parts of living as a household of faith remain. As members of our congregations connect with each other through technology, or communicate through masks and glass barriers, we remember that, as Christ's followers, we belong to each other. In this new reality, we can still cheer each other on in the adventure of discipleship. There are still opportunities to pray for each other and for the world. There are still opportunities to serve.

Right now, our churches may not be having meals together, but Arli Klassen writes on page 11 of one way to help put food on other tables. Mennonite World Conference is inviting contributions to a fund that assists Anabaptists living in precarious situations caused by COVID-19 in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Mennonite Church Canada has already pledged \$50,000 toward this effort, with an invitation for Canadian Mennonites to match that amount. You can read more at: bit.ly/3gMEgUq and bit.ly/3e8z9ws.

This is an invitation to imagine a larger table and to do our part in the Global Church Potluck.

Seeking new stories

Speaking of food, you may have noticed the occasional stories in our Gathering around the Table series. (See page 31 for the most recent one.) When our

editorial group envisioned this series almost four years ago, we considered how food fosters and enhances connections between people. We called on *Canadian Mennonite's* readers to help tell those food stories.

Since then, we've published articles in which cooks and bakers recall how preparing and sharing a particular dish helped build a sense of community. Each story has a corresponding recipe, which appears only online. Over the years, we've served up photos and recipes for rhubarb pie and rice pudding, tourtière and injera (Ethiopian flatbread), frogmore stew and wacky cake, vegan beans and—ah yes!—butter tarts. (You can search canadianmennonite.org for "gathering around the table" for these and others.)

Thank you to the contributors who have shared their stories and recipes. Now here's a call for other "foodies" to come forward. If you have a favourite recipe and a story of how it helped build connections between people, we invite you to contact editorial assistant Barb Draper at edassist@canadianmennonite.org. She will help you prepare your submission for appearance on the CM table.

Looking ahead

Over the summer, the print issues of *Canadian Mennonite* are mailed less frequently. But, for digital subscribers, the every-two-week schedule has continued, with digital-only content. The next issue, dated Aug. 31, will be the last digital-only issue of the summer. If you would like to receive that and future issues via email, you can subscribe online at canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital or email office @canadianmennonite.org. There is no extra cost to current subscribers. ✎



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PHOTO: DONNA SCHULZ / CANADIAN MENNONITE

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FEATURE

Hooked on volunteering

Or is what we do for God service instead?

Story and Photos by Donna Schulz

Saskatchewan Correspondent



Volunteers Sheila Harder, left, Eileen Flath and Hariette Melin sort through fresh produce at Rosthern's Good Neighbours Food Centre in May 2018.



Meaningful volunteer experiences help build community. Sarah Warkentin, left, Jessica Rorison and daughter Nyah, Vicky Stucky and Janet Regier tie a quilt at the MCC Great Winter Warm-up in Rosthern, Sask., in January 2020.

Eileen Klassen Hamm recalls how, as a young adult, she considered a Mennonite Voluntary Service term to be a good and natural thing to do.

“It was an earlier era, where the church that owns Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) really fostered that sense of voluntary service,” she says. “There were a whole host of opportunities to do a stint of volunteer work. It was really part of church culture at the time.”

Klassen Hamm, who is executive director of MCC Saskatchewan, says that, during the 1980s and '90s, voluntary service was seen as an acceptable way to spend a few years, and this attitude helped shape her identity.

“If there are things we believe in, it's okay to forego the salary and benefits that society thinks we need,” she says of church culture when she was a young adult.

A new reality

But times have changed and so has the culture surrounding volunteering. These days, MCC tries to create volunteer opportunities for people who may only have a couple hours to give each month or who may want to engage as a group in a one-off volunteer experience.

“Can we find meaningful things for them to do?” Klassen Hamm asks, noting that the work “must be meaningful for them but also helpful for MCC.”

MCC Saskatchewan's annual Buckets of Thanks event fits the bill. Each October, church groups and families gather to fill plastic buckets with items needed to create relief kits.

“It's a lovely intergenerational volunteer opportunity,” she says. “I have wondered how that can shape people over the years.”

What is and isn't volunteering

Volunteering can be defined as freely offering to do something, as in, “My son volunteered to make supper.”

It can also be defined as working for an organization without getting paid, as in, “My mother volunteered at the thrift store for many years.”

By the latter definition, unless one is a pastor or paid church employee, everything one does in church is volunteering. Or is it?

Ryan Siemens, the executive minister of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, thinks there should be a distinction between work we do at church and jobs we volunteer for in the community.

Siemens says the church is a household of faith. The Apostle Paul uses the household imagery of brothers and sisters in his letters. In a household not everything one does is voluntary.

“There’s stuff you got to get done, so you do it,” he says, using teaching his son Isaiah to empty the dishwasher as an example. “When Isaiah’s cleaning the dishwasher, he’s not volunteering,” says Siemens, adding, “There are household codes that are not very popular because of the hierarchy implicit in them.”

Likewise, he says, “Worship leading is not volunteering, it’s pulling your weight. . . . We all need to be doing our share for our life together.”

Volunteer or servant?

Ryan Wood, who is principal of Rosthern Junior College High School (RJC), agrees with Siemens. “I do a lot of volunteering through the school or through church,” says Wood, “but I don’t know if I really think about it as volunteering. I kind of think about it as my job in those places. I think about it as duty.”

Volunteering is an integral part of community life at RJC.

“We are very intentional about fostering volunteerism,” says Wood. “We affirm students’ involvement in active service to the community.”

Participation in sports teams, choirs, clubs and committees is seen as an act of strengthening community. But these activities, although voluntary, aren’t necessarily thought of as volunteerism.

“We rarely use the word ‘volunteerism,’” Wood says. “It’s definitely framed more from the perspective of service to community.” And service, according to



Hertha Friesen and Edna Sagrott tie quilts together at MCC’s Great Winter Warm-up in Rosthern in January 2020.

Wood, is just something one does as a follower of Christ. “Jesus is at the centre, at the core of the whole thing. Once you commit [to Christ], you’re not really volunteering, you’re just living out your commitment.”

Volunteering begins with an example

Whether one calls it volunteering, serving or living out one’s commitment to Christ, creating a culture of volunteerism begins with an example.

In John 13, Jesus assumes a servant role and washes his disciples’ feet. And then he teaches them: “*Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*”

But creating a culture of volunteerism or service takes more than just example. Even the very best example must be followed. There must be opportunity and there must be invitation.

Many young people have their first volunteer experience at summer camp.

Mark Wurtz, executive director of Youth Farm Bible Camp near Rosthern, Sask., recalls volunteering as a counselor-in-training (CiT) when he was a teenager.

“My youth pastor was going to be the camp pastor. He encouraged me to come,” says Wurtz. As a camper the

(Continued on page 6)

I learned how to be a volunteer

BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

Volunteer experiences do shape us. As do the examples of others:

- **Years before I** was born, my parents hosted a Mennonite immigrant family in their home. This was no small sacrifice. The newcomers added another five people to their household of six.

Mom and Dad gave up the second floor of their house for the Foth family. Their family lived with mine for a couple of years. The parents worked alongside my parents in the dairy and the Foth children went to school with my siblings. The two families formed a bond of friendship that continues to this day.

This was my earliest and most profound example of volunteering. But I doubt Mom and Dad thought of it as volunteering. They were just living out their commitment to Christ.

- **When I was 19**, Helen, the woman whose children I babysat, invited me to help teach English to the Vietnamese refugees our church sponsored. I was happy to volunteer, but if Helen hadn’t invited me, I don’t think I would have done it. I had no experience and didn’t have the confidence, or even the awareness of my ability, to know this was something I could do.

- **If I think** of my most impactful volunteer experiences—the ones I would willingly repeat—they were the ones that brought relationship and community to my life. Whether teaching English to refugees, serving on a board or committee, or serving watermelon and *rollkuchen* (deep-fried pastry) at a Mennonite Central Committee relief sale, the work is meaningful not only because it fills a need but because it’s undertaken with, and for, others.

(Continued from page 5)

previous summer, Wurtz had seen the CiTs enjoying themselves and thought it might be something he'd like to do. But it was his youth pastor's invitation that got him started.

Inviting youth to serve as CiTs is more effective than waiting for them to sign up, he says, adding that he also thinks it's important to match the volunteer with the job. Admittedly, with young people who don't know their interests or abilities, this can be tricky. But the beauty of summer camp, he says, is that young people can learn to do many different things.

"We throw them in the fire," he says. "There are not many [opportunities] in church where they can get as much leadership experience." Wurtz says his own summer volunteer experience was crucial to finding out who he was.

Volunteering with MDS

Not unlike summer camp, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) provides opportunity and invitation to volunteer through its family projects. Ida Buhler, chair of MDS Saskatchewan, and her husband Ed have participated in family projects with each of their grandchildren.

Unlike most MDS work, family projects don't involve cleaning up after disasters. Rather, they are multi-generational work bees, with children of all ages, parents and grandparents building and doing development work, often at summer camps.

The Buhlers directed a family project at Camp Elim, south of Swift Current, Sask., where participants built two cabins and walkways, stained decks on existing cabins, and cleaned up the beach area, says Buhler. "The whole idea is to try and show younger kids that this is fun," she says. "You're helping others and, when you leave, you've done something for someone."

In addition to family projects, MDS facilitates youth projects. These have included making improvements to an apartment building for low-income residents and replacing windows and roofing at a Bible college.

'Worship leading is not volunteering, it's pulling your weight.' (Ryan Siemens, MC Saskatchewan executive minister)

"The emphasis [of family and youth projects] is more on trying to get them hooked on volunteering," says Buhler. These projects provide children and youth with opportunities for "giving back, sharing and doing something that you're not getting paid for," she adds.

Buhler says that "those little, warm moments" of appreciation from people served by MDS keep volunteers coming back again and again. "Every time you volunteer you have that good feeling and you want to do it again," she says.

The beauty of relationships

But there is another, even stronger, motivator for many volunteers, and that is the formation of relationships. Some develop meaningful relationships with fellow volunteers; others form impactful

relationships with the people they serve.

Erica Baerwald is human-resources coordinator for MCC Saskatchewan. For her, volunteering is about community. "My involvement with MCC started 15 years ago . . . volunteering with a kids club," she says. "I formed relationships with those kids. Seeing them grow and thrive was a beautiful journey. That is what hooked me into MCC."

Baerwald says that MCC tries to "give people opportunities and then works at creating community." She adds, "We have to pay attention to the environment we're inviting people into." Meaningful work is part of that environment, but events like potlucks also help "create a culture that is important to people." ❧

/// For discussion

1. What have been your volunteer experiences? Who were the dedicated volunteers who helped teach you about the importance of giving to others? What is the difference between volunteering and "pulling your weight"?
2. Eileen Klassen Hamm remembers that when she was a young adult, voluntary service was part of the church culture. Who were the young people from your congregation who signed up for a year or two of voluntary service? How did the experience of these young service workers impact the church in the long term?
3. Donna Schulz writes, "But times have changed and so has the culture surrounding volunteering." What changes have you seen? Do you think young people have the same vision for service that their grandparents had when they were young? Who are the faithful volunteers of today?
4. Schulz says that many volunteers appreciate the meaningful relationships they develop while volunteering. Do you agree? How would you explain why you volunteer?
5. What volunteering experiences do you find most appealing? How can we better foster a culture of service in our churches?

—By Barb Draper

See related Volunteer Leadership resources at www.commonword.ca/go/2109

CommonWord
Bookstore and Resource Centre

/// Readers write

✉ Dandelion cover inspires flower arranger

Re: Dandelion front cover, June 8.

I laughed out loud when I saw the dandelion on the cover.

Growing up on the farm in Virgil, Ont., we had

Italian neighbours. As soon as the dandelions were out in the spring, they would be out in the ditches along the road picking dandelions or leaves for eating. Strange people, we thought.

Early this spring, I passed a yard that was covered with dandelions and I thought, how beautiful! One of my passions is flower arranging, and I couldn't resist the beautiful dandelions. I picked a few along the sidewalk, took them home and made a flower arrangement to share with your readers.

MARY DERKSEN, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.



✉ Social-media followers resonate with polio story

Re: "Legacy of the last great epidemic," June 22, page 26.

• **I got my start** in nursing the summers of 1959 and 1960, when I worked with post-polio patients at King George Hospital in Winnipeg. There were still several patients in the iron lung then.

RICKEY SCHRAG (FACEBOOK COMMENT)

• **At age 4**, I contracted polio in 1952, as did two of my cousins in our Mennonite church in western Oklahoma. All of us survived without having any lifelong results.

PAT PENNER (FACEBOOK COMMENT)

• **Thanks for sharing** this story. It brings back memories of when I worked in the diet kitchen of the King George Hospital for a year in 1964-65. There were still several polio patients in iron lungs there at that time. I remember feeling overwhelmed by the thought of spending one's life in such a

situation and I was impressed with the spirit of endurance I sensed in the people I met.

LEONA DUECK PENNER (FACEBOOK COMMENT)

✉ Reader disappointed in radio feature gaps

Re: "The twilight of Mennonite radio," June 22, page 4.

The feature gives a timeline of events and highlights several pioneers in Manitoba Mennonite radio. I would like to point out a large gap in information:

- **Victor Sawatzky** became director of Faith & Life Communications (FLC) in 1976, and remained so until his retirement in 1999. During his 23-year tenure, it flourished. Programming consistently met the needs and wants of its listenership. Recording workshops, which provided music for broadcasts, led to the development of the internationally renowned Faith & Life Male Choir (1984) and Women's Chorus (1995).
- **Reg Sawatzky** was the recording engineer of FLC from 1988 until 2003. He was integral to the success and achievements of its recording studio.
- **From 1998 to 2001**, Mennonite Church Manitoba annual reports of FLC pointed to growth and sustainability of programs. In 2002-03, a significant shift happened, as programs and jobs were eliminated to save money. An explanation for the depletion of the FLC Bequest Fund was not detailed in subsequent reports. The feature only mentions "a \$250,000 fund had dried up."

