

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

December 7, 2020 Volume 24 Number 25

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## EDITORIAL

# Gifts received, gifts given

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER  
Executive Editor



**A**s Christmas approaches, many of us are thinking about gifts. The beautifully wrapped packages

under the Christmas tree, of course. Also other types of gifts—the kind that we can receive and give at any time of the year. The gifts that require more than a click on a website or a trip to the mall.

I remember a generous gift my husband and my parents gave me in the days when I was the primary caregiver for our young children. Three times, they took on the running of the household and the care of our children, freeing me up to go away for weeks-long study opportunities. For someone who values learning, it was the perfect gift.

Which brings to mind a book that was popular in the 1990s, *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*. Written by Gary Chapman, a Baptist pastor, the best-selling book outlines five ways that a romantic partner can express love for the loved one: acts of service, gift-giving, physical touch, quality time and words of affirmation. Only one of these involves actual presents; the others require attention, intentionality and maybe even sacrifice. These acts can be carried over into other types of relationships.

This magazine has occasionally reported on ecumenical exchanges between Mennonites and other denominations. A recent article highlighted the five-year conversation among Lutherans, Catholics and Mennonites on the subject of baptism. The resulting

document, “Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church,” includes the term “Gifts received” to describe the ways in which each denomination benefits from the perspectives of the other groups. (To read the document, visit [bit.ly/39uIBLm](http://bit.ly/39uIBLm).)

There’s a certain humility in acknowledging the richness in other traditions, a necessary attitude if one wants to receive their gifts. That same attitude was called for in a faith-formation class my congregation held on the subject of racism. The regional churches that make up Mennonite Church Canada are seeking to cultivate an “intercultural-church” reality within our denomination. This comes at a time when the dominant culture is learning more about the insidious and destructive effects of racial injustice on people of colour, and on all of North American society.

As the primarily white class discussed how to relate to “the other” who is different from us, at least one thing seemed clear: one task for reaching across boundaries is the mutual sharing of gifts. Guest speaker Fanosie Legesse, who serves as intercultural minister in MC Eastern Canada, encouraged us to look for the “giftings of the Holy Spirit in ‘the other.’” He urged us to consider what each person can receive from, and give to, others.

Throughout his letters to the early Jesus-followers, the Apostle Paul reminded them of the God-given gifts—the talents and the financial resources—represented among them, gifts given for the building up of Christ’s body.

Along with gifts comes gratitude. At

this time of year, the *Canadian Mennonite* team wants to thank those who agreed to have their stories appear in this magazine; this is your gift to all the other readers. We thank you for the gift of your attention, for your letters, email messages and web comments. We are grateful for your donations, which help sustain our ministry. We greatly appreciate the gift of your prayers.

May this Christmas season be a rich time of receiving and giving in the circle you inhabit, whatever the gifts you share. May you see and celebrate the gift of God’s grace, as expressed in the coming of the Christ Child. As Paul writes in II Corinthians 9:15: “Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”

## Digital-only issue ahead

This is the second year in which the *CM* staff has produced 26 issues of the magazine, four of which are digital-only. This issue will be the last one to appear in print in 2020. The Dec. 21 issue will only go to *CM*’s digital subscribers, via email. (Content from digital-only issues appears on our website, but print subscribers can also subscribe to the digital editions at no extra cost. Go to [canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital](http://canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital).) The next print issue will be mailed on Jan. 4, 2021.

## Correction

Hyung Jin (Pablo) Kim Sun was ordained at Toronto United Mennonite Church/Toronto Mennonite New Life Church on Oct. 18. Incorrect information appeared in the photo caption on page 28 of the Nov. 23 issue. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error. ❧



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'Light,' by Zoe Fretz, a Grade 8 student at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont., who attends Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, also in Kitchener. See more student artwork on pages 4 to 6 and the back cover.

ARTWORK: ZOE FRETZ

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## CHRISTMAS FEATURE

# Resting in the shadow of hope

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent

**R**ecently, I read a book that unsettled my sense of hope.

In her memoir *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*, Austin Channing Brown, a racial-justice leader, writes about growing up Black, Christian and female, and her journey to self-worth while navigating America's racial divide. In the final chapter, "Standing in the Shadow of Hope," she says, "[T]alking about race in America is not usually a hopeful experience if you're Black. . . . The persistence of racism in America—individual and societal—is altogether overwhelming. It doesn't lay the fertilizer for hope to grow. And so hope for me has died one thousand deaths."

I have to admit, I don't really know what it feels like to have hope die over and over again.

My sense of hope has generally been positive and optimistic, associated with faith that God's love is stronger than any other force and that, in the end, love wins. It is based on the assumption that humanity is essentially good, and when we make God's love real in the world, we keep hope alive.

My sense of hope has also been shaped by the season of Advent—by the sense of longing and anticipation that God's love can be born among us again, as it was in Jesus. Hope conjures up soft warm images of candles and the haunting harmonies of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" on Christmas Eve, when we sing with hearts full of assurance: "Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light / the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

Hope has to do with seeing things that are not quite there. It has to do with anticipation and expectation, with wants and desires and dreams. Hope calls for trust and courage and imagination. Biblical hope is the confident expectation that God will fulfil what God has promised, because God is faithful.

Advent is a season of hope—of waiting in anticipation for God's promise to be fulfilled. Of course, during Advent we acknowledge the shadows, we sit with the

world's suffering, with our longings for peace and justice, and we wait. But like the glow of the Advent candles, our hope persists. It flickers sometimes, but it survives, born anew at Christmas.

Channing Brown is calling me to sit with hope differently this Christmas season. She invites me to ponder the fragile nature of hope and what it means when hope dies.

I appreciate that hope can sound too rosy, optimistic and unrealistic sometimes. It can be an empty platitude that ends up seeming false and naive. We also know that hope can be manipulated and exploited, when people make promises they cannot keep, or prey on the doubts and fears of others. Hope can be a mirage—just wishful thinking that disappears when we get close. Hope dashed can lead to crushing disappointment and deep frustration

**Biblical hope is the confident expectation that God will fulfil what God has promised, because God is faithful.**



'Untitled,' by Ashley Skaar, a Grade 10 student at RJC High School, Rosthern, Sask.



'Tree of Hope,' by Tara Yasemi. The Grade 8 student at Menno Simons Christian School, Calgary, says, 'Hope is a connection to all these ideas.'

that is not good for our well-being. Hope can even lead to complacency; it can be lazy. It can create an illusion of comfort that everything will be okay, which actually leads to inaction.

### When hope dies

In her memoir, Channing Brown recounts many ways that hope has let her down.

"Each death of hope has been painful and costly," she writes. But she has "learned not to fear the death of hope," for that is what "comes with living, with struggling, with believing in the possibility of change."

She describes how "the death of hope gives way to a sadness that heals, to anger that inspires, to a wisdom that empowers me the next time I get to work, pick up my pen, join a march, tell my story." In the mourning after each death of hope "there always arises a new clarity about the world, about the church, about myself, about God. And in this there is new life. Realignment.

Rediscovery. And on the really good days: renewal."

She asks, "What is left when hope is gone? What is left when the source of my hope has failed?" That is when she says, "I have learned to rest in the shadow of hope."

Channing Brown writes, "I do not believe that I or my children or my grandchildren will live in an America that has achieved racial equality." But living in the shadow of hope means "knowing that we may never see the realization of our dreams, and yet still showing up . . . work[ing] toward a world unseen, currently unimaginable . . . it is working in the dark, not knowing if anything I do will ever make a difference. It is speaking anyway, writing anyway, loving anyway. It is enduring disappointment and then getting back to work . . . it is pushing back, even though my words will never be big enough, powerful enough, weighty enough to change everything. It is knowing that God is God and I am

**Those who rest in the shadow of hope also teach me something about the fragile nature of hope. It resonates with biblical themes of the unlikely choice and the upside-down nature of the kingdom Jesus called his disciples to form.**

not."

Another writer and activist, Mary Jo Leddy, recalls a story in her book *Radical Gratitude* that also explores the weak and limited nature of hope. While keeping vigil at the bedside of "a holy older woman" who lay dying, Leddy recalls that the unconscious woman suddenly awoke to recount a dream: "I had a dream. I dreamt that all the men and women were all seated around a round table, all equal, all free. It will take a thousand years but it doesn't really matter, because it's going to happen."

Leddy admits that "it is sometimes difficult to hear that 'it will take a thousand years,' but it makes all the difference in the world whether we believe in the power of this dream to prevail. It is this dream that has the power to sustain us in struggle and the power to endure through the collapse of our particular hopes."

Martin Luther King Jr. also knew what it meant to live in the shadow of hope. In his last speech, given the night before

he was assassinated, he spoke these words: “We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn’t matter to me now because I have been to the mountaintop. . . . I have looked over and I have seen the promised land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the Promised Land.”

### Resting in the shadow of hope

My challenge this Christmas, as a person of relative privilege, is to listen to those who rest in the shadow of hope. They are teaching me that hope is sustained by practise—by exercising it like a muscle. Hope is a refusal to accept the world as it is. Hope is about making the commitment to God’s love and justice, and showing up day after day to make them real, despite the consequences, the losses, the frustrations and the broken promises, even if it takes a thousand years.

Leddy reminds us that Jesus “lived with a sense of meaning and purpose in the most chaotic and oppressive time.” He lived with God “as the point of his being. . . . He knew who he was, that his deepest identity lay in the mystery that he was born of God. And he knew that he was ‘for’ God, that he had come to announce the great dream of God,” she writes. “Jesus has left us with this vision, a vision worthy enough to summon every aspect of our being and the whole of our lives.”

Those who rest in the shadow of hope also teach me something about the fragile nature of hope. It resonates with biblical themes of the unlikely choice and the upside-down nature of the kingdom Jesus called his disciples to form. God often works through those who are perceived to be inadequate and improbable for the job. Jesus’ life and teachings turn upside down our assumptions about who is most capable and worthy. In facing his own limitations, the Apostle Paul is reminded by God: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (II Corinthians 12:9).

Hope is a weak and improbable player. But, according to the biblical

story, the fragile nature of hope is its strength. This is especially true when we consider the fragile nature of a baby, born to poor parents, in an animal stable, in a homeland under occupation, as Luke tells it in his gospel. So much can go wrong here. Hope can die. Jesus can be killed. And yet, despite the unlikely circumstances, wise elders like Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna recognize Jesus as Lord, as the fulfilment of God’s promise, as the one to bring salvation and redemption, even if they are too old to witness his ministry fully unfold.

So what is left when hope dies? Channing Brown writes: “I let the limitations of hope settle over me. I possess not the strength of hope but its weakness, its fragility, its ability to die . . . so I abide in the shadows, and let hope have its day and its death. It is my duty to live anyway.” ❧

To view more student art, see the back cover and visit [canadianmennonite.org/2020-art](http://canadianmennonite.org/2020-art).



‘Untitled,’ by Emma Martin, a Grade 7 student at Centennial Public School, Waterloo, Ont., who attends Elmira (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

### ❧ For discussion

1. Can you think of a time when you were disappointed because things didn’t work out as you had hoped? How is that feeling different from losing all hope? As you look at our world today, where are people generally hopeful that the future will be better? Where is there a feeling of despondency that things are getting worse?
2. Janet Bauman writes that her sense of hope is “associated with faith that God’s love is stronger than any other force and that, in the end, love wins.” How deeply do you share that hope? Have you ever doubted that good will eventually triumph over evil? How does the Christmas story speak to that hope?
3. Bauman acknowledges that hope can be “an empty platitude” or a mirage that can lead to complacency and inaction. Do you agree? What are some examples of how we can demonstrate hope by sharing God’s love? What can ordinary Canadians do to work toward improved racial justice?
4. Has your understanding of despair and hope been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic? What does it mean to “rest in the shadow of hope” in these times? What are some ways that you can nurture hope in others this Christmas season?

—By Barb Draper

See Hope related resources at [www.commonword.ca/go/1725](http://www.commonword.ca/go/1725)

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Bookstore and Resource Centre

## /// Readers write

### ✉ Liberals let off easy in Tommy Prince feature

**Re: “Expanding the reconciliation tent,” Oct. 12, page 4.**

This unnecessarily politicized article comes across as a subtle demonization of Conservatives. To illustrate, I point out the highlighted quotation on page 5: “The Conservatives acknowledge the racism Prince faced upon his return from war, when he and other Indigenous veterans were denied benefits received by other veterans. Prince eventually died homeless in 1977.”

