

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

February 15, 2021 Volume 25 Number 4

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Photo essay by Lois Siemens, pg. 14

Times of waiting and stillness

and times to take off and GO!

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## EDITORIAL

# What are they doing with our money?

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER  
Executive Editor



**T**he annual congregational meeting is moving along with the usual reports and updates. Then it's time to discuss next year's budget. Seeing the dollar amount the congregation will forward to the regional church, a well-intentioned member stands up to ask the question: What are they doing with our money anyway?

A fair question. When you and I sit down regularly to write out cheques or do electronic transfers to our church, we know that some of that money will be passed on to ministries outside our congregation. We want those gifts to benefit our own community and to do much good elsewhere in the world.

A verse that comes to mind is 1 Peter 4:10: *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."* It's good to remind ourselves that our donations are God's money, an expression of God's grace to be shared beyond our own circles.

Quick review: Mennonite Church Canada is made up of five regional churches (in former times called conferences), that are geographically based. Congregations in those areas are members of their respective regional churches. They are Mennonite Church British Columbia (with 29 congregations), Mennonite Church Alberta (12), Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (26), Mennonite Church Manitoba (39) and

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (97).

The regional churches have an agreement—a covenant—with each other to form Mennonite Church Canada. While the regional churches engage in their own ministries closer to home, they also help in the ministries of the nationwide church. A small staff at the nationwide office carries out tasks done on behalf of the larger church.

Often larger visions for ministry depend on cooperation among the various parts, beyond our individual congregations. "Doing together what we cannot do alone," is how the MC Saskatchewan website expresses it. The regional and nationwide church structures are in place to help us accomplish things that our individual congregations cannot do efficiently on their own.

So, what's happening with the money our congregations give to the larger church? Here are a few examples:

- **Helping churches find** pastors;
- **Providing support** to new congregations;
- **Giving practical help** for congregations to build new websites;
- **Contributing toward the** cost of your *Canadian Mennonite* subscription;
- **Encouraging connections between** congregations;
- **Organizing events** for youth;
- **Offering ongoing training** and accountability for pastors;
- **Planning events** for inspiration, learning and spiritual growth;

- **Supporting publishing projects** for curriculum and worship materials;
- **Distributing books and other materials** that encourage faith development
- **Supporting Mennonite schools and camps**, who in turn train new leaders;
- **Setting priorities** for working together in nationwide efforts and guiding us into new callings;
- **Informing Mennonites about** ministries across Canada and overseas, inviting prayer, volunteers and financial support;
- **Coordinating projects with** other Mennonite denominations in North America;
- **Representing MC Canada** in ecumenical efforts for peace and justice;
- **Equipping and supporting** International Witness workers to share God's good news in China, Philippines, South Korea and Thailand;
- **Cooperating with Anabaptist** siblings in other places to help them carry out their ministries.

The financial gifts you and I send to our regional church help the church carry out God's mission in many places, close to home and thousands of kilometres away. So maybe the question isn't: What are they doing with our money? A better question would be: What are *we* doing with *God's* money?

In the coming weeks, the five regional churches will be holding their annual delegate sessions. With meetings happening online this year, you may be able to take part and hear more about what we—together—are doing with God's money. Check your regional church website for details.

*Canadian Mennonite* will report on these meetings in upcoming issues. In the meantime, keep following other stories in our magazine, where you will see many examples of your/our/God's money at work. ☸