I am disappointed that an article that focused on the timeline of success and subsequent demise of FLC would leave out key contributors to that success.

I acknowledge the passing of time, changes in demographics and priorities of listeners. I also believe it is just as important to acknowledge changes in specific focus, vision and accountability of the conference (now the regional church).

RAMONA TURNER, HEADINGLEY, MAN.

✉ Former pastor, choir leader thankful for church-history story

Re: "Superb helped me continue to have faith," June 22, page 20.

Thank you for the interesting article on the Superb Mennonite Church's history and its closing service.

As well as the ministers mentioned, Reverend Peter Warkentin drew the people together into one

church community, sharing the pastoral role with Reverend Peter Klassen until 1948, and continuing until 1974. Music was always important in that church, beginning with Reverend Klassen, who taught the choir to sing harmony.

Later, for a period of about 20 years, I very much enjoyed leading the Superb Mennonite Men's Choir, which sang in several other Mennonite Church Saskatchewan congregations, as well as in churches of other denominations. We often heard, "We didn't know men could sing!" The choir also performed several arts-council concerts in the area.

Reverend Werner Zacharias began driving from Fiske, Sask., in about 1970 to provide English services twice a month and he served faithfully until 1986.

It is notable that several missionaries, volunteers with Mennonite Disaster Service, Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Voluntary Service were produced by this small and vibrant congregation.

While it is sad to see that its time has now come to an end, God is to be praised for the church's time. Superb was, as a neighbouring clergy person

described it, "an oasis in a desert."

EILEEN KLASSEN, SASKATOON

✉ Exchange of letters 'reveals interesting nuances'

Re: "Point: From the indulgence of hubris" and "Counterpoint: 'I have received as much as I have given'" letters, June 22, page 7.

This exchange reveals interesting nuances around the word "assumptions."

It seems to me that Peter Reimer misinterpreted Doug Klassen's missional comments in "Open to us a door," May 25, page 4, regarding the opportunity this COVID-19 crisis presented for the church. I know Doug quite well, having been a member of his congregation in Calgary for many years. As he stated in his Counterpoint, when he talked about the community surrounding the physical presence of the church, he meant everybody. And he also meant everybody would be welcome, regardless of religious persuasion, skin colour or anything.

RICHARD PENNER, SASKATOON

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Bartel—Twins Georgia Grey and Rusty Walter (b. April 30, 2020), to Calvin and Leah Bartel, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Kim—Loa (b. June 17, 2020), to Jinah Im and Pablo Kim, Toronto United Mennonite Church.

Morasch—Audrey Maeve (b. June 18, 2020), to Maegen and Paul Morasch, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

Schellenberg—Arlo Everett Friesen (b. April 14, 2020), to Terry Schellenberg and Lenore Friesen, Sterling Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Baptisms

Marco DiLaudo, Serena DiLaudo, Tahlia DiLaudo—North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Deaths

Bauman—Aden M., 85 (b. Jan. 31, 1935; d. June 14, 2020), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Bauman—Kimberley Ann (Brubacher), 55 (b. May 25, 1964; d. May 11, 2020, Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Ediger—Gerhard, 98 (b. March 20, 1922; d. June 28, 2020), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Epp—Daniel James, 59 (b. Feb. 18, 1961; d. June 24, 2020),

North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Friesen—Henry, 86 (b. July 5, 1933; d. June 23, 2020), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Funk—Menno, 95 (b. Jan. 9, 1925; d. April 21, 2020), Altona Berghaler Mennonite, Man.

Goertz—Eric, 87 (b. Jan. 1, 1933; d. June 9, 2020), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Janzen—Henry J., 90 (b. Aug. 4, 1929; d. June 15, 2020), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Klassen—Herman Henry, 90 (b. Jan. 26, 1930; d. May 25, 2020) Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite, Glenbush, Sask.

Klippenstein—Doreen, 86 (b. Nov. 21, 1933; d. June 3, 2020), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Pries—Ernest, 84 (b. June 26, 1935; d. June 15, 2020), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Rosenberger—Velma, 86 (b. Aug. 23, 1933; d. June 26, 2020), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask. (formerly of Sharon Mennonite, Guernsey, Sask.).

Wiebe—Peter, 86 (b. July 30, 1933; d. May 6, 2020), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

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 long wait’

Anna-Lisa Salo

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: A time to born and a time to die . . .” (Ecclesiastes 2:1-2).

Over the years, I have come to refer to the process of dying as “the long wait.” Although it is true that we begin dying the moment we are born, most of us live our lives in denial, as though we are immortal, ageless. Unless we are taken quickly in some senseless tragedy or sudden illness, those who are dying and those who accompany the dying enter into “the long wait.”

Those who stand vigil with the dying fool themselves into believing that “the long wait” somehow prepares them for the inevitable. As we watch the pulse of a vein through translucent skin and lean in to detect shallow breaths on our cheek, we believe we are ready for the inevitable.

“It’s time,” we say. “She’s in such pain,” we explain, as if death needs an excuse. We tell ourselves these things and stack them like building blocks in a dam, with the intention of holding back the intense pressure of impending grief and loss that threatens to burst free at the

most inappropriate times.

But death, when it comes, is always a shock. In a heartbeat, the border between life and death is breached. Letting go of their hand, we see the dead pass through this border and we are left behind to try to make sense of the fact that they are just . . . gone.

Left alone with our memories, we are reminded of the brevity and fragility of life, at how much and whom we take for granted. The author of the Book of James writes: *“Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes”* (James 4:14).

Strange as it may sound, the words of James struck me on one occasion as I was preparing to record my mileage. Mileage is not just about kilometres covered over the course of a month; it’s a record of people encountered and the shift in needs over a given period of time. A series of recorded trips to the hospital, for example, abruptly ends with a trip to the cemetery.

For some, grasping the reality of a death is not immediate. It may not occur until long after the funeral flowers have wilted, the thank-you cards have been distributed, and the last casserole is eaten. And then, one day, a sound, a touch, a picture, a smell, or even something as mundane as a mileage record, can trigger that incredulous voice of truth within, “He’s really gone.”

During the pandemic, many entered into “the long wait.” Due to restricted access to loved ones at such a sensitive time, anger often merged with grief at the seeming injustice of it all. As we attempt to breathe life back into those who are depleted and fragile after “the long wait,” James invites us to consider our own mortality: *“What is your life?”* he whispers into the mist.

“Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years draw near when you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’; . . . before the silver cord is snapped, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it . . .” (Ecclesiastes 12:1,6-7). ❧



Anna-Lisa Salo is pastor of Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury, Alta.

A moment from yesterday



Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Lorne W. Friesen / Conference of Mennonites in Canada Photo Collection

The Conference of Mennonites in Canada annual session was held in July 1975, in Swift Current, Sask. Hot weather put participants’ “cool” to the test. The assembly was not only about business but also about relationships and, as such, there was time for work and play, including a game of volleyball, pictured. While our lives have carried on during the pandemic, and many have continued to work, thanks to technology, what has been lost includes times and spaces to build relationships, with little time and means for play. As our COVID-19 situation evolves, we need to remember to encourage people to play together and make time for it.



THIRD WAY FAMILY

Why 'third way'?

Christina Bartel Barkman

I've been asked recently why my column is called "Third Way Family." The question has prompted me to share my reasoning behind choosing this title and what it means to me.

I first started blogging after we moved to the Philippines. I wrote a lot of newsletter updates for our friends and supporters. I also enjoyed writing about topics that moved me personally, and that people could relate to and also be challenged by. I always thought of writing more and explored building a website called "Third Way Family." So when *Canadian Mennonite* asked me to write this column, the title was a quick and clear choice. But what does "third way" mean and how does it relate to my family?

First of all, the third way refers to early Anabaptists who split from the Protestant reformers and were therefore not Catholic or Protestant, but a new third way. They lived with radical allegiance to Jesus and risked persecution and violent death because of their belief in a voluntary adult commitment to Jesus Christ. They believed that church and state should be separate and that adults should be baptized upon confession of their faith rather than join the state church through infant baptism.

This radical way of personally

committing our lives to Jesus above any other authority—the state—is still a mark of recognition for Anabaptists and Mennonites. My opa (Siegfried Bartel), a faithful follower of Jesus, used to say, "The state cannot tell me who my enemy is."

This is crucial in my own faith and as a family because our allegiance is always first to Christ and not to systems/governments put in place by people. We embody loyalty to Jesus Christ by living the way Jesus lived. If this means opposing government systems that are unjust, we do so in creative peacebuilding ways. Living and leading in the Philippines under a violent and oppressive government shed new light on these Anabaptist principles and helped shape our Christ-centred peacebuilding work.

"Third Way Family" is also significant for me because of its roots in Jesus' third way. Many times we think there are only two choices or options in dealing with conflict, when actually there is a third or alternate choice. When faced with the choice to fight back or give in, there is always a creative option to engage conflict. Jesus' creative third way always honours the life, dignity and value of each person

through active, nonviolent action. Jesus' life exemplifies radical love that teaches us to transform unjust systems, love our enemies and build peace amid brokenness.

Walter Wink writes about Jesus' third way illustrated in Matthew 5:38-41, a scripture passage about turning the other cheek and going the extra mile. Wink writes: "Jesus is not telling us to submit to evil, but to refuse to oppose it on its own terms. We are not to let the opponent dictate the methods of our opposition. He is urging us to transcend both passivity and violence by finding a third way, one that is at once assertive and yet nonviolent."

As a family, we seek to live out Jesus' creative, loving, nonviolent and assertive third-way options. We often fail, of course, but walking in God's grace energizes us to strive for Jesus' third way. I love sharing about our attempts to live out the gospel in this way and what we learn on the journey. I hope you enjoy reading them! ☺



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

Et cetera

Amish church districts continue growing

Ever since 1930, an Amish family from Ohio has been publishing an almanac that includes a list of all Amish ministers in North America. It includes all bishops, ministers and deacons, their birth year, year of ordination and mailing address. The *New American Almanac* has been available in English since 1970; in earlier years, it was *Der Neue Amerikanische Kalender*. In 1930, the ministers' list took three pages. By 1980, it was 19.5 pages, and the 2020 issue has 72.5 pages, showing the dramatic increase in Amish districts.

Source: A report by David Luthy in *Family Life*, May 2020



Cover of the 1930 almanac.

THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

The role of the church today?

Arli Klassen

I am listening these days to stories of how people and their churches are responding to the physical and emotional needs around them due to COVID-19. Every congregation is finding ways to help those around them who need food, assistance with their rent, connecting digitally or some other kind of accompaniment.

I am pleased to see that Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) decided to make grants available to local congregations so that they can respond to those around them facing COVID-19 hardship. (*Visit bit.ly/3fyMJKe*.) This is an intriguing decentralized distribution model, empowering local congregations to be the centre of response in this disaster. My own congregation received a grant. I love it.

I also listen to the 12 regional representatives of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) talk about the impact of COVID-19 in their countries, and how congregations around them are responding with whatever funds they can find in their own congregations. The reps speak constantly about the hunger all around due to lockdowns and loss of daily wages. They talk about churches identifying people who are not eligible for any minimal government assistance, in order to make sure they have some food. They talk about using their youth groups to

deliver food packets to people in need, especially in countries that imposed lockdowns only on older people. I love it.

My policy-oriented mind starts to wonder about how the role of the church changes in different countries, depending on the role and capacity of the government. We are privileged to live in Canada, a country with a relatively generous government that has provided basic financial support to most people who lost their jobs due to COVID-19.

As I read through the list of the MDS-funded projects in Canada, I see that many are providing strategic assistance to people on the margins in Canadian society. Does the role of the church become smaller in a country that has a relatively generous government system of support?

MWC has created a COVID-19 Fund that is supported collaboratively by the North American Anabaptist mission and service agencies, and some of the national and European churches, including Mennonite Church Canada. (*Visit bit.ly/3gMEgUq*.)

As Siaka Traoré of Burkina Faso says, “This fund is the Body of Christ responding to the challenge of our generation, to do what we can do in celebrating and mobilizing our global communion.” Like

the Spirit of MDS Fund in Canada, these grants go to Global South churches, so that they can respond to the needs around them.

The MWC COVID-19 Fund has already run out of funds, after approving 27 projects in the Global South—27 projects from a total of 49 countries and about 85 national member churches. This fund has not gone very far to help the churches in what they are already doing.

César García, MWC’s general secretary, did a rough calculation of funds being made available by North American Anabaptist agencies to Anabaptist churches for local responses. He found that about 55 percent of that funding has been made available to North American churches, and about 45 percent has been made available to Global South churches. Canada and U.S. member churches constitute about 17 percent of the total MWC membership. Is this funding distribution appropriate?

I know, we respond to needs that have names and faces, in our own churches and communities. The impact of COVID-19 is heavy on our hearts, our lives and our own communities. The impact is even heavier in the Global South, where governments are smaller and churches carry bigger roles. How might we help those churches do even more? ☺



Arli Klassen is a member of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., and a staff member at Mennonite World Conference.

Et cetera

Chad Rower Pump demonstrated by MCC worker

Charles Bender, left, an MCC service worker in Chad, and Abbalone Malole, a local worker employed by MCC, demonstrate the use of the Chad Rower Pump in 1989. MCC volunteer George Klassen developed the first Rower Pump in Bangladesh in 1978, to increase irrigation potential. The pump design was adapted for use in other regions where MCC worked, such as India, Indonesia and West Africa.