What does author Will Braun wish the reader to infer from this statement? Why did he omit the fact that Liberals were in government while Prince was at war and when he returned?

JOHN HILDEBRAND, MISSISSAUGA, ONT.

### ✉ No such thing as a ‘Mennonite name’

**Re: “You must be a Mennonite!” column by Arli Klassen, and “Be bold! Make yourselves known” article by Joanne De Jong, Oct. 26, pages 10 and 23, respectively.**

I appreciated Klassen’s column in which she challenges us to acknowledge our racism and prejudice in regard to names, ethnicities and backgrounds in Mennonite churches. There is no such thing as a “Mennonite name.”

Several pages later, I was disappointed to read De Jong’s statement that “Giugovaz is not a Mennonite name.” She explains how Steven Giugovaz experiences his “otherness” when people in every Mennonite church he has attended ask about his name. Her own opening words reflect that stereotype of Mennonites that keep Giugovaz from being seen as an authentic Mennonite.

ELENOR TAVES, LONDON, ONT.

### ✉ Old Outtatown photo evokes thoughts about ‘poverty porn’

**Re: ‘Outtatown Discipleship School discontinued indefinitely,’ Oct. 12, page 27.**

The photo in the news brief was a picture of me at age 18 while visiting an orphanage in South Africa. I was excited that day to take photos with the kids because I wanted to post them on my social media.

Unconsciously, I wanted my network to know that I was a good person out changing the lives of those living in poverty. The reality is, as I’ve come to

understand since, those kids had far more to teach me about myself and the world than I did for them. Me visiting for an afternoon was not the solution to their life of poverty.

Matt Collin, in 2009, defined “poverty porn” as “any type of media, be it written, photographed or filmed, which exploits the poor’s condition in order to generate the necessary sympathy for selling newspapers, increasing charitable donations, or support for a given cause.”

I used the child in that photo to market my own self-image. We did not know those children’s names. We did not have consent for their picture. They did not know how or where we would use them. It was exploitative.

Even though I regret that this photo is still being used, I am glad for what I have learned. Outtatown was a year of learning and growth, not about ending poverty. It is really important to think about how the photos I take represent the people in them in a positive light and that dignity remains intact. Even more importantly, there are times to put the camera down and spend time getting to know people instead.

ALLISON GOERZEN, CALGARY

*The writer is a 2011 alumna of Canadian Mennonite University’s Outtatown program.*

### ✉ ‘For our own survival’

**As a capitalist, I am heartened to read in leading business journals that the private sector is starting to realize that it’s not “business as usual,” and it may never be again.**

When the market changes, successful businesses listen. The market is us—the people—and we can no longer ignore that it’s unhealthy to pack so many animals (industrial feedlots) and people (New York, Beijing, Mexico City) into one spot. The coronavirus is telling us this.

Also climate change. It has happened throughout Earth’s history, but never as fast as it’s happening now. Not every person in our family needs a car, even if we can afford it. There is no reason why a family of four needs to live in a 280-square-metre house. No reason why we have to live on food that is over-processed and overpacked.

And stop spending every waking moment looking at a screen. Be aware of your surroundings and learn a bit about the magical creation that is around you and sustains you, both physically and mentally. Mother Nature (God) is speaking, and we should listen and adjust accordingly, for our own survival.

RICHARD PENNER, SASKATOON

## ✉ Church overreacts in John D. Rempel case

**Re: “Credentials terminated for theologian-academic-pastor,” Nov. 9, page 18.**

While nobody today would want to minimize the pain reported by the claimants to Conrad Grebel University College and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada regarding their accusations of sexual misconduct against John D. Rempel more than 30 years ago, the institutional leaders have been insufficiently transparent about the nature of the accusations and excessively harsh in their public shaming of Rempel.

These leaders have chosen the most extreme form of punishment from an array of other options that have been used effectively elsewhere in sexual-misconduct cases. It is as if, with the U.S. Mennonite institutional shortcomings in the late John Howard Yoder case in mind, Grebel and MC Eastern Canada are overreacting to the opposite extreme.

They have unleashed a public defamation of Rempel’s character without end, unless, at some point, one of the claimants has had enough and says “stop it.”

Are all vestiges of Rempel to be removed from Mennonite organizations? Do we stop using the Ministerial Manual? Are his books to be removed from our shelves? Are his writings to be stamped by a warning of his transgressions? Just how far will this public cleansing go? This is a new challenge that those of us within the church now face.

There are many faithful, thoughtful and loving souls within the Mennonite church who understand that institutional interests can get in the way of searching for the “lost sheep” to welcome them back into the fold. Hopefully these friends will rise to the occasion in this case and offer a helping hand to Rempel as well as to his accusers.

DAVID L. SWARTZ, BOSTON, MASS.

*The writer is a graduate of Goshen (Ind.) College, where he initially met Rempel. He visited him regularly while Rempel was pastor of Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship in New York City.*

## ✉ How did sexual misconduct become the unforgiveable sin?

**Re: “Credentials terminated for theologian-academic-pastor,” Nov. 9, page 18.**

By whose authority has it been established that sexual misconduct is the most serious breach of Christian ethical behaviour? It has, of course, never been formally established, but in contemporary

church life it appears to be a settled issue.

Pastors have their ministerial credentials rescinded, and from then on their reputations are destroyed. A sexual blot cannot, it seems, ever be removed. Lay people, on the other hand, are not normally subject to exclusion from church membership for sexual misconduct. How can this discrimination be justified?

The church has the obligation to be more reflective about its headlong following of the popular culture. Unlike popular culture, the church does not have the freedom to sow division by destroying reputations. The church welcomes the sinner home.

And what can be the meaning of the question raised by MennoMedia about whether what John D. Rempel has written should still be used in the church?

Does a blot on my coat make that coat useless? Its function to warm me is in no way changed. If we are going to be moralistic in this case, what happens to a considerable portion of the church’s literature written by people whose lives were not sexually immaculate? Not only that, but we’d have to edit out a number of the psalms of David because he was a sexual predator who even committed murder to satisfy his sexual appetites.

Rempel’s book *Recapturing an Enchanted World*, a treatise on the Lord’s Supper, is without question a major ecumenical contribution to the understanding of the Holy Supper. Are we actually proposing that it should be thrown into the shredder? Does it contain false teaching? Is it an intellectual and spiritual threat to tender readers because of an unrelated ethical lapse?

It is time the church grows up on this issue.

WALTER KLAASSEN, SASKATOON

## ✉ ‘When is forgiveness in season?’

**Re: “Credentials terminated for theologian-academic-pastor,” Nov. 9, page 18, and letters by Tom Yoder Neufeld and Marcus Shantz, Nov. 23, page 7.**

The Oct. 20 press releases of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and Conrad Grebel College University College clearly support the victims of John D. Rempel’s abuse, as they must. And the punitive action they have taken against him is clear: termination of his ministerial credential, of his role as Senior Fellow at the Toronto School of Theology, and any affiliation with Grebel.

But the specific details of his transgressions are not as clear. Since we do not know the details, we must place our trust in the judgment of these church



leaders that the punishment fits the crime. Those who know Rempel only by his public profile may now imagine the worst, and some apparently do, in their letters online and on social media. And other church bodies, like MennoMedia, have been quick to disavow any further affiliation with him.

So we were heartened to read Yoder Neufeld's response. As an esteemed recently retired New Testament professor at Grebel, we regard him, too, as a church leader. He states unequivocally that church leaders must "take a clear stand with those who have been harmed," but he ends with an eloquent plea that we must all "do everything possible to recover the offender from the wreckage of sin, shame and brokenness."

We find the response of Marcus Shantz, Grebel's president, to Yoder Neufeld's rebuke particularly limp—that this is not the "time and place" for forgiveness, that it's not the "season." When is forgiveness in season? Do we have to wait until both Rempel and his accusers have died?

ERWIN WIENS, OTTAWA

(Ottawa Mennonite Church)

ELIAS MINA, STRATFORD, ONT.

RON TIESSEN, PELEE ISLAND, ONT.

ERNEST J. DICK, GRANVILLE FERRY, N.S.

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ED CORNIES, KINGSVILLE, ONT.

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## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Bean**—Angus Charles (b. Sept. 28, 2020), to Candace and Adam Bean, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

**Schumm**—Mason David (b. Aug. 12, 2020), to Robin and Nick Schumm, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Layla Hamm, Jada Hamm**—Erie View Mennonite, Port Rowan, Ont., Aug. 16, 2020.

## Marriages

**Bender/Winter**—Dathan Bender (East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.) and Rebekah Winter, in Tillsonburg, Ont., Oct. 3, 2020.

**Gingerich/Reimer**—Mack Gingerich (East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.) and Sara Reimer, in Port Rowan, Ont., Aug. 22, 2020.

## Deaths

**Brubacher**—Alice (Snider), 99 (b. Sept. 5, 1921; d. Oct. 31, 2020), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

**Dyck**—Peter, 84 (b. June 2, 1936; d. Nov. 1, 2020), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Enns**—John, 90 (b. Dec. 19, 1929; d. Oct. 19, 2020), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Funk**—Hella (nee Schroeder), 101 (b. July 15, 1919; d. Oct. 17, 2020), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Lichty**—Jack Robert, 14 (b. Feb. 22, 2020; d. Oct. 29, 2020), Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

**Loewen**—Peter, 92 (b. Jan. 1, 1928; d. Sept. 22, 2020), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Metzger**—Emanuel, 85 (b. Sept. 10, 1935; d. Sept. 10, 2020), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

**Neufeld**—Mary (nee Enns), 97 (b. March 24, 1923; d. Sept. 3, 2020), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

**Neumann**—Hertha (nee Schmidt), 88 (b. Feb. 2, 1932; d. Oct. 2, 2020), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Penner**—Abe, 90 (b. Aug. 1, 1930; d. Sept. 1, 2020), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Reimer**—Adolf, 85 (b. April 24, 1935; d. April 24, 2020), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Saunders**—Anni (Bergen) (nee Thiessen), 96 (b. Jan. 19, 1924; d. March 29, 2020), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Shantz**—Anna (Brubacher), 101 (b. Dec. 3, 1918; d. Oct. 16, 2020), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

**Schulz**—Linda (nee Willms), 73 (b. Dec. 6, 1946; d. Sept. 26, 2020), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Snyder**—Beatrice (Martin), 89 (b. Dec. 20, 1930; d. Oct. 28, 2020), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

**Swojanovski**—Mary Ann, 71 (d. Nov. 8, 2020), Morden Mennonite, Man.

**Thiessen**—Kay (nee Hoffman), 93 (b. July 10, 1927; d. Nov. 3, 2020), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Wiebe**—Cornelius (Corney), 83 (b. Aug. 24, 1936; d. Aug. 21, 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](mailto:milestones@canadianmennonite.org), including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please also include birth date and last name at birth if available.*

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Growing with our global faith family

Jeanette Hanson

In the early 2000s, I sat in the church office of Pastor Wang in southern China. He was lamenting the fact that 300 people from his congregation had signed up to take baptismal classes during services over the Christmas weekend. I tried to encourage him by saying that that number was beyond a Canadian congregation's wildest dreams.

"You don't understand," he said. "We are growing so fast that we are already a mile wide and an inch deep."

A few years later, Pastor Wang visited my home province of Saskatchewan with a group of pastors from China, an exchange facilitated by Mennonite Partners in China. After visiting ministries in my rural community, he worshipped with a congregation on Sunday. The local pastor apologized for the few people at the service, knowing about Pastor Wang's large congregation in China.

Pastor Wang exclaimed: "Exactly! These few people are doing all those ministries! If half of my congregation put their faith into action the way yours does, my city would never be the same. This is what we have been teaching Jeanette, in China. You are the roots and we are the leaves. We feed each other. We cannot

grow and mature without each other."

Historian and missiologist Andrew Walls writes: "None of us can reach Christ's completeness on our own. We need each other's vision to correct, enlarge and focus our own; only together are we complete in Christ." Walls calls the time we live in right now an "Ephesian Moment" for the church. Just as the church in Ephesus was a gathering of traditional (Jewish) believers and new (Gentile) believers, God is bringing us together from different cultures to strengthen and form us into the likeness of Jesus.

I see many opportunities for roots and leaves to grow through relationships between our nationwide community of faith and our global brothers and sisters. Through International Witness, our Canadian congregations could:

- **Walk alongside Indigenous** neighbours as Joji and Dann Pantoja do in the mountain areas of Mindanao in the Philippines.
- **Assist Korean and Chinese** Mennonites developing resources for Anabaptist teaching in their contexts.
- **Commit to restorative** justice like the Bonmae Community Peace Centre in

South Korea, founded by Witness worker Bock Ki Kim, where police and educators from local schools facilitate conflict resolution between students and their families.

