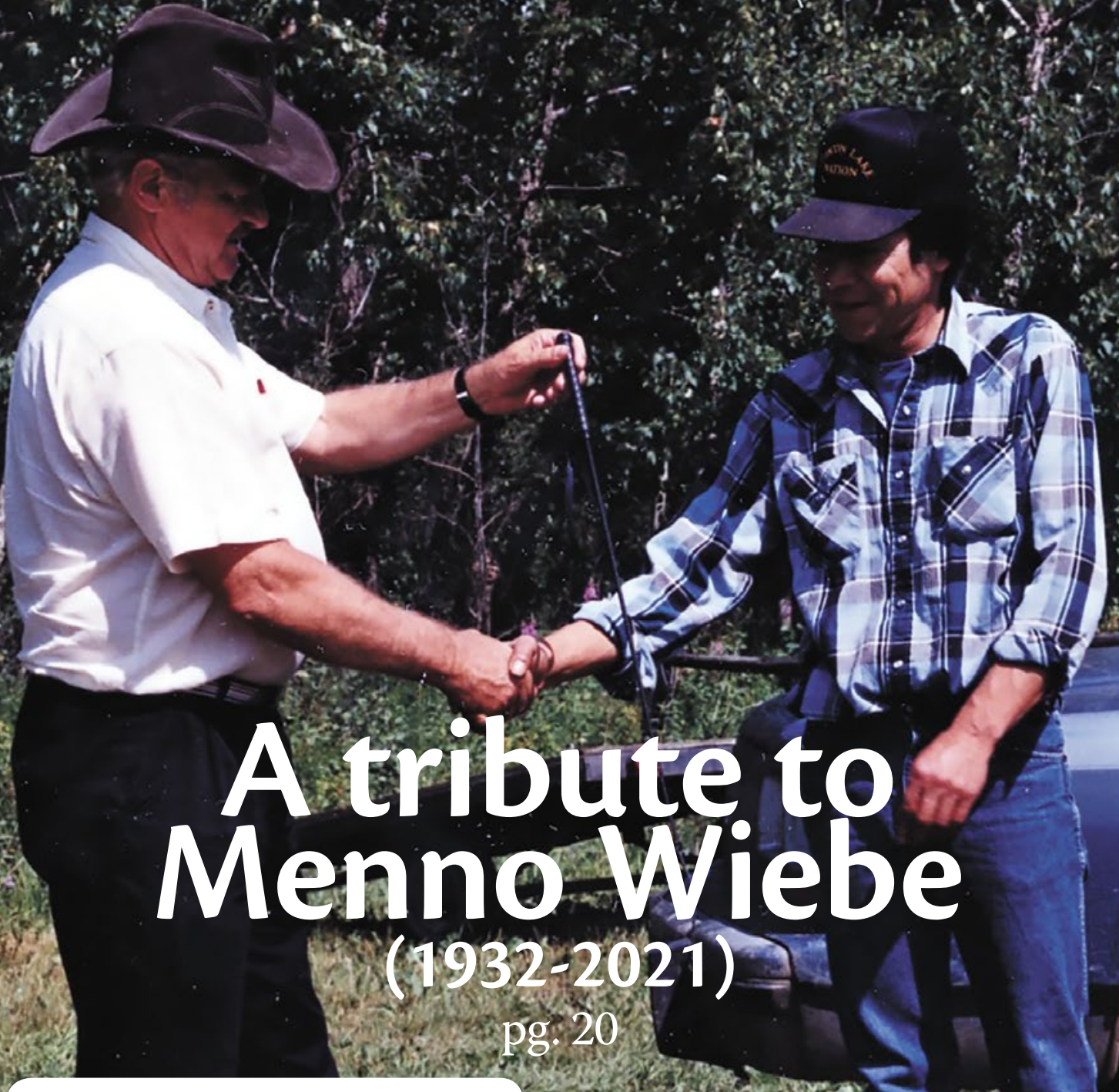


CANADIAN MENNONITE

February 1, 2021 Volume 25 Number 3



A tribute to Menno Wiebe

(1932-2021)

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EDITORIAL

Hope in a bleak midwinter

BY TOBI THIESSEN
Publisher



Canadians are struggling with the heaviness of this winter. The prospect of several more months with physical gathering restrictions is as depressing as the grey skies of southern Ontario in February. As a society, we have started to squabble, point fingers and shift blame.

The arrival of COVID-19 vaccines in December buoyed our spirits as much as Christmas lights did. We knew it would be months before we all got a turn to be inoculated but it is hard to be patient. Now there is nothing festive to warm our hearts and there seems to be more bad news than good. Where do we find hope in this bleak midwinter?

Hope and optimism are not the same thing, but of course we look on the bright side of a situation to help get through dark days. The pandemic forced us to try new ways of being a church and community. To enable online worship, we embraced new technologies and learned new skills. Our communities, sorely challenged to minister to the most isolated among us, have tried new ways of reaching out. We have tested both the potential and the limitations of online worship and virtual community. We will bring the benefit of this experience into church when in-person gatherings resume.

The arrival of the new hymnal *Voices Together* brightens this winter as well. The music collection is something exciting and new to explore that is rooted in our centuries-old tradition of

singing together. It gives us hope that we will meet together again one day. When we do, we will rejoice and sing praises to God for the chance to do what we once took for granted.

We generate some hope for ourselves by thinking about what church will be like when we gather in person again. This is hope as an act of imagination that makes a tough present situation more bearable. It is the same type of hope that we take by lighting candles at Advent and remembering God's promise that the Messiah will deliver us from oppression. It is a quiet, meditative kind of hope we seize when the challenges of the day are too great for any one person to resolve.

To hope is to envision an outcome in which life is better in some way. In some instances, the hope allows us to withstand the present situation despite our inability to change it. In other cases, we create hope when we act within our own sphere of influence to make life better for someone else.

We are, after all, the hands and feet of God on this journey towards liberation from oppression. Resolving the pandemic is something beyond our capacity, but we can still take action to improve life at a very local level.

In this issue, Donna Schulz writes about one such effort initiated by the Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon (page 18). Joanne De Jong writes about the pastor of Edmonton's Oromo Mennonite church teaching anger-management skills to Ethiopian youth (page 23). There are other

examples in every issue of this magazine.

It is a bleak midwinter but the days are getting longer. Some of our most at-risk citizens have already been vaccinated. We can find physically distant ways to help bring God's hope to others in this hurting world. Amazingly, these acts of goodwill towards others will kindle and strengthen hope within ourselves.

Print and digital issues will continue

In 2021, *Canadian Mennonite* will again publish 22 regular issues plus four digital-only ones. As a subscriber, you can have a print issue mailed and a digital copy emailed to up to two email addresses in the same household. To add digital delivery to your subscription, email Lisa Jacky at office@canadianmennonite.org.

Select articles from a digital-only issue are printed in the next print issue to ensure that print-only readers get a sampling.

Corrections for Jan. 4 issue

- **First Mennonite Church** in Kitchener, Ont., has 245 members. Incorrect information appeared in the feature "A rich and diverse version of God," pages 4 to 7.
- **The head shots** of Karen Schellenberg and Lisa Enns in the "Pastoral transitions in Manitoba" news brief, page 30, were transposed.

Canadian Mennonite regrets the errors. ❧



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Menno Wiebe, left, presents a riding crop to renowned Lubicon Cree chief Bernard Ominayak in Little Buffalo, Alta., in 1993. Wiebe's presentation was accompanied with the words, "Ride on, sir!" Story starts on page 20.

PHOTO: MICHAEL BRYSON / MENNONITE HERITAGE ARCHIVES

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FEATURE

Stones of remembrance

Feature and Photos by Danielle Raimbault

“And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, ‘In the future when your descendants ask their parents, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’” (Joshua 4:20-22).

The crossing of the Jordan River was a key event in Israel’s history. As the Israelites found themselves on the other side, Joshua commanded the Israelites to take 12 stones from the river and carry them to their camp. Joshua set up the stones as a symbol of God’s faithfulness to them as they crossed into the promised land.

The pile of stones was just as central to this story as the physical crossing of the river was. It reminded the people of that day—the week after, the month after, the year after—until those who had gathered the stones had their own children and those children had their own children.

The remembrance of these stones, a physical representation, stood out for the children to ask, “Why are these stones here?” The stones cried out with Israel’s story that their God was faithful.

Looking for stones

But here we are. Our congregations are aging. It seems as though the church in North America is aging. Folks from the younger generation aren’t involved in church anymore. The church population is getting kind of old.

Yet we are called to further Christ’s church. Our congregations need to work at being sustainable and being a place that will continue on with the younger generations. Our congregations can do that by being vital. If the church continues to be vital in people’s lives, it will continue to be sustainable.

I don’t know how to make the church sustainable. And I have questioned whether the church is vital. And, many times in my life, I’ve seen the church population age and younger people dwindle away. Sometimes I do love to trash-talk about the church. But here I am: a young, under-30 person who is actively a part of the church. And it’s not just because I get paid to be here.

So, why am I part of the church? Why haven’t I given

up on the church?

The Israelites were reminded of God’s vitality in their lives by creating a pile of stones. And so, I went searching for my own pile of “stones,” shown in the following photos. I don’t have 12, so four will have to do.

Dancing girl



This figurine reminds me of my grandma’s house. I remember my grandma, who was a single mother in the 1960s. The figurine reminds me of how she became a devoted follower of Jesus, beat alcoholism, spent all her time volunteering for her church and how she spoke about Jesus wherever she would go. It reminds me of my grandma, who knelt with me as I welcomed Jesus into my heart, as children in my context were taught to do. It reminds me of my grandma, who heard about my struggles in finding my identity as a pastor and said, “I wish you would have told me, I could have prayed for you.”

I have no doubt that my grandma was praying for me that whole time.

This figurine reminds me of my grandma, who, to me, embodies what the church should be. It reminds me of my grandma, who taught me that God is faithful.

Photo of Genesis



This is a photo of me in all my teenager awkwardness, with a Nicaraguan girl named Genesis. She was one of the first children to arrive at an orphanage where my dad and I worked. She and I became fast friends despite our language differences.

I promised Genesis that I would come back next year and visit her; I didn't. I've thought about her often. I have no idea where she is, but I want to call her and tell her about the impact she made on my life. It's very possible she doesn't even remember who I am.

This photo reminds me of all the people we interact with in our lives, on whom we make a lasting impression without even knowing it. It reminds me that the Holy Spirit works in powerful ways that are beyond our control. This photo makes me hope that God was as faithful to Genesis, wherever she is, as God has been faithful to me.

Baptismal certificate



This baptismal certificate reminds me of the church I went to while growing up in Manitoba. I don't have too many good memories of that place, but this is one that is very special to me.

I was 15 and asked to be baptized in the river at a provincial park near our house. I loved the outdoors. As I rose from the water, the church members, lined up along the shoreline, began singing "Amazing Grace."

It was a congregation that always welcomed me back home. This certificate reminds me that this church did, in some roundabout way that I didn't see then, nurture me into becoming a pastor. This certificate reminds me again and again of my baptism into Christ's church, however messy it looked in my life during that time. It reminds me that God is faithful.

Cross necklace

I received this necklace from someone whose house I was billeted at during a choir tour. I don't remember anything about him other than his generosity to give me a gift after barely even knowing me.

This necklace still has a special place in my heart. I often wear it at times when I need to feel God's presence with me, whether it's attending a visitation for a funeral I'm officiating for someone I've never met, or a workshop I'm doing for a room full of pastors who seem much wiser—and older, and "maler"—than me.