Source: MCC / Photo by Marc Hostetler



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Antifragile church

Troy Watson

The past few months have awakened us to our fragility as individuals, communities and nation states. We've observed the fragility of our health-care system, food-supply chain, economies, global trade, international relations, institutional accountability. It seems that everything in our world is fragile, including ourselves.

We're also becoming acutely aware of the fragility of the Canadian church. Last year, experts predicted a third of Canadian churches wouldn't survive the next decade. Now, many are predicting they won't survive this pandemic.

Why are Canadian churches so fragile? Or has the church always been fragile? I think it depends on how you define church.

The modern concept of church tends to focus on things like the 3 Bs: buildings, budgets and butts in the seats. These are the standards by which many experts predict a church's health. Conventional wisdom assumes that for a church to be sustainable it needs a building to meet in, enough attendees to fill the building on Sunday mornings, and enough money to pay the bills to maintain said building and the interest or loyalty of its congregants. We are witnessing the fragility of this modern version of church. This pandemic is testing its fragility in ways we couldn't have anticipated.

But there is a different "kind" of church. A church that isn't fragile. In fact, just the opposite.

What is the opposite of fragile? You're probably thinking robust or resilient, but that's not accurate, according to Nassim Nicholas Taleb, author of *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder*.

In it he writes: "Some things benefit from shocks; they thrive and grow when exposed to volatility, randomness,

disorder and stressors, and love adventure, risk and uncertainty. Yet, in spite of the ubiquity of the phenomenon, there is no word for the exact opposite of fragile. Let us call it antifragile.

Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better."

- **Fragile things get worse** when shocked.
- **Resilient things stay** the same when shocked.
- **Antifragile things get better** when shocked. They grow, thrive and get stronger when things like pandemics come along.

The antifragility of the church, the Body of Christ, has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout history. From its inception, the early church was faced with persecution, danger, chaos, volatility and adversity beyond what we could imagine today. Christians were hunted down and beaten, imprisoned, stoned, crucified or fed to the lions. But the early church wasn't fragile. It wasn't just resilient either. It was antifragile. It didn't just survive, it flourished when it was exposed to that which threatened to destroy it.

This antifragility of the church has been demonstrated time and again throughout history, more recently in China. At the time of the Chinese Communist Revolution, there were approximately four million Christians in China. In 1949, the new government, called the People's Republic of China, took aim at the church, forcing it to go underground. The church had no buildings, programs, professional clergy or public worship gatherings, and almost no Bibles. Christians were threatened with imprisonment, or even death, if they gathered for worship. The

church should have died in China, but it was antifragile. It flourished, growing from four million people to approximately 67 million in the midst of danger, hardship, persecution and risk.

Another example is the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia. It grew out of the work of Eastern Mennonite Missions in the 1950s. Growth in the early years was slow, until a military coup occurred and the Derg took power in 1974. The Derg tried to eradicate certain sects of Christianity, including the Meserete Kristos. At the time, there were 5,000 Meserete Kristos members. Like the church in China, the Meserete Kristos Church was forced underground, and like the church in China, it thrived with the increased persecution, chaos, adversity and risk. It grew to more than 470,000 over the next 40 years.

We often associate things like buildings, budgets, programs and well-attended worship gatherings as signs of a church's strength and stability, but what if our focus—and reliance on—these things is actually creating fragile churches? After all, churches with no buildings, programs or public worship gatherings have thrived throughout history in many different contexts and cultures.

It makes me wonder: What are the genuine signs and indicators of an antifragile church? What are the core essential ingredients that transform a group of people into the antifragile body of Christ? ❧



Troy Watson (troydw@gmail.com) is a pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont.

BOOK REVIEW

Western Christianity misinterprets Jesus

Jesus of the East: Reclaiming the Gospel for the Wounded.
Phuc Luu. Herald Press, 2020, 256 pages.

Reviewed by Barb Draper
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

When H.S. Bender came out with *The Anabaptist Vision* in the 1940s, he offered a Mennonite theology that was different from the evangelical fundamentalism widely accepted in the church at the time.

The author of *Jesus of the East* does something similar, offering a sharp critique of western Christianity and presenting a different perspective of Jesus. Phuc Luu says that the predominant Christianity of North America has become a nationalistic religion that oppresses the poor and teaches that God is an angry avenger. He argues that the traditional eastern church and the Minjung theology of Korea do a better job of explaining the message of Jesus.

Although Luu has no obvious Anabaptist connection, his concerns about western Christianity have long been under discussion in Mennonite circles. For example, he argues that, since the time of Constantine, the western church has had a cozy relationship with governments, which reshaped Christian theology into a tool for those in power. He is critical of churches, particularly in the United States, for preaching an individualized and spiritualized faith that ignores Jesus' message of peace and justice. He also questions the concept of original sin and the penal substitutionary view of Atonement.

While it may seem a bit presumptuous for Luu to critique beliefs that Christians have held for a thousand years, his questions are honest and his outlook rings true in our postmodern



culture. Luu was born in South Vietnam but came to the United States when he was four, when his family escaped in the night just before the fall of Saigon. As a Vietnamese-American, he says he is caught between two cultures, not really fitting into either one. This situation of being between two countries gives him a distinct perspective from which to compare eastern and western theologies.

Luu critiques western Christianity for teaching that salvation is private and spiritual, so that Christians can avoid being concerned about the world's economic inequality and racism. He says that, for the past 400 years, the West has separated mind and body to

the degree that ethics and social concerns are considered only physical and not relevant to theology. In this way, religious doctrine has supported a culture of injustice.

The doctrine of original sin is not consistent with the teachings of Jesus, says Luu. Augustine, who came up with the idea, misinterpreted Romans 5:12 because he was using a Latin translation rather than the original Greek. In the East, sin is understood differently, as there is no sense of total depravity. The responsibility of Christians is not to deal with guilt but to restore the image of God in themselves.

Luu also doesn't accept the penal substitutionary view of Atonement. He writes, "There is no systematic theology within Scripture that explicitly shows how God redeemed humanity," and he argues that God could not have used violence to redeem humanity from their sins. The story of the Prodigal Son shows what Jesus believes about those who need forgiveness, and it does not involve appeasing the wrath of God.

Among all these critiques, Luu also describes what he believes Jesus taught, occasionally referring to some ideas from the Minjung theology of Korea and early Christian writings from the Middle East.

As a Mennonite, I was fascinated to find one subheading entitled "The politics of Jesus," and that Luu emphasizes peace. I found it very interesting to compare this book to Anabaptist theology and I appreciated Luu's thoughtful critique of American civil religion.

When I first looked at the cover, I was puzzled, until I realized the words are vertical rather than horizontal. Since many Asian languages are traditionally written in columns, Luu seems to be saying that an eastern perspective can give us new insight.

Although Luu has degrees in theology and philosophy, this book is refreshingly easy to read. I would recommend it for anyone interested in thinking about how God relates to us. ❧

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Will there be another assembly miracle?

Ray Brubacher
Mennonite World Conference

Did you know that a pandemic has preceded three consecutive Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assemblies in the Global South?

For Zimbabwe in 2003, it was severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). For Paraguay in 2009, it was H1N1 (also known as swine flu).

And now, planners for next year's assembly in Indonesia are facing an even more severe pandemic: COVID-19.

In all three events, an epidemic loomed—or looms—in the background.

Zimbabwe 2003

The assembly in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, faced several serious issues.

The bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City (Sept. 11, 2001) created high anxiety about flying.

Zimbabwe was in political turmoil primarily because of rapid land redistribution. Inflation was soaring. Exchanging funds at the official rate would have strangled the assembly, as it was killing many businesses in the country.

And then there was SARS, an outbreak of respiratory illness that appeared in February 2003 and quickly spread to more than two dozen countries.

Plan B was developed for a limited gathering in South Africa, much to the chagrin of Zimbabwean leaders who held on in faith that everything would come together in the end.

And it did.

Several days before the event, the prayer committee held a day of prayer and fasting. Participants walked every inch of the assembly grounds to pray that God would remove any spirit that would impede the gathering.

What that assembly meant to the host Brethren in Christ Church cannot be

measured. Even city taxi drivers and local shop owners asked: "When is the next assembly?"

The "Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy" theme could not have been better chosen. The success of this assembly was a miracle.

Paraguay 2009

About three weeks before opening day of the assembly in Asunción, Paraguay, a representative from the health ministry met with planners, asking them if the event could be delayed for several months. He was concerned that the swine flu (H1N1), which originated in North America, would be brought to Paraguay.

It was winter in Paraguay, a season when flu spreads more easily. He feared this imported virus would wreak havoc in the *barrios* (neighbourhoods) and that thousands of Paraguayans would die.

"No," we said. "It would be impossible to postpone."

"Could everyone wear a mask?" he asked.

We promised to look into it. However, at that late stage, getting sufficient masks was not possible. Special care went into providing hand-sanitizing facilities, especially before meals.

At the beginning of the opening service, a leader asked the audience not to greet each other with a hug, a very typical way of greeting in South America. There was a gentle ripple of laughter through the audience, seeming to imply: "Get real. This is Latin America."

Over the course of the

event, some assembly participants were taken to a local hospital, but not because of the virus.

The success of this assembly was a miracle. We "came together in the way of Jesus Christ," as the theme suggested.

Indonesia 2021

Now, MWC assembly planners for Indonesia face the challenge of the century: the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with a growing sense that flying contributes to environmental degradation. It is clear that assembly planners are facing a serious time of discernment.

Will there be another miracle? Will we be able to keep the date and still have the rich fellowship among thousands that we have come to expect at these gatherings? Or will we be able to move the date without too many challenges?

Let's pray that God will work a miracle for Assembly 2021! ☛

Ray Brubacher was an MWC assembly planner from 1999 to 2009.



MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE PHOTO

Participants from around the world worship together at Mennonite World Conference's Assembly 2015 in Harrisburg, Pa.

'Be on our side'

Black webinar panelists critique 'nice gestures' that don't change white power structures

Story and Screenshot by Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

Acknowledging that “the church has been awakened and reawakened to racial injustice in our midst after the death of George Floyd,” MennoMedia, an agency of Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A., dedicated one of its “adaptive church webinars” to addressing racism in churches.

The July 9 webinar, entitled “Expanding our witness: Equipping ministry for anti-racist change,” was hosted by Amy Gingerich, executive director and publisher of MennoMedia, which provides resources from an Anabaptist perspective.

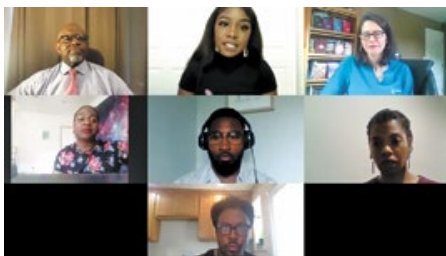
Dennis R. Edwards, a Black professor, writer and pastor, moderated the conversation with five Black panellists.

Delonte Gholston, senior pastor of Peace Fellowship Church in Washington, D.C., said that white people “are in a Nicodemus moment,” referring to the Pharisee who came to Jesus at night. Gholston said the invitation of Jesus to Nicodemus still stands: “Be born again . . . be baptized and come out new.” But he wondered if white people are “willing to go down to the water and come up new.”

Johise Namwira, a human rights activist and member of Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg, said whites have to acknowledge that “Christianity was used as a tool of colonization,” and that some Christians have been “complicit in the construction of white supremacy and the subsequent dehumanization . . . of Africans.”

Panelists described how systemic racism is vast and capable of remaking itself to benefit those in power.

Namwira said “racism is a learned behaviour” that has been the foundation of North American culture for 400 years, which means that everyone “has some form of racial bias.” It “thrives on strong marketing” that reinforces notions of



Participants in the MennoMedia 'adaptive church webinar' addressing racism in the church are pictured from left to right, top row: Dennis R. Edwards, Johise Namwira and Amy Gingerich; middle row: Chantelle Todman, Jerrell Williams and Leah Fulton; and bottom: Delonte Gholston.

white superiority while creating a single, negative story of Blacks. She cited a TED Talk called “The danger of the single story,” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian writer, as a helpful resource.

Reflecting on the history of anti-racism, Leah Fulton, a writer, consultant and doctoral student in higher education and African American studies, said, “We have kept ourselves whole [by] affirming our identity from before colonization,” an identity that “has been pathologized” in western culture and theology, and “used for building the foundation of racist hierarchy.”

Anti-racism means pushing back against the forces of oppression, said Chantelle Todman, a community activist and intercultural leadership coach with MC U.S.A.’s new Mosaic Mennonite Conference. But it also means finding the “blessing and birthright” in Black identity. She said that “not allowing the theft of my preciousness” is important in the face of systems “meant to dehumanize us.”

When asked to describe entry points into anti-racism work in the church, Todman told participants that there is a

“kaleidoscope of efforts” already out there to get involved with in their neighbourhoods. “Take stock of what is already in front of you . . . the stories, the witnesses, the calls to action,” and “be faithful to . . . what you have already heard.”

Gholston said, “Knowing where you are in the story” is important. “God is calling [white Christians] to know your privilege and lay your power down.” He added, white Christians need to “know the lens [you] are reading Scripture with,” noting that Black people “read Jesus as a marginalized, oppressed person . . . who served the marginalized and oppressed.”

Jerrell Williams, pastor of Salem Mennonite Church in Oregon, concurred. He said that anti-racism work involves “reclaiming the biblical text . . . taking back what is ours . . . reading Scripture differently.” He cited Hagar’s story as an example, noting that God is with Hagar, an Egyptian woman, and offers her the same promise as Abraham.

Williams wants to see predominantly white churches “get on board . . . with what Black people are calling for.” “Be on our side,” he said. “We are telling you all what we want. . . . We are asking for real structural change. . . . Everything else is nice gestures” that deflect from real change.

Being upset by rioting—but not by the conditions that led to the inclination to riot—Fulton called “respectability politics” that deflect from the actual violence of racism.