- **Speak out boldly** against violence just as the Colombia Mennonite Church did in its public statement on Oct. 24.
- **Meet the daily** needs of folks in your midst through income-generating ministries modelled after those practised by Thai believers in the Issan region.

This year has taught us that we are not alone. We approach the throne of God holding hands with brothers and sisters worldwide.

Roots and leaves do feed each other. ✎



Jeanette Hanson is director of International Witness for MC Canada.

To find out more about how congregations can form relationships through International Witness ministries, contact your regional church or visit [mennonitechurch.ca/international-witness](http://mennonitechurch.ca/international-witness).



## A moment from yesterday



Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: *Der Bote* photo collection/ Mennonite Heritage Archives

The Rosedale Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (also known as Holdeman) is in the community of Crooked Creek, Alta. This photo is from the 1970s, but the community began in 1928 and is located 72 kilometres east of Grand Prairie, Alta. In 2019, this congregation's membership was 178. Worldwide, the Holdeman community had 26,648 members in 2018. The Holdeman denomination is only one of many Mennonite denominations. The Mennonite community is very diverse. According to Donald Kraybill in the Concise Encyclopedia of Amish, Brethren, Hutterites and Mennonites, there are more than 200 denominations that trace their roots back to Anabaptism. Take a challenge: Learn about other Mennonite denominations and get to know some of their people.



[archives.mhsc.ca](http://archives.mhsc.ca)

## IN THE IMAGE

## ‘Touch the hem of her cloak’

Ed Olfert

I have a friend. Her name is Samantha (a pseudonym).

I called Samantha last night and invited her to a church service next Sunday. It will be an Eternity service, during which candles are lit for those in our lives who have died. Samantha assured me she would be there.

Samantha is a widow. Her husband Rex (a pseudonym) was a core member of our Circle of Support and Accountability. His history was extremely difficult. When he was released from incarceration, his picture appeared in the media and on posters everywhere. He was deemed an untreated sex offender.

Samantha appeared in Rex’s life sometime after that. She seemed confused and intimidated with this strange support group that gathered around Rex. Samantha, who struggles from depression and addictions, was threatened by our presence.

Rex and Samantha married and they pulled away from the support group. Addictions mixed with violence, and Rex spent another year incarcerated. But Samantha was determined. She was waiting when he again emerged, and they creatively found a new way to make their relationship work.

Then Rex, never in robust health, died.

About four years ago, we held a funeral. Samantha revelled in the warm stories told and shared many of her own. In a difficult life that has held more than its share of hard stories, Rex’s warmth and charm had captured her heart. No one had ever made her feel so special.

This fall, Samantha asked whether we could hold a burial service. She had finally saved up enough money to fund a bronze plaque to lay on Rex’s grave. Again, she asked for our warm stories of Rex. Again, tears and laughter mixed freely.

Through this complicated story, I have become a friend to Samantha. We spend time together recounting the twists and turns of life, and the awe to be found within that. We laugh. We move furniture a lot.

You see, Samantha has a profound gift for caring for dying people. Often I have heard her stoutly announce, “No one should die alone!” Samantha’s unique way to live that out is to identify people with diminishing health and minimal good options, and simply care for them. If that means moving them into her humble home in a grim little prairie village, that’s what happens.

Within a year after Rex’s death, it was an ex-boyfriend, someone with whom life had been very hard. He stayed until

Samantha could no longer physically handle him. Then I got a call to help move out the couch—her last patient had not had control of bodily functions—and another couch was moved in.

In our phone conversation, Samantha told me that an older fellow nearby was needing help with cleaning and food preparation. She works at that, with very minimal financial support.

Her résumé includes years spent as a heavy equipment operator. It’s this kind of unique history that intrigues me and draws me in. Whether we move furniture or machinery, she is committed, determined and fun.

On a trip to retrieve some goods from a low-rental property where she had nursed one of her dying friends, people gathered from adjacent apartments to “touch the hem of her cloak.”

A thought recently expressed was that being faithful was not about convincing someone else of something, but rather recognizing the Christ and reacting to the awe of that encounter. Samantha offers that.

While her demons are never far away, she chooses to make a difference. When I am with her, when I note the care and respect she offers, especially to those who have limited good options, I am in the presence of Christ.

Yes, Samantha, see you next Sunday. ☿



Ed Olfert (p2ptheo@sasktel.net) receives far beyond his giving.

## Et cetera

## Goshen named an environmentally responsible college

Goshen (Ind.) College is one of the United States’s most environmentally responsible colleges, according to the 2021 edition of the *Princeton Review Guide to Green Colleges*, which features Goshen among the 416 colleges chosen for their commitment to the environment and sustainability. “We strongly recommend Goshen College to students who want to study and live at a green college,” says Rob Franek, the *Princeton Review’s* editor-in-chief. Pictured is Goshen College’s 924-panel solar array that sits atop the Rec-Fitness Center overlooking the campus, one initiative the college has undertaken to increase sustainability.



## MIND AND SOUL

## A gift to faith

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

**A**dvent is the season of waiting for the gift to come. Advent moves into the season of Christmas, which ends at Epiphany, when the Magi—possibly Zoroastrians—famously gave gifts to the infant Jesus.

In these monthly columns I have tried to emphasize the mind as a gift essential to faith. Another emphasis is that our objective as followers of Jesus is to promote the common good, shalom, the well-being of all creation. With mind and soul together we seek the Creator's way. And by mind I do not just mean its application in theology but across the breadth of physical and social sciences and other disciplines.

The mind is a gift to the church for several reasons. Most obviously, it helps us do good. Medicine, engineering, quality social programs and ecological restoration are gifts that join us to God in making life better.

Second, the mind well used helps keep us on track. The disciplines of the mind can alert us to when the goodness that is creation, human ingenuity—or even the gospel—are subverted to economic, national or ideological idols. We examine things, then realize and correct such errors as ethnocentrism, privilege, settler-colonialism or unloving applica-

tion of Scripture.

Third, the mind can help us love better. Love (*agape*) is active. It reaches out without paying attention to socially perceived value. Everyone has dignity because all are in the image of God, we are all gifts of our Creator and we all have gifts. This is the foundation of “pro-life” values manifested in loving enemies, opposing capital punishment, combatting poverty and so on. Having a sociological mind improves loving others by recognizing they and we are situated in webs of social circumstances and systems.

For example, one of the biggest risk factors for ill health is loneliness. Usually it is called “social isolation.” But it means the same thing. Isolation can be a fact of the individual, but it can also be the way our society is structured—or the dominant social values—a direct reason why the United States is faring so badly in response to COVID-19.

Social inequality is correlated to social isolation and lower levels of public health. But smaller communities, like churches, can improve many of these effects when they work to be inclusive. Even better is when they work to undermine the causes of isolation, exclusion and inequality, which requires the

analytic work of the mind. Social justice is love applied to social systems.

Effective use of the mind also requires imagination. To “imagine” means “to perceive that which is not available to the senses.” Except for those rare times when God inserts Godself into our minds, the realm of possibility only includes what we have encountered or heard about.

Diversity is good! Sisters and brothers in other societies may see the world in ways we can receive as gifts, like Indigenous people extending shalom beyond the human community to the community of all creation. Others around us think thoughts that are not ours.

A health official trying to explain the pandemic surge in late November commented, “We didn’t model human behaviour. We didn’t take pandemic fatigue into account.” Any social scientist could have added that seemingly obvious variable, but only if they were included on the team.

It is these many gifts—mind, spirit, love, imagination, ways of knowing from different disciplines, the gifts of different cultures—that help us to best pursue what is good, true, honourable, just, pleasing, and commendable this Advent and all of the year. ☸



*Randy Haluza-DeLay is a former university professor and current participant at First Mennonite Church in Edmonton.*

## Et cetera

## Women work on sewing skills at Pobitra

The Mennonite Central Committee Bangladesh program aims to enable the women to both find meaningful work and stability in their lives. Pobitra, an MCC Bangladesh job-training program for women who wish to leave sex work is based in Mymensingh. In addition to teaching the women skills to produce handicrafts like blankets, clothing and soap, the program provides training in topics that include literacy, numeracy, health and hygiene, legal rights, and English, as well as social support, informal counselling and family training/support.

Source: MCC / Photo by Silas Crews

(This ends CM's yearlong photographic retrospective of MCC's work over the last century.)



## TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

## Sovereign of good and bad

Joshua Penfold

**W**hat do you do when you maybe don't believe the Bible—or at least a particular part of it?

Amos 3 has a list of rhetorical questions from God: *“Does a lion roar in the thicket when he has no prey?” “Does a trap spring up from the earth when there is nothing to catch?”* And so on. They are all pretty clear, but then comes the final one: *“When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?”*

Do I, can I, believe that God causes disaster? Allows perhaps, uses even, but causes? Is this a matter of semantics or translation, or do I have a real problem here?

It reminds me of a song I wrote years ago for our church at the time. The song incorporated the various texts we were using around the theme of “asking.” One line was, “We ask, giver of good and bad, ‘Why, oh why?’” It is based on a passage from the Book of Job, that says God gives both good and evil (Job 2:10, KJV). When I presented the song to the church leadership before leading the congregation in the song, this was the one line they wanted me to think a little bit more about. What was suggested, and ended up being the final line, was, “We ask, sovereign of good and bad,

‘Why, oh why?’”

I struggled with this because it felt like they were squashing my lyric. I thought that the scripture passage I was referencing was very clear that God was the giver of good and evil. Plus, it also felt kind of edgy and provocative, so why were they trying to change my lyric?

I'm glad they did. There is a difference between giving evil and being sovereign of it, and I think there's a difference between allowing disaster and causing it.

And still the difficult question: “What do we do with these verses in Scripture that seem to promote God as inflicting evil and destruction?” What do I do with them if I feel that my understanding of God doesn't line up with that?

There was once a time that I would say, “If your thinking doesn't line up with Scripture, then you need to rethink your thinking.” However, I'm continually learning it's not that simple, not at all. Once again along this Bible-reading journey I find that Jesus throws a curveball into everything, and reshapes for us how we understand Scripture, who God is and what God causes and allows.

When I originally posted a version of this reflection on Facebook, I reached out to those who originally encouraged

me to adjust my lyric, asking if they had any further thoughts that might help with this age-old theodicy predicament, “Why does God allow evil?”

Here's what one of them replied: “I'm not sure we have a final answer to this question. One thing we do know is this: God has come near to us in our distress. God's sovereignty isn't exercised at a great distance. He joins with us and, in fact, goes ahead of us into the worst. This is what is revealed to us in the gospel. It's the great surprise. No one saw it coming, even Jesus' closest followers, that Israel's Messiah, the long-awaited king—Immanuel—would take up his earthly rule by surrendering his life to death. . . . When we go through the worst of times, we are not alone. Jesus has gone ahead of us into those trials and difficulties. And he meets us there . . . not merely to join with us in our suffering, but to lead through it to new life.” ❧



Joshua Penfold  
(penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) is a support worker, songwriter and Scripture wonderer.

## Et cetera

## WCC condemns recent extremist attacks around the world

**“The unbearable toll of lives lost, and the impact on the affected communities and nations, must engage the concern, solidarity and action of the international community and all people of goodwill, to stem the bloodshed and to confront the brutal ideologies behind such atrocities,”** wrote Ioan Sauca, interim general secretary of the World Council of Churches, on Nov. 3, as he commented on the violent extremist attacks in western Ethiopia, Kabul and Vienna.

Source: World Council of Churches / Photo by Albin Hillert, 2016



## VIEWPOINT

# A church once sacred and safe is now suspect

Matthew Froese

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

**M**y grandfather smoked, but I didn't know it. Grandma didn't want us to see him smoking and pick up the habit, but they agreed he could continue as long as it was out of sight. I had no idea until years after his passing, when a coworker returned from a smoke break smelling just like grandpa.

Today it seems we're constantly unearthing secrets. Sexual abuse and church are tightly bound in our cultural imagination. Where the church was once assumed to be safe and sacred, today the church is suspect.

space for the realities of grief, loss and betrayal.

It feels like we're unearthing decades of sins all at once—and I'm glad we are. I think it's our best chance to reclaim the role of the church by living out our faith. Some folks will certainly keep calling us back to those quieter and more traditional ways. It's tempting to try to leave this uncomfortable spot, to act like everything is fine. But it's not fine for a church to preach that we ought to let our "yes" be "yes" and our "no" be "no" while leaders have also been pushing those who have been abused

If we don't know Christ, we can't be the church, and young people are right to look elsewhere.