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PHOTO: LOIS SIEMENS

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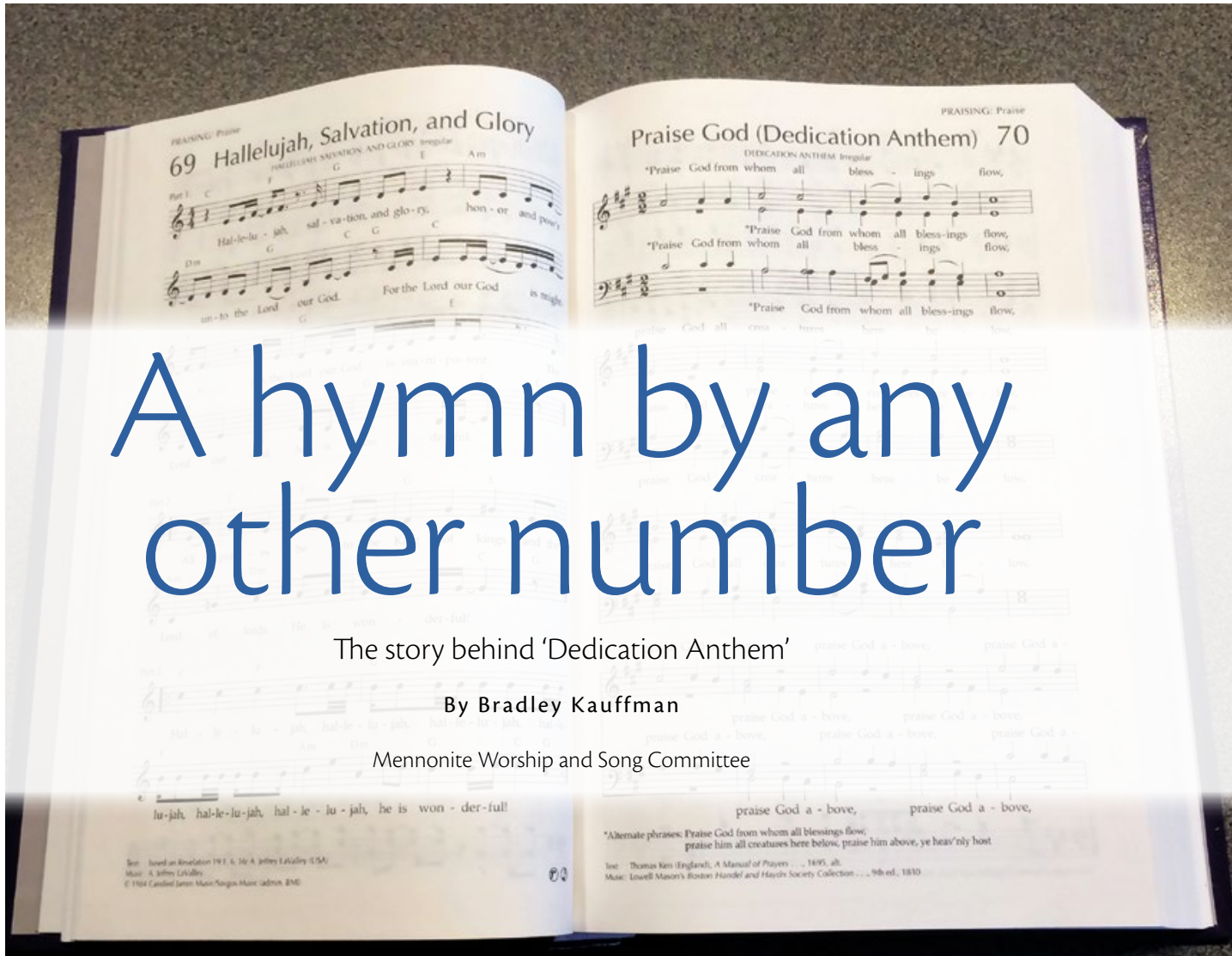
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## FEATURE



# A hymn by any other number

The story behind 'Dedication Anthem'

By Bradley Kauffman

Mennonite Worship and Song Committee

PHOTOS BY MERRILL MILLER

*Apart from communities in the eastern United States, where the song was previously known, Mary Oyer and her committee colleagues had presumed the song would appeal primarily to church choirs looking for a challenge.*

When hymnologist Mary Oyer travelled from Uganda to Oregon to attend the 1969 Mennonite Church general assembly, she was surely filled with anticipation. She arrived in the second week of August to attend the dedication of a new denominational worship book, *The Mennonite Hymnal* (1969), which the General Conference Mennonite Church would also use.

As Oyer and her colleagues wondered which of these 653 songs and 98 worship resources would find resonance, a surprise lay in store. In that inaugural gathering around this collection, an unlikely standout emerged: a three-page 19th-century anthem tucked away in the "Choral Hymns" section, No. 606, "Praise God from Whom."

"The Virginians already knew it well," 97-year-old Oyer

recalled in a recent telephone conversation. Apart from communities in the eastern United States, where the song was previously known, Oyer and her committee colleagues had presumed the song would appeal primarily to church choirs looking for a challenge.

To her surprise, its appeal as a congregational song in gatherings of predominantly white Mennonites was immediate. "In retrospect, I would say 'no wonder,'" she added. "People at that time were ready to sing something cheerful." It was so galvanizing in the summer of 1969, Oyer recalled. "We ended every day of meetings by singing it."