The panellists also addressed how white people easily can learn from Blacks.

Todman said, “It’s a distraction tactic to ask people of colour to figure out how to dismantle something that we didn’t build. . . . We are not the architects of this thing.”

Gholston said that Christians are being called to be “holy midwives,” referencing the Hebrew women in the Exodus story who, “in the face of a colonial and oppressive power,” say “no” when instructed to kill the Israelite baby boys. “Let’s be midwives of a new kind of Christianity . . . responsible to birth a new reality,” he said. ✎

The webinar can be viewed online at bit.ly/expanding-our-witness.



Pastoral misconduct investigation mishandled, says complainant

'They constantly moved the goal post': Doug Johnson Hatlem

By Aaron Epp
Online Media Manager

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada should have taken action against Wilmer Martin at least two years ago, says one of the people responsible for bringing complaints against him to the regional church.

Doug Johnson Hatlem, who served as co-pastor of Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont., from August 2016 until January 2020, says MC Eastern Canada “persistently mishandled” its investigation into Martin and repeatedly failed to follow the Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure manual, the protocol used throughout MC Canada and MC U.S.A.



PHOTO COURTESY OF
DOUG JOHNSON HATLEM

Doug Johnson Hatlem, former co-pastor of Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont., believes Mennonite Church Eastern Canada ‘persistently mishandled’ its investigation into Wilmer Martin.

The regional church announced in June the termination of Martin’s ministerial credential after investigating him for ministerial misconduct and ministerial sexual misconduct alleged to have

occurred during his tenure as pastor of Erb Street from 1978 to 1991. (*See story online at canadianmennonite.org/wilmer-martin-credentials.)*

MC Eastern Canada leadership said it began its investigation, as per the policy, after receiving a written complaint on Oct. 31, 2019.

The regional church should have acted sooner, Johnson Hatlem said, adding that a wide range of complainants came forward over the years to pastors, elders and council members at Erb Street, as well as MC Eastern Canada leadership. And he believes that the regional church could have done more to support Erb Street’s pastors and church council.



FACEBOOK PHOTO

Wilmer Martin was the pastor of Erb Street Mennonite Church from 1978 until 1991.

“[MC Eastern Canada] had plenty of written records from me or from other people by late October to mid-November 2017 [and] it ought to have done something,” he said. “There’s no two ways about it that they failed to act when they should have acted in the fall of 2017.”

Johnson Hatlem said he made the

regional church aware of allegations against Martin in November 2017. In the two years that followed, he worked alongside Erb Street leadership—including his co-pastor and wife, Jodie Hatlem, and the church’s council—and MC Eastern Canada leadership to launch an investigation into Martin.

According to Johnson Hatlem, MC Eastern Canada reached an agreement with Erb Street’s council on two separate occasions that it would accept a complaint from the council on the church’s behalf, and that MC Eastern Canada would start an investigation as a result. The regional church leadership later broke each agreement, Johnson Hatlem said. “They made agreements about what was needed to make this case go forward. We met those agreements and then they changed their tune and claimed various reasons why,” he said. “They constantly moved the goal post.”

Johnson Hatlem said he resigned from his role at Erb Street in January 2020 as a matter of conscience related to the matter. The church’s council placed Jodie Hatlem on involuntary leave shortly thereafter. She resumed her work at the church in July.

At the end of February, Johnson Hatlem posted on social media that MC Eastern Canada was investigating Martin for misconduct, and that the investigative team was open to speaking with any and all people who had information regarding similar misconduct.

He also criticized the regional church’s handling of the investigation, stating, among other things, that MC Eastern Canada had “steadfastly refused to agree to protect the safety of key people harmed.”

Investigation conducted fairly: David Martin

MC Eastern Canada believes that its investigation was conducted fairly and in good faith, in line with the Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure manual, according to David Martin, the regional church's executive minister. "Throughout this investigation, [MC Eastern Canada] has always acted within the provisions of the policy," he said.

He added that, when concerns about Wilmer Martin's conduct came to his



MC EASTERN CANADA PHOTO

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada conducted its investigation fairly and in good faith, says David Martin, the regional church's executive minister.

attention in late 2017, he approached congregational leadership at Erb Street and immediately explored those concerns with them and with legal counsel.

According to David Martin, MC Eastern Canada leadership worked to explore the complaints, to ensure the safety of those involved, and make sure that any action it took allowed due process for everyone involved. MC Eastern Canada also consulted with Erb Street's leadership as the congregation appointed a victim advocate who reached out to individuals with possible concerns related to Wilmer Martin.

"The denominational policy and procedure for investigating misconduct is premised on a direct complaint of a first-hand nature. The policy is triggered by a formal, signed complaint," David Martin said. "[MC Eastern Canada] did not have a

formal signed complaint by a complainant until Oct. 31, 2019, and the policy has no provisions to act on second-hand information."

He disputes Johnson Hatlem's claim that MC Eastern Canada leadership broke agreements it made with Erb Street, saying that no firm agreements were reached. "Mr. Hatlem's perception is not the same as that of Erb Street Mennonite Church leaders and [MC Eastern Canada]," David Martin said. (Jen Helmuth, Erb Street's church council chair, declined to comment for this story.)

David Martin added that he does not understand Johnson Hatlem's accusation that MC Eastern Canada refused to protect the safety of people allegedly harmed by Wilmer Martin. "One of the highest values that [MC Eastern Canada] has in investigating allegations of misconduct is the safety of the complainant and keeping the identity of the complainant confidential," he said. "That is probably the highest value we hold as we investigate. . . [MC Eastern Canada] would never put that at risk and has never put that at risk in the current process."

A challenging case

Johnson Hatlem isn't convinced. He believes MC Eastern Canada was hesitant to investigate Wilmer Martin because of his influence in Waterloo Region. After Martin's pastorate at Erb Street ended in 1991, he became the president and CEO of Habitat for Humanity Canada for nine

years; then he became president of Tour-Magination, a Mennonite-oriented travel company, until his retirement in 2016.

David Martin denies that the regional church was hesitant to take action. "[MC Eastern Canada] always responds to misconduct complaints with unwavering resolve," he said, adding that the Wilmer Martin case has been challenging for everyone involved.

"My prayer is that God's healing touch might enfold each person, so that justice and right relationships might find a path through this difficult experience, and lead each one to renewed health and wholeness within the Body of Christ," he said.

Policy and procedure manual available online

The Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure manual was developed by representatives of MC Canada and MC U.S.A. for use across both denominations. A revised edition was released in 2016 and addresses both sexual and ethical misconduct by ministers. The manual includes input from area conference ministers, survivors of ministerial sexual abuse, professionals who work with sexual abuse, and legal counsel in both the U.S. and Canada. It outlines the process of investigation, including how complainants are to be supported and a process for appeal by the accused minister.

To download the manual, visit bit.ly/312nBG1. ☞



News brief

Leader magazine provides free resources

HARRISONBURG, Va. —The rapidly changing climate of 2020 has presented many challenges to the church, including the novel coronavirus pandemic. To help meet the needs of congregations, MennoMedia has released a COVID-19 issue of *Leader* magazine. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown the world and the church into uncharted territory. "The world is changing fast and we want to help churches flourish during this time," says Amy Gingerich, MennoMedia's publisher. The free digital issue of *Leader* magazine contains resources to help address pressing questions facing Mennonite churches, including how Anabaptist biblical interpretation, faith and practice can inform a long-term strategy for ministry and mission for such a time as this. To download the issue, visit bit.ly/leader-covid-issue.

—MENNOMEDIA



Together in Worship website set to launch this fall

Theological studies prof Carol Penner a part of binational effort

By Elizabeth Robertson
Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO, ONT.

“Worship is the beating heart of the Christian church,” says Carol Penner, who teaches practical theology at Conrad Grebel University College and the University of Waterloo.



Carol Penner

Penner and a team of six volunteers from Mennonite churches across Canada and the United States have spent the last two years creating a website of worship resources with an Anabaptist-Mennonite approach designed to aid leaders in Mennonite congregations. They plan to expand their team to include more faculty and students from Mennonite institutions, as curation continues.

While some denominations have services led by ordained clergy, Penner says that Mennonite worship leaders tend to be volunteers, not all of who are theologically trained. “Having a website that provides resources written by Anabaptists can really help them as they prepare to lead worship,” she says, adding that the Together in Worship website, which is set to launch this fall, aims “to support leaders shaping thoughtful and creative worship through easy-to-access and free online resources.”

It will include lyrics, prayers and visuals that reflect diverse cultures and languages, as well as information for the mentorship of individuals interested in growing their understanding and practice of Mennonite worship.

The platform will also act as a base from which to find and access worship resources that have been developed by Mennonite organizations, and a place for “individuals and communities to create and share resources,” according to Penner, who says that one of the project’s

objectives is to “support corporate worship in communities that have diverse worship practices.” While Together in Worship prominently serves a Mennonite audience, its content will be available to leaders in all denominations.

The project has received US\$18,000 in funding from the 2019-20 Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Teacher-Scholar Grant. It allowed Penner and her committee to hold a binational working meeting and to hire four students for the 2019 summer term to find, curate and input worship resources from a variety of Anabaptist perspectives. One of the students was a master of theological studies (MTS) student at Grebel.

The Bequest Earnings Disbursement Fund of Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden, Ont., also contributed \$10,000 to the website, funds that will be used for graphic design and further website development.

This summer, three more MTS students have been curating resources under the supervision of Sarah Johnson, an MTS graduate and worship resources editor for the *Voices Together* Mennonite hymnal and editor of its accompanying volume for worship leaders.

According to Penner, the COVID-19 pandemic has displayed the importance of online availability for resources in ever-changing circumstances. “Worship is where we come together to find strength and comfort in these hard times,” she says.

When it launches, the website can be found at togetherinworship.net. In the beginning, there will be access to English resources such as prayers and readings, with more content added over time. Penner says the “goal is to include resources written in a variety of languages, as well as music and visual art.” ❧

Riverton Fellowship Circle closes its doors

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

Riverton (Man.) Fellowship Circle decided on June 24 to close its doors, passing a motion to dissolve the church corporation and its assets.

The congregation began meeting in 1985, when the Indigenous community expressed its desire for a church. It was led by Neill and Edith von Gunten, who also did ministry work in Matheson Island and Pine Dock, and community member

Barb Daniels. The community built its own church building in 1997 and the group joined Mennonite Church Manitoba in 2006.

Neill says the vision for the fellowship circle and its worship style developed directly from the community. At first, the church had around 40 participants every Sunday, even around 80 at high points, but in the last several years only a handful

remained, he says.

Being a largely transient community, and having an aging and dying population, contributed to the congregation's declining numbers. And after the von Gunten became co-directors of MC Canada's Native Ministry and moved away in 2005, there just weren't enough people or energy to sustain the church long-term.

When the congregation had to close because of COVID-19, members decided it was the right time to stay closed.

"Here I helped build the church and now I have to help dissolve it," Neill says. "But it feels good to know that a lot of great things have happened and it really pulled that community together in so many ways.

The fellowship circle has gifted its building to the Riverton and District Friendship Centre, with whom it had a close relationship.



CM 2010 FILE PHOTO

Visitors to Riverton Fellowship Circle receive a mug 'full of love.' Church leader Barb Daniels, centre, presents church mugs to translator Ed Toews, left; Brigido Loewen of Paraguay; Alina Itucama of Panama; and translator Liz Drewnisz.

A final service to celebrate the church and its important role in the Riverton

community will take place at a future date. ☸

'A house church with a building'

Small size, remoteness characterize Dawson Creek fellowship

By Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent

With eight members, Northgate Anabaptist Fellowship of Dawson Creek is the smallest congregation in Mennonite Church British Columbia. It is also the most remote, located about 1,880 kilometres northeast of Vancouver, near the Alberta border.

Northgate was not always its current size. It began as a Mennonite Brethren church plant in 1962, first known as Dawson Creek Mennonite Brethren Church and later as Northgate Community Church. Membership peaked at 73 in 2000.

But due to the transient nature of life in B.C.'s north, most members eventually moved out of Dawson Creek, a town of about 12,000. Five years ago, the fellowship switched affiliation to MC B.C. because the MB stewardship model, which emphasizes evangelism and growth, did not fit it.

With no pastor, the group has the feel of a house church, what in other congregations would be called a small fellowship group. It has had a meetinghouse since 1979, but no pastor since 2003.

"We are a house church with a building," says Eileen Klassen, Northgate's administrator. However, during the COVID-19 isolation period, the members have chosen to meet by Zoom rather than in person, Klassen says, because of provincial protocols for cleaning the church building.

On a typical Sunday morning, members connect by Zoom and take turns reading Scripture, giving the message and leading in prayer. Wayne Plenert and Ernie and Eileen Klassen take turns planning and leading worship, which includes discussion of the message and sharing. Having online worship also allows others to

(Continued on page 20)



PHOTO BY ESTHER KLASSEN

Northgate Anabaptist Fellowship members meet in their church building on the second Sunday of Lent, shortly before the pandemic forced them to worship from home. Ernie and Eileen Klassen, facing the front of the church, listen as Wayne Plenert leads worship, with Delores Plenert at the piano.

(Continued from page 19)

join them, including participants from Pender Island and Vernon in B.C. and from Waterloo, Ont., Edmonton and even Pennsylvania.

Despite feeling somewhat disconnected from other MC B.C. churches, Northgate members have maintained Mennonite connections as best they can. They coordinate worship services using the lectionary series for scriptures and themes from MennoMedia.

Northgate was not always its current size. It began as a Mennonite Brethren church plant in 1962, first known as Dawson Creek Mennonite Brethren Church and later as Northgate Community Church. Membership peaked at 73 in 2000.