I hope that we can still be the church even if it's different and difficult. When we no longer assume the church is always safe, we must put in place appropriate protections against abuse. I'm thankful for the abuse prevention work being done in many churches. I think we also move forward by naming what is sacred in this difficult process:

- **It's sacred** for survivors of abuse to find the courage and strength to name their abusers. Their "yes" and their "no" are sacred.
- **It's sacred** to weep with those who weep, even if we fear the tears will never stop.
- **It's sacred** for the church to call abusers to repent and to guard against further abuse.
- **It's sacred** for the church to guard against those who would warp forgiveness in the same way they warped their ministries.

**We can build up a church that's centred on Christ, centred on healing and centred on hope, but we have to move on from the church that's been a place to hide abuse.**

I'm not sure I fully grasp the drive to silence, but I've heard many older people in church circles raise familiar objections when abuse is confronted: What will this do to the image of the church? What about the good work of the abuser? Will this affect church programs? Fundraising? When people want badly for the church to be viewed as without spot or blemish, they'll work pretty hard to sweep serious issues under the rug.

There is also immense pressure to head immediately to forgiveness. We name reconciliation as the centre of our work, but the space needed to do the slow, difficult work of recovering from abuse can be hard to find.

I noticed that the official statement from Mennonite Church Eastern Canada on the removal of John D. Rempel's credentials names a hope that he will experience forgiveness but doesn't mention repentance. We struggle to hold

into silence.

I got upset a little while ago when I saw a letter to the editor ("Accusations should not keep hymns out of *Voices Together*," Sept. 28, page 7) naming David Haas, whose hymns have thankfully been removed from the new hymnal, as a man of "strong Christ-centred character." If people of faith can't tell the difference between the character of Christ and the character of a man who is accused of abusing dozens of women and girls over four decades, why would anyone want to claim an identity as a Christian? Is that something to aspire to?

When so many young people who grow up in the church leave and don't come back, these are fundamental questions. What identity do we claim when we commit ourselves to following Christ?

If we can't tell the difference between the profane and the sacred, we're lost.

We can build up a church that's centred on Christ, centred on healing and centred on hope, but we have to move on from the church that's been a place to hide abuse.

If you feel a need to go smoke behind the barn, I think we'll understand that some habits are hard to break. But the time for hiding dangerous secrets has passed. ☿

*Matt Froese is a member of Hamilton (Ont.) Mennonite Church, is connecting with First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, and doesn't recommend moving during a pandemic.*

## VIEWPOINT

# What can a white church do?

Donna Schulz  
Saskatchewan Correspondent

**W**hen the death of George Floyd sparked race-related demonstrations across North America earlier this year, one of our deacons asked, “What can we do in response to this?”

My church, Eigenheim Mennonite in Rosthern, Sask., is racially homogeneous. The community beyond our church includes Indigenous, Filipino, Karen and Pakistani people, but they don’t worship with us. How could we, a group of white Mennonites, respond to the racial tension we witnessed daily in the news?

One response, we thought, would be to learn about racism, and we decided to do this through our adult education class.

Both Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan and the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in Saskatoon supported us in our learning by providing speakers and facilitators.

Using Zoom as our platform, we met nine times between Sept. 13 and Nov. 22, with an average of 15 participants.

During our first sessions, we looked at the scriptural foundations for anti-racism and discussed words and phrases—such as “white privilege” and “white fragility”—that are common in conversations about racism.

In the following weeks, we welcomed five guest speakers. Their presentations were insightful, challenging and encouraging. I learned a lot more than I can include in a reflection piece such as this, but here are a few of my takeaways:

- **Race is a social construct**, invented to justify the enslavement of African peoples and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples worldwide. There are no significant biological differences between someone with white skin and someone with brown or black skin. But while race may be a fiction, racism is a reality.

- **Whiteness and white privilege** are also a reality, but we white people have been socialized not to see our privilege. We believe our possessions and our positions in society are ours because of our merits—because we worked for them. In fact, the advantages we enjoy are ours because others have been disadvantaged.

- **There is a power dynamic** inherent in racism that distinguishes it from prejudice. Anyone can be prejudiced against another group, but it isn’t racism if the person holding the prejudice is part of a marginalized group. In other words, there’s no such thing as reverse racism.

“You don’t grow up with ‘my’ culture imposed on ‘you.’ There’s a power relationship there,” said Manuela Valle-Castro, who is the intercultural education coordinator with the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association and coordinator of the Saskatoon Anti-Racism Network. “You can’t call it racism until there’s that element of power, until there’s a group power attached to it. Racism is targeting whole groups on the basis of race.”

- **One doesn’t become** anti-racist overnight, or even after attending a nine-week course on anti-racism. Indigenous educator Russell McAuley spoke to us about anti-racism as “a lifelong process.”

“It’s transformative rather than informative,” he said.

Peace Akintade, a young Nigerian-Canadian poet, speaker and actor, told us that to be anti-racist is to “always be in a learning posture.” And that includes learning from our mistakes. When someone tells us our words or actions have been hurtful, she said, our best answer is, “I’m sorry. I didn’t know.”

- **The role of white people** in anti-racist

work is important, but it isn’t a leadership role. People of colour are calling on us to learn about systemic racism and the racist history of our country. They’re calling on us to listen to their stories, follow their lead and walk alongside them in their struggle for racial equity.

Roman Young is program coordinator for the Centre for Indigenous Women, Two Spirit and Gender Diversity with the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan. He spoke to us about the importance of learning and building relationships with Indigenous people. “Educate yourselves. Gain deeper understandings,” he said. “You can learn and benefit a lot from each other. It’s a reciprocal relationship.”

- **Understanding the concept** of treaty is key to understanding anti-Indigenous racism. Indigenous peoples saw treaty as an agreement between two sovereign nations for the benefit of both. Amy Seesequasis, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner’s director of public education, told us that the creation of the Indian Act was a breach of treaty that resulted in the loss of culture, spirituality, traditions and languages for Indigenous peoples.

“We’re over 150 years behind in our relationships because of the Indian Act,” she said. “We need to return to the principles of treaty. We are all treaty people.”

Our learning journey, which began with the question, “What can we do in response to this?” ended with a similar but more pointed question posed by Seesequasis: “How will you exercise your treaty identity and the responsibilities associated with it?”

I don’t know yet how to answer this question, but I do know that I can’t leave it unanswered. ❧

## NEWS

# Candles of care for health-care workers

*Churches respond as city faces skyrocketing rates of COVID-19*

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent  
STEINBACH, MAN.

A single flame flickered into existence in the window of a home in Steinbach, and now throughout the city—and across the country—candles send warmth to a hurting community.

Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach began lighting candles on Nov. 13, putting them in windows and posting photos to social media daily, in prayer and solidarity with health-care workers, patients and their families in the community.

The action was in response to the skyrocketing rate of COVID-19 in the city of nearly 16,000 residents, which reported an alarming 10-day test positivity rate of 40 percent on Nov. 20. Hundreds are sick from the virus, and multiple outbreaks were reported in personal-care homes, leaving the local hospital, Bethesda Regional Health Centre, overflowing and under-staffed.

“It feels scary and heavy,” said Alisa Harder, who attends Grace Mennonite. “It’s like we’re all walking around with this weight on our shoulders, and it seems to be getting worse, which is very discouraging for us.”

And yet, after a particularly tough week for the city, and just two days after the whole province moved to code red and tighter restrictions, more than 100 people gathered in Steinbach on Nov. 14 to protest mandatory masks and other restrictions.

This public defiance of health measures was deeply discouraging for health-care workers, who are risking their lives to help others.

“The actual number of people who are anti-maskers is actually quite small, but they’re very loud,” said Kyle Penner, associate pastor of Grace Mennonite. He wanted his congregants to be able to do something

practical to show their support for those suffering from COVID-19 and those trying to help them.

When he and others from the congregation began posting pictures of their candles on the internet, they quickly gained hundreds of likes and dozens of comments by people sharing their own photos from across Canada. Penner said the health-care workers he heard from “were crying with tears of gratitude. . . . It was kind of neat to see a gesture of hope and solidarity spread like wildfire, as opposed to fear and anxiety.”

Harder said she and her friends were “feeling very powerless and very angry” when they were messaging on a group chat one day. They decided they needed to take action to show nurses and doctors that “there’s more of us that have their back than those that don’t.”

She put out a call for donations among friends and family, and very quickly received enough contributions to purchase and deliver \$10 coffee gift cards for all the ER nurses and support staff, paramedics and the majority of COVID-19 ward staff at the local hospital. Harder’s friend fundraised through her Facebook page and purchased bath salts from a local business to help nurses relax after their shifts.

Since then, Steinbach residents started another online fundraiser through GoFundMe, to show their appreciation by providing food purchased from local businesses for staff at the hospital and nursing homes. In one week, they raised \$12,221, far exceeding their \$5,000 goal.

Harder said it is the fundraisers and candle lighters who reflect the heart of her community, not the anti-maskers: “Being from Steinbach, I know that’s not who we



PHOTO FROM KYLE PENNER'S FACEBOOK PAGE  
**Kyle Penner, associate pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach, Man., has been lighting candles for weeks, in prayer and solidarity with health-care workers, patients and their families fighting COVID-19.**

are, that’s not what Steinbach is about.” But with so many COVID-19 cases, she said it is clear that not everyone is following the rules, “so some of that reputation is sadly probably valid.”

Many protesters did not actually come from Steinbach, but from neighbouring towns and as far away as Winnipeg. Dozens came from the Church of God, a congregation located south of Steinbach. Penner said there is “deep frustration” in the community that, despite a small Steinbach presence at the rally, “we all got tarred and feathered with the same brushes.”

Anti-mask protesters expressed dismay over losing rights and freedoms, and being prevented from worshipping together in person.

“I understand that people are worried about personal freedoms . . . [but], as disciples of Christ, we put aside our freedoms for the love of the neighbour,” said Lee Hiebert, lead pastor of Steinbach Mennonite Church. “I think that, as disciples of Christ, as always, one of our mandates is to care for our neighbour. And I think that wearing a mask is an embodiment of that.”

Other churches in the area seem to think so, too. Steinbach Mennonite and Grace Mennonite joined 21 other Steinbach area churches in signing an open letter imploring Christians to follow public-health orders.



While congregants hunker down in their homes and wait out the lockdown, the two Mennonite churches will continue to connect with them, whether that's through

phone calls, online Sunday school, sending out CDs of worship services to those who can't access them online, or by lighting candles of care. ❧

## Flexibility key to youth ministry

*Youth groups adapt in face of restrictions, change*

Story and Photo by Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

**T**he weekly church youth group gathering, whether for service, faith discussions or recreational activity, has had to change this fall in the face of COVID-19. B.C. youth leaders are adapting the best they can, trying to keep young people engaged and connected to the church.

Cedar Valley Mennonite youth group in Mission had been meeting in person earlier this fall for such activities as a Halloween costume party, bowling and "light painting." New this fall was a drop-in skate park in the church parking lot after school one afternoon a week. The Cedar Valley youth have also met via Zoom, including holding a paper airplane contest with other youth groups, and have been planning a one-night fundraiser for homeless and vulnerable teens in early December.

At Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, the high school youth were still meeting weekly as of mid-November, mainly with Bible studies, but also for such activities as a Halloween party and movie night. "We had been asking everyone to stay [about two metres] apart and have a mask with them in case of a scenario where they couldn't distance," says Noel Dueckman, Emmanuel's youth group coordinator. "We have avoided any games or activities that can't be done at a distance. The youth seem to be fine with it," he says.

Jack Meers, youth pastor of Eden Mennonite Church in Chilliwack, says COVID-19 has presented a new and different challenge, but leaders have tried to be creative. "On one day during the summer, I



**In preparation for Remembrance Day in early November, Noel Dueckman, left, of Emmanuel Mennonite Church leads high school youths in a Bible study on peace.**

and a couple of our youth leaders drove all around Chilliwack and delivered donuts to our youth kids at their homes, safely and at a distance, of course," he reports. "While it was a long day, it was a really big win and a great time to connect."

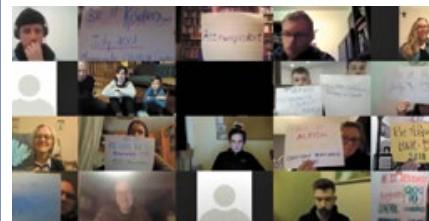
The group started meeting again in person in September, alternating high- and middle-school youth each week, per the church's safety plan.