In the 1960s, most Mennonite congregations would have been familiar with the Thomas Ken doxological text "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" (1708), but

they would have sung it with the “OLD HUNDREDTH” tune (frequently referred to as “The Doxology”) from the 1551 *Genevan Psalter*. This widely memorized setting served as a weekly sung benediction in the worship life of many congregations.

With the emergence of a “new” (though by 1969 well over a century old) way of singing a familiar text, worshippers would reach for a nickname to differentiate the two.

Which “Praise God from Whom”? No. 606!

When a hymn title like “Praise God from Whom” is ambiguous, often the tune name (traditionally printed in all caps) offers a path to clarity. The 1830 source material (published without attribution by the Boston Handel and Haydn Society) named this anthem simply “DOXOLOGY,” which did not help differentiate it for a 20th-century Mennonite audience. The 1969 hymnal committee must have anticipated this, adding a secondary parenthetical to the tune name: DOXOLOGY (DEDICATION ANTHEM).

The qualifier, “DEDICATION ANTHEM,” reveals the committee’s presumption that the song would serve as a festival hymn rather than one that would find regular use in worship.

The 1969 *Mennonite Hymnal* organized its contents by theme and musical idiom. White gospel hymns and choral anthems had their own sections. The next full-length denominational collection, *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (1992), centred the flow of worship in its theological and thematic distribution of material.

Reinforcing this flow, “Dedication Anthem,” which by then had had a 23-year history of denomination-level adoption, was promoted to a place much earlier in the collection (No. 118), reflecting its function among songs of praise.

Some communities that valued the song, however, viewed this as a demotion.

It is easy, in retrospect, to understand how a number became a de facto title. Today, though, announcing or referring to that song by its number alone divides

a congregation into insiders who know some of the history behind the song and outsiders who do not—insiders who are familiar with four-part harmony and outsiders who are not.

It amounts to a cultural secret handshake. We diminish the gifts of this song if we allow it to confuse or confound.

Some urged the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee that produced the new *Voices Together* hymnal to correct the 1992 treatment by assigning the song its “rightful place” between 605 and 607.

Editorial judgment ultimately reasoned that backward-facing pride-of-place would diminish a potent story of the song. God’s Spirit will move in ways that we cannot expect or prescribe. Further, privileging a song so tied to white ethnic identity could serve to perpetuate insider versus outsider dynamics.

*Voices Together* underscores the power of this song as a praise hymn by placing it in the Praise section, at No. 70. In fact, it anchors a succession of doxologies. No. 71 is the OLD HUNDREDTH setting, which sits on a facing page with a newly composed “Alleluia” refrain (an optional tag to accompany No. 71) by Darryl Neustaedter Barg (No. 72), and a guide to signing “Alleluia” in American Sign Language (73).

### Musical innovations, blurring boundaries

The placement of “Dedication Anthem” in *Voices Together* reflects the ways Mennonite communities are evolving, expanding and singing new songs.

The 1969 hymnbook, promoted as a conservative historical collection, landed amid a watershed moment in ecumenical church music. The committee had completed its work in 1967, and, by the time of publication in 1969, a significant renaissance of church music was underway. In his Aug. 5, 1969, review of the new hymnal in *Gospel Herald*, the Mennonite Church magazine, Ervin Beck noted that adopters of the hymnal might be wise to balance its conservatism (the bulk of the collection was material considered to be tried and true) with some form of more “dispos-

able” contemporary sources.

The 1970s would indeed see Mennonites drawing on the influence of the Catholic reforms known as Vatican II, including simple choruses with guitar or piano accompaniment, and adopting songs representing greater diversities of origin. Both of these developments are explored in the 1979 *Sing and Rejoice* collection. The next hymnal committee (a joint effort between General Conference Mennonites, “Old” Mennonites and the Church of the Brethren) began to take shape as early as 1983.

Throughout all of this change, Mennonite worshippers have developed and maintained an appetite for exploring and adopting new songs and expressions of worship. Oyer’s study of East African songs, and the relationships she would later forge with Christian musicians across Asia, would influence the curation of *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. And that movement toward worshipping with a global church spread ecumenically.

The innovations in church music that were evident in the late 1960s through the ’90s continue to thrive today. We see this in a proliferation of new hymn writers, increasingly versatile contemporary worship styles and intercultural songs. Twentieth-century hymnal committees had relatively small numbers of living—or historical for that matter—Anabaptist writers to include.