Garry Janzen, the regional church's executive minister, visits regularly. As moderator, Plenert attends pastors meetings and the tiny church sends representatives to MC B.C. annual meetings.

Because several have attended Mennonite postsecondary schools, Northgate's Mennonite identity remains strong.

While its size is a challenge, the members believe it is also an asset.

"We like to think of ourselves as a thoughtful church," Plenert says. "We see real advantages in a smaller group, in that we do not need to pay a great deal to maintain the group and can support our community and the organizations we respect more easily. The model we developed for church quite some time ago still works. ☸"

From days gone by to 'Richer Days'

Saskatchewan congregation continues to learn and grow

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
CLAVET, SASK.

Like many rural congregations, Pleasant Point Mennonite Church isn't as large as it once was. But, although small in number, the church enjoys a rich and interesting congregational life.

Pleasant Point also has an intriguing history. It is the only Mennonite Church Saskatchewan congregation with a building that boasts a steeple and a church bell.

Moravian farmers from Minnesota who settled in the rural area about 40 kilometres southeast of Saskatoon built the church in 1909.

Mennonites arrived on the scene in 1925. They immediately felt an affinity with their German-speaking, Moravian neighbours, although by this time the Moravian congregation was already declining.

At first, the Mennonites worshipped in each other's homes, but when the Moravians invited them to use their church building in 1928, the Mennonites accepted. Eventually, the Moravians stopped using the building and the Mennonites purchased it in 1950. Additions were built in that year and again in 1978.

Pleasant Point Mennonite, together with Dundurn and Hanley Mennonite churches formed the *Nordheimer Mennoniten Gemeinde*. For several decades, these congregations were relatively large.

"We had 60 kids in Sunday school at one point," says Pastor Harry Harder. In those days, he adds, "farms were much smaller and families were much larger. Many people lived in poverty, but everybody was the same."

Harder, who grew up in the Pleasant Point church, doesn't remember the bell being there when he was a child. He believes that one of the congregation's senior members wanted to have a bell

in the steeple and so bought one for the church. But Lorne Epp of Rosthern, Sask., says his father-in-law, who was a member of the church, remembered hearing the bell ring in his younger days.

Harder says the bell is rung for weddings and funerals, but not on Sunday mornings.

Today, there are 40 names on Pleasant Point Mennonite's membership list, but that list doesn't hold much stock with Harder, who counts anyone who is actively involved as a member.

"We are an inclusive congregation," he says. "If you want to worship with us, you're more than welcome. If you don't have money to give, that's fine, too. We don't have many barriers."

'We are an inclusive community that worships with us, you're welcome.'
(Pastor Harry Harder)

Average Sunday morning attendance is between 10 and 20 people. Farmers are in the minority and most members are over 50, although the congregation does include some young families.

"We're a small group, but we have embraced the fact that we can do stuff with a small group that we can't do with a larger group," says Harder. "Sunday mornings are very interactive. It's not just a one-way street from the pulpit."

Harder, whose position is part-time, shares pulpit duties with lay speakers Elaine Presnell, Linda Michalowski and Murray Bentham.

"I feel very much part of a team and do not feel isolated," Harder says.

About seven years ago, a member



PHOTO BY LORNE EPP

Hilda Epp stands beside the Pleasant Point Mennonite Church cemetery gate. A portion of the cemetery houses the graves of early Moravian settlers.

named Richard Cassidy left the church a substantial bequest. Cassidy was a chemistry professor at the University of Saskatchewan who had a passion for critical thinking. Harder says it was Cassidy's

**gregation. If you want to
re more than welcome.
arry Harder)**

wish that the bequest be used "for bringing in new ideas." Thus began the congregation's "Richer Day" series.

"Every three months," says Harder, "we invite someone to speak to us from their experience and expand the paradigms of what faith and community are all about."

Over the past five years, topics have ranged from human rights to music and worship, and from the ecological crisis to Anabaptist history. Some presenters have come from within MC Saskatchewan, while others have come from the broader community.

Presenters have been university professors, journalists, athletes, refugees, Indigenous leaders, physicians, parents, Quakers, psychiatrists, counsellors and

volunteers. Not all presenters identify as Christian, but they know the congregation is Christian. Harder says they are told, "Tell us what we need to know. Help us be what we are."

Presenters are also told that they will not have the last word. A Q&A session follows each presentation, but the conversation continues after the presenter leaves, as the congregation processes what it has learned.

"It has turned into something far more dynamic than I ever expected," says Harder. "We have been really quite challenged by the stuff that's been spoken here."

Harder admits that being part of a small rural church has its challenges.

"Our membership is declining, and people have other priorities in their lives," he says. "We have to work within that context."

But he also sees a lot of life in the congregation. "We're small, but we have some really good stuff happening here," he says. "We've done some very vital things in people's lives." ❧

To view a video of the Pleasant Point Mennonite Church bell being rung, visit canadianmennonite.org/pleasant-point-bell-ringing.



News brief

Shine adds digital curriculum for fall



Shine is helping congregations provide Christian formation while maintaining social distancing. With most churches either relying on parents to teach their own children, or hosting online Sunday school classes, *Shine* is debuting two new digital resources, which are being offered to help congregations offer faith formation in online and at-home settings:

- *Shine at Home* is a new, simple option for families to do at home if congregations are not resuming regular Sunday school this fall. *Shine at Home* includes weekly mini-sessions, complete with a prayer practice, ideas for sharing the Bible story, questions and conversation prompts, media suggestions and four activities that help kids and families explore the Bible story. Use with *Shine's* storytelling, music and student resources for a fun learning experience at home. It was released on Aug. 1 as a downloadable PDF to email to all the families in the purchasing congregation.

- *Shine Connect* is a new free resource for those faith-formation teachers leading children through online Sunday school sessions. *Shine Connect* materials from preschoolers to junior youth are included for free with the purchase of any *Shine* teacher's guide starting with fall 2020 materials.

To learn more about these products, visit shinecurriculum.com and follow the "Digital products" link.

—MENOMEDIA



PHOTO ESSAY

'Butterfly whisperer' aids monarchs in Windsor

By Zach Charbonneau
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

The human impact on climate and the Earth itself can often be seen on a massive scale. Think of the melting Arctic or check out the photographic work of Ed Burtynsky.

But Susan K. Harrison, a hospice chaplain and psychotherapist in Windsor, Ont., is doing her part to help on a much smaller and more local scale.

Through setting up patches of milkweed as monarch butterfly way-stations, she has been able to collect and preserve both monarch and swallowtail butterfly eggs. She has released 23 butterflies to date, with plans to release 30 more this year.

Harrison says that habitat loss and human activity are the biggest threats to monarchs, whose caterpillars exclusively eat milkweed, a plant that is becoming harder to find in the wild. Harrison hopes to be part of the remedy to keep the species going.

She is new to the world of rearing monarchs but has found a community of like-minded individuals in Essex County in southwestern Ontario. She has learned how to spot and care for eggs, caterpillars and butterflies through a Facebook group of local enthusiasts whose main interests are the survival and well-being of these delicate insects, and educating others.

Harrison gets to enjoy the metamorphosis of the monarch up close and personal. She even tells a story of a butterfly perching on her shoulder for hours while it prepared for its first flight. "The transformation a butterfly goes through has so much metaphorical relevance for me," says Harrison, who also deeply cares for people as a grief-support-group facilitator. ❧



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SUSAN K. HARRISON

An eastern black swallowtail has just emerged from its cocoon (top right). This was Susan K. Harrison's first successful attempt to raise an insect from egg to butterfly.



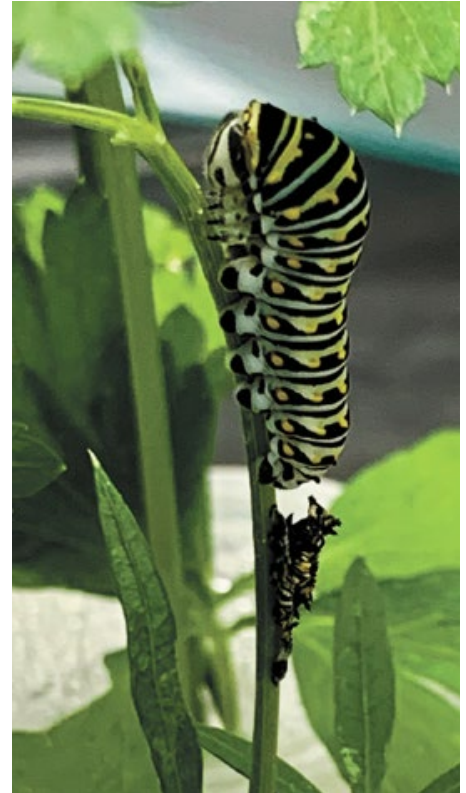
Monarch caterpillars can only eat milkweed, and they only lay their eggs on the milkweed plant. Without an available supply of milkweed, they are at risk of extinction. To Harrison, they are pretty plants that people who want to help the monarch survive can easily incorporate into their gardens.



A newly released female monarch butterfly decides it is not ready to leave Harrison, so it walked up her arm and sat on her shirt for the rest of the afternoon. It flew away later that evening.



Harrison releases a monarch butterfly at a farm in LaSalle, Ont., where the owner, Dick Wood, has allowed the land to naturalize, nurturing biodiversity, including monarch and swallowtail butterflies.



An eastern black swallowtail has just shed its skin and has moved to the next size of caterpillar. It will turn around and eat its former skin before moving on to some parsley or dill.



'The nursery' in Harrison's kitchen. The tent on the left has a test-tube holder and tubes full of water with cuttings from milkweed that have monarch eggs or newborn caterpillars on them. The other tent has tubes of water holding cuttings of parsley with eastern black swallowtail eggs and newborn caterpillars on them. When the caterpillars get old enough to pose a threat of eating the other eggs, they are moved to an outdoor cage, where they will eventually form their chrysalides.

Marking end-of-life rituals during the pandemic

Pastors and families choose 'intimate, meaningful, private ways to say good-bye'

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

Amid the restrictions of COVID-19, pastors and families are still finding creative and meaningful ways to mark, grieve and ritualize the deaths of loved ones. But no two funerals are the same, and there are added stressors, frustrations and disappointments.

Mark Diller Harder, pastor of St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church, where there have been four funerals since early April, says, "There are no models for this."

So Mennonite Church Eastern Canada leaders sought guidance from local funeral directors, who, in turn, consulted with their colleagues across the province, in order to provide clear advice about how to abide by provincial regulations that changed over time.

Pastors give credit to funeral directors for their excellent work in guiding families through the COVID-19 regulations and safety protocols with sensitivity. They also consult with each other and praise the tech providers in their churches for supporting new ways of projecting, recording and sharing family meetings and funeral services.

For Anita Schroeder Kipfer, pastor of Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church, who helped to lead a funeral recently, it was about "meeting the needs of the family," and honouring the person who died "in the best way we could." She felt it was important to provide family and community members with a model for how a funeral could be done, and assurance that "we will do everything we can to make it something you would have wished for."

Tanya Dyck Steinmann is a pastor of East Zorra Mennonite Church in Tavistock, Ont., where there have been four funerals so far during this pandemic period, all of them small family services. She has found that "families continue to

be respectful of public health guidelines and choose intimate, meaningful, private ways to say goodbye to their loved ones."

Diller Harder acknowledges that, for families and their loved ones, "the dying process was harder" because no in-person visits were possible, until near the time of death, and even then they were limited. There was "certainly added stress and disappointment," he says, noting the toll that separation took on families and their loved ones in hospital, or in palliative and long-term care. He appreciates the "graciousness of institutions" to let some family members, and sometimes even a pastor, in at the end.

In the face of COVID-19 restrictions, Diller Harder says, they were "able to mark these deaths, but not in the fullest way they would have liked to." While the "worship rituals were as rich as they could be, whatever the restrictions at the time," families certainly missed having people present, and missed the time of food and fellowship.

Wanda Roth Amstutz, who conducted two memorials under COVID-19 restrictions at Cassel Mennonite Church in Tavistock, says one of the hardest parts for her was that the church family "could not have the same opportunity to reflect and grieve and process these two deaths. I



PHOTO BY MARK DILLER HARDER

An outdoor, physically distant, drive-by visitation is held in the St. Jacobs Mennonite Church parking lot for a senior member of the congregation who died this summer.

think we will still need to do that at some point as a community when we are able to gather together again in a way that might include food."

Diller Harder says, "There wasn't a right or wrong way to do this." There were "good things about how each one was done." In some cases, services were livestreamed from a funeral home, conducted over Zoom, or recorded at the graveside, allowing people from a great distance to participate.

In the first couple of months of pandemic restrictions, when indoor gatherings were limited to five people and graveside burials to 10, pastors and families chose a variety of creative ways to mark the deaths of loved ones.

One family chose to postpone a celebration of life to a later date. They did spend two hours as an extended family on Zoom with pastors for a time of prayer, scripture, music, sharing and storytelling. They recorded the Zoom call to be shared with those who could not attend.

Another family chose a graveside service with nine people, while others joined through an iPad. In addition to the words

of committal, the pastor expanded the service to include scripture, prayer, music and a short meditation. Another family chose a similar service, and added family tributes at the graveside.

Some families decided to divide into smaller units for visitation, time to say goodbye with the body of their loved one, and time at the graveside service. Pastors repeated the same graveside service for different family groupings.

Similarly, one family divided into small groups for visitation and a short service, repeated three times for different groupings, in the church foyer.

One family chose a full Zoom funeral, which included both live and recorded music, family tributes, scripture, prayer and a meditation. At the end, the service was opened up for a time for sharing, and they spent another hour listening to tributes and stories from friends and family who joined remotely.

As COVID-19 restrictions eased, other families had more options available to them. One family chose to have a drive-by visitation in the church parking lot, where they set up tents for each family and easels with photo boards. They had an invitation-only service at the funeral home for 40 people, which was live-streamed for those unable to attend. At the service, people wore masks and the music was pre-recorded.