"Some creative things we have done online are Kahoot tournaments with other MC B.C. youth groups on Zoom, Jackbox games, and we've been utilizing videos from the Bible Project during our teaching times," says Meers. "I've learned to be flexible on almost all my plans, as the situation is ever changing."

Recent tightening of restrictions by the provincial government and health authorities have forced youth groups that had been meeting in person to transition back to Zoom, and they will re-evaluate once the restriction period is over. ❧

### News brief

#### Annual youth peace gathering focuses on Indigenous justice



On the eve of every Remembrance Day, Mennonite Church Manitoba youth gather to learn about peace. This year's event, entitled "Remembering . . . our resolves," focused on learning about Indigenous justice through the lens of the new publication from Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Central Committee, *Be It Resolved: Anabaptist & Partner Coalitions Advocate for Indigenous Justice, 1966-2020*. The book is a compilation of more than 90 documents that detail the commitments Anabaptists have made to Indigenous justice and decolonization over the last 54 years. "That book is 90 times we, as part of the Mennonite church, made decisions and choices and called each other to action to be people who cared," said Kathy Giesbrecht, the regional church's associate director of leadership ministries, who hosted the online event. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the group met on Zoom, where they sang camp songs, shared prayers of lament and petition, ate nachos together and heard stories from guest speakers. Steve Heinrichs and Esther Epp-Tiessen, the book's co-editors, and graphic designer Matt Veith each reflected on a resolution in the anthology that was meaningful to them. The youth ended the evening by sharing signs they had created showing their pledge to remember MC Manitoba's commitments and to work towards peace, and to encourage congregations to do the same (see photo above). To watch a short video of the event, visit [bit.ly/3nX6mja](https://bit.ly/3nX6mja).



—STORY AND SCREENSHOT  
BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

# Celebrating new beginnings at MC Eastern Canada

*Newly installed executive minister calls for 'courageous imagination' in strange times*

Story and Screenshot by Janet Bauman  
Eastern Canada Correspondent

**“W**hatever may pass and whatever lies before me . . . I will keep on singing.”

These words from a praise song led by Keith Ly of Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church, seemed appropriate at the beginning of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's fall gathering on the morning of Nov. 14. Forced online by pandemic safety protocols, the gathering, entitled “Courageous imagination,” was a mix of live and pre-recorded elements, offering the 120 participants many opportunities to celebrate as well as share the challenges of being the church during a pandemic.

Brian Quan, assistant moderator of MC Eastern Canada and a pastor of Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church, facilitated the Zoom meeting, which was translated into French.

Several stories from across the regional church were shared about adapting to the new reality of COVID-19.

Rebecca Penner, youth pastor of Bethany Mennonite Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., shared how she has been accompanying youth through the compounding losses and fears of the pandemic. They have created a sense of community online by connecting through social media. Penner has encouraged hands-on activities by dropping off craft kits at their homes and by getting them to bake together from their kitchens while on a Zoom call.

Kendall Jongejan Harder, a pastor of North Leamington Mennonite Church, shared how that congregation baptized three youth despite physical distancing. The youth and their faith partners shared their faith stories over Zoom, and then,

since all three were related, they were baptized on the front porch of one of their homes. Their mothers and a grandfather poured the water, while Jongejan Harder led the service from several metres away. The rest of the church celebrated with a drive-by greeting. Jongejan Harder said there has to be a “creative edge” to pastoring since everything pastors do has been impacted by the pandemic.



*Leah Reesor-Keller, newly installed MC Eastern Canada executive minister, speaks from the sanctuary of First Hmong Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., which hosted the physically distanced installation service that was recorded and shared at the regional church's online fall gathering.*

Jonathan Abraham, pastor of Shalom Worship and Healing Centre, Kitchener, Ont., shared how the congregation's transition from in-person to Zoom worship made it possible for others with Eritrean roots to join from a distance, resulting in two new groups forming in Kingston and St. Catharines, Ont. He said that, in the face of the pandemic, the church could stagnate and wait for normal to return,

or face the new challenge by following the Holy Spirit. This is “not time for us to be in despair,” but rather “a time to be renewed,” he said.

Online participants were given two opportunities to join small-group discussions reflecting on the challenges they have faced as individuals and congregations, and where they have experienced “God moments” and invitations from the Holy Spirit.

Four new MC Eastern Canada congregations were introduced and welcomed:

- **Grace New Life Mennonite Church**, Hamilton, Ont., which worships in Lao and English, became a full member.
- **Mennonite Disciple Mission**, Joliette, Que., which worships in Swahili and French, became a provisional member.
- **Soul House**, Toronto, which meets in a home for worship, study and a meal, became a provisional member.
- **Warden Underground**, which ministers to youth and young adults in its Scarborough, Ont., neighbourhood, became a provisional member.

Jordan Thoms, pastor of Warden Underground, offered a prayer, calling on everyone to look to Jesus as a model for ministry.

Two people were installed into MC Eastern Canada leadership roles:

- **Norm Dyck**, mission minister, introduced and led the installation of Fanosie Legesse as intercultural mission minister, tasked with resourcing, equipping

and encouraging the full integration of all the cultural groups in the regional church. Legesse described himself as one who “embraces diversity” and sees this “God-sized challenge” of integration as an opportunity to take advantage of all the gifts that are represented, with the assurance that “God will be with us.”

• **Marilyn Rudy-Froese**, church leadership minister, led the installation of Leah Reesor-Keller as executive minister. Reesor-Keller acknowledged “how deeply we

long to be together,” and how much people need each other in these strange times. She offered words of encouragement, drawing from Roman 12:4-5 and Isaiah 41:10: “*We are not alone. God is with us.*”

She described the church not as an institution, but as a spiritual movement rooted in deep joy that follows Jesus and seeks to share God’s love by welcoming strangers and caring for the vulnerable. “I feel hopeful and inspired” about building this movement together, she said. Both

individuals and congregations need “courageous imagination” as they grow their capacity to “dream and imagine.”

A small singing group from Rouge Valley Mennonite Church, Markham, Ont., blessed Reesor-Keller with the hymn “My Life Flows On.”

Quan brought the meeting to a close with this prayer: “May we be surprised by how you lead us.”

## Muslims and Mennonites discuss mental health

By Joanne De Jong  
Alberta Correspondent

**M**ental health and how faith can play a role in strengthening people through this difficult and lonely time was the topic for this year’s Mennonite-Muslim dialogue, held virtually on Zoom because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Mennonite Church Alberta’s North Edmonton Ministry program co-hosted the “Boosting resilience for the digital age” dialogue on Oct. 31 in partnership with Common Word Alberta.

The topic was chosen at the suggestion of a young Muslim woman who was concerned about the increase in suicides and depression due to COVID-19. More than 80 participants took part in the virtual event, with Mennonites making up more than half of the facilitators and a good part of the participants.

Donna Entz, director of the North Edmonton Ministry, commented that the Mennonite community “more than carried their weight.” She also expressed her appreciation for their involvement, calling it “a powerful collective witness.”

Two speakers, one Christian and one Muslim, addressed issues surrounding mental health. Reverend Ingrid Cramer-Doerschel and Dr. Salima Versi were chosen for their respective faith backgrounds and experience working in the areas of mental health. Common themes

that emerged were the importance of not stigmatizing people with mental-health issues, prayer, and the challenge to not be afraid to ask people who are struggling, “Are you okay?” After their talks, participants were placed in break-out rooms to discuss a variety of questions.

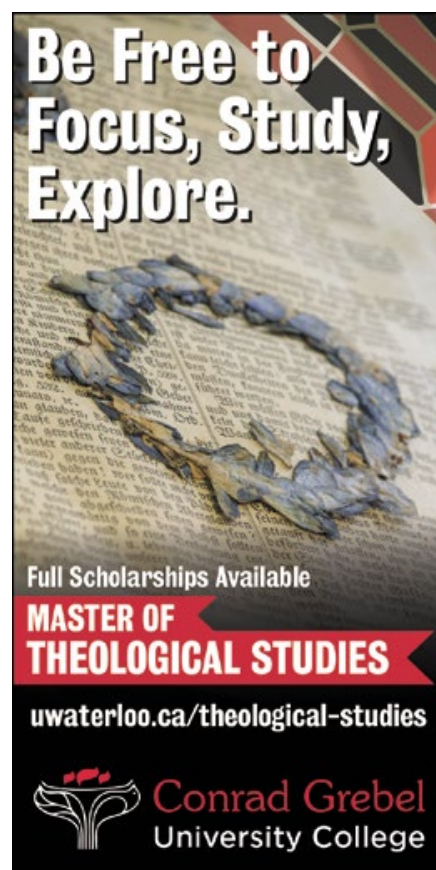
In the first session, participants were asked, “How do you experience the digital environment influencing mental health?” Positive answers included the opportunity to slow down, as more things are done online, and time driving decreases. This gives more time for walking and family. Concerns were raised around the increased time spent online, where there are many negative posts about Muslims and inappropriate sites for children.

During the second breakout session, facilitators asked, “Imagine what your prophet or founder of your faith would have done, and how he would have responded if one of his very close disciples or friends was experiencing mental illness.”

From the Christian tradition, stories were shared about Elijah’s exhaustion and depression; Nebuchadnezzar’s seven-year breakdown; and Peter’s emotional struggle after denying Jesus that was followed by healing forgiveness.

A Muslim participant told a story about a poor woman in Medina who always swept the mosque. Sweepers were often those who were disabled or of low status, sometimes due to mental-health issues. One night, the woman died and was quickly buried with no comment. The Prophet Mohammed heard about it and, rebuking those who buried her, stated she was worthy of honour, regardless of her condition.

Both groups emphasized that their faith and community sustain them. ❧



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# Zoom check-in

*MC Alberta asks, 'Are you okay?'*

By Joanne De Jong  
Alberta Correspondent

A regional church check-in meeting last month gave members a chance to learn how Mennonite Church Alberta is faring.

With the arrival of fall, when in-person meetings were prohibited, MC Alberta leaders decided to host a Zoom check-in for all the churches so communities could connect and hear how things are going.

Brenda Tiessen-Wiens, the regional church moderator, asked churches, "How have you been enlivened? Surprised? Challenged?" adding, "I know pastors connect, but it's good for churches to connect, too, to build community." She expressed the desire to know that churches are okay, both spiritually and financially.

Each congregation was invited to share how it was adapting to the pandemic. It quickly became clear there was a diversity of approaches. Some meet in person, some do not; others have a combination of in-person and online services; some live-stream, others have services on Facebook. Regardless, each church is active and alive. Funerals, weddings and communion continue, even if not in person.



PHOTO BY JON OLFERT

*Thanks to a generous donor, Camp Valaqua was able to build two yurts this spring to offer as places to rest and refresh. Located next to the Little Red River on the north quarter of the camp's property in Water Valley, Alta., each yurt has a bunk bed, and pull-out queen-sized bed, together with other modest furnishings. Yurt bookings are expected to be available by April 2021.*

A variety of reported highlights included:

- **MC Alberta** announced a projected surplus and is beginning to discuss priorities and dreams for 2021.
- **Camp Valaqua** raised \$32,000, double what its annual hike-a-thon fundraiser usually brings in. The camp also built two yurts to be rented out.
- **The Chin** congregation is planning to move into its newly purchased and renovated church building in January. Other churches were invited to help.
- **Congregants from** across the province have been faithfully joining together in prayer on Zoom every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday since COVID-19 began.
- **Excitement in** having young people who have moved away, and new people who rarely attend, join the online services.

Most congregations seemed to be doing well financially, although one church shared about its struggles. This resulted in another church immediately offering to help. Another common struggle that was expressed was decreased leadership, as some members have now stepped down from their positions for health and other reasons.

The meeting ended with brainstorming ideas for Alberta's upcoming 2021 E3 (Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ) visioning session.