This necklace weighs on my neck and reminds me that God is there with me. It reminds me that the presence of God goes with me wherever I may be. It reminds me that God is faithful.

What are the stones of remembrance in your life? What are the rocks that point to God's faithfulness? Why have you stayed in the church for as long as you have? Why is your faith vital to you? I invite you to share these stories with your children, with your grandchildren. Ask them to share their stones of remembrance with you.

The Israelites did not become the people of God easily. They became God's people through the experience of redemption from Egypt, the experience of their time in the desert and the experience of crossing the Jordan River. Israel became the people of God through these, as they witnessed God's



souls.

I believe that you aren't able to show others that the church is vital unless you first think about how the church is vital to you.

I still don't know how to make the church sustainable. But I do know that I'm here because God has been faithful in my life. I know that it is better for me to be here listening to the ways that God has worked in people's lives. And I wonder: if we continue to tell others about how the church is vital to us, perhaps the sustainability part will work itself out. ☘



Danielle Raimbault is a co-pastor of Preston and Wanner Mennonite churches in Cambridge, Ont. She preached this sermon to both

faithfulness over and over again.

Joshua built the pile of stones to remind the Israelites why God was vital in their life. Like them, we can talk, share our "stones" and our stories about how God has been faithful to us.

These stories shape who I've become and they are a part of why I show up to church on a Sunday morning. I don't show up because there is flashy worship that catches my attention. I don't show up because there are a bunch of other young people here that are my age. I show up because these stones in my life have shown me that I need to be with the people of God, and I'm not going to do that by sleeping in every Sunday morning.

I show up because it is in the church where I have seen God active. I show up because it is in the church where I have seen the Holy Spirit moving. I show up because being with the people of God and hearing their stories tells me what the Israelites learned over and over again: God is faithful.

Sure, church is messy. We fight. We are impatient with one another. We are tired of committee meetings. We roll our eyes when certain people are talking and we zone out perhaps more often than we should.

But we also fall in love, cry with each

other, dedicate our babies, and give packages to our youth in the hope that they will know that we love them even though they are distant. We collect food for the hungry and we feed our own

congregations in a series based on a covenant the two churches formed to guide their relationships as they share pastors.

☘ For discussion

1. What are your "stones of remembrance"—the artifacts or stories that remind you of how God has been faithful in your life? Are they portrayed in your photo albums? What is the advantage of having your own "pile of stones" out on display where you can see them daily?
2. As you think of your church building, what are the objects or photos on display that remind people of God's past faithfulness to the congregation? How often is attention drawn to these items? Does a Mennonite museum do a good job of reminding us of God's faithfulness?
3. Danielle Raimbault wonders about the sustainability of the church in North America and admits she doesn't know how to make it sustainable. What questions do you have about the future of the church? How does reminding ourselves of God's faithfulness in the past help us deal with fear about the future?
4. Raimbault writes, "[I]t is in the church where I have seen God active." Where have you seen God active in the church? In what ways is the church vital for you? How can the church better remind itself of times when God was faithful?

—By Barb Draper

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/// Readers write

✉ Might Jesus have really said 'Our Mother'?

Re: "Gendered images of God," Nov. 23, 2020, page 23.

The committee that worked on the new hymnal, *Voices Together*, says that "the decisions made about the language used for God may be unsettling for some."

I am one of those. I'm sure we all believe that Jesus spoke the truth when he said, "*I am the way the truth and the life*," and taught us to pray, "*Our Father who art in heaven*."

How can we now say he could have been wrong and may have said, "Our Mother"?

In all the Bibles I have, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are always referred to in the male gender.

I also think it is wrong to change words in hymns that we all love and that were written for us hundreds of years ago. When we use someone else's words and claim that they are our own, that is called plagiarism. Doing the exact opposite has to be wrong, too.

I'm sure the committee is sincere and wants to be inclusive, but making these changes is not going to help.

CORNIE MARTENS, RABBIT LAKE, SASK.

as he would have us believe are those of some of the survivors who reached out to him: "They unfortunately experienced [Yoder Neufeld's] letter as shaming them for coming forward, and pressuring them to quickly forgive."

But after reading Yoder Neufeld's letter a number of times, I find no indication that he suggested, encouraged or even hinted at the survivors' need to forgive Rempel for what he has done. His comment on forgiveness was clearly directed at the church, to those who have done the harm [Rempel] coming to a "full acknowledgment and true repentance."

Survivors who have interpreted his letter differently are doing so from their internal emotional process, not from what is written by Yoder Neufeld. Furthermore, they are using their energy to enlist an ally rather than using their energy to reflect on their own pain, turmoil and trauma, which is where the healing must take place.

Shantz, in becoming that ally, has slipped into an either/or approach and has lost some of his freedom to be helpful. I would, however, completely support his position that "the day may come when we can talk of forgiveness," but for the survivors that must always be left in their hands—whether to forgive and, if so, when.

GEORGE ENNS, SASKATOON

✉ Dealing with sexual abuse should be a 'both/and' exercise for the church

Re: "Point: Compassion needed for both victims and perpetrator," and "Counterpoint: No quick forgiveness for perpetrator" letters, Nov. 23, 2020, page 7.

As a retired family therapist who has worked with both perpetrators and survivors, I know it's common for individuals, therapists and the church community to approach difficult problems within an either/or paradigm, which is limiting and insufficient. We need a paradigm of "both/and," one that I believe is more closely aligned with the teaching of Jesus.

From my perspective, Tom Yoder Neufeld eloquently outlined the painful dilemma of John D. Rempel's sexual misconduct, his devastating behaviour and the church's need to take a clear stand with "those who have been harmed" and "with those who have done the harm." I also agree with Yoder Neufeld that the church has done a much better job of dealing with those who have been hurt, abused and traumatized than it has in dealing with those who have offended, where we have too often slipped into an either/or approach.

Marcus Shantz's letter is one clear example of this,

✉ Mother and daughter can't keep from singing hymns

My 92-year-old mother, Ruth Marie Wideman Reesor, lives north of Toronto, where she is a member of Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville, Ont. I live in north Florida.

At the beginning of the first pandemic lockdown, I realized how important our phone calls were. I started bringing poetry books for our daily chats. The Zoom choirs on social media sparked an idea. On Mother's Day last year we started singing hymns together, she on her landline phone and me on the speaker of my cell phone.

We quickly realized how good it feels to sing with someone else, despite the lag or the bad reception. After four months of hopping around in three hymnbooks, we started in September to systematically sing our way through each book. What a treasure this heritage has been for us! It's amazing to realize how many hymns we know. Mom has lots of stories about specific songs, especially from the old *Church Hymnal* (1928).

It continues to be so gratifying to sing seven to eight hymns every evening. Last week our new *Voices Together* hymnals arrived, and we began our

journey. It looks like a great resource for many decades to come. We do have to watch the pronouns and new words, so it keeps us alert. I bought the CDs, so hopefully we can learn some new songs too: "My life flows on in endless song, above earth's lamentation. / Since Love is lord of heav'n and earth, how can I keep from singing?"

I am so grateful for the opportunity I had to learn to sing in choirs in Sunday school; at what is now Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ont.; at the former Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ont.; and in the Mennonite Mass Choir. It is such a rich tradition.

NORMA REESOR, TALLAHASSEE, FLA.

✉ **MAID article pulls rug out from under reader**

Re: "He asked if it was okay for him to die," Dec. 7, 2020, page 29.

I'm guessing that I would be classified as an average reader of *Canadian Mennonite*. I look at, or read, most articles and finish with the feeling that all is well in my Mennonite world, thanks to the fine and uplifting news and stories.

I felt the same with the Dec. 7 issue until "wham," you pulled the rug out from under me. John Longhurst's people story is disturbing, timely and beautiful! I was reminded of the St. Francis story, when he was asked what he would do if he knew that he would die the following day, and he replied, "I would finish hoeing my garden." It seems clear that some of us are blessed with knowing in advance when our "gardening" is done.

PETER A DUECK, VANCOUVER

The writer is a member of Peace Church on 52nd in Vancouver.

✉ **Pastor dismayed at 'smug' COVID-19 letter**

Re: "Send free copies of CM to Steinbach and Altona" letter, Jan. 4, page 10.

I am dismayed and disappointed by this smug letter to the editor about sending *Canadian Mennonite* magazines to southern Manitoba as it experienced a significant increase in COVID-19 cases.

I was dismayed and disappointed by *CM's* editorial staff for printing it, thus undermining the excellent, nuanced, thoughtful and compassionate journalism done by Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe ("Candles of care

for healthcare workers, Dec. 7, 2020, page 16). She worked hard to interview local residents and not resort to stereotypes and potshots, and her work should not be undone by printing a glib, self-righteous letter to the editor from somebody across the country.

And I was dismayed by the letter itself. Jesus told a story about a self-righteous Pharisee who thanked God he wasn't like that sinner over there, warned us about logs in our own eyes, and taught us that we're supposed to treat others how we'd like to be treated.

The letter naively generalizes diverse communities from afar, makes no reference to the herculean and sacrificial work done by our local congregations and health-care staff to help and heal our local communities during a pandemic that has left beloved members of our communities dead, and its sanctimony runs antithetical to much of what makes the Christian faith beautiful.

KYLE PENNER, STEINBACH, MAN.

The writer is associate pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach.

✉ **Mayor responds to erroneous COVID-19 claims**

Re: "Send free copies of CM to Steinbach and Altona" letter, Jan. 4, page 10.

As mayor of our southern Manitoba community of Altona, I regularly hear from residents drawing my attention to items involving our prairie town. Imagine my surprise, when a lifelong resident directed me to this letter and the comment that Altona was the site of anti-mask protests, and that our patients were in cars and ambulances outside of the hospital.

Please note that is most certainly not the case.

Like communities all across Canada, our COVID-19 battle has not been easy, and there are detractors, but overwhelmingly our residents have supported and practised the public-health directives.

Our health-care facility has not been overrun with COVID-19 patients and, unlike the City of Calgary, where the letter writer resides, the town of Altona has not been the site of any anti-mask demonstrations.

As a former Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service board member, thank you for your ongoing efforts to engage the *Canadian Mennonite* readership in meaningful and open conversations.

AL FRIESEN, ALTONA, MAN.

FROM OUR LEADERS

The crowd

Caleb Kowalko

Many of us are taking crowds very seriously these days and avoiding them as much as possible. For the sake of public health, I cannot encourage this enough. But there's a crowd we have been avoiding since long before the pandemic started.

That crowd is a constant reality throughout the gospel stories, following Jesus wherever he goes. Too often we overlook the presence of that crowd and, when we eventually do pay closer attention to it, we often look down on it with disdain.

Count me among those who, for a long time, thought Jesus was constantly trying to escape the crowd, or that the crowd was constantly getting in Jesus' way. We read about the crowd as if they are like a swarm of mosquitos, selfishly trying to get at Jesus and take something from him. Then every Easter we cast our scorn on the crowd as they were so easily manipulated by the chief priests, demanding blood as they shouted, "Crucify him!"

The crowd is a burden. The crowd is to blame. The crowd is a problem.

These are the assumptions that so often drive our ignorance, avoidance

and disdain for the crowd around Jesus. But if we take the crowd much more seriously, something else emerges.

What is the crowd? It is made up of the wounded, the desperate and the hungry. Within the crowd are the diseased and the outcast, sex workers and tax collectors, soldiers, widows and orphans, Jews and gentiles, and even the occasional rich young man.