More recently, one funeral was conducted in a church when that became possible. Visitation took place in the foyer, respecting protocols for masks, physical distancing and extra sanitation. From there, the 75 invited attendees filed into the large sanctuary for the funeral service, which was also livestreamed. Some music was pre-recorded. Live music was offered by a quartet that could physically distance from each other and the congregation. On the way out, people received a pre-packaged cookie to eat in the car, as a way to honour a person who loved food and fellowship.

Going forward, Schroeder Kipfer acknowledges that, whenever people gather, there will be risk, especially for seniors, so she emphasizes the importance of respecting safety protocols. ❧



PHOTO BY LINDA PETERS / TEXT BY JOANNE DE JONG

Bill Wiebe and Irvin Martens of Lethbridge (Alta.) Mennonite Church help prepare lunch for homeless people with the Lethbridge Soup Kitchen on July 28, following a tradition that goes back 36 years. The vision was, and continues to be, 'to provide a daily hot meal for the poor and hungry, in the name of Christ.'



PHOTO COURTESY OF GARRY JANZEN / TEXT BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

The COVID-19 virus may have curtailed many activities for the summer, but the annual Mennonite Church British Columbia motorcycle ride was not one of them. Five riders—Len Block, left, Rick Smith, Andrew Pham, Garry Janzen and Diane Janzen—on four bikes took part in the 13th annual ride to Whistler, B.C., and back on July 25. "I was debating whether to do the ride this year, with the COVID-19 physical distancing expectations in mind," says organizer Garry Janzen, who is also MC B.C.'s executive minister. "Of course, riding motorcycles is a great expression of appropriate distancing," he says. "It was just having lunch together that was going to challenge our distancing commitments." Fortunately, a couple of take-out restaurants were able to provide the riders with their lunch.

A store by any other name

Former Ten Thousand Villages stores in Alberta rebrand

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent

“What would it take to stay open?” asked members of the Edmonton Ten Thousand Villages (TTV) Society after the organization announced its closure in early January. Independently owned stores across Canada held emergency meetings to decide what to do next.

According to Ernie Wiens, a board member of the Edmonton TTV Society and of Edmonton First Mennonite Church, stores were told they could continue to use the “Ten Thousand Villages” name for one year.

The TTV trademark is legally owned by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada. According to Scott Campbell, MCC’s director of communications and donor relations, “Stores that wanted to continue with the Ten Thousand Villages brand could sign on to an agreement with MCC Canada or go independently.”

Two Alberta stores chose independence, along with the Port Colborne, Ont., store. Those choosing to sign a licensing agreement with MCC are in Cobourg, Ont.; Brandon and Steinbach, Man.; and Abbotsford, B.C. Those keeping the brand will be required to adhere to all the principles and practices outlined in the agreement.

The Edmonton and Calgary stores have been successful for more than three decades. In the 1980s,

both stores were named Global Village Crafts. In the 90s, they were called Ten

Thousand Villages. Today, their names are changed again: Edmonton is now reg-

istered as Village Goods and Calgary as Villages Calgary. Same managers. Same boards. Same values.

Roberta Taylor, manager of the Edmonton store, says that the members wanted the word “Villages” in its name to signify the new brand has roots. “Many of the original Edmonton TTV Society members are still involved and continue to be emotionally connected to Ten Thousand Villages,” she says. “Volunteers and customers are just excited we’re still here. People really want a place to buy ethically sourced products.”

Although the TTV news was a disappointment, volunteers have hung in there. According to Charlene Baker, a Calgary board member, “Volunteers have been, and will continue to be, the life blood of our store.” But because many of its current volunteers are older and cannot continue due to COVID-19, the store has hired three summer staff.

The Edmonton store has a larger pool of younger volunteers, so it has not experienced the same challenge.

Becoming independent



PHOTO BY JOANNE DE JONG

Assistant manager Alexandra Ketchum, left, and manager Roberta Taylor pose in front of the newly rebranded fair-trade store in Edmonton. The former Ten Thousand Villages store is now called Village Goods.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURA PEDERSON

Villages Calgary manager Laura Pederson, left, and Maeva Kouakou, summer and marketing intern, stand next to their store’s mural painted in 2018 by local artist Daniel Kirk, son of store volunteer June Kirk.

Voices Together announces No. 1 hymn

'Dedication Anthem' will be part of the 'Praising' hymns section

MennoMedia

has been a huge learning curve. According to Taylor, "It's been terrifying ordering everything ourselves." TTV Canada did most of the purchasing, so ordering was mainly from one warehouse, but the store has been able to connect with more than 40 fair-trade wholesalers across North America.

Daniel Christie, a Villages Calgary board member who also works at MCC Alberta, hopes connections and purchasing agreements can be made with TTV U.S.A. "We really hope to keep those personal stories and connections," he says. "We have had relationships with these artisans for decades. At the end of the day, it's about continuing to support them."

Another challenge has been the loss of marketing done by the national organization. TTV maintained a website and was responsible for media and promotion. It also provided IT support and training.

Although the Alberta stores enjoyed being part of TTV Canada, MCC is unable to support the stores in the same ways, leading to the decision to become independent. But being independent gives the stores freedom to react better to the market, allows flexibility in purchasing and the opportunity for more targeted marketing campaigns. Another benefit is the opportunity to explore new opportunities, like opening web stores, which was not allowed in the MCC agreement, but which has really helped the stores during COVID-19.

Laura Pederson, manager of Villages Calgary, loves having a web store, which ships fair-trade goods across Canada and already makes up almost 10 percent of the store's sales. Village Goods also has a web store but only ships in Alberta.

An exciting development for the Edmonton store is that it is now the Canadian home for the Bunyaad Collection, a TTV rug-making partner from Pakistan. Customers will be able to shop its rug collection online.

No matter what each store has chosen to do, they will remain as a family. All seven stores have been chatting monthly on a video conference to share ideas, contacts and encouragement. As a group, they have purchasing power and have sometimes been able to get group discounts. ❧

As *Voices Together* nears publication, the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee editorial team has assigned the roughly 750 songs across the table of contents and selected the song that will appear first in the collection.

"The first hymn among the hundreds found in a hymnal shouldn't matter, but it does," says Rebecca Slough, manag-

still in unity." The refrain follows: "Let us bring the gifts that differ / and, in splendid, varied ways / sing a new church into being / one in faith and love and praise."

The tune is commonly recognized as the music for "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing." It was chosen for the variety of ways it can be led and accompanied. The *Voices Together* accompaniment edition

will include multiple accompaniment options, ranging from folk instrument scorings to organ and brass. The tune lends itself well to be led in the style of contemporary worship music or sung in parts a cappella.

General editor Bradley Kauffman says, "Hymnal-using Mennonites develop strong associations with numbers, and we are often asked, 'What will be number one?' In selecting Sister Delores's text, we are drawn to how her prayer for the church may find immediate resonance with a versatile tune."

In addition, Kauffman affirms that "Dedication Anthem (Praise God)" will appear in the "Praising" section of the collection, among the first hundred songs. In the committee's four years of production work, many have also asked where this song—No. 118 in *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and No. 606 in *The Mennonite Hymnal* (1969)—will be placed.

"We weighed this decision carefully, and listened to voices advocating for many different options," he says. "Ultimately, we decided to give priority to sequencing songs, including this one, within the *Voices Together* table of contents structure." ❧



MENNOMEDIA PHOTO

As *Voices Together* nears publication, the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee editorial team has assigned the roughly 750 songs across the table of contents and selected the song that will appear first in the collection.

ing editor for *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (1992). The first selection in any hymnal "calls God's people to sing; announces why we are gathered here; and sets the tone, rhythm and harmonies for the adventures in singing that shape the Body of Christ we will become."

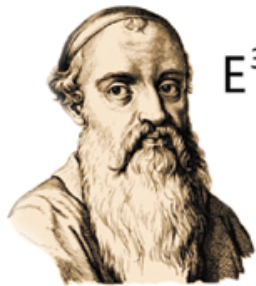
No. 1 in *Voices Together* will be "Summoned by the God Who Made Us," a text by Sister Delores Dufner, OSB, paired with the hymn tune NETTLETON. The first verse celebrates the church's foundational unity in Christ and calls God's people to live in relationship: "Summoned by the God who made us / rich in our diversity / gathered in the name of Jesus / richer

After a process of visioning, the congregations and individuals of MCA have embarked on a 3-year plan called

**Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ
In Life, in Community, in the World**

We have felt God calling us to deeper relationship, to authentic living, to focus together on living more fully into being the people of God.

September 27
A Sunday of Celebration and Commitment



$E^3 = MC^A$

Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ
In life, in community, in the world

In recognition of our discernment and calling, MCA congregations are invited to devote their Sunday worship to a time of mutual commitment and celebration of Year 1 of this plan: *Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ in Life.*

How might we as individuals and congregations open ourselves to Christ more fully? How might we celebrate Christ's ongoing presence and our mutual calling to discipleship as individuals, as congregations, and as a broader church family?

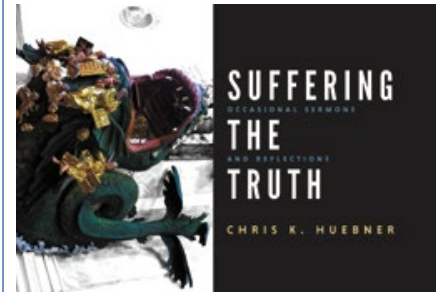
Check out mcab.ca for Worship Plans as well as other E3 resources.



We welcome the prayers of the nationwide church as MCA seeks to incarnate God's call.

News brief

CMU prof reflects on the truth in his new book



WINNIPEG—The gaping mouth of a giant fish stretches open across the cover of Chris K. Huebner's new book, *Suffering the Truth: Occasional Sermons and Reflections*. The image of a Polish church pulpit in the shape of the giant fish from the biblical story of Jonah represents the difficult undertaking of speaking on behalf of God through preaching. The associate professor of theology and philosophy at Canadian Mennonite University released the book this spring through CMU Press. The 111-page volume is a collection of provocative explorations and thoughts on the Christian life. It consists of 16 sermons and reflections structured around the liturgical calendar, moving through Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time, Peace Sunday and other important dates. The book title comes from the title of one of his sermons, which he thought captured the essence of the whole collection. "I also think it reflects my own approach to theology, that the truth, as Christians understand it, is not a category or concept or an abstract thing, but a person, Christ Jesus," Huebner says. "And that truth is expressed precisely in his story, which included the suffering we call the cross, and that makes it profoundly lived and concrete." *Suffering the Truth* is available for purchase online at commonword.ca.

—CMU PRESS



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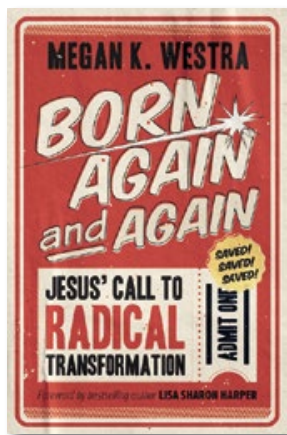
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by Megan Westra

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Pastor and blogger Megan K. Westra takes on the self-serving form of Christianity that has birthed the doctrine of discovery, planet-killing lifestyles, and civil religion. She leads readers into an encounter with the Jesus who gave up everything to come to us and invites us to give up everything to come to him.



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PEOPLE

A meaningful combination of talents and gifts

Pastor preaches on Jesus feeding the five thousand while drawing a picture to illustrate her sermon

By Maria H. Klassen

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONT.

Before scheduling was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Niagara United Mennonite Church annual picnic was scheduled for June 14. Renate Dau Klaassen, the associate pastor, was scheduled to speak that morning on the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand from John 6: 1- 4. She entitled her message “Picture this: A mass picnic.”

The picnic did take place that day, but with every church family eating at their own location. And the sermon was delivered online while she was drawing a picture of the famous biblical event.

Klassen is an accomplished artist, watercolours being her preferred medium. But she knew that paint would take too long to dry in order to finish the picture during the sermon. So she decided to use chalk pastels instead. Since this was a fairly new technique for her, she did some preliminary experimenting.

Speaking and drawing at the same time proved to be a challenge. Another challenge was the recording of both. So she drew the picture first and then added her words as she played it back. Video and audio recordings then had to be merged.

Using two sheets of paper, Klassen started drawing the village, the sea and the mountains in the background. As she drew the crowd, she talked about them being hungry and thirsty: hungry for hope in an oppressive world, hungry for change

in their power system, hungry for meaning to their existence, hungry for someone who would make Israel great again. And then she asked: “What are you hungry for today?”

Klassen continued her reflection by describing today’s world racked with suffering and need: cities filled with crime, poverty, addictions and raging protests; refugee camps; disease-ravaged long-

he do? Not take out his lunch? Sneak a few bites? Share with those next to him?

In a radical gesture of faith, he hands his whole lunch Jesus, even though it seems too little for so many. God completely transforms and multiplies the resources by his power, in his wisdom. And Klassen asked her congregation: “What do you have to offer? What can God do with that small amount, and what can we do

as a faith community? In God’s hands, too little will be enough; enough will always be more than enough.”

Klassen concluded by asking, “Where do you see yourself in this picture? As part of the crowd, unsatisfied with the status quo? As a disciple responsible to do something about the hungering world, wondering if and how you can make a difference? Do you see yourself as the boy with something to give, ready and willing to let God use you in ways you can’t imagine? Or . . . are you looking on from

behind the bushes, curious, wishing you could be part of the picture, not quite sure if there is a place for you?”