Depending on the pandemic, the next MC Alberta assembly will hopefully be held in person at Edmonton First Mennonite Church in the spring. ❧

*To view a short video of this year's MC Alberta activities, visit [mcab.ca](http://mcab.ca).*



## News brief

### Willowgrove awarded \$10,000 for Camp@Home program



PHOTO COURTESY OF WILLOWGROVE

#### **Willowgrove staff lead virtual Camp@Home activities.**

Staff at Willowgrove had to transition quickly when COVID-19 prohibited overnight camping this past summer. For the "innovative" Camp@Home program it created, the United Way awarded Willowgrove \$10,000 from its Emergency Community Support Fund in York Region of Ontario. The program was chosen for its efforts to address "the pressing need for social inclusion and increased well-being for children in response to COVID-19," and its ability "to serve vulnerable populations," according to Johnny Wideman, Willowgrove's executive director. Summer camp director Jason McDowell began to dream up replacement activities, posting camp song tutorials and craft videos on social media. Wideman described the program that evolved as a "unique online camp experience that allows for children and youth to have personal, genuine camp connections under the supervision of a live counsellor." Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Hepworth, Ont., offered a similar online camping experience. Hidden Acres Camp, New Hamburg, Ont., mailed out "camp-in-bag" kits to campers and single-mom families, with activities that could be done at home. Staff also opened their grounds for safe camping for individual families.

—BY JANET BAUMAN



PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTVIEW CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

*Westview Christian Fellowship in St. Catharines, Ont., held a wonderful celebration on Thanksgiving Sunday, 2020. After a local business couple offered to pay off the church's \$230,000 mortgage, the congregation held an outdoor mortgage-burning ceremony, during which everyone was given a copy of the mortgage. 'We wanted every single person to know that this gift was for them,' wrote Erika Klassen in a Facebook post on behalf of the church. 'Whether they had given 50 cents, \$50 or \$5,000 to Westview Christian Fellowship, they helped to pay this mortgage. This burning celebration included all of us.' During the week, Westview acts as a community hub for women in the Queenston Neighbourhood at the Westview Centre4Women.*

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# 'To keep the faith'

*Congregation celebrates despite COVID-19*

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

As with most celebrations during this pandemic, it was a quiet 75th anniversary celebration for St. Catharines United Mennonite Church on Nov. 1. In order to limit social contact, the Sunday services alternate between families and seniors, and this Sunday was a seniors Sunday service. About 86 people attended.

The service began with a video of a slide collection of the church through the years, including baptisms and dedications; service groups for girls, boys, men and women; music groups and choirs; outreach work in the community and further afield; church staff and volunteers; and socializing around food and the annual bazaar.

The first informal worship service was held in July 1942 in a rented hall. As more families came to the area, it was decided to build a church building on Carlton Street in St. Catharines.

In October 1945, the congregation elected a minister, adopted the official name and accepted a constitution. This date was used as the official starting date. As the church continued to grow, a larger building was constructed on Garnet Street in 1949. The final congregational move was to its present location on Linwell Road in 1967.

The language of worship was exclusively German in 1945, and moved toward separate English and German services in 1988. Until the pandemic, there were two worship services most Sundays, one in German and the other in English. With the challenges of the pandemic, the congregation has worshipped in English.

After the opening song and welcome, youth worker Taya Himes read the personal reminiscences of several members, sharing their highlights of the early days of coming to church.

Reverend Henry H. Epp, minister of the church at three separate intervals, had been interviewed in 2014, and part of the

interview was shown. When he was asked what was most important, he said, "To keep the faith."

After a celebratory litany, Pastor Nick Schuurman highlighted the work of the Maria Martha Verein ladies aid society, whose quilts hung on the church wall during the service. Although the society was also celebrating 75 years of service, it was announced that the group was disbanding. (See sidebar at right.)

Taya Himes acknowledged the giving of Bibles to three Grade 4 students, a tradition of the church.

Randy Klaassen, the church's associate pastor, spoke on the theme "We're only passing through," based on I Peter 1:17-23. He reflected on the church's official opening just after the Second World War had ended. It was a time of many changes in the world. Locally, some early members had been in the area for some time, while others were just leaving Europe and coming to Canada. Still others came from South America in the following years. Young and old were part of these migrations. Klaassen emphasized that within these diverse groups, "all were seeking healing and hope in the name of Jesus Christ."

Coming as this service did during a pandemic and a climate crisis, Klaassen suggested little acts of behaviour that people can change, for the sake of others, because of Jesus. He listed wearing a mask to protect others, and by using Earth's resources responsibly by reducing consumption, re-using, re-purposing and recycling, in order not to be wasteful. He urged congregants to speak the truth in love and to build others up; to encourage and support each other so that God's grace and power are experienced by all; to speak out when they witness injustice; and to recognize one another as equals in the eyes of God.



ST. CATHARINES UNITED MENNONITE CHURCH  
ARCHIVES PHOTO

**Volunteers help erect the church building on Linwell Rd., St. Catharines, Ont., in 1967.**

The service and the 75th celebration concluded with a song and benediction. There was no celebratory communion service or fellowship meal due to pandemic restrictions. ❧

## ❧ Sidebar

### A fond farewell

As St. Catharines (Ont.) United Mennonite Church celebrated its 75th anniversary on Nov. 1, the church also said goodbye to the Maria Martha Verein (ladies aid society). Several women got together in each other's homes in 1945 to sew together, and started using the name Maria Martha in 1947. Over the years, 78 women were part of the group, eventually meeting in the church, as they outgrew their homes. Many activities centred around sewing quilts for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to be sent overseas, the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale, the church bazaar and for new babies, as well as making school kits and HIV bags, which were filled by MCC with pyjamas, dresses and shorts, diapers and bandages. In 1970, the group started a "Gaben Tag"—a meeting at which they gave money for missions; throughout the years they collected \$182,000, which they gave to local missions and overseas work. The group catered many weddings and served at numerous funerals. The last meeting was held as the COVID-19 pandemic started. Given the age of the remaining members, the social and physical distancing in place, and the continuation of the pandemic, the group will not start up again.

—BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

# Be it Resolved released

*New anthology documents six decades of Anabaptist responses to Indigenous calls for justice*

By Katie Doke Sawatzky  
Mennonite Church Canada

A new anthology published by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada and Mennonite Church Canada hit the press this fall. *Be it Resolved: Anabaptists & Partner Coalitions Advocate for Indigenous Justice, 1966-2020* is a collection of more than 90 documents detailing commitments Anabaptists have made to Indigenous justice and decolonization since the 1960s.

"I was aware of a handful, but as soon as I started digging in the archives I found incredible, old, significant commitments," says Steve Heinrichs, director of Indigenous-Settler Relations for MC Canada. "Everything from Indigenous self-determination, recognizing native sovereignty and advocating for a resolve to Indigenous land claims. Big things!"

The work was originally meant to be a pocket-sized booklet, like those created for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action or the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. At the time of printing, the manuscript had ballooned to 480 pages.

Heinrichs and Esther Epp-Tiessen, historian and former peace educator for MCC, co-edited the collection and provided historical context for each of the documents featured in the text. Documents are presented chronologically and are prefaced by quotes from Indigenous voices calling for action to address injustice.

"This work is about pockets of the church being responsible and collectively responding in faithfulness, but it's always the cries of Indigenous Peoples that move the church to action," says Heinrichs.

*Be it Resolved* details how, over six decades, Anabaptists in Canada have addressed Indigenous land rights, access to water, education and housing, missing and murdered women and girls, the legacy of residential schools and restorative

responses to crime.

The work is evidence of concern and solidarity action for Indigenous justice, but there is candour in the introduction about the colonial mindset impacting some of the commitments. The anthology begins with a problematic resolution by the Conference of Mennonites (CMC) in Canada in 1966 that encouraged Mennonite families "to adopt and foster homeless Indian and Metis children," at the height of the Sixties Scoop.



*Be it Resolved* was designed by Matt Veith.

"This is not a linear progression of 'enlightenment,'" says Epp-Tiessen. "It's not like we start at 1966 in kind of a colonial way and it just gets better and better. Some of the most profound and radical commitments come from the '70s and '80s."

For Epp-Tiessen, the resolution made by CMC in July 1988 is profound. Epp-Tiessen visited Labrador at the time as an MCC board member, and witnessed the trial of Elizabeth Penashue, one of several Innu grandmothers who walked onto an air force runway in protest and were arrested. The resolution expressed

solidarity with Innu people in Labrador, who were trying to stop low-level military training flights over their land. It resolved to challenge the Government of Canada to recognize "the Aboriginal rights and aspirations of Native people."

"History is always important because it's important to know where we come from, what our story has been, what our relationships have been," she says.

Stan McKay, a retired United Church minister and Woodland Cree from Treaty 5, wrote the foreword for the book. He details his long history of connections with Mennonites and their Indigenous ministries, writing that the documents reflect "the faith of peacemakers who are growing in their awareness of the injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada and the world."

Doug Klassen, MC Canada's executive minister, and Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of MCC Canada, co-wrote the afterword.

There is an eight-session study guide by Kathy Moorhead Thiessen and Vic Thiessen at the back of the resource. The sessions include suggested readings from the anthology, discussion questions and actions of response.

For Epp-Tiessen, the book confirms that Indigenous justice, along with climate action, is the most important peacemaking agenda Mennonites have right now. It leads her to ask, "Do these statements come alive in the responses of ordinary people, ordinary churches, ordinary followers of Jesus?"

*Be it Resolved* is available for purchase through [CommonWord.ca](http://CommonWord.ca).



To read an interview with the co-editors and graphic designer, visit [bit.ly/2V4J6U3](https://bit.ly/2V4J6U3).

## MEDA CONVENTION 2020

# A dress rehearsal for climate change

*'This is a kitchen table issue, in the literal sense'*

By Mike Strathdee

Mennonite Economic Development Associates

The COVID-19 pandemic is a dress rehearsal for climate change, the greatest threat to people's futures worldwide, says Dennis Tessier, an environmental expert employed by Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA).



Dennis Tessier

"Despite all these changes the pandemic has forced upon us, I am reminded every day that this pandemic is merely a dress rehearsal for our greatest challenge yet, and that is climate change," said Tessier, MEDA's technical director of environment and climate change. He made the statement at MEDA's annual convention, which was held online from Nov. 6 to 7.

Seventeen years ago, the Earth's atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels passed the 400 parts-per-million (ppm) threshold for the first time in history. (A 350 ppm level, last seen in 1990, is considered by scientists to be an upper safe limit.)

Higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels—now 412 ppm—mean "the world our children and grandchildren are going to inherit is going to be drastically different than what humanity has ever experienced before," he said. "We are inundated with stories of sea-level rise, droughts, hurricanes and record fires. . . . As with COVID-19, the sense of urgency with climate change must match the threat."

During peak lockdown in April 2020, daily CO<sub>2</sub> emissions dropped by an unprecedented 17 percent compared to 2019 levels, something Tessier sees as a

hopeful sign. COVID-19 presents unique opportunities to pursue a path to meet the climate-change challenge, he said.

MEDA is working with numerous partners to build a business case for environmental sustainability in developing countries. "We are striving to support our clients in a way that ensures their livelihoods thrive within our planetary boundaries," he said.

Many of the areas where MEDA works are extremely vulnerable to climatic disruptions. Hot and dry countries will become even hotter and drier in coming decades, said author Amanda Little, a keynote convention speaker.

Little's book *The Fate of Food* explores how the global food system needs to change to support growing population amid changing environmental conditions. Whatever crops they are growing, small-scale farmers need better connections to markets, she said. They also need "a greater depth and breadth of information about how to grow their crops in new and changing circumstances."

As population and climate pressures intensify, "climate change is becoming something we can taste," Little said, quoting a comment first made by Tim Gore, Oxfam's head of food policy: "This is a kitchen table issue, in the literal sense."

Many specialty foods, including coffee, are produced in sub-tropical and equatorial nations, areas most vulnerable to climatic

disruptions, Little said. "Goldilocks crops," such as coffee, which thrives in weather that is neither too hot nor too cold, will be the most disrupted by changing conditions.

But she sees hope for reducing the negative environmental impacts of agriculture.

"Human innovation, which marries new and old approaches to food production, can . . . redefine sustainable food on a grand scale," she said. ☼



MEDA PHOTO

**'We are striving to support our clients in a way that ensures their livelihoods thrive, within our planetary boundaries.'**  
**(Dennis Tessier, MEDA environmental expert)**

*Agriculture makes up a large part of the economies of many developing countries. But small-scale farmers, such as this Tanzanian woman, lack access to finance, training and markets. MEDA wants to create 500,000 decent jobs in the agriculture sector over the next decade.*



## MEDA CONVENTION 2020

# A bold new goal

*MEDA plans to help a half-million people out of poverty and into decent jobs by 2030*

Mike Strathdee

Mennonite Economic Development Associates

**M**ennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) is setting an ambitious target of creating or sustaining decent jobs for a half-million people within a decade, attendees heard at the organization's annual meeting, held this year on Zoom from Nov. 6 to 7.