They scream, "Jesus, help me!" and reach out to him in desperation as he passes by. Indeed, they are there to get something from Jesus. They want healing, hope, restoration and life. They want salvation. And they've come to the same place—the right place—around the body of Jesus.

The crowd is human. The crowd is dependent. The crowd is the point.

The crowd is not in Jesus' way. Jesus came precisely for the crowd. And if we take a step back, we can witness the unfolding of a sacred event whenever Jesus is in the midst of the crowd: the Creator and the creature are together again.

The gospels give the idea that there is a porous boundary between the crowd and the disciples. Both are dependent

human creatures, but being in the crowd is not the same as being a disciple. Disciples often emerge from the crowd but, more often, the disciples are invited by Jesus into his work of ministering from within the crowd.

This means that discipleship is not only about "me and Jesus." As a theology professor once said, "If you don't feel drawn towards the crowd, you might need to rethink your time at the divinity school."

Discipleship is precisely about not avoiding the crowd. As much as we stand alongside the crowd, with our own desperate longing as creatures longing for our Creator, discipleship also includes facing the crowd with Jesus, seeing the crowd through Jesus' eyes and joining in that dangerous but life-giving work of loving. ☩



Caleb Kowalko is the pastor of Calgary First Mennonite Church.

A moment from yesterday



Scarlet fever, cholera, diphtheria, smallpox, typhoid and whooping cough were some of communicable diseases that plagued communities in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Jacob Kroeker (1836-1914) came to Manitoba in 1876 and settled in the village of Schoenweise. From 1881 to 1885 *halskrankheit* (diphtheria) was a significant communicable illness that affected many. During this time, Jacob lost his wife Anna Zacharias (1836-Nov. 17, 1883), daughter Anna (1880-Nov. 29, 1883), and son Franz (1862-Dec. 28, 1883). As the weather grew colder in 1884, the communicable diseases made their presence felt again. Jacob had to say *aufwiedersehen* to David (1872-Dec. 5, 1884), and Abram (1877-Dec. 10, 1884). So many deaths due to these illnesses in just one family! During this time, diphtheria killed more than half of the children it infected. Thanks to vaccines, today many families are spared the anguish of children dying from these diseases. Pictured, Jacob poses with his second wife, Helena Fehr, in 1903.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Mennonite Heritage Archives



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THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

Connections

Arli Klassen

I believe it is important that we are called to belong to a faith community that is beyond our own congregation. My main question today is: “How do we belong, how do we connect with the people in our Anabaptist church (regional, nationwide, international) beyond our congregation?”

In previous decades, we learned about and developed relationships with people beyond our own congregation in very centralized ways. We attended regional, nationwide and international conferences in person, where we learned to know people from “out there.” We listened to reports and sermons by visiting church leaders and missionaries, who visited our local congregations and told us stories about the exciting things happening “out there.”

Today, we live in a world where our people, particularly younger adults, are more sceptical about what is perceived to be centralized and institutional communication. Long ago, we were a small-enough community that one might personally know the various church leaders, and trust them.

Then we grew much bigger and we developed proper systems and more professional staff, and there seems to be less trust in our systems and our leaders.

We seem to be returning to a time when people trust the people who they know personally, while centralized communication systems are trusted less than communication by the people you know personally. I wonder how this changes our church world.

Some examples

- **Our Mennonite Church Canada** Witness workers are supported through relational funding mechanisms, fostering strong direct relationships with some individuals and congregations. It is harder for less-connected Witness workers to be well funded.

- **Some congregations have** direct relationships with other congregations around the world, sharing music videos, prayer times and sermons with each other online. I loved seeing the Facebook post last week of a church choir in Zambia that shared its music with a congregation in Pennsylvania for Sunday morning worship.

- **I participated in** the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Online Prayer Hour last weekend. We had interpreters to help in five different languages, and we spent time in breakout rooms praying together for the personal and political, and for our churches.

- **There are three** Anabaptist conferences (synods) in Indonesia, none of which were started by a Mennonite church in North America, whereas the Dutch Mennonite church has strong relationships in Indonesia. How do we Canadian Mennonites develop relationships that are not tied to our historical mission activity?

Direct relationships are becoming an important way of connecting with Anabaptists beyond our congregation. When people use these relationships to connect their congregation with Anabaptist brothers and sisters somewhere else in Canada or around the world, all congregational life is enriched, and our experience of God deepens and grows.

When there are no informal direct communication channels, it is the communication tools of our larger church bodies that help us to learn about and support those among our Anabaptist family who are more marginalized or isolated.

Let us continue to trust those more centralized communication channels along with the vast network of direct relationships, which all work together so that we feel more connected into the whole of our Anabaptist body. ☿



Arli Klassen connects informally and formally in Kitchener, Ont., MC Eastern Canada, MC Canada, and MWC.

Et cetera

East Africa threatened by returning locusts

A return of desert locusts in East Africa is a major threat to food security in the region, church leaders warn, as the coronavirus pandemic continues to cause severe disruptions. In 2020, huge swarms of biblical proportions struck the region, destroying food crops and animal pastures, and pushed hunger and economic hardship to new levels. And as though that is not enough, the United Nations warned in January that a new invasion has started spreading in East Africa. “We are concerned about their impact on the people’s food security,” says Nicta Luubale, a Ugandan who is the general secretary of the Organization of African Instituted Churches. “We are also concerned about the psychological impact they have on the farmer. This time, he is handling drought and last year there was too much rain. We are also talking COVID-19 to the farmer. It’s a pileup of many things.”

Source: World Council of Churches / Photo by Marcelo Schneider



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Losing freedom?

Troy Watson

I'm writing this on Jan. 18 and I'm wondering how tone deaf my article will seem by the time you read it. I have no idea what the world will be like in a few days, let alone a few weeks. Who knows what catastrophic event or pivotal moment in history will have occurred between now and early February?

Obviously, the world has always been unpredictable. That's not new. What's new is my deeper awareness of the unpredictable nature of it. I think we all feel this on some level. Anything could

The other day, I felt ungrateful because I felt my freedom was being taken away. But the truth was actually the opposite. I was no longer free because I was no longer grateful.

happen. The stock market could crash. Civil unrest could escalate into violence. A loved one could die. Our freedom could be taken away. Aliens could attack. A zombie apocalypse.

The Maple Leafs could win the Stanley Cup. Okay, I'm getting carried away, but there isn't much at this point that would really surprise me.

If astronomers informed us that a comet the size of Luxembourg was on a collision course with Earth, or geophysicists warned us that every volcano on the planet would inexplicably erupt next week, I think my response would be, "Yup, that makes sense."

I've pondered this new attitude of mine and I don't think I'm becoming pessimistic or indifferent. I think I'm just acknowledging the indifference of the universe towards my survival and well-being. I'm not trying to be dark or discouraging here. I'm trying to live in truth. And I think this is an important

truth to accept.

As I've written in previous articles, I believe truth is often paradoxical. Perhaps for too long I've been basking in the truth that I am loved, valued and deserve a good life, while ignoring the other side of the paradox, namely, the universe doesn't care if I live or die.

I'm no historian, but it seems to me that most people in most cultures throughout history have been more aware of this unpredictable and indifferent aspect of reality than most Canadians living today. Many of us have

the assumption that we are entitled to at least an opportunity to get whatever we want in life. I think this attitude would be perceived as bizarre, arrogant and delusional by the majority of human beings who have ever lived.

For example, most of the people we read about in the Bible seemed to live with the understanding that everything—their money, crops and livestock (food), possessions, children, freedom (if they hadn't lost it already)—could be taken from them at any moment. They would grieve, but I don't think they would be surprised.

As a theologian whose name I cannot remember pointedly asked, "Have you ever noticed that, when tragedy strikes, people in the Bible don't ask, 'Why, Lord?' They know why. Tragedy and loss are part of life. Their response to suffering is not, 'Why?' but, 'How long, O Lord? How long must we suffer?'"

I think there is an important truth

being revealed to me through this pandemic. I'm becoming convinced that, when I accept the unpredictable and indifferent nature of the universe, it does not bring fear, it brings freedom. It helps me live more grounded in the awareness that not one thing, not one person or relationship, not one breath, can be taken for granted.

It might be clichéd but it's also a profound truth that each moment is a gift. And as soon as I start treating anything, including the very moment I'm experiencing, as anything other than a gift, I'm no longer living in truth.

The other day, I felt ungrateful because I felt my freedom was being taken away. But the truth was actually the opposite. I was no longer free because I was no longer grateful.

I don't mean to undermine legitimate oppression. I'm a freedom fighter at heart when it comes to the rights of others. But I think I'm being taught it's only when I'm living in truth that I am truly free. A virus or government cannot take away my real freedom; it's only when I'm in disharmony with truth that I lose my freedom.

So I'm learning to pay attention to my gratitude level as a measure of my attunement with truth. A lack of gratitude in my life reveals that I'm no longer receiving each moment, each breath, as a gift. Which means I'm no longer living in truth. Which means I'm no longer living in the freedom Christ offers us. ☿



Troy Watson is a pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont.

BOOK REVIEW

Wise stories can build peace

I Am Not Your Enemy: Stories to Transform a Divided World.
Michael T. McRay. Herald Press, 2020, 256 pages.

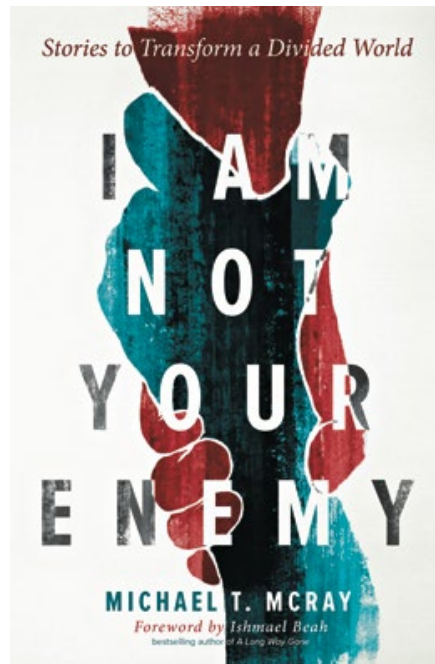
Reviewed by Barb Draper
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

In the aftermath of last year's Black Lives Matter protests, and the violence that boiled over in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6 of this year, it feels as though tensions are rising in our society. As fear escalates, we wonder how to find a way for everyone to get along without violence. In his book *I Am Not Your Enemy*, Michael McRay explores this very question by reporting on his research into how to foster peace in divided societies.

McRay believes that we can be transformed by storytelling if we are wise enough to listen to the right kind of stories. We need to learn to listen to complex stories that are profound and that express truth. If we only listen to the simple stories of those who are like us, they will only hurt us in the end. "Single stories lure us toward the kind of thinking that leads to funerals," he writes, but, "Wise stories are ones that help us face the truth around us and name it for what it is."

Raised in Tennessee, McRay served for a few months with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Israel-Palestine in 2012. Interested in knowing more about peacemaking, he began a research project under the auspices of Texas Christian University. He tells the story of his travels to Israel-Palestine, Ireland and South Africa, listening to stories from people who are working for peace in places that have been devastated by violence.

He is a sensitive and careful listener, and all those he interviewed consented to having him share their stories. Experiences from both sides of each conflict are included. He doesn't draw lessons from the stories but reflects on



what he himself has learned, frequently comparing the situations in the Middle East, Ireland and South Africa with the attitudes and racism found in North America.