Those who curated *Voices Together* have been energized by a groundswell of Anabaptists creating art, words for worship, songs, tunes and hymn texts.

Karen Lafferty’s 1972 “Seek Ye First” (included in *Sing and Rejoice* and *Hymnal: A Worship Book*) is an example of a song from the early years of the contemporary worship movement that is still sung today. Following the risk-taking trajectories of *Sing and Rejoice*, *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and its later supplements, *Voices Together* included 35 songs from contemporary worship publishers. Far from being confined to the idiom’s praise-and-worship origins, these songs support a range of expression across the *Voices Together* table of contents.

In a recent example of how idiomatic boundaries become blurred, All Sons and Daughters, a contemporary worship band, adapted the Prayer of St. Patrick from fifth-century Ireland in their 2014 song, “Christ, Be All around Me.”

When a worshipping community adopts a new hymnal, worshippers have new opportunities to grow the ways we worship together and expand the bounds of who is invited. As styles meld over time, labels begin to hold less significance.

Not all contemporary worship music conforms to simple unison structures. Composer-songwriters like Bernadette Farrell (“Longing for Light,” 1993) occupy a musical space that ventures toward folk and popular idioms.

The accessibility of singing in unison has been important for generations. *Voices Together* builds on a need for balance between traditional and contemporary, unison and harmonized singing.

History and tradition are important, and must be living and flexible to maintain positive impacts.

“Dedication Anthem” does not have broad enough cultural accessibility to draw together a diverse 21st-century church. But if we’re paying attention to the gifts of “Dedication Anthem,” we will remember that the Holy Spirit will move in ways that worshippers and hymnal committees cannot predict or prescribe.

As members of Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. welcome a new denominational song collection, let’s wonder together and explore what songs and worship resources draw a diverse church together. ☞



*Bradley Kauffman served as the project director and general editor for Voices Together since the Mennonite Worship and*

*Song Committee launched its work in the summer of 2016.*

*Originally published as “Make the chorus swell,” in the Nov. 27, 2020, issue of Anabaptist World. Reprinted by permission.*



*Some urged the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee that produced the new Voices Together hymnal to correct the 1992 treatment by assigning the song its ‘rightful place’ between 605 and 607.*

### /// For discussion

1. As you think of all the church hymnals you have used, which one has had the greatest impact on you? Where/how did you and your congregation learn to sing “Praise God from Whom” (No. 606 in *The Mennonite Hymnal*)? How do you explain the popularity of this song among Mennonites in the late 20th century?
2. Bradley Kauffman explains that *The Mennonite Hymnal* (1969) had separate sections for white gospel hymns and choral anthems. What would be some reasons for organizing a hymnal this way, and why do you think later hymnals did not follow that pattern? How would you organize songs in a hymnal?
3. Kauffman comments that announcing or referring to a song by its number divides a congregation into insiders and outsiders, and becomes a “cultural secret handshake.” Do you agree? How does your congregation work at balancing music that is familiar and nurturing with songs that are less familiar but perhaps more welcoming?
4. Does your congregation sing more harmonized or unison songs? What are the benefits of each of these styles? Do you think church music is growing or declining in importance? How do you think the *Voices Together* hymnal will be a blessing to the church?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources at  
[www.commonword.ca/go/2199](http://www.commonword.ca/go/2199)

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## /// Readers write

### ✉ Readers weigh in on MCC's research on National Socialism

**Re: "Committed to seeking a deeper understanding: MCC begins research into historical connections to National Socialism," Feb. 1, page 13.**

- **Kudos, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC),** for beginning to face part of our history that may be quite shameful.

CRAIG ANDERSON (ONLINE COMMENT)

- **Thanks, MCC leadership,** for beginning to seek to tell the difficult truths of our past. This is not just about MCC. It is about our legacy of faith as Anabaptist Mennonites. The truth (and repentance) will set us free.

STEPHEN KRISS (ONLINE COMMENT)

- **Already the word "shameful" is being used before we even start!** Canadian Mennonites who did not have to escape Soviet communism should be very, very careful before commenting.

If it wasn't for the German army offering some protection, my parents and 12,000 others would have been sent to Siberia, like my grandfather was, and perished. Think about that!