"We have a bold new goal of helping 500,000 people obtain decent work, primarily women and youth, by 2030," said Leah Katerberg, MEDA's vice-president of innovation and impact, of a strategic plan launched in July. MEDA will reach the goal by leveraging expertise and strength in agri-food market systems, working with farm entrepreneurs and small- and medium-sized enterprises, she said.



**Leah Katerberg**

Three-quarters of workers in developing countries are in vulnerable employment, and most of those living in poverty are in the agricultural sector. MEDA's strategic job creation goal is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal to "achieve full and productive employment, and decent work, for all women and men by 2030."

MEDA will continue to provide risk capital, business and technical expertise to its farm and business clients, Katerberg said, adding that the organization is committed to making certain "that the entrepreneurs we work with succeed in an ethical manner, by ensuring environmental sustainability, gender equality, and valuing inclusion and diversity."

MEDA will have to work differently to attain its job-creation goal, though. It intends to shift its focus from securing more and increasingly large contracts, to achieving impact at scale and focusing on creating system-level change.

Dorothy Nyambi, MEDA's president

and chief executive officer, said she sees "challenging, but exciting opportunities ahead of us. . . . We need to acknowledge that things are different and will continue to be different."

MEDA remains well positioned to navigate pandemic turbulence and deliver on its mission to create business solutions to poverty, Karin Krahn said in her treasurer's report.



**Karin Krahn**

MEDA lost \$1.1 million in the fiscal year ended June 30 because of \$1.7 million of investment and foreign exchange losses due to the economic downturn.

Both revenue and expenses were

lower than budgeted. MEDA proactively managed and contained expenses by holding off on hiring new and replacement roles, and by reducing discretionary costs.

Donations of \$6.5 million were better than forecasted. The organization has \$5.8 million in non-restricted cash reserves, funds that will allow MEDA to "weather some economic storms [and] ensures we will be there for the people we serve," she said.

The pandemic has had widespread negative impacts on marginalized populations and local markets around the world, said Simon Carter, MEDA's interim senior lead for global programs. These include disrupted agri-food supply chains causing food insecurity; an alarming global rise in gender-based violence; and reduced mobility, sales and incomes for farmers and many people left without work, he said.

In the new fiscal year that began on July 1, MEDA has secured new projects in Haiti, Kenya, Senegal and Nigeria. ✎



**Simon Carter**

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# Stronger together

*Waterloo Mennonite Homes, MennoHomes merge to strengthen response to affordable housing needs in Waterloo Region*

MennoHomes / Waterloo Mennonite Homes  
Waterloo, Ont.

**W**hen Dan Driedger, executive director of MennoHomes in Waterloo Region, wanted to explore potential partnerships for a new affordable housing project at Lancaster and Bridgeport streets in Kitchener, he approached Waterloo Mennonite Homes (WMH). Since both organizations build affordable housing under the Mennonite umbrella, it seemed like a good fit.

“Both organizations hold a similar vision of providing low-income housing in the Region of Waterloo,” says WMH president Rudy Goertz. “Over time and through much discussion, it felt like the perfect opportunity to not only become a partner, but to merge and become one organization.”

WMH provides housing for low-income seniors in a building adjacent to Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church at 15 George Street, Waterloo. In the 1970s, senior members of the church

explored the feasibility of building a seniors apartment near the church, says Goertz.

And WHM was born. Construction on the 46-unit building began in 1979, and the first tenants arrived in 1980. The building has 43 one-bedroom and three two-bedroom units. Subsidies are available to tenants whose rent is more than 36 per cent of their income, and about 30 per cent of the total units are subsidized.

“We have been working closely with WMH over the past couple of years to support each other. This merger is a natural extension of that collaboration,” says Driedger. “We are humbled they have the confidence in [MennoHomes] to be good stewards of their building and the people who call it their home. This is not a responsibility we take lightly, and we’ll do our utmost to honour their trust.”

MennoHomes Inc., a non-profit, was founded in 2001 to respond to the need

for affordable rental housing in Waterloo Region. It currently provides a mix of single-unit apartments, family duplexes, and multi-bedroom housing for 105 households across the region. Once the merger with WMH is finalized and a 48-unit building in Kitchener currently under construction is completed, the grand total of affordable housing units under MennoHomes will be 199.

Both organizations offer support to residents: WMH employs a parish nurse whose salary is shared with W-K United Mennonite Church, and MennoHomes employs a community support worker for its homes. Once the merger is complete, the operating budgets will merge, says Driedger, and during the transition the roles will remain as they are.

## **A Place to Call Home update**

The MennoHomes project at 544 Bridgeport Road East in Kitchener, called A Place to Call Home, is being built on the former site of St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church; the church is partnering on the project, as is a local not-for-profit, Parents for Community Living. The 48-unit building will provide a secure, affordable and supportive environment for single people, seniors, families and individuals living with disabilities who meet the Region of Waterloo’s income criteria.

MennoHomes had just launched its capital campaign for A Place to Call Home when COVID-19 hit. The pandemic highlighted the need for affordable housing in Waterloo Region, and the project went ahead; construction is scheduled for completion in mid-June. ☘



WATERLOO MENNONITE HOMES PHOTO

**Waterloo Mennonite Homes is located next to Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont.**

*For more information about the project, or to help MennoHomes reach its \$5 million fundraising target, visit [mennohomes.com](http://mennohomes.com).*



## GATHERING AROUND THE TABLE

# Christmas pudding a long-time tradition

By Barb Draper  
Editorial Assistant

For many of us, sitting around the table with extended family is a very important part of our Christmas celebration. In my family of origin, the traditional menu included turkey and dressing, while dessert was always iced sugar cookies and fruit salad with cubes of red and green Jell-O. I'm sure each family has its own well-worn food customs. But when you become part of a new family, sometimes you need to adopt new food traditions.

At my first Christmas dinner with the Draper family, the menu was very familiar, except that dessert included something I had never had before—steamed Christmas pudding. It was served warm with a choice of butter-scotch sauce or hard sauce, and was quite delicious. Since I married into that family, steamed pudding also became part of my tradition, although I've never seen the appeal of hard sauce. As the years have gone by, making this Christmas treat also has become part of my to-do list in December.

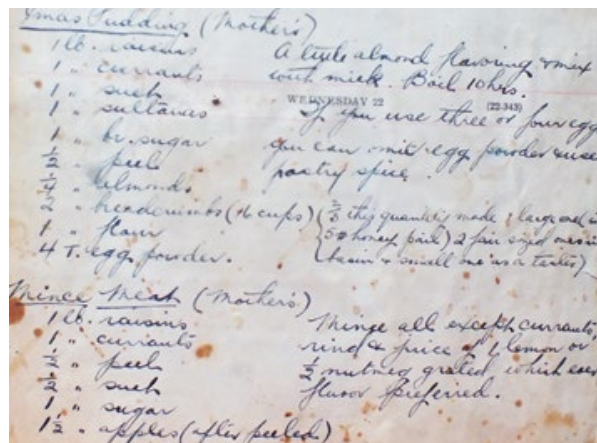
The recipe calls for lots of raisins, candied peel and glazed cherries. While the ingredients bear some similarity to fruit cake, the texture is quite different. My mother-in-law always put the batter into a coffee tin and steamed it in a pressure cooker, but when I took over I found it simpler to use a Bundt cake pan or a bowl. The family was gracious enough not to comment that it was no longer the traditional shape. Later, I began substituting shortening or butter for the traditional suet, and still no one complained, so I never went back to scouring the grocery stores for suet. I also cut the recipe in half.

The Draper family came to Canada in the early years of the 20th century, coming from Norfolk, England. The family of my husband's maternal grandmother were also English immigrants who came to Winnipeg in 1902



**Ethel Draper at age 20.**

and settled in Alberta five years later. Neither family had any background in farming, and the early years were a challenge, but they eventually found their feet. Ethel Draper, my husband's paternal grandmother, was married in Calgary and moved to Ottawa with her husband and baby in 1916. She must have felt quite isolated at first, far from her parents and siblings in Alberta. A few years later, she began a scrapbook of recipes, not only for things to eat, but also recipes for cough medicine, mustard plaster and salves for burns.



**Ethel Draper copied her mother's Christmas pudding recipe into her scrapbook of recipes.**

The scrapbook is in tatters now, but I'm sure it was important to this young mother more than 100 years ago.

In the collection is a hand-written recipe for "Xmas pudding (Mother's)". Perhaps each year when she made this dessert she thought about her mother and her far-away family, because travel between Ottawa and Ponoka, Alta., would have been rare. The recipe certainly is large enough to feed many relatives; a note with the recipe says it will make a five-pound honey pail size, and two fair-sized puddings in basins.

When the Draper family gets together around the table for a Christmas meal every year, we are following a long family tradition. My mother-in-law did not use her mother-in-law's recipe, probably because she needed things measured in cups rather than pounds. The recipe handed down to me came from "Aunt Nancy," a family friend who was an English war bride. I'm sure it, too, is an old recipe, because the instructions say to dissolve the baking soda in a bit of water. The Drapers were teetotalers, so the pudding was never doused with liquor and set afire, and the hard sauce did not include brandy.

This year, the extended Draper family will not be gathering around a table at Christmas, but the pudding is made and will be shared with each household. The future of this tradition is not clear because my children do not care for Christmas pudding and their cousins are somewhat ambivalent. They much prefer the cookies that are also on the table.

We are blessed with so many good things to eat and we all have our own preferences. As someone descended from a long line of Swiss Mennonites, I think it is interesting to be part of a multi-generational tradition of serving old-fashioned steamed pudding at Christmas. ❧

Find the Christmas pudding and sauce recipes at [canadianmennonite.org/christmas-pudding-recipe](http://canadianmennonite.org/christmas-pudding-recipe).



# 'I stitch in words'

Writer, poet finds identity in small-town Mennonite life

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Carla Funk of Victoria, B.C., is a writer, poet and teacher—and possibly the first Mennonite ever to have received the title of “poet laureate.”



**Carla Funk**

Funk grew up in the community of Vanderhoof in the centre of the province and one of the first places Mennonites settled when they moved to British Columbia in the early 20th century. Her father was of Low German background, while her mother has ancestry including Amish from the United States.

Her small-town upbringing, along with her Evangelical Mennonite faith, influenced her greatly.

“I think small towns are good teachers for the imagination,” says Funk. “The smaller the town, the more the mind has to dream up fun, and the tighter the boundaries, the more the imagination has to flex its wings. I think that’s true of Mennonites, too.”

Her growing-up years were a mixture of modernity—her family had television and were allowed to go to movies—mixed with conservatism—neckties and wedding rings were forbidden.

Outdoor activities, such as playing baseball, kick the can, flashlight tag, tobogganing and driving all-terrain vehicles through the snow, made up some of Funk’s small-town entertainment.

Family was important, too. “We had lots of cousins, aunts and uncles; there was never a lack of community or family get-togethers,” she recalls. “But by the time I hit the teenage years, I wanted out of town; I didn’t want the life of wife and mother that was expected.”

Funk moved to Victoria to attend university and settled there, finding her calling teaching creative writing and composing poetry. When the call was put out to name the inaugural poet laureate for the City of Victoria, Funk applied and was surprised

when she was selected. In this position, which she held from June 2006 to November 2008, she helped promote the literary arts.

“It involved being an ambassador for the literary arts,” she says. “I would go to city council meetings and read a poem, or go to city events and read a poem that tied in with the event.”

Today, she hosts a writing group for women that, over the past months, has taken place on Zoom. She is also a speaker and recently was asked to speak at the Sunday morning worship service for Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship in Vancouver, also on Zoom.

These days, Funk is mostly writing prose. She is the author of several books, including *Every Little Scrap and Wonder: A Small-Town Childhood*, which was short-listed for the 2020 City of Victoria’s Butler Book Prize.

Although today Funk attends a non-denominational church, where she sometimes preaches, she considers “Mennonite” central to be her identity. “My ancestry is Mennonite, and there is much that I value and appreciate from my heritage,” she says. “I value the sense of work ethic and steadfastness and faith; sense of service to community; devotion to living a quiet, godly life. Those are elements in my spiritual devotion I hold so dear.”

Reflecting on the relationship of Mennonites to the arts, she acknowledges that, while Mennonites have always loved music, there has been a notion that other arts are frivolous, with the possible exception of the written word.

“Story is at the core of the Mennonite faith,” she says. “I think the idea of words and language and story is actually held in much more devotion. I always joke that I was terrible at stitching [but] I stitch in words.”