The first thing he learned is that "reconciliation" is a loaded term. He writes, "People in power prefer a victim calling for forgiveness and reconciliation to one calling for vindication," because it suggests that the status quo can continue. He learned from his research that peace is not possible until justice is addressed. If peacebuilding doesn't concretely improve the lives of those who have been oppressed, then it is not building peace.

Empathy and compassion are very important for reducing violence, says McRay, but on their own they are not enough. Dialogue and listening are first

steps, but there must also be remorse and changed actions if solid bridges between groups are to be built. He comes to the conclusion that "forgiveness is more complicated than we'd like it to be."

He also reflects on the role that fear plays in ongoing conflict. "We humans tend to do our worst when we are afraid," he writes, describing the vicious cycle that fear, hatred and violence can spiral into. Acting out of fear is the worst thing to do. High walls are sometimes built in response to fear, but McRay believes they become self-fulfilling prophecies; all they do is perpetuate fear and conflict.

We humans have an amazing capacity to not understand perspectives we do not agree with, writes McRay, commenting that "sometimes it's easier to believe a lie than to chance being unravelled by a truth." He encourages those who want to seek peace to release their own ignorance and fear by exploring their own personal stories.

McRay writes with humility and draws the reader into his personal story. Although the book is easy to read, it deals with very weighty subject matter. He suggests that living in peace is possible, but challenging.

Anyone who wants to ponder what it means to build peace will want to read this book. ☘

This book was chosen as the Winter 2021 Common Read book for Mennonite Church Canada. To borrow or buy a copy, download discussion questions, or view an interview with the author, go to <http://bit.ly/2Y2Cy9O>



Committed to seeking a deeper understanding

MCC begins research into historical connections with National Socialism

Mennonite Central Committee

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has initiated research into how national socialism (Nazism) shaped the contexts in Europe and Paraguay where MCC operated in the 1930s and '40s, and how, at the time, MCC engaged with the German National Socialist government and worked to resettle Mennonite refugees from the Soviet Union.

At MCC's invitation, 11 academic historians from Canada, the United States, Germany, France and the Netherlands are researching MCC's work in Europe and Paraguay before, during and after the Second World War. They will build on previous research and bring their individual scholarly specializations to bear in examining actions MCC and its staff undertook during this period and how they wrote about those actions.

"MCC is committed to developing a deeper understanding of this part of our history, and to reckoning with it once the research is complete," says Ann Graber Hershberger, executive director of MCC U.S.

"National socialism" describes the ideology of Germany's ruling Nazi Party at the time, marked by virulent anti-Semitism that led to the Holocaust of six million Jews in Europe. "MCC rejects and repudiates anti-Semitism," says Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of MCC Canada. "Like the injustices visited upon other people groups, anti-Jewish actions and attitudes need to be named, confronted and ceased. We are eager to see what we can learn from the researchers' work."

Recent scholarly articles have spurred MCC's desire to learn more about this history and to grapple with the significance of it. The research project is focused only on the activities of MCC, acknowledging that MCC's history is entwined with, and not easily separated from, the



MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE PHOTO
(ALBER PHOTO COLLECTION)

High-profile Nazi officials toured the Mennonite colonies in occupied Ukraine. During his 1942 visit to Molotschna, Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS and an architect of the Holocaust, exchanged greetings with Mennonite surgeon Johann Klassen.

history of Mennonites in Paraguay, Europe and the Soviet Union during this period.

The research will be presented at the Sept. 30-Oct. 2 "MCC at 100" conference at the University of Winnipeg (held in collaboration with Canadian Mennonite University and MCC), and will be published, including in the fall 2021 edition of MCC's *Intersections* journal.

Alain Epp Weaver, *Intersections* co-editor and MCC director of strategic planning says, "Countless displaced Mennonites directly helped by MCC after the Second World War were kept from certain death or deprivation if they would have been returned to the Soviet Union, from which many had fled a few years earlier.

"This real account nonetheless is not the complete picture. We are seeking to further round out our understanding and determine potential next steps to address this complex history." ❧

News brief

Voices Together shipping costs explained

HARRISONBURG, VA.—Several congregations have expressed concern over the shipping charges for *Voices Together* products. MennoMedia takes these concerns very seriously and wants congregations to know that great care was taken to keep distribution and shipping costs as low as possible. *Voices Together* books were printed in the United States, and getting them to various locations, including across the border into Canada, posed some logistical challenges. After much research and consultation, it was determined to be the cheapest and most efficient method to have the books delivered via freight truck. MennoMedia obtained three separate bids for shipping and distribution and chose the lowest-cost provider. "Delivering these heavy books via freight truck whenever possible is far less expensive than sending via regular mail," says Amy Gingerich, MennoMedia publisher. "Shipping *Voices Together* is significantly more challenging and expensive than a congregation's usual box of Sunday school curricula and periodicals." Due to the massive shipping volume during the COVID-19 pandemic, all the major freight companies announced increased rates for their peak periods in November and December. The *Voices Together* books began shipping in November, so the slightly higher fees were applied. "Please know that MennoMedia is not making a dime on the shipping. We are simply passing along the costs to our customers," she says.

—MENNOMEDIA

VOICES
Together

You are invited to join the table

Witness Support Networks allow congregations to extend their reach and learn from brothers and sisters around the world

Mennonite Church Canada

Mennonite Church Canada's International Witness program invites congregations across its nationwide community of faith to join networks of support for its International Witness ministries.

"Being part of the network for the Philippines reminds us that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves," says Marlene Friesen of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C. "We see the work that is being done in the name of God's kingdom."

International Witness works with 18 ministry partners in 13 countries around the globe and has eight Witness workers in four countries.

Witness Support Networks are a new way for Canadian congregations to support and participate in this work.

"In these networks congregations can connect more deeply to at least one of those ministries," says Jeanette Hanson, director of International Witness, of the five networks currently in operation.

Four of the networks support ministry in countries where there are Witness workers: China, the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand. The fifth network supports ministry in Burkina Faso. The goal of the networks is mutual sharing, learning and giving through relationships.

Each network contains four partners:

- **Congregations that wish to support the same ministry**
- **Regional churches**
- **MC Canada**
- **Witness workers**

Congregations individually determine how to contribute to their network. Distributing newsletters, organizing fundraisers, connecting with international partners (online or through visits or learning tours)

and sharing prayer requests are examples of support congregations can give.

"As part of the Thailand network, it has been a real blessing to be part of Zoom meetings with the Poovongs and hear firsthand what they are doing," says Sharon Schultz, pastor of Eyebrow (Sask.) Mennonite Church.

Hanson says another benefit of the networks is that congregations across Canada will connect with each other through their support of international ministries. "The opportunities for learning and sharing are endless," she says.



Congregations interested in joining a Witness Support Network can contact their regional church representative:

- **MC British Columbia:** Kevin Barkowsky (info@mcbc.ca)
- **MC Alberta:** Tim Wiebe-Neufeld (tim@mennonitechurch.ab.ca)
- **MC Eastern Canada:** Norm Dyck (ndyck@mcec.ca)
- **MC Manitoba:** Rick Neufeld (rneufeld@mennochurch.mb.ca)
- **MC Saskatchewan:** Josh Wallace (churchengagement@mcsask.ca) ❧

Visit mennonitechurch.ca/witness-support-networks for information and resources.



News brief

MCC centralizing relief warehouse in New Hamburg



PHOTO COURTESY OF MCC

Skids of relief kits are packed into a shipping container at MCC's material resources warehouse in New Hamburg, Ont.

By April 1, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada will centralize packing and distributing material resources in a warehouse in New Hamburg, Ont. As a result, its warehouse in Plum Coulee, Man., will close at the end of June, affecting one employee. According to a media release, the move is meant "to help facilitate the more rapid distribution of relief supplies," such as comforters, relief kits and canned meat. New Hamburg is closer to the port of Montreal, through which most containers of relief aid are shipped, bound for "families facing disaster or crisis due to conflict, natural disasters and climate change," says John Head, executive director of MCC Ontario. The warehouse will operate out of the former Ten Thousand Villages Canada distribution centre. The building also provides space for processing donations for the New Hamburg Thrift Centre next door, and houses the MCC rePurpose Centre. One full-time employee will likely be hired at the New Hamburg site. Jon Lebold, MCC Ontario's material resources coordinator, describes the kits and comforters assembled and shipped from this warehouse as "a tangible way to share love and compassion and remind people around the world that their needs are not forgotten."

—BY JANET BAUMAN

Hurricanes wreak havoc in Central America

By Kristen Swartley
Mennonite World Conference

“**W**hat resources on creation care would be most useful?” The recently formed Creation Care Task Force of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) asked this in a survey of Anabaptists around the world. Many respondents wanted to learn more about how climate change affects people around the world.

In early November, Hurricane Eta tore through Central America, followed by Hurricane Iota several weeks later. These storms, categories 4 and 5 respectively, caused enormous destruction, including the deaths of hundreds of people, billions of dollars in damage, and the loss of agricultural and business resources.

Unfortunately for MWC churches in Central America, this area of the world is likely to experience the worst aspects of climate change and also has fewer financial resources to deal with these changes.

In the survey, Karen Flores Vindel, a member of Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Central de La Ceiba in Honduras, wrote about her climate-threatened home city: “The church building is flooded with every heavy rain.”

Other impacts of the changing environment include power outages, overflowing rivers, landslides, flooding, destroyed infrastructure, and the rising sea level that eats into the coast. These, in turn, cause economic crises, disrupt trade and the distribution of products, increase the cost of living and migration pressure, and lead to social violence.

Migration and recovery

Migration is one of the direct results of climate change’s greater effects on those who are poor and marginalized. After the recent hurricanes, many people are choosing to leave their homes, to meet their basic needs.

In Honduras, Mennonite church committees are organizing recovery work from

November’s storms. In December, Vindel reported that José Fernández, national president of Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña and local pastor of Vida en Abundancia and Central de San Pedro Sula, is cleaning up and helping people in the heavily affected area. Several church buildings serve as temporary housing for people who have lost homes and resources.

Vindel wrote that she feels “frustrated, discouraged, powerless because of all the destruction that happened, and all the death, pain and suffering it caused. I have cried many times during my prayers.” Yet she is encouraged by people who are working to effect change for future generations.

Human factors

According to James P. Kossin, a climate scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, “It’s very likely that human-caused climate change contributed to that anomalously warm ocean,” and, along with other scientists, he says this is “absolutely responsible for the hyperactive season.”

Because of warmer ocean temperatures, storms are developing higher wind speeds, more rain and wider ranges of occurrence. Additionally, storms are becoming slower and more volatile. All these factors contribute to an increase in wind and flood damage.

Prayer for change

Prayer is an important way to act for change and find “the strength to confront this and the means to survive,” says Karen Martinez, a student at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., and a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., who is worried about her family who live on the coast of Honduras. She is a part of the immigrant communities of Garifuna people.

“Many people live under the poverty line and have lost the little they have,” she says.

Along with other Garifuna immigrants in the United States, she sends support back to her family, especially in times of need. Mennonite Central Committee has also responded to the crisis by sending emergency relief in food and supplies, and it will continue to do ongoing recovery work.

Task force response

As MWC task force collects final results from the Creation Care Survey, it will offer more resources for the longer-term work of addressing climate change in the world. ☸



PHOTO BY TED SMOKER

High water damage from hurricanes Eta and Iota. Bezaleel, the Kekchi Mennonite Church's middle and high school in San Juan Chamelco, Guatemala.