HORST UNGER (ONLINE COMMENT)

- **There are historical societies everywhere** that have the expertise and interest in history. I hope that MCC is hiring professional historians.

Why is MCC diversifying into history? Many count on MCC to meet human needs, like clean water, sanitation and so much more. There are so many needs in the world, including needs here in Canada. What agency is carrying on the work of meeting needs and setting up new things so that people can meet their own needs?

I think that MCC should communicate with the constituency (us), as they used to call it, to answer the questions that this article does not cover.

LOIS EPP (ONLINE COMMENT)

*We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to [letters@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org) and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.*

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Friesen**—Katrina Lynn Reesor (b. Dec. 1, 2020), to Wanda Wall-Bergen and Isaac Friesen, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Hamm**—Maila Katherine (b. Nov. 22, 2020), to Emma and Simon Hamm, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Pauls**—Levi Benjamin (b. Dec. 11, 2020), to Matt and Laura Pauls, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Weber**—Elodie Jean (b. Oct. 1, 2020), to Maynard and Tiffany Weber, Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont.

### Weddings

**Bartel/Miller**—Mitch Bartel (North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.) and Kelly Miller, in Saskatoon, Jan 2, 2021.

**Martin/Shantz**—Tyler Martin and Cheyenne Shantz, Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont., in Listowel, Ont., Sept. 26, 2020.

**Shantz/Wideman**—Ally Shantz and Kyle Wideman, Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont., in Alma, Ont., Nov. 14, 2020.

### Deaths

**Beck**—Florence (nee Cressman), 89 (b. May 20, 1931; d. July 1, 2020), Bethel Mennonite, Elora, Ont.

**Cornelsen**—Erwin, 101 (b. May 28, 1919; d. Dec. 26, 2020), Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver.

**Diller**—Eva Margaret (nee Baker), 85 (b. Oct. 22, 1935; d. Jan. 2, 2021), Wideman Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

**Driedger**—Gilda (nee Sawatzky), 92 (b. Aug. 25, 1928; d. Jan. 16, 2021), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Driedger**—Leo, 92 (b. June 27, 1928; Dec. 28, 2020), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Dyck**—Maria, 94 (b. Oct. 2, 1926; d. Jan. 1, 2021), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg

**Ewert**—Katy (Schmidt), 84 (b. Feb. 18, 1936; d. Dec. 30, 2020), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Fransen**—Hilda, 88 (b. July 20, 1932; d. Jan. 19, 2021), Vine-land United Mennonite, Ont.

**Grebe**—Casey, 89 (b. Feb. 19, 1931; d. Aug. 2, 2020), Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

**Kehler**—Henry Cornelius, 90 (b. March 5, 1930; d. Dec. 19, 2020), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Klassen**—Elsie (nee Bartel), 90 (b. July 18, 1930; d. Dec. 23, 2020), Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

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

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Transition in leadership

Bob Boehr

**M**y first season of a church in an intentional pastoral transition process was as an associate pastor with my home church in Surrey, B.C.

I joined the church when it was first planted and was called to be the youth pastor in its 12th year of existence. The church's planting pastor heard God's call to another challenge in the 17th year. Our congregation hired a transitional pastor to walk with us through the process of good questions: Who were we under our previous pastor? Where is God leading us next as a congregation? What kind of leader will help mesh those two realities?

My second season has been walking with a church in Abbotsford after its pastor felt her time at the church had reached its completion after 25 years. This was different from my home church, with a different culture and new relationships for me to navigate. The church dynamics are different, but the framework of the transitional process remains the same.

This concept of a transitional pastor may be a new concept for many. This position was created because, too often,

the next incoming pastor, especially after a beloved long-term pastor moves on, quickly became the next outgoing pastor. A transitional pastor may also be hired in churches that have a history of cycling through pastors because no one ever seems to "fit."

Transitional leadership begins with creating closure on the past and ends with walking through a search process for the next pastor. The stuff in the middle is where things can get messy. Change evokes emotions of anxiety for some and excitement for others who have been waiting for this opportunity.

Outreach Canada's transitional leadership model suggests these conversations cycle around relationship renewal (with God and each other), vision, clarity and a healthy organizational structure, while maintaining the preaching, pastoral care and administrative duties, bathed in prayer and accompanied with good listening skills. It is imperative to partner with the congregation in all the tasks and to seek wisdom on when to focus on one task over another and when to hand some things off.