## News brief

### Menno Singers announces Abner Martin Music Scholarship winner



**Joanna Loepp Thiessen** of Kitchener, Ont., is the recipient of the 2020 Abner Martin Music Scholarship worth \$4,000. A graduate of Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Loepp Thiessen is a fourth-year vocal performance major in the bachelor of music program at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. Her home congregation is the Gathering Church in Kitchener. She has shared her musical skills there, as well as at the House of Friendship, Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church and the Ontario Mennonite Music Camp. She was a voice student at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ont., from 2015 to 2017. She also served with Mennonite Voluntary Service from 2017 to 2019 in San Antonio, Texas, where she was a church music leader and involved in community music workshops while volunteering full-time at a shelter for people experiencing homelessness. At CMU, Loepp Thiessen is studying voice and church music, and serving on the community gatherings committee. She also volunteered to help proofread and analyze data for the *Voices Together* hymnal. The next scholarship-application deadline is Sept. 15, 2021. More information and an application form are available from Linda Janzen, the chair of the scholarship committee, at [lindajanzen@sympatico.ca](mailto:lindajanzen@sympatico.ca).

—MENNO SINGERS



# 'He asked if it was okay for him to die'

*With his family's support, former MB pastor uses medical assistance to end his life*

By John Longhurst  
For Anabaptist World

**B**efore his death in November 2019, John Regehr of Winnipeg said he wanted to start a discussion about death and dying.

Regehr, 93, a former Canadian Mennonite Brethren pastor and professor at Mennonite Brethren Bible College (a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University), did just that when he chose to die using medical assistance in dying (MAID).

"When we asked if he wanted us to share this, he said yes," said his daughter Jenny Cartman.

"I saw his decision as the professor giving his last teaching, or the pastor preaching his last sermon," added his son Mark.

"He was ready to go," said his son Rennie. "He had lived a full life. He knew it was time."

According to his children, Regehr's last few years had been difficult. His wife Mary died in 2014. At the age of 90 he needed life-saving heart surgery.

The surgery went well, but a few months later he fell and broke his hip. He recovered, continuing to live independently. But over the next few years there were more falls and more trips to emergency.

On Oct. 18, 2019, he was admitted to hospital with severe pain in his hip. This time it was clear he would never be able to go home again.

"He was exhausted," Rennie said. "He had no more projects and didn't want to stay alive for the only purpose of remaining alive. He didn't want to lie in bed for who knows how long, waiting for death to come."

Two weeks later, Regehr called his children together for a conversation about death.

"He asked us if it was okay for him to die," Rennie said. "He wanted our support and blessing."

Mark admitted he was taken aback at first. "I was caught off guard when he suggested it," he said. "But I quickly saw his point of view."

While finding it hard to hear his request, daughter Jenny was not surprised; her dad had spoken many times about being ready to die. "He had made his mind up," she said.

Regehr asked medical staff at Concordia Hospital, a publicly funded facility owned and operated by Winnipeg's Mennonite community, about ways to hasten his dying. They suggested he stop eating, an option that didn't appeal to him.

Then he learned he was eligible for MAID since he couldn't return to normal life, had an incurable disability, his life was unbearable and there was no hope of reversal.

"His face lit up," Rennie said, remembering his reaction upon hearing he qualified and could be certified for MAID by a doctor.

While the news put Regehr at ease, his children worried that his decision might cast a pall over their dad's life of service to the church. But when they saw how convinced he was, they offered their full support.

Since Concordia Hospital doesn't permit MAID on its premises, on Nov. 7 Regehr was taken by ambulance to another city hospital, where he was joined by his family and two pastor friends.

Before he died, Scripture was read, and he was asked: "John, can anything separate you from the love of Christ?"

He shook his head emphatically and, with a strong voice, answered: "No!"

Then, as Rennie played one of his dad's favourite hymns on the viola, a life-stopping drug was administered intravenously, and Regehr slipped away.

For Rennie, it was a powerful experience. "To see my dad surrounded by people



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE REGEHR FAMILY

**Rennie Regehr and his wife Jenny are pictured with Rennie's father, John.**

who loved him deeply, lovingly participating in a compassionate, painless and comfortable death was overwhelming," he said. "It was wrenching and beautiful all at the same time."

For those who might question Regehr's decision on theological grounds—that only God can decide when someone should die—Rennie said his dad had no doubts. "The inner work had been done long before," he said, noting that his dad had spent a lot of time thinking and praying about it. "He had complete trust in a loving and accepting God."

Plus, he said his dad "felt he had already played God earlier by deciding to have life-saving heart surgery. He felt death had already come calling for him then, but he had not been willing to go."

Regehr anticipated some might be critical of his decision based on pro-life grounds. According to the children, he told them that anyone who insisted he should have continued in a "torturous,

*(Continued on page 30)*



## ONLINE NOW!

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



### MC Canada calls for prayer

Mennonite Church Canada has called on the nationwide church to pray for Ethiopia and Eritrea, countries that are facing a threat of pandemic, famine and war.

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



### MCC responds to double hurricanes

After two hurricanes in two weeks flooded several countries in Central America twice, Mennonite Central Committee is providing emergency relief.

[canadianmennonite.org/hurricane-relief](http://canadianmennonite.org/hurricane-relief)



### Artists who ask questions

Read a review of the new book, *Making Believe: Questions About Mennonites and Art*, which explores Mennonite writers, musicians and visual artists.

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



### Grief and a snowman

A pastor/social worker reflects on experiencing and processing grief during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[canadianmennonite.org/blog/mib-grief](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/mib-grief)

*(Continued from page 29)*

useless struggle to survive” might not really be pro-life from a caring, compassionate point of view, “but more a slave to that ideology.”

Although the Canadian MB conference is opposed to euthanasia, at least two other members of that denomination have used MAID. Both were members of Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church in Edmonton, and both used it in 2018.

Reflecting on Regehr’s decision, Jason Dyck, director of church ministries for the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba, said, “I don’t know what it’s like to experience the last stage of life. I don’t know the pain, I don’t know the loss, I don’t know what questions I’ll ask. While we Mennonite Brethren aspire to believe that all life is subject to God’s sovereignty, John’s story reminds me that nothing in life or death is simple.

“I’m grateful to John and his family for the way they encountered and processed this end-of-life circumstance. I’m grateful that we serve a Saviour who welcomes us into his loving presence, in spite of all of my inadequacies and imperfections.” ❧

*Originally published in Anabaptist World. Reprinted with permission of the author.*

### Staff change

#### Pastoral transition in Saskatchewan



**Rodney Hennessey** began as lead pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Regina on Oct. 1. He holds a master of divinity degree from Edmon-

ton’s Taylor Seminary, which is affiliated with the North American Baptist Church. His education background is in graphic design and music composition, and he describes his former job as worship pastor at a non-denominational church in Edmonton as “playing electric guitar for Jesus.” Hennessey is originally from Prince Edward Island; he is new to the Mennonite church. He and his wife of 12 years have three children.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

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**CANADIAN MENNONITE**

## Calendar

### Nationwide

**Dec. 15:** The Mennonite Church Canada Palestine-Israel Network is hosting a Zoom meet-and-greet event with friends in Bethlehem at 11 a.m. EST. For more details, visit [mennonitechurch.ca/pin](http://mennonitechurch.ca/pin). To register for the event and receive the Zoom link, email [mcmfriendsofpalestine@gmail.com](mailto:mcmfriendsofpalestine@gmail.com). All MC Canada members are welcome.

### Alberta

#### Every Monday to Thursday:

Congregants from across Mennonite Church Alberta are invited to join a Zoom group for morning prayer on Mondays and Wednesdays at 7:30 a.m. MDT, and evening prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9 p.m. MDT, for about 15 to 20 minutes, using *Take Our Moments and Our Days*. Register online at [mcab.ca/events](http://mcab.ca/events).

### Saskatchewan

**Ongoing:** The Youth Farm Bible Camp food market is back! The camp will once again have groceries, fresh cinnamon buns, a hot meal of the week and many more options. Check out the products at [yfbcfodmarket.square.site](http://yfbcfodmarket.square.site). Order by Monday for pickup on Wednesday.

### International

**July 1-4, 2022:** Mennonite World Conference's Global Youth Summit, in Salatiga, Indonesia. Theme: "Life in the Spirit: Learn. Serve. Worship." To learn more, visit [mwc-cmm.org/gys](http://mwc-cmm.org/gys).

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



## Classifieds

### Employment Opportunities



## CAMPUS HOSTS

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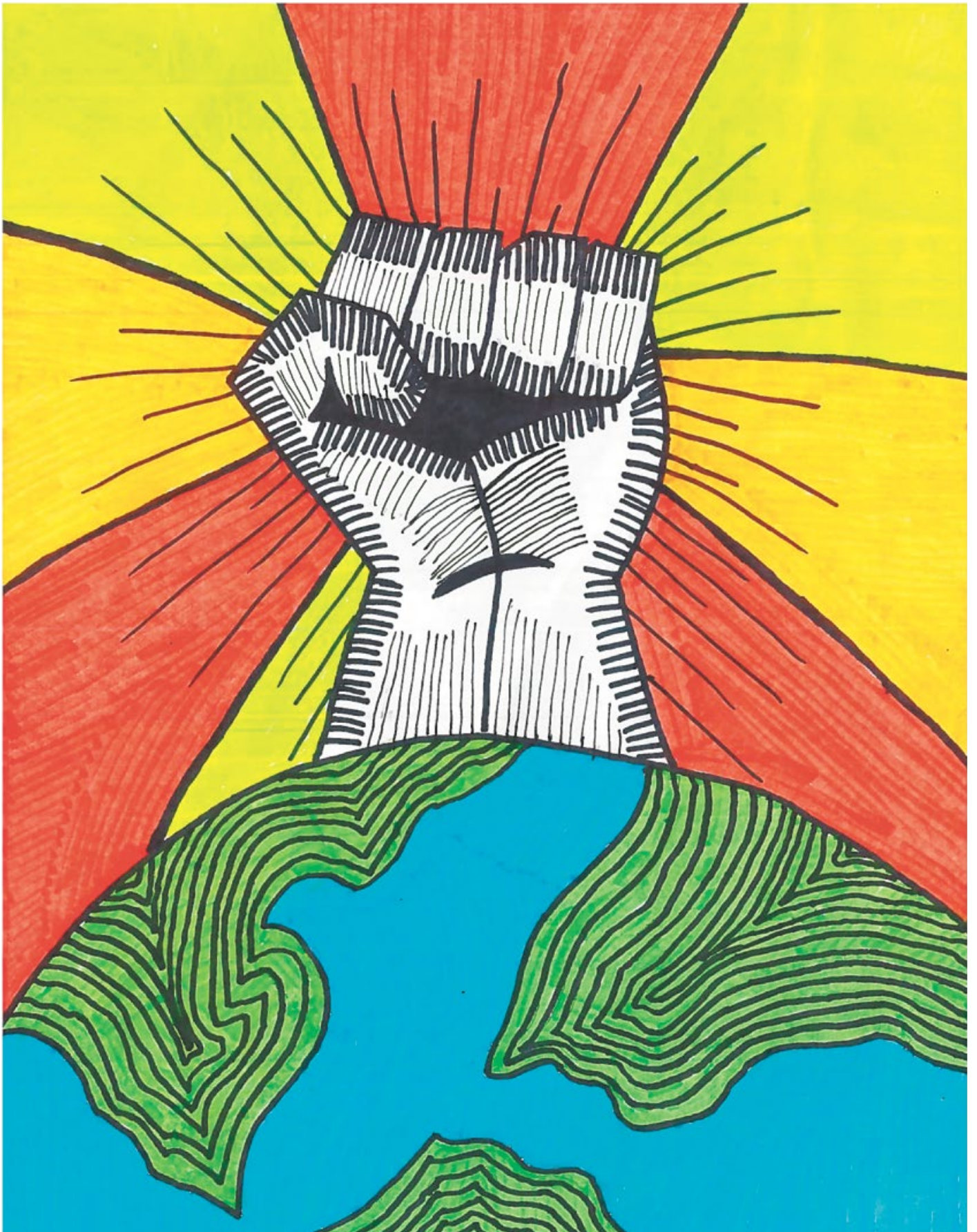
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*'It Matters,' by Jaiden Du Plessis. The Grade 9 student at Menno Simons Christian School, Calgary, says, 'The world has to work as one voice to show that things matter.' This artwork was submitted to illustrate the theme of hope, explored in the feature on page 4.*