The importance of a 'generous space' in Manitoba

LGBTQ+ Mennonites find supportive community

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

Thousands of LGBTQ+ Christians have found community at Generous Space Ministries. Manitoba Mennonites are no exception. In fact, Pastor Jamie Arpin-Ricci is Generous Space's director of community for central Canada.

Arpin-Ricci, 43, is a pastoral leader at Little Flowers Community, a Winnipeg faith community of Mennonite Church Manitoba. He started working for Generous Space two years ago. "As someone who identifies as bisexual myself, I have experienced a significant amount of religious-based harm," he says, adding that it is a privilege to be part of "an organization that's seeking to undo that harm and help Christian churches better understand how to relate with LGBTQ+ folks and celebrate them as part of the Body of Christ."

The ecumenical organization produces resources, hosts retreats and operates dozens of online communities for LGBTQ+ people. The majority are Christians, but some identify as atheists, agnostics or otherwise, many having had painful experiences in the church. Generous Space groups for LGBTQ+ people and their close allies currently meet in 21 locations from coast to coast.

Arpin-Ricci publicly came out as bisexual in 2016 after witnessing Christians' harmful responses to the mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Florida, some citing it as "God's judgment." He and his wife Kim realized how important it was to be public about their fully supportive position on LGBTQ+ people in the church. "We just felt there needed to be another Christian witness," he says.

"Overnight, it became a ministry," he says, as his inbox flooded with hundreds of

emails from queer Christians in the closet. But he was also ostracized from Youth With A Mission, where he had served for 25 years, and eventually he and Kim had to leave the organization.

Experiences like this, and many others that queer Christians encounter daily, emphasize the importance of organizations like Generous Space. "For many people, their connections within Generous Space are their only family, so it's literally life-saving," he says.

For Tim Wenger, the confidential social media groups were a safe resource he could easily connect with when he was first realizing his queer identity and was still deep in the closet.

The 29-year-old came out as bisexual

publicly in August 2020 but had started attending Manitoba's Generous Space group the previous October. "Knowing that I'm not alone, and there are other people that experience these same things, and being able to talk about that in a safe space, was so important to me," he says.

The group gathers twice a month in Winnipeg homes to pray and share with each other. Guided by a group facilitator, participants discuss different topics and books, or study the Bible. The rest of the evening is spent hanging out and eating food together. During COVID-19, the group has been connecting once a month over Zoom.

Arpin-Ricci says meeting attendance ranges from six to 20 people, although many Manitobans can't drive to Winnipeg for meetings, so the number of people connecting with the online community



**Jamie
Arpin-
Ricci**



**Tim
Wenger**



PHOTO COURTESY OF GENEROUS SPACE MINISTRIES

Generous Space participants gather at one of the organization's annual retreats.

is higher. “Every year we’re seeing the number of people that we’re reaching across the country increase,” he says.

Even so, many Mennonite Manitobans likely still do not know about Generous Space. Mennonite Church Manitoba’s official stance remains that marriage is “a covenant between one man and one woman for life,” as stated in the “Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective,” with an understanding that individual congregations may disagree and take a different position.

A Mennonite woman from Manitoba, who asked to remain anonymous, says she has found support among smaller circles and individual members within the church, but hasn’t felt like she can be completely open. She says, “As a closeted queer person not feeling the freedom within the Mennonite church, but as a long-time member, and wanting to remain within, I sought for faith-led, supportive, discerning community.”

She found Generous Space and has been connected for two-and-a-half years. The leadership, which includes pastors and theologians, whom she considers to be “people of integrity,” have helped in her spiritual growth. “For me, they have been a space that was not provided by my faith community.”

Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, where Wenger attends, runs a group specifically for LGBTQ+ people and allies from within and outside of the church. But few other congregations in Manitoba, if any, currently run similar groups.

Wenger says people should know Generous Space exists, especially if congregations are small, or not affirming, and don’t have as many resources. “Being able to say, ‘Here is a place where you will feel welcome,’ can be pastoral care even if you’re not able to give pastoral care within your specific context.”

“We have seen the cost of when we don’t celebrate people for who God created them to be [and] we’ve also seen the beauty of when that is celebrated,” says Arpin-Ricci. “It’s a powerful community to be a part of.”

To learn more, visit generousspace.ca/.

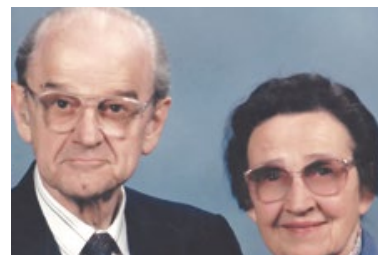


News brief

AMBS scholarship marks 30 years with campaign to support future pastors

ELKHART, IND.—An endowed scholarship at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) that has helped students pursue pastoral leadership education for 30 years has sparked a campaign to celebrate the aid given and raise funds for continued student support. Since its inception in 1990, the Paul M. and Bertha M. Miller Pastoral Leadership Scholarship has benefited 38 graduate students at AMBS with \$120,419 in tuition aid (all figures in American dollars). The scholarship, which now covers 80 percent of tuition, is designated for students who previously did work in conference-based theological education; have been commissioned by their congregations and plan to serve as a pastor; or are pastors on sabbatical leave from their congregations. As part of a 30th-anniversary campaign, AMBS’s Advancement Team and the donors’ four children are seeking to add \$30,000 to the fund—\$1,000 for every year in which it has aided students. “Supporting the seminary was a very high priority for [our parents],” said Jim Miller of Sarasota, Fla., one of the couple’s children. “Dad and Mom were committed to the goal of training, supporting and encouraging pastors within the church.” To donate online, visit ams.edu/give and note “Paul and Bertha Miller Scholarship” in the “Add a note” field when entering payment information.

—AMBS



Paul and Bertha Miller



News brief

MCC reflects while looking forward

The year of the pandemic impacted some of the world’s most vulnerable communities while also creating many concerns close to home. Yet despite COVID-19, individual donations to MCC Canada in 2020 were higher than in 2019, says Laura Kalmar, the organization’s associate director of communications and donor relations, adding, “It’s a reminder of how incredibly generous and faithful MCC donors are!” The project theme areas that received the largest number of donations last year were food, education and “Share your Table,” a monthly giving program that provides emergency food for families. Kalmar highlighted that MCC’s work with displaced people in Syria is in need of support in 2021, as media attention turns away from the country but fighting continues and millions of Syrians are displaced from their homes. “Our projects in Syria are well-established with strong local partners and often serve communities that have little other support,” she says. “Following the onset of the pandemic, we began a project that supports some 9,000 households... with hygiene support and COVID-19 prevention information.” MCC also provides food, water, comforters, vocational training, trauma healing and more. South Sudan and Zimbabwe are also currently places of high need.

— BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



MCC PHOTO BY
AMANDA TALSTRA

Phaidah Mwaanga enjoys her maize porridge lunch at Mboole Primary School near Batoka, Zambia, in early March 2020 before COVID-19 social distancing guidelines and before Zambian schools were closed later that month.

Appeal for funds garners no small potatoes

Saskatoon church raises money to support Friendship Inn

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

When the missions and service ministry team at Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon was trying to identify a giving project the congregation could rally behind, it thought of the Friendship Inn.

Saskatoon's Friendship Inn provides hot meals twice daily to the city's most vulnerable people. The non-profit organization relies heavily on volunteer labour to prepare and serve the meals. But the COVID-19 pandemic had reduced their volunteer work force by about 75 percent.

When Wilf Funk contacted the Friendship Inn to ask how Mount Royal could help, staff suggested the Inn could really use an automatic potato peeler, because, with fewer volunteers, it had to rely on paid staff to peel potatoes.

Wilf understood. He and his wife Cheryl had been part of a group of eight regular volunteers at the Inn who volunteered every Sunday for a period of time. "We peeled a lot of potatoes," he says.

But a commercial potato peeler was not small potatoes in terms of cost. The price tag was around \$7,500.

The ministry team had heard that Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) was providing grants to organizations negatively impacted by COVID-19, so it started its fundraising efforts by applying for a grant.

Claire Ewert Fisher, who is the church's co-pastor, says the grant deadline had already passed by the time Mount Royal contacted MDS, but when she explained what the church wanted to raise funds for, she was told to write a proposal and to ask for twice what she hoped to receive. She did, and Mount Royal got a \$2,000 grant.

The church dubbed its fundraising campaign Project Potato Peeler. The Funks

canvassed businesses and Ewert Fisher approached other Mennonite churches in Saskatoon and area. Donations started coming in and the momentum grew.

"The response was absolutely great," says Wilf. "It seemed like everybody we spoke with was generous." In addition to smaller donations from church members, the ministry team also received sizeable



PHOTO BY CLAIRE EWERT FISHER

Wilf Funk, left, stands with Bob Wyma in the Friendship Inn kitchen, where 500 meals are prepared each day for Saskatoon's vulnerable population.

gifts from a number of corporate donors.

"We had no idea it was going to snowball into this rallying point," says Laura Herman, who is the Friendship Inn's development and engagement manager. She notes that what began as an \$8,000 fundraising goal snowballed into a much larger gift of about \$40,000.

"We're not just getting one piece of equipment," says operations manager Bob Wyma. All together, the funds raised will enable the Inn to purchase the potato peeler, a commercial salad spinner, food processor and coffee machine. "When we

told the staff, it was like Christmas down there," he adds.

The new equipment will make meal preparation easier for staff and volunteers alike. And Herman says it will free volunteers to do other tasks, including the extra cleaning and sanitizing required by COVID-19 regulations.

Herman says that having the potato peeler will also free volunteers "to have a conversation, even a brief one, with guests as they're being served, [and not have to] feel pressure to get back to the kitchen to peel potatoes."

Friendship Inn serves about 500 meals every day, says Wyma. While the pandemic has forced it to reduce the capacity of its dining room, it also offers a take-away service. Mealtimes are limited to 15 minutes so the Inn can ensure everyone in the lineup gets fed, he says.

"We wouldn't be able to do the work we do without the support of churches," says Herman. "There was no dream before Wilf called. They really opened up that ability to dream."

Ewert Fisher attributes the success of Mount Royal's fundraising project to the pandemic and the movement of the Holy Spirit. "People realize we're all vulnerable," she says. "It's time for us to check our privilege and do something about it." She adds, "We have money to share, and we are responsible for many other people, too. It was totally of the Spirit." ❧

'Help me to see how you see it'

Regional church event explores language and practice for becoming intercultural

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

"I want to learn from you." These words express the attitude in an intercultural church.

Keynote speaker Safwat Marzouk encouraged this posture of openness at a recent online Pastors, Chaplains and Congregational Leaders event sponsored by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

The Jan. 16 event featuring Marzouk, associate professor at Anabaptist Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and author of *Intercultural Church: A Biblical Vision for an Age of Migration*, brought together some 120 participants from across the regional church.

Fanosie Legesse, intercultural mission minister, facilitated the event, which included worship, two teaching sessions and time for questions. French translation was provided.

Anneli Loepp Thiessen, who served on the *Voices Together* committee, and Matthew Boutda, a musician from Toronto, led worship using resources in a variety of languages and styles from the new *Voices Together* hymnal.

In his first teaching session, Marzouk, who was born in Egypt and moved to the United States 15 year ago, explored what it means to read the Bible through an intercultural lens.

He said, "The church is meant to be intercultural." It is "an embodied witness . . . [to] God's vision of shalom to a broken and polarized world." Segregation goes "against the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ." An intercultural lens is "helping us see a reality we have forgotten or ignored."