With the picture completed and the story ended, Klassen ended the church picnic by leading the congregation in a virtual communion service. ❧



PHOTO BY RANDY KLAASSEN

The completed picture of Jesus feeding the five thousand by Renate Dau Klaassen.

term-care homes; economic injustices and financial collapse.

The disciples in her picture seem a bit exasperated when Jesus asked them about supper plans for the huge crowd. Jesus does the same today, asking Christians the same question: “How are we going to feed them?” He says “we” because he is part of the team.

And then there is the young boy with the small lunch. As Klassen sketched him, she wondered what he is thinking. What should

To view this and other online services from Niagara United Mennonite Church, visit redbrickchurch.ca/sermons/.



GATHERING AROUND THE TABLE

Oven Omelette popular with B&B guests

By Jill Mitchell

Do you love food? I do! My love of cooking and experimenting with food has led me to develop many of my own recipes. A few years ago, I typed up and printed out approximately a hundred of my recipes, placed them into binders and gave them to my seven children.

Recently, I asked those children to help me select one of my recipes to share with you. My stepdaughter Becky told me, “Your omelettes definitely come to my mind first! They are the best I’ve ever had.”

Her younger sister, Maria, wrote, “Everyone who has tried your omelettes has loved them, both at home and at school!”

My son Stefan, who moved home during the COVID-19 pandemic, also suggested that I share my omelette recipe. Stefan has celiac disease and appreciates that my omelettes are gluten-free.

I have taken their advice and am sharing my simple and basic Oven Omelette recipe. It can be made “as is,” or adapted to make it more “gourmet.”

I developed this recipe when I was a community school coordinator, responsible for overseeing the nutrition program at a school. By creating tasty menus that featured fruit, vegetables and whole grains, we encouraged students and staff to build good eating habits, because a healthy diet has been proven to help reduce the development of type-2 diabetes and heart disease. For the school, all of my recipes needed to be highly nutritious, as well as relatively inexpensive and easy to make. They needed to appeal to all ages, from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12, plus adults.

In order to maximize its nutritional

impact, we served each piece of Oven Omelette with a side salad (romaine lettuce, carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, green onions) or a fresh fruit cup (grapes, berries, bananas, oranges).

Five years ago, my husband Stewart and I moved to Rosthern, Sask., to become the owners of a traditional bed and breakfast. Since then, I have adapted that original recipe, making it more “sophisticated.” I have added fresh herbs and more vegetables. I have experimented with different cheeses and different cooking techniques.

When I serve omelettes to my bed-and-breakfast guests, I usually complete their plates with one slice of bacon, one piece of locally made “Mennonite sausage,” a small bowl of fresh fruit with yogurt and granola, and either a slice of whole grain toast or a small portion of homemade hash-browned potatoes.

I strive to make each meal as tasty and beautiful as possible with the addition of fresh herbs and edible flowers, most of which I grow myself. Stew bought me a hydroponic herb garden, so we have fresh herbs year-round!

Even though our business is closed due to the pandemic, I continue to enjoy creating delicious and nutritious meals for the three of us. What we miss most about not having guests is the conversation around the breakfast table. Frankly, I also miss their feedback on our “comment cards,” because in five years of business, with literally hundreds of guests, I am humbled to share that every single card has been marked “exceeded expectations” in the breakfast



PHOTO COURTESY OF JILL MITCHELL

Jill Mitchell prepares her Oven Omelette in her B&B kitchen.

column.

Recently, Stew and I went to India on a Canadian Foodgrains Bank learning tour, where we were thrilled to eat traditional Indian food every day. There was one food that I missed, though, and it was the first thing I made to eat when we got home—a cheesy, veggie, herb-filled omelette! ☘

Jill and Stewart Mitchell are members of Eigenheim Mennonite Church in Rosthern, Sask., where they both serve on the hospitality committee and Jill volunteers to do the church bulletin each week.

The recipe for Oven Omelette and its “gourmet” version can be found at canadianmennonite.org/oven-omelette.



Echoes of history

Pastor translates century-old letters from distant relatives

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

When John Braun was contacted by a relative he didn't know existed, it was the start of a long adventure into family history and an old language.

Braun pastored Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg for the last 25 years and is currently an interim pastor of

Braun's great-grandmother was Katharina Toews Braun (1869-1923); Taves' grandfather was Jacob Toews (1875-1945); and Howden's great-grandfather was Wilhelm Toews (1884-1956).

Wilhelm was the recipient of the letters, which were written by his older brother, Johann (1877-1933), another Toews sibling, in the Soviet Union.

However, the cousins could not unlock these family secrets in front of them because they were written in German gothic script, which they couldn't read. To their surprise, Braun told them he could read the letters.

"My grandmother taught me that script when I was a kid, when I was a teenager, because I was very interested in old family documents," he says. "I've been a genealogist all of my life. . . . I've been interested in family history for ever since I can

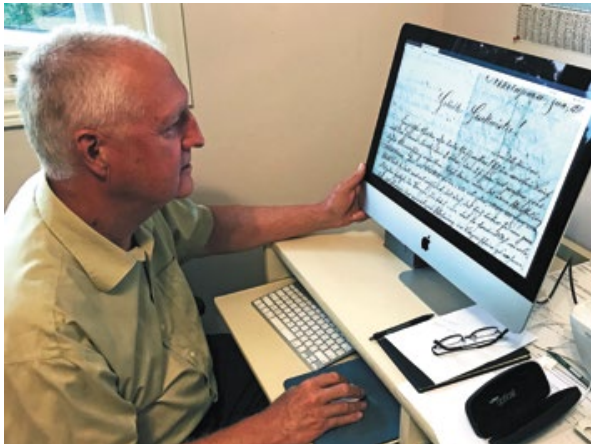


PHOTO BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

John Braun, currently interim pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, has always had a passion for stories and genealogy.

Bethel Mennonite Church, also in Winnipeg. He received an email in the spring of 2019 from Ruth Anne Taves, a very distant cousin in British Columbia who is not Mennonite but who was interested in exploring her Mennonite roots.

Taves wanted to get in touch with Braun after seeing his numerous contributions about their shared ancestors in the Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry. She had reached out to another distant cousin in Minnesota, Karen Toews Howden, and discovered that Howden had more than a hundred family letters sent between 1899 and 1933.

Braun, Taves and Howden are all descended from Johann Toews's siblings.

remember."

Braun offered to translate all the letters. He transliterates the Gothic alphabet into the Latin alphabet and then translates the German text into English. Of about 120 letters, he has translated half in the last 15 months.

Braun is intrigued by oral tradition. "We've often concentrated on the literary criticism or the literary part of [the gospels], but there's this oral part that came before it was written down," he says. There is a power in oral tradition, and he enjoys examining that both in the Bible and in his own family story.

Braun's *opa* (grandfather) told him a story when Braun worked in the fields



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN BRAUN

Johann Toews, the letter writer, when he was sentenced to five years of forced labour in exile.



PHOTO BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

The letters, written from 1899 to 1933, reveal the story of two brothers, Wilhelm and Johann Toews.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN BRAUN

Funeral picture of Reverend Johann Toews Sr. (1845-1898). Third from right is Johann Toews, the letter writer; far right is Wilhelm Toews, who received the letters. Second from left is John Braun's great-grandfather Johann Braun (1869-1922), whose wife Katharina Toews Braun is not pictured because she had just given birth.

with him as a kid. "Wilhelm was different than a lot of Mennonite boys. Wilhelm was a poet," Braun says, retelling the story. "In fact, he would write poems on the pumpkins in the pumpkin patch. And the poems would often have to do with 'Amerika.' One day, Wilhelm was gone. And they didn't hear from him for months and months. Then one day they got a letter from Wilhelm. He was in Amerika."

Wilhelm had travelled to Mountain Lake, Minn., in 1906, when he was about 20 years old. He became the editor of two newspapers there, and after a few years he found a community and got married.

Braun's opa told him the story in the 1960s, 60 years after it took place. Now in 2020, another 60 years later, the story came full circle when Howden, Wilhelm's great-granddaughter, contacted Braun.

From within the letters unfolds the story of two brothers communicating across the ocean. In the first few letters before Wilhelm goes to America, Johann comforts him when both their parents die suddenly at a young age. When Wilhelm becomes deeply homesick in America, and doubts whether he has made the right choice, Johann strongly encourages him to stick with his decision and stay there. Later letters are filled with Johann's wishes to join Wilhelm in America.

When COVID-19 was beginning to

race around the world, Braun was translating letters written in the years around 1920. These were years of widespread disease caused by the Russian Revolution, civil wars and famine, as well as the 1918 influenza pandemic. All the Toews sisters, including Braun's great-grandmother, died of tuberculosis. "I couldn't help but see that there are echoes in history," he says.

He was also struck by the tension in the letters about the political situation in the Soviet Union. Life was falling

apart and the Mennonite colonies were no longer the same. Johann was arrested in 1929 and sentenced to five years of hard labour in Siberian exile because he was a Mennonite minister teaching religion to children.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN BRAUN

Johann Toews, the letter writer, left, and two of his sisters, Elisabeth Toews (1881-1922) and Helen Toews Letkemann (1879-1919).

Braun's dedication to learning and preserving family history stems from his passion for stories. He is translating the letters sequentially because discovering what happens next in the story is what keeps him going. He says it is fascinating to see someone's mind develop and mature over the span of three decades.

Next up are the many letters Johann wrote while in exile. ❧

News brief

EMU president appointed to a second term



Susan Schultz Huxman

was unanimously appointed to a second five-year term as president of Eastern Men-

nonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., by the Board of Trustees, effective Oct. 1, 2020, through Sept. 30, 2025. The board's resolution of affirmation praises "Dr. Huxman's strategic and unwavering leadership, advocacy of EMU's mission and core values, commitment to Mennonite higher education, and steely resolve in facing the challenges of higher education." Huxman, who began her first term on Jan. 1, 2017, says she is "honoured and humbled" by the reappointment and its affirmation of her service to the university. "It brings me great joy to serve our exceptional community of learners—students, faculty and staff who live into our noble mission every day—and to champion their successes to so many other stakeholders far and wide." Huxman's stewardship has led to EMU's increased fiscal health, literacy and transparency. She has also worked in concert with advancement division staff, to build investment in EMU's endowment and to support other significant fundraising initiatives, including the completion of Suter Science West renovations. The reappointment brought affirmation from the Mennonite Education Agency (MEA). "The university is fortunate to have Susan Schultz Huxman as its president," says interim director Thomas Stuckey, who is the organization's representative on EMU's Board of Trustees. Huxman has served for more than 25 years in higher education in a variety of administrative and academic leadership roles.

—EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

Setting our sights on God's shalom vision

Interview by Katie Doke Sawatzky
Mennonite Church Canada

An interview with Sara Wenger Shenk, president emerita of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and a plenary speaker at Mennonite Church Canada's virtual study conference, "Table talk: Does the church have legs?" on Oct. 24

How has COVID-19 affected you and your community?

SWS: The pandemic upended our world here, as it has for so many people. People no longer go to church and need to reinvent their jobs or find ways to make life work at home with new rhythms and the intensity of family. We've offered shelter to others. We had our son's family, with a newborn baby and a two-year-old, with us for seven weeks when things were closing down in New York. We've been able to care for our other grandchildren so their parents can carry on with full-time work. There's been profound grappling with the basics of life: How do you care for each other in hard times? How do you sustain life when everything is upended?



Sara
Wenger
Shenk

Have you gained insight into that?

SWS: I am finishing a book manuscript for MennoMedia. The title is *Tongue-Tied: Learning the Lost Art of Talking about Faith*. The entire project has taken on a different meaning and intensity because of the pandemic. During any crisis, fundamental questions about what larger story we're a part of and who we are relative to God become exceedingly pertinent.

That very much relates to the question we've asked you to discuss in your plenaries for our conference. What's your reaction when you hear the question, "Why the church?"

SWS: It sounds like a question posed by people who have found the church unhelpful, too conventional, uninteresting, out of touch, and inactive in response to the

great dilemmas, problems and struggles of our time. I hear that question coming out of some great ambivalence about whether the church has anything to offer to the real world and the very hard times we find ourselves in.

What has caused that ambivalence?

SWS: Some church communities have been focused on their own internal dynamic, self-preservation and comfort. As humans who cluster in communities, we like to stay in control of our community and manage internal dynamics. That is a good impulse and it's also a self-defeating impulse. If we focus too much on maintaining control and serving our own self-interest, we lose touch with God's larger shalom vision for the healing of the world.

So that's your reaction. What is your initial response to the question, "Why the church?"

SWS: There's a natural social characteristic built into the fabric of our lives as human beings. We desire to be more than we can be by ourselves. There are all sorts of ways humans organize to do things together. Groups organize around a charismatic leader, an ideology like Marxism or progressivism, or as a social club. We organize as institutions and agencies to deliver goods to society.

The church organizes around God's shalom vision. We learn that vision from the Scriptures. We tell stories and rehearse that vision together. The particular calling of the church within the larger biblical shalom vision is to be the Body of Christ in the world. The church as a human association intentionally seeks to follow the

"Jesus way" together, to become the hands, feet, mind and heart of Christ in the world.

We are a human association that organizes around what we believe is an alternative vision for the flourishing of all creation—the shalom vision of God.

You mention "an alternative vision." I grew up under this idea that the church is an alternative vision that is against all of these other ways humans associate, that you've mentioned.

SWS: I was raised with much of the same idea, that there is the church and there is the world, and the church is separate from the world.

That way of framing things creates an artificial and misleading separation or divide between a noble, holy, righteous church and the horrible, fallen, broken world. We are all a part of this world, through and through, the world that God created and so loved. Those of us who choose to congregate as the church seek to align our lives with the vision of God for the world. We seek to intentionally shape our lives in ways that Jesus invited us to do.