He described a continuum to clarify the language around culture. At one end is a monocultural church, which actively seeks

to preserve the dominant culture and its power. Other voices are muted, silenced or even seen as a threat.



Safwat Marzouk

Next is a multicultural church, whose different cultural groups are "islands in the same body of water." There is peaceful co-existence, and even a celebration of differences, but no vision to create a new community together.

At the other end is an intercultural church that intentionally creates space for interaction with an attitude of openness to be transformed by the relationship and produce something new.

In the intercultural church, he said, people learn to hold in tension the practices of cultivating "decentralizing unity" and fostering "just diversity." The first means to "find common ground" but not at the expense of diversity, which is a gift from God. The second means to celebrate differences in a way that is empowering.

Marzouk explored the story in Acts 10, where Peter and Cornelius are transformed by their encounter with each other. Five principles in that story can help the intercultural church "proclaim a message of hope in a world that is polarized:"

- **"The church** is God's project" and God chooses to work through culture by incarnation.
- **There is** a mutual need, where people take on a posture that says, "I want to learn from you."
- **"Conversion is mutual."** Everyone is open to being transformed by the Holy Spirit.
- **"Fellowship is vital."** People need practices like sharing food and stories to help us encounter each other.
- **Identity and** healthy boundaries are

necessary but are negotiated with equality.

One participant asked Marzouk if building bridges is a good approach when different groups are "islands in the same body of water?"

He encouraged participants not to stop at building bridges. Rather, "can we live together on one island?" using the resources of both to create something new?

In his second session Marzouk used a continuum to illustrate the journey to becoming an intercultural church. It starts in a monocultural mindset, where people miss and deny cultural differences. It moves to a posture of polarization, where differences are judged from an "us versus them" mindset. In the next stage, tolerance happens but differences are avoided or minimized. Next, there is an effort to comprehend and accept differences without changing much. Finally, in an intercultural mindset, people adapt to each other and experience transformation while something new is formed.

Using several biblical illustrations, he explored pastoral care concerns that arise in intercultural churches, such as tensions between first- and second-generation migrant communities, and dealing with pain, loss, change and questions of purpose and vocation for someone who feels like a "transplanted tree."

He noted that translation goes beyond language to include cultural things like conflict resolution style; and attitudes about time, equality, hierarchy, honour and shame.

He also addressed questions about how intercultural churches could navigate socio-economic and gender role differences. He said it is important to "look through the lens of intersectionality" because identity and experiences of oppression are multilayered. It is important in mutual relationships to ask how people want to receive help. It is also helpful to remember that conversations about gender roles in the church have taken place in western culture for decades, and there is still no consensus. A helpful posture is to say, "Help me to see how you see it." ❧

The event was recorded.

To view it, visit mcec.ca/learningcommons/.



PEOPLE

COVER STORY

A tribute to Menno Wiebe (1932-2021)

Visionary behind a generation of Mennonite-Indigenous relations dies

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

Upon entering the home of Menno and Lydia Wiebe at 10 Concord Avenue in Winnipeg, where they lived for 48 years, one would likely be met not with conventional niceties but with a bright-eyed, depth-probing question, possibly relating to birds and theology, or gardens and ecclesiology, or something else that would never otherwise cross your mind but regularly occupied Menno's.

Such questions stood as a welcome not only into a truly homey home, but also into the heart of a vivid, ever-unfolding inner journey; into collective creative possibilities; into conversation that never retreated to the banal.

It was as if Menno was just waiting for someone to show up to join him in solving the mysteries of the universe and the challenges of a hurting world. Ensuing deliberations were fuelled by human warmth and hot rosehip tea.

The burst of soulful inquiry at the door prevented one from fully appreciating the hat collection lined up around the cramped back entrance: hats from the dozens of Indigenous communities Menno had visited and endeared himself to. A staggering accomplishment. Prized among them, at least in my eye, was the "Lubicon Lake Nation" hat, a marker of his intimate link to one of the most heart-rending and politically raw Indigenous struggles of his time.

On Jan. 5, after years of declining health, Menno Wiebe died at a care home in Winnipeg at age 88, with Lydia and other family members present.

Most notable among the roles he filled in his life was that of director of Native Concerns for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada from 1974 to 1997.

Perhaps my recollections of visiting him are slightly more interpretive than reality



PHOTO BY ELAINE BISHOP

Menno Wiebe with Steve Nosky at Checkpoint 4 of the Lubicon Cree blockade in 1988 in northern Alberta.

would fully support, but that would not be entirely unfitting. Menno saw uncommon layers of meaning everywhere. On occasion his retelling of an event or conversation I had also witnessed left me genuinely wondering if he was blurring memory and creativity, or whether my ordinary senses had just missed what really happened. His mind worked differently than most.

After completing seminary studies and being ordained, Menno took a Native Ministries position with the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (now Mennonite Church Canada). There, he organized a youth drop-in program that nurtured the lives of numerous young Indigenous people, a surprising number of whom went on to be prominent leaders and lifelong

friends of his.

Then he moved on to MCC, where he continued to establish an astonishing breadth and depth of relationships. He knew the leaders who were regularly in the news and the old ladies whose wisdom upheld those leaders. When he showed up, busy chiefs had time to talk and, evidently, present souvenirs. He would find musicians, artists, poets and gardeners, all of whom would receive his nudgings and affirmations. And children would not go unnoticed. He did this from coast to coast, literally: Sheshatshiu, Newfoundland and Labrador, to Port Hardy, B.C.

Not given to the apprehensions and apologetic nature of many well-meaning white people in such settings, Menno would freely hand out advice, ideas, questions, praise and encouragement. In return, he was embraced.

He did things with people more than for them, and was ever observing and learning.

Where he went, people remembered him. They may have mispronounced his name (I heard "Meeno Web" more than once, including in his own impersonations of others) but he was the welcome and enduring face of Mennonites to many Indigenous people.

Over time, he brought many of us into those expanding circles of friendship, eager to pave the way for others to learn from, and walk alongside, Indigenous people.

He pushed boundaries, working in the contentious realm of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. He supported blockades, met with senior government officials and helped organize a citizen-convened public inquiry.

He spoke candidly with me about his struggles within MCC, where the organization as a whole often did not feel the pull

of Indigenous calls for justice as urgently as he did. But rootedness in the broader Mennonite people was of non-negotiable importance to him. It had to be a “people to people” connection. No “lone rangers.”

Menno lived a multidimensional life. He was a master gardener, joining forces with Lydia at their farmstead on the banks of the Whitemouth River east of Winnipeg. This was a place of potatoes, poems, dreams and hospitality.

He loved art. He sang in the Faith and Life Male Choir, wrote at least two plays, collected paintings by Indigenous artists and, more significantly, he encouraged others. At the Winnipeg youth drop-in, a young Tom Jackson was part of a theatrical production that featured “The Huron Carol.” Decades later, the renowned singer publicly acknowledged Menno’s role.

While doing anthropological studies in

Garden Hill, Man., Menno got to know artist Jackson Beardy, arriving home once with a trunk full of paintings by the man who would go on to be part of the “Indian Group of Seven” and a landmark figure in Indigenous art in the ’70s. To acknowledge the importance of Menno’s encouragement, Beardy’s mom gave Menno the cradleboard Beardy began his life in.

Over the years he also taught Native Studies and Anthropology, part-time, at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University) and elsewhere.

Menno was also a pastor. He once invited me to an Indigenous funeral home in Winnipeg’s North End for the funeral of someone I didn’t know. I presumed the intent of the invitation would become apparent. It did not entirely, but I suspect Menno wanted to point to the importance

of the sort of behind-the-scenes pastoral accompaniment of which he did so much, often with people whose lives were unhinged and often well outside business hours. The message: Our church must stand with Indigenous people, whether at blockades or funerals.

Menno did not say goodbye at the conclusion of phone calls. He settled on a more open-ended, to-be-continued note, in step with the cultures he so respected. And so now, we who knew him say not “goodbye,” but, perhaps, thanks for the gifts of a life that created so many ripples that continue on. ☸

To see photos and recollections of Menno and to add your own, see canadianmennonite.org/mennowiebe.



PHOTO BY KATE JANZEN

‘Since we couldn’t have friends visit us on the farm’ in Airdrie, Alta., because of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in the province, ‘we made some,’ write Bob and Kate Janzen of Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary.

Guided by God's hands

Despite plans to change careers, caregiver will now remain one until she retires

By Angelika Dawson
Communitas
CAMPBELL RIVER, B.C.

When Peggy looks back on her long career in social services, she can see how the Lord has led and guided her throughout. Her sensitivity to that leading took her through a long, diverse career in the United States and eventually brought her to Vancouver Island and the Communitas Supportive Care Society. She remembers that it began with a walk and a little bit of soul searching.

"I was just out of college and searching for God's plan for my life," she recalls. "I wondered, should I join the Peace Corps? Should I look for work in another country? Where do you want me, Lord?"

It was during that soul-searching walk that she clearly heard God speak to her and say: "Peggy, you have a mission field right before you. Go forth and serve me well."

That was all the encouragement she needed. She had completed her degree in human services and already had experience working in a nursing home in Wyoming in the early 1980s. During her time in college, she worked in a group home that served people who were coming out of institutions and into community; a similar shift in care was also taking place in Canada at that time.

It was a formative time for Peggy. "I think I could write a book about that time," she says.

After graduation, she managed a different group home for the next 20 years and also raised her two daughters. She then moved into administration at a new job in Montana, where she worked as a case manager for five years. She also met her husband during this time and, after a yearlong, long-distance relationship, they agreed that she would make the

life-changing move to Vancouver Island.

It took three years to complete the immigration process, and Peggy is now a proud permanent resident of Canada. Once that was complete, she decided that it was time to look for work, but in a different field.

"The people I served were and still are near and dear to my heart, but the work was often extremely difficult," she says.

But it seemed that God, who had given her direction thus far, had more for her

She was immediately drawn to the organization's mission statement: "Inspired by Jesus, Communitas will be a place of belonging, growth and contribution." As she continued her research on Communitas, phrases like "spirit of gentleness" and "embracing God-given creativity" leapt out at her. She knew that she would love working for an organization that was guided by these principles. She has now been working for Communitas for five years, and she loves it.

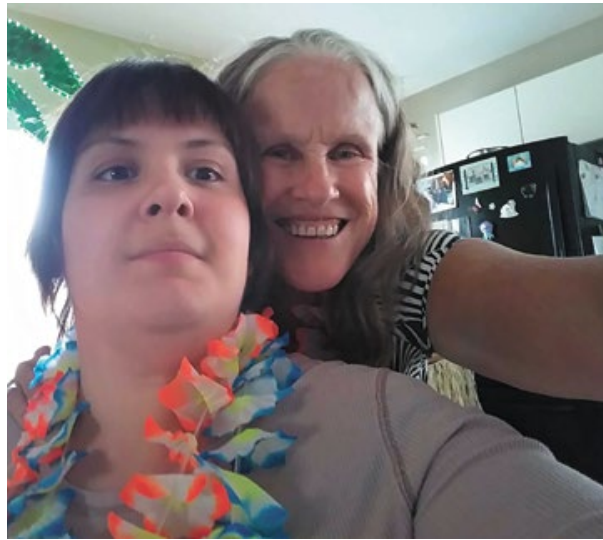
"When I come to work, I feel like I am at home," she says. "At this point in my career, I don't believe that I will have another job after I leave here, so I thank God for allowing me to finish my long and satisfying career in an environment that is guided by God's hands."

Stacy Waffle-Rennie manages the home where Peggy works, a home that serves three women living with developmental disabilities. She says that Peggy brings many gifts to the team and the residents, including gentleness, honesty, and loyalty.

"The biggest and most special quality that Peggy has is that she is always person-centred," Waffle-Rennie says. "On every shift, Peggy focuses on the specific needs of each resident at that time. We are very blessed to have Peggy on our

team!"

Peggy recognizes that people don't have to be Christian to work at Communitas, but she is grateful that she works for an organization that allows her to bring her faith perspective to her work. "That is rare in this field and I am so, so grateful," she says. ☸



COMMUNITAS PHOTO BY PEGGY KNIGHT

Peggy, right, who is pictured with one of the residents in the Communitas home where she serves, says that working directly with people is most important to her.

to do in this field. She spent six months looking for work in other areas but she wasn't at peace. She decided that she would look for a job where her experience lay and was determined to find something where she would work directly with people.

"Direct care is my favourite part of working in this field," she says. "And then, lo and behold, I came across an ad for Communitas."

There is no peace without Christ

Mennonite pastor in Edmonton teaches anger management in Ethiopia

Story by Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
EDMONTON



PHOTO COURTESY OF PASTOR MEZGEBU TUCHO

Youth from Addis Ababa and surrounding areas come for discipleship and leadership training by Pastor Mezgebu A. Tucho. Tucho's son, Zecharias Abdissa, centre, also preached.

What was so important that an Ethiopian Mennonite pastor would go back to Ethiopia with his family during COVID-19 and a war?

After much preparation and prayer, Pastor Mezgebu A. Tucho of Bethel International Church-Edmonton Oromo Congregation, together with seven coordinators from across Ethiopia, decided to proceed with their plan to equip Ethiopian leaders, youth and families with anger-management skills.

According to Tucho, this was the perfect time to return to Ethiopia, as there was a lot of anger and violence, with the message of peace being critical. "If we do not address the root causes of anger, it will lead to more and more violence," he said.

Tucho and his family remained in Ethiopia for a month, returning safely home to Edmonton on Dec. 8, after teaching in a variety of places chosen by the coordinators, who come from different parts of the country and from different denominations.

Part of the reason the Tuchos chose to go ahead with their plans was that they were reassured by the coordinators that the violence and pandemic were not as bad as portrayed in the media. There were police and soldiers in each region, but they felt safe and found that the only inconvenience was a lack of transportation in certain areas due to pockets of violence.

The coordinators chose to hold some of their workshops in Nekemte, which is six hours west of the capital, Addis Ababa, towards the Sudanese border. Thousands of people from more than 300 churches attended a three-day workshop, which included teaching on anger management, depression, stress, spiritual formation and discipleship. Part of Tucho's teaching was that Jesus was the way to a transformed life.

Before 2018, Tucho was limited in his ability to fulfil his dream to preach the gospel of peace, since the government arrested many of his tribe who were not part of the state religion. He saw so many

politicians hungry for money and power, and has seen first-hand that politics and religion don't mix: "In the past, politicians have said they wanted unity, but what they meant was they wanted everyone to be part of one religion. There was no diversity in their vision of unity."

Tucho wishes that leaders would sit down and talk with one another—whether religious leaders or politicians. "But even if we come together, that's not enough," he said. "Without Jesus there is no peace."

Multiple times he mentioned that peace is not just the absence of violence and that people need Jesus to help them with self-control: "He gives us the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit gives us power and that's how people's hearts are changed."

Peace can be a challenge when even faith communities differ, with some churches siding with the people and some siding with the government. His message to Mennonites, or any denomination, is that change cannot happen alone. "We cannot only focus on the Mennonite churches; we

need the whole body of Christ,” he said. “It is important to support one another.”

At one of the meetings, a Full Gospel pastor encouraged people to take the peace and justice course at the Mennonite Bible school, Meserete Kristos College, in Bishoftu. (In Ethiopia, Mennonites are considered part of the evangelical church.) “The whole church has the power to bring people together,” he said. “We need to discuss together, pray together and come up with solutions together.”

Tucho has been trying to go back to Ethiopia once or twice a year since 2018. He hopes to join Mennonite Church Alberta leaders in 2021, who are praying about providing discipleship and peace training for South Sudanese refugees who are in camps in Ethiopia on the Sudanese border. ❧



PHOTO BY JOANNE DE JONG

Pictured from left to right: Pastor Mezgebu A. Tucho of Bethel International Church-Edmonton Oromo Congregation; Bruce Buckwalter, Ethiopian representative for Mennonite Central Committee; and Joanne and Pastor Werner De Jong of Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton, met at the MCC Ethiopia compound in November 2018. Pastors Tucho and De Jong went together to the Burayu Bible College to do leadership, peace and spiritual formation training.

Woodworker, pastor dies at 101

Erwin Cornelsen served as Sherbrooke Mennonite's first pastor

By Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent



Erwin Cornelsen, age 101.

Erwin Cornelsen, former pastor and one of the last Mennonite *Aeltesters* (elders) in Canada, died Dec. 26, 2020, at Menno Hospital in Abbotsford, B.C., at the age of 101. He was laid to rest on Jan. 5.

Erwin was born on May 28, 1919, in Schweingrube, West Prussia, the first of nine children in a farm family. He didn't want to fulfil his father's wishes that he also farm, and in 1936 he enlisted in the German military, with the promise of free education after 12 years of service. However, the Second World War broke out less than three years later, and he spent most of the war in Oslo, Norway, working in search and rescue.

In 1938, he experienced a profound deepening of his Christian faith and he joined a small group of evangelical Christians in Oslo. There, he met his future wife, Hildur Deckert, a fellow German who was

conscripted to work in a general's office. The two were married in Germany in 1944.

Following the war's end in 1945, Erwin's hometown became part of Poland, and some of his family emigrated to Canada. Hildur and Erwin stayed in Germany and, with no career and no prospects, Erwin turned to the craft of woodworking and furniture making for the next decade. The couple had four sons, and Erwin began testing his skills in Christian ministry. In 1956, after Hildur's parents had both died, the family moved to British Columbia to join other family members, and there their fifth son was born.

Erwin made his living in carpentry until his passion for church work led him to be ordained in 1960 to lay ministry at First United Mennonite Church in Vancouver. He took on the role as associate pastor in 1964, and then, in 1968, was called to be the first pastor at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, a church plant of First United Mennonite, also located in Vancouver.

Later, he was ordained as *Aeltester* in the Mennonite church. He served as pastor at Sherbrooke until 1984.

Erwin cared about the wider church, attending numerous world conferences and serving on national committees such as the Board of Christian Service. He also believed strongly in cooperation between General Conference Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren in B.C., and he was instrumental in merging the two Bible schools that became Columbia Bible College.

From 1978 to '82, Erwin and Hildur returned to Germany, where they served in a pastoral assignment at Wolfsburg, serving German-speaking emigrés from the Soviet Union. In 1985, he spent six weeks in the Mennonite colonies of Paraguay, speaking at "deeper life" meetings.

Throughout his life, Erwin continued his love for woodworking and he continued to practise his skills. With the lathe he brought back from Germany, he crafted

furniture for family, and pulpits and communion tables for the churches he served. After his retirement, he sold handcrafted items from reclaimed wood at B.C.'s annual Mennonite Central Committee festival.

Always practical about the reality of death, he fashioned his own casket and one for Hildur, who died in 2001.

Erwin lived in the same house in Vancouver for more than six decades. In his retirement, he found joy through engaging with people, and especially children, in his neighbourhood on daily walks to the YMCA.

He moved to Abbotsford in 2017, at the age of 98, to live at Menno Place. He was privileged to celebrate his 100th birthday in 2019.

Among the many things Erwin will be fondly remembered for: the twinkle in his eye, his cheerful countenance, the delicious pumpernickel bread he baked, the candle he lit every morning at breakfast for his late wife Hildur, his appreciation of nature and the outdoors, his love of



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CORNELSEN FAMILY

Erwin Cornelsen speaks at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver, B.C. as its first pastor.

stories, his spirit of inclusiveness and reconciliation, his desire to continue lifelong learning and his passion to help others follow Jesus.

Survivors include three sisters, five sons and their wives, nine grandchildren and their partners, seven great-grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews. ❧

To read more about Erwin's friendships, visit canadianmennonite.org/stories-prayers-y



Teachers learn lessons, too

Retired teacher reflects on lessons learned from her Indigenous students and their families

By Donna Schulz

Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

It's not uncommon for Linda Bartel to meet former students while volunteering, and she's always delighted to see them.

Bartel, who is 86 years old, volunteers two or three days a week, dividing her time between the Good Neighbours Food Centre and the Mennonite Central Committee Clothes Basket in Rosthern, where she lives. In both places she has had happy reunions with adults who were once her Kindergarten students at Stobart Community School in nearby Duck Lake, Sask.

Bartel taught at Stobart from 1974 to 1994. Many of her students were from Beady's and Okemasis' First Nation, and, of the Duck Lake residents, many were Métis.

"I thank God every day for the years I



PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOD NEIGHBOURS FOOD CENTRE

Linda Bartel, centre, volunteers at the Good Neighbours Food Centre in Rosthern, Sask., every week. She is pictured with fellow volunteer Rachel Wallace, left, and Good Neighbours community catalyst Pristine Chabaylo.

was able to teach,” she says, “especially those years at Duck Lake.” Among the things she is thankful for are the life lessons she learned from her Indigenous students and their families.

Bartel first learned about patience from her father. As a rather dark-skinned, German-speaking man in a predominantly English-speaking community, he faced discrimination. But she remembers that he always responded with kindness and patience.

She also saw patience demonstrated in the lives of her Indigenous friends. “Time meant nothing to them,” she says. “They were often late, unless they were bussed [to school].” But, she adds, “People were more important [to them] than hitting a time mark.”

Bartel recalls being invited to attend events on the First Nation. When an event would begin at 7 p.m., she would be told, “Come at 8. Then you’ll be right on time.”

“They were able to laugh at themselves more than we do,” she says.

They also taught her to be more comfortable expressing affection. “We didn’t do much hugging in our home,” she says. But it was different in the homes of her students. “Very often I got a hug from the [grandmothers] and a handshake from the older men,” she says. “There was a feeling of comfort.”

Over the years, this changed the way Bartel interacted with her own children and grandchildren. “I’m much more physical than how I grew up,” she says.

Bartel also learned to value the generosity she saw in the Indigenous community. “They are much more appreciative of each other than I think we are,” she says. “They have a bigger heart.” She saw that bigger heart in the way they shared their belongings with one another.

“If you have four tires on your yard that you’re not using, they think it’s perfectly all right to use them,” she says. She continues to see that generosity at the Clothes Basket, where Indigenous customers frequently offer one another money to help cover the cost of their purchases.

“There’s a loyalty to family there that I don’t think we feel that strong,” she says. That loyalty inspired her to have grandchildren live with her on more than one



PHOTO COURTESY OF LINDA BARTEL

Linda Bartel taught Kindergarten at Stobart Community School for 20 years. She’s pictured with her last class in 1994.

occasion. “I don’t know if that could ever have happened if I hadn’t had those years in Duck Lake,” she says.

As a Kindergarten teacher, Bartel visited her students in their homes before the beginning of each school year. She’d play with the children to get to know them better. The grandmothers would offer her soup, coffee or tea, and would simply sit with her as she played with the children. When she left, they’d invite her back and thank her for a good visit.