God's vision for the world is our orienting North Star. When we choose to seek to be the Body of Christ for the world, we discover that we need each other and the accountability that we receive from others to walk in step with that vision. We discover that we need to keep testing our decisions, our actions and our attitudes to see whether they align with that vision. Yet we are a part of the world.

We are broken, as the world is broken. We are beautiful, as the world is beautiful. We are loved, as the world is loved. But we have set our sights on the North Star of God's shalom vision, most explicitly revealed in Jesus Christ. The church becomes the body that openly says, "This is our vision. This is where our primary loyalties and allegiance lie: to God's shalom vision, to Jesus as Lord." ❧

Registration is now open for "Table talk: Does the church still have legs," MC Canada's 2020 virtual study conference. Visit mennonitechurch.ca/tabletalk2020.



Remembering Helen Martens

Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO, ONT.

Helen Martens, Conrad Grebel University College's first music faculty member, passed away on April 9 at the age of 92, surrounded by family in Winnipeg. She last visited Grebel in 2013 during the college's 50th anniversary.

Grebel staff and faculty remember Helen Martens for her extensive contributions to the music department and the college community. She was a beloved professor at Grebel from 1965 to '93, initially teaching courses in music and the fine arts as well as music and literature. During her 28 years at Grebel, she became director of the college choir and began piano instruction, while also teaching music history and music appreciation.

"In her pioneering work as a musicologist, pianist, choral director and supportive mentor, Helen laid the foundation of Grebel's distinctive music program," says Laura Gray, Grebel's music chair. "The mission she embodied—to equip students in academics, performance and ensemble work, and to engage them in searching for music's meaning in its connections with other disciplines and society—continues to inform the direction of the music program today."

Professor emeritus Leonard Enns remembers Martens as someone who held uncompromising standards. "She was the founding director of Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir (IMCC) with which she established an impressive record of choral discipline and excellence, but I knew her mainly as an academic colleague whose ideals were uncompromising and strong," he says. "Her early work blossomed into what is now a very fine liberal-arts music program at Grebel. Her work lives on in



PHOTO BY DAVID L. HUNSBERGER /
MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

Helen Martens, the first music professor at Conrad Grebel University College, plays the piano and leads a Grebel choir in 1969.

the music department, in the IMCC, and in the blending of solid and balanced academic and performance standards that are the hallmark of the current program."

Martens's first book, *Hutterite Songs*, was based on her doctoral dissertation, and it established her as an authority on the music of the Amish, Hutterites and Mennonites. She published *Felix Mendelssohn, Out of the Depths of his Heart* in 2009 and *Passion vs Duty: Felix Mendelssohn, Cecile, Jenny Lind and E.J.* in 2012. These two books stem from research she began in the 1980s, translating hundreds of letters written in German gothic script.

Professor emerita Carol Ann Weaver also worked with Martens during her time at Grebel. "Nothing has ever matched Helen's presence and impact at Grebel," Weaver says, "from her vibrant soprano voice cutting through the sea of mostly male voices in college council; to her raucous and infectious laughter; to her warm-hearted encouragement to all of those who sought her counsel; to her

Staff change

MC Eastern Canada appoints new youth coordinator

Katie Goerzen Sheard



has been appointed as interim coordinator of youth events for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. She will give leadership to various events, including youth retreats, and meetings for youth pastors and workers, both online and in person. She has been involved with coordinating regional church youth and junior-youth events for the past number of years and was a member of the Youth Ministry Dream Team, discerning the future of youth ministry in the regional church. She has a 15-year relationship with Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, both as a camper and, for the past four years, as a counsellor. This summer, she is part of a team delivering Silver Lake Camp @Home online. Waterloo North Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont., is her home congregation. She is currently a student at the University of Waterloo in social development studies. According to Marilyn Rudy-Froese, MC Eastern Canada's church leadership minister, discernment around future youth ministry will be part of the larger strategic planning that the regional church will begin this fall under the leadership of Leah Reesor-Keller, MC Eastern Canada's newly hired executive minister.

—BY JANET BAUMAN

generous guest appearances in my Women and Music classes, where she gave vivid, memorable stories about Fannie and Felix Mendelssohn as if they were her own cousins or older siblings.

"Her tireless work and keen scholarship, resulting in various publications, is no better described than in the title of Helen's most recent book, *Passion vs Duty*. The work about Felix Mendelssohn and Jenny Lind reveals how their passions shaped and determined their musical duties," says Weaver, adding, "The title alone describes Helen's own life and work." ❧

‘Are you a pastor’s wife?’

Innocent question began a spiritual journey for leader of the Evangelical Vietnamese Mennonite Church denomination

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent

In Vietnam it is still uncommon to see female pastors. But the president of the Evangelical Vietnamese Mennonite Church (EVMC) is a woman and also a pastor. Reverend Hong Thi Nguyen is the leader of 40 Mennonite congregations throughout the southern part of Vietnam.

After completing a degree in civil engineering, she married and started a family. Then tragedy struck. Her husband of 10 years died suddenly, and her friends abandoned her. “When there was lots of money, there were lots of people around, but then, when we were in trouble, no one helped us, and I wanted to kill myself,” she says.

But an older friend, who could see she was in distress, invited Nguyen to stay at her home and she comforted her. It was this friend who shared some reading material with her, encouraging her to confess, believe and pray to Jesus.

One night she had a dream: “I saw evil hands grabbing for me and I prayed for Christ’s protection. I felt God’s personal touch. Then I knew he was real, and my faith grew from there.”

Nguyen then sold her little house and opened a restaurant. She also decided to start a small church in the community. Eventually, she had to close the restaurant, but the church continued to support her family. During that time, she wondered what plan God had for her life.

Then one Sunday, when she was visiting

another church, a young woman greeted her at the door and blurted out, “Are you a pastor’s wife?” The young woman then shared with Nguyen how God had given her a prophetic word that she was going to welcome a pastor to the church and she felt that person was her. Since women were not usually pastors, she wondered if Nguyen was a pastor’s wife. Nguyen pondered this in her heart.

On another Sunday, while visiting a different church, a woman approached her out of the blue and said, “God told me that you should serve the Lord.”

Nguyen’s final experience and call came at a conference at which a woman preacher taught about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was in Nguyen’s private time of prayer that the Holy Spirit fell on her and she accepted the call. It was not easy, she says.

“There were a lot of difficulties serving as a female pastor, but I have spiritual mentors in my life that help me to stay strong,” she says. “Every time I have difficulties, God opens a door.”

Nguyen has four daughters and one son, who passed away at the age of 34 due to a tumour. Her son was midway through his master’s degree to become a pastor when he was given a month to live.

“It was losing my only son that gave me the strength to be president of EVMC,” she says. “God miraculously helped me

to overcome my sadness and bitterness. I found my faith getting stronger and stronger.”

As EVMC’s president, she travels throughout the country with other leaders to give Bible training. She recently finished a teaching tour that began on May 15 and ended in July in Ho Chi Min City (Saigon), her hometown.

During a session in Daklak, 10 pastors and local leaders worshipped, prayed and learned together. They also distributed bags of rice to those who are struggling due to COVID-19. Donations were given through the Vietnamese Mennonite churches in Canada.

According to Nguyen, the trainers were especially encouraged, seeing the training as beneficial, as “leaders were reminded that they had not joined a religion, but had entered into the experience of a personal relationship with God.”

According to Nguyen, EVMC is different from other Christian denominations in Vietnam in many ways. “We are centred on Jesus,” she says. “Also, one thing that is special about Mennonites in Vietnam is that we only submit to the authorities if it lines up with the Bible. In other words, if we are asked to do something contrary to Scripture, we will obey God and not man.”

Mennonite missionaries with the U.S.-based Eastern Mennonite Missions began ministry in Vietnam in 1957. By 1975, there



Worship time at a Mennonite teaching conference in Daklak, Vietnam. Reverend Hong Thi Nguyen is wearing the purple T-shirt.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF NHIEN PHAM

Vietnamese Mennonite pastors, including Hong Thi Nguyen, right, receive bags of rice to distribute to those in need due to COVID-19.

were more than 100 Mennonites meeting in Saigon. There are now two Mennonite denominations in Vietnam: the Mennonite Vietnamese Church, which is registered with the government and a member of Mennonite World Conference, and EVMC, which is currently unregistered.

EVMC currently partners with the North American Vietnamese Evangelical (previously Mennonite) Fellowship, which is connected to Mennonite Church Canada.

According to Nguyen, “We hope to have a closer relationship in the future with Mennonite Church Canada. I hope you can see us as a daughter.” ☸

ServiceLinks

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MCC responding to explosion in Beirut

Learn about Mennonite Central Committee's efforts in Beirut, Lebanon, in the aftermath of the Aug. 4 explosion.

canadianmennonite.org/mccbeirut



Church seeks to boost 'helping fund'

Leamington United Mennonite Church is boosting its Oak Street Helps Fund by \$50,000, to help families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

canadianmennonite.org/oakstreethelps



Registration now open for virtual study conference

People can now register for "Table talk: Does the church still have legs?", Mennonite Church Canada's upcoming virtual study conference. It takes place on Oct. 24.

canadianmennonite.org/ttregistration



COVID-19 fund helps Global South churches

The Mennonite World Conference COVID-19 inter-agency task force has approved 21 proposals as part of its new Global Sharing Fund.

canadianmennonite.org/reliefproposals

Staff change

MC Alberta hires new communications coordinator

Ruth Bergen Braun

began her new role as communications coordinator of Mennonite Church Alberta, on June 29, replacing June Miller.



Bergen Braun says she has a deep joy for "documenting the life of the church and is excited to tell the story of MC Alberta." She will work half-time as communications coordinator, quarter-time as a counsellor in her small private practice, and quarter-time as a photography support worker. "One of the things I'm most looking forward to in this role is getting to know the people of MC Alberta—as friends, not just 'work' people," she says. Bergen Braun graduated from the University of Lethbridge, Alta., at the age of 52, with a master of education degree in counselling psychology. She attended Lethbridge Mennonite Church for 14 years until feeling called to work at the Foothills Mennonite Church guesthouse in 2018, which she did for nine months. She now lives in Calgary and attends Foothills Mennonite. She has three children and four grandchildren. Her passions are photography and Indigenous relations. She especially loves to photograph powwows, some of which have been published.

—BY JOANNE DE JONG

CANADIAN
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Do you have stories to tell of food as the star of the show?

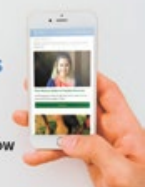
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UpComing

Festival food: Order, pick up, enjoy!

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—The annual Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Festival for World Relief won't be taking place in British Columbia this year, but those longing for traditional German ethnic foods can still enjoy their favourites. A Festival-to-Go event is planned for Sept. 20, allowing would-be fair and sale attendees to purchase the ever-popular *vareniki* (stuffed dumpling) with gravy and farmer's sausage, watermelon, and *rollkuchen* (deep-fried pastry) or *portzelky* (raisin fritters), as long as they order ahead of time. MCC B.C. began taking food orders online on Aug. 1 and will continue through Sept. 15. On Sept. 20, at designated times beginning at 3:30 p.m., cars are to drive to MCC B.C. headquarters on Gladys Avenue in Abbotsford, where purchasers can pick up their pre-ordered food. MCC is taking precautions for physical distancing and food preparation/serving to assure everyone's health and safety. "This is a safe, clean and physical-distancing way to get your MCC Festival food, so it is pre-order only," says a post on the MCC B.C. website. "No meals will be available for onsite purchase." This year's funds will help families in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by providing agricultural training, food security, income generation and COVID-19 prevention to families living in the country's internally displaced persons camps.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY RINNER WADDELL



Watermelon and rollkuchen are among the foods for purchase at this year's MCC Festival-to-Go in Abbotsford, B.C.

Calendar

Nationwide

Oct. 24: "Table talk: Does the church have legs?" Mennonite Church Canada virtual study conference. Join

the nationwide community of faith as we gather virtually for a virtual study conference on the nature and identity of the church and the role of worship. Plenary speakers from Mennonite Church Canada-affiliated universities and colleges will speak on themes

of ecclesiology and worship. For more information or to register, visit mennonitechurch.ca/tabletalk2020.

British Columbia

Sept. 19: MCC B.C. Cyclathon, Abbotsford. For more information,

visit bit.ly/mcc-festival-cyclathon. **Sept. 20:** MCC B.C. Festival to-Go. For more information, visit bit.ly/mcc-festival-to-go.



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Ottawa Mennonite bids farewell to longtime volunteer

By Bill Janzen

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Since the COVID-19 pandemic prevented Ottawa Mennonite Church from holding a large farewell celebration for Monica Scheifele, it scheduled a Sunday afternoon for people to come, one by one, to express their thanks for her service to the church since 1997.

Within a few weeks of her arrival at Ottawa Mennonite, she was teaching Sunday school, something that she continued for the next 23 years.

Other volunteer efforts over the years included telling the children's story during worship, sometimes with puppets; founding a Scripture drama group; running a Bible memory challenge; teaching Vacation Bible School until 2016, when

the church stopped running it; serving as Sunday school superintendent, education committee coordinator, deacon, congregational chair, and as coordinator of the Ten Thousand Villages sales held at the church every November; and participating in many of the church's small groups.

She worked at the Mennonite Central Committee Ottawa Office until a recent restructuring took place. After some reflection, she decided to move to Waterloo Region in southwestern Ontario, where her parents reside.

She touched many lives and she will be missed both for the work she did and the spirit in which she did it. ❧



PHOTOS BY JANE HILLIARD

Pictured saying thanks and farewell to Monica Scheifele are, top left photo: Anna Luksic, Jon Dyck and their daughter Sophie (their other daughter, Adriana, is also in the photo, but only her legs can be seen); top right photo: Philip Neufeld and Ellen Shenk; and bottom photo: Ron Shutler and Kathy Neufeld.