From these women Bartel learned the value of being silent together in the same room.

“You don’t need to be jabbering all the time,” she says. This lesson stood her in good stead when her husband Lowell suffered from Alzheimer’s disease and could no longer speak. She found comfort in sitting with him in silence.

“God gave me a really good opportunity when he gave me a teaching career,” she says. “I would be a different person if I hadn’t taught at Duck Lake.” ❧

Upcoming

Journalist to be honoured for advancing interreligious understanding



John Longhurst, a longtime religion journalist for the *Winnipeg Free Press*, is being awarded the 2020 Manitoba Lieutenant Governor’s Award for the Advancement of Interreligious Understanding during an online ceremony on Feb. 16. “In this province, where we so proudly embrace multiculturalism, Mr. Longhurst’s vision, passion and commitment to bring voices from our diverse religious and cultural communities together, truly exemplifies the spirit of this award,” says Lt.-Gov. Janice C. Filmon. “It will be my pleasure to formally recognize Mr. Longhurst for his work in building harmony and understanding in our province, our country, our world.” Longhurst has been a Free Press Faith Page columnist since 2003; it is currently the only faith page remaining in Canada. In March 2019, Longhurst reached out to faith groups across Winnipeg in a bid to help provide financial support in order to preserve news reporting on faith communities. Some 17 faith-based groups have now lent their support to the project. “It is particularly during the time of COVID-19 that Longhurst’s work has been particularly prominent, appreciated and helpful,” states a press release from the Manitoba Multifaith Council. To register to view the online ceremony on Feb. 16 at 7 p.m. CST, visit bit.ly/longhurst-award.

—MANITOBA MULTIFAITH COUNCIL



/// Staff change

Pastoral transition in Saskatchewan



Ed Olfert has retired as pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Prince Albert, Sask., a position he held since November 2017. Olfert formerly served as the congregation's pastor for 11 years, from 1995 to 2006. He is a welder and hopes to spend his retirement sculpting with metal, writing and volunteering.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ



ONLINE NOW!

at canadianmennonite.org



New ways of learning for a new time

An online discussion channel co-founded by three Mennonites has become a meeting place for theology students from around the world.

canadianmennonite.org/theology



The gift of a coffee with John H. Neufeld

On the CM blog, Moses Falco reflects on his interactions with recently-deceased pastor and teacher John H. Neufeld.

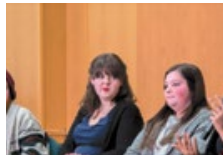
canadianmennonite.org/blog/mf-coffee



Watch: A tour of *Voices Together*

What's on a hymnal's page? A music educator takes you on a tour of the *Voices Together* hymnal in this new video.

canadianmennonite.org/hymnaltour



Deep dive into theology

Two recent graduates of the Master of Theological Studies program at Conrad Grebel University College reflect on their work.

canadianmennonite.org/deepdive

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Graduate studies at CMU

Research, practical, and flexibility within CMU's graduate programs

By Braden Siemens
Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg

What makes graduate studies programs unique at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU)?

Valerie Smith, associate registrar for graduate studies, says that “being rooted in the Anabaptist tradition, we specialize in peacebuilding and reconciliation-oriented programs, even in the ways we teach business. There is plenty of space for diversity within the programs, creating conversations that cross disciplinary boundaries. Dialogue is

one of our greatest strengths.”

The program offers three graduate studies programs—a Master of Business Administration (MBA), Graduate School of Theology and Ministry (GSTM), and a Master of Arts in Peacebuilding and Collaborative Development (MA-PCD). Students are given the flexibility to shape their degrees around their interests with the guidance of supervisors, including thesis writing, practicum placements and business start-ups.



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UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO | Conrad Grebel University College



COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE

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Now eligible to offer one Canada Graduate Scholarship each year to a researching student, CMU is working hard to develop funding for relevant and important research contributions.

Oanh Bui, a current MBA student, decided to study business at CMU not only because of the affordable tuition fees but because the program matched perfectly with her interest in a future career in non-profit business planning. "I am from Vietnam. It is exciting to study abroad, to learn from other cultures, but also to work in a collaborative program whose leadership focuses on the common good," she says.

Studying in the MA-PCD program, Evy Klassen says that the flexibility of the program, especially during pandemic times, has enabled her to study from British Columbia. Courses such as "Reconciling Stories: Indigenous Laws and Lands" and "Models for Conflict Transformation" have inspired her to develop a possible practicum project in her province.

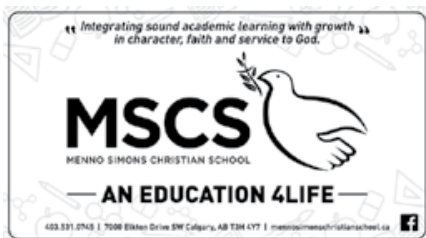
Regarding the MA-PCD program, Smith explains that "the school draws in an incredibly diverse group of people, many of whom have travelled halfway across the world. The

range of the people in the program is astonishing. With skilled instructors, this makes for a unique and powerful classroom experience."

Originally from southern Ontario, Kim Rempel moved to Winnipeg to complete a Master of Divinity degree within the GSTM program at CMU. Her research interests, ranging from embodiment, trauma, death and dying, dementia, suffering, abuse, and feminist perspectives, all contribute to her chaplaincy work in long-term care. She says, "I am able to meet some of my academic goals through the work that I am already doing in long-term care, specifically by focusing on the way that dementia affects end-of-life experiences and spiritual care."

While alumni of the graduate school have continued to complete doctoral work in their field, or to launch small businesses, others have entered chaplaincy, ministry and spiritual care careers. ✎

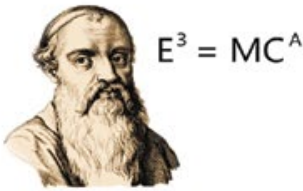
For more information about graduate studies at CMU and options for studying online, contact Valerie Smith at vsmith@cmu.ca or visit cmu.ca/gradstudies/.



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



Louisa Adria
Foothills Mennonite Church

Daily prayer is life-changing but it is also a life change. To create intentional time for prayer means forming a new habit. As the habit is taking root, I just don't make it to morning and evening prayer every single day.

So I am committed to returning imperfectly. I accept that I am going to walk before I run and I am going to stumble all the way through. Some days I am more present than others but God is always present, inviting me to keep on coming just as I am.

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NIH RESEARCH STUDY



- Study participation includes an interview (2-4 hours) and a blood sample.
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Department of Health & Human Services
National Institutes of Health



National Institute
of Mental Health

www.clinicaltrials.gov Protocol No. 80-M-0083

Calendar

Nationwide

Feb. 9 on Zoom: The final TourMagination's "The Anabaptist Story lives on: Virtual museum and archive tour" session: "The cookie war: A sweet and true tale from the Mennonite Archives of Ontario," hosted by Lauren Harder-Gissing, archivist at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario in Waterloo, Ont. For event details and registration information, visit tourmagination.com/vtour-3.

Annual Meetings, details to follow

Feb 27: MC British Columbia
Mar. 6: MC Manitoba
Mar. 13: MC Saskatchewan
Mar. 20: MC Alberta
Apr. 24: MC Eastern Canada

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.

Manitoba

Feb. 17: CMU Wednesday webinar,

"Year One: Exploring your options," 4 p.m. CST. For more information or to register, visit cmu.ca/webinar.

Feb. 23: CMU's ReNew: "Resources for preaching—II Corinthians," with George Shillington, 11 a.m. CST. For more information or to register, visit cmu.ca/renew.

Feb. 24: CMU virtual open house, 4 p.m. CST. For more information or to register, visit cmu.ca/virtual-open-house.

March 3: CMU Wednesday webinar, "Music at CMU," 4 p.m. CST. For more information or to register, visit cmu.ca/webinar.

March 10: CMU Wednesday webinar, "Pre-professional tracks at CMU," 4 p.m. CST. For more information or to register, visit cmu.ca/webinar.

March 31: CMU's ReNew: "Resources for preaching—James," with Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, 11 a.m. CST. For more information or to register, visit cmu.ca/renew.

March 31: CMU virtual open house, 4 p.m. CST. For more information or to register, visit cmu.ca/virtual-open-house.

Ontario

March 11: Conrad Grebel University College presents the 2021 Bechtel Lecture: "Blackness, whiteness and the Anabaptist 'Imagined Community,'" 7 p.m. EST, on the Grebel YouTube channel. Speaker: Timothy D. Epp

of Redeemer University. To register, visit bit.ly/38RJDaj. For more information, visit bit.ly/3nVDgJR.

For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



INTERIM CHAPLAIN

Conrad Grebel University College

Conrad Grebel University College, a residence and teaching community affiliated with the University of Waterloo, seeks an Interim Chaplain for a 17 – 24 month contract at 0.6 FTE (21 hrs/week) beginning Aug 1, 2021. The role involves leading a student Chapel Committee and planning weekly chapel services, working as part of Grebel's Student Services team to contribute to general student life programming, and serving as a pastoral counsellor to students. The successful candidate will hold a minimum of an M.Div or master's degree in Theology, have a clear Anabaptist-Mennonite theological orientation and faith commitment, be a member in good standing of a Mennonite congregation and have experience in leading worship, preaching and young adult ministry.

Application deadline is February 28, 2021.

Read more at grebel.ca/positions



Employment Opportunity Music Director

Founded in 1945, UMEI Christian High School provides excellent secondary education in Leamington, Ont., and the surrounding area. Our dedicated teachers provide whole-person

education, in a caring atmosphere, building community and lasting relationships.

UMEI requires a grades 9-12 choir and instrumental teacher to teach, conduct, and assess students.

Part of the vision for the Music Director is to rekindle the rich Anabaptist music tradition at UMEI. This is a remarkable and fulfilling opportunity for a teacher who is passionate about music to share music with our creative, committed and willing students. This is also a chance to teach and learn beside other passionate teachers who inspire students to develop and pursue their interest in all areas of academia.

Applicants with choral conducting experience are encouraged to apply. Additional experience with instrumental music is an asset.

For more details about the job, visit www.umei.ca. Inquiries and resumes may be submitted to principal@umei.ca. Applications will be accepted until April 30, 2021. While UMEI Christian values all applications, only candidates who qualify for an interview will be contacted.

Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



Mennonite
Central
Committee

Employment Opportunity Planned Giving Associate

The successful candidate for this salaried part-time term position will be tasked with implementing the Legacy Giving program for Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCCC).

Working with the MCCC donor relations team, and at times with Abundance Canada, the Planned Giving Associate will identify and solicit prospective planned giving donors within the MCCC donor community on behalf of the MCCC provincial offices. The Planned Giving Associate position reports to the Donor Engagement Manager.

To view the full job description and to apply visit:
mcccanada.ca/get-involved/serve/openings



Photo finish

PHOTO AND TEXT BY MELITA PENNER

Making blankets for Mennonite Central Committee has been an ongoing project at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. Even though participants now are fewer, and getting together has not always been possible because of the pandemic, they try to continue. This COVID-19 quilt-top was crafted by Sarah Seemann and was completed by women from the church. As Seemann pieced the fabric together, she found designs that depict the virus (pink swatches), masks, physical distancing, the pandemic and light at the end of the tunnel. In past years, the group has made up to 300 blankets in eight months, but it will not reach that number this year. Being together every Wednesday has been a time for conversation, enjoying the craft and working for a worthy cause.