Transitional leadership is more an art

than a science. There is no single formula that will make everyone happy, and hiccups should be expected. We had more than our fair share in my home congregation, and I have had a few missteps in my current role. A pandemic during the transition process has not helped.

I take solace in the fact that I'm not the saviour of the church. It was not the previous pastor's church and it will not be the next pastor's church. I am convinced that Christ still loves his church and has a way to move things forward, as we express a little humility, faith and love for one another in times of transition. ☸



*Bob Boehr is transitional lead pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C. He has been part of Mennonite Church B.C.'s church health committee for many years, focusing on how churches can be healthy in times of peace, conflict and transition.*

## A moment from yesterday



In 1984, a local reporter interviews Gary Snider, dressed in clothes his grandfather wore when he arrived as an immigrant from the Soviet Union 60 years before. Three hundred people took part in this commemorative walk, retracing the route of a group of 1924 Mennonite immigrants from a railway siding in Uptown Waterloo, Ont., to Erb Street Mennonite Church. Upon arriving at Erb Street, members of the Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, formed by the immigrants, presented a plaque in appreciation for the welcome they received in 1924. What historical walks should we be retracing today?

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing  
Photo: Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca



## IN THE IMAGE

## 'Our framing story'

Ed Olfert

The Jan. 10 bulletin at Tiefengrund Mennonite Church included the following church family news: "Ed Olfert has officially retired and is now living the good life! In other news, Ed was taken to hospital on Wednesday and was subsequently diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and now has to alter his diet and take pills/insert needles for the rest of his retirement. . . ."

The ambulance trip referred to was exactly one week into the highly vaunted good life.

My point is not to invite commiseration. My life continues to be good. I'm on to the next adventure.

In January, my online meditation from Richard Rohr spent a week exploring the stories within which we find ourselves. A compelling term used was "our framing story."

In 2014, the last of Holly, and my parents died. At the burial, a cousin pointed out that it would now be up to us, as the most senior generation. I understood that to mean that the family story would now be in our shepherding care. What would carry on as the family narrative—who we are, our place in the world—would be shaped by us.

Even on that emotional day, I understood the importance of that thought.

How this family understands our place in creation is now, to a significant degree, our responsibility.

If we see our lives as hard, plagued by injustice, or if we live our lives steeped in anger, controlled by an unfair world around us, our stories will reflect that. The generations that follow will wrap themselves in that bitterness, and it will be included in their framing story.

We can, however, make other choices.

The bulletin blurb I quoted earlier was written by a family member. I delight at the ability to tell stories, even hard stories, in a manner that lightens the telling, that puts it into a healthy perspective. A book I published some years ago was designed to tell stories of hope and wonder, to remind those who come after us that life is warm, is hopeful, is exciting, that goodness comes to us through all of creation. That goodness is always God.

The news is good. If our stories are bitter, we have not yet arrived at the place from which God calls. Certainly, we have all not yet arrived, and we all have a distance to go. Let the journey be part of the goodness.

An acquaintance regularly sends treatises that he has written, arguing his points about the true church, while more-than-equal words are written to

point out his opinions of the beast. He offers strong opinions about the identity of that beast. There is little about being transformed, finding joy.

Another friend sends daily meditations as well. And while his spiritual water comes from a slightly different stream, he writes as if his life depends on it. I believe that is true, that there is a desperation to his writing. He has committed an offence that separates him from his family, and he writes about his faith to offer himself a beacon of hope, a reminder that he is still loved, an affirmation that he still has something worthwhile to offer. His story, although very hard, is told with hope.

Can we do the same? Can our stories reflect spiritual realities that are soaked in hope, beauty and awe?

I close with a recent family text, this one penned by me: "Okay, so I'm pretty sure that diabetes hasn't affected me cognitively. . . ."

"But today I went for my walk around the edge of town. Put on my long underwear and the rest of my warm outfit. About a block down the road, hmmm, my knees are colder than they should be for -12. Looked down. Yep, forgot to put my pants back on."

Let the ones who come after you know that life is good, even when it's a little awkward. ☘



Ed Olfert (p2peho@gmail.com) is kept humble by those he loves the most.

## Et cetera

## Women Talking adaptation takes shape

Some big names are attached to the film adaptation of Miriam Toews's 2018 novel, *Women Talking*. Deadline.com reported in December 2020 that Frances McDormand, known for her Academy Award-winning work in the films *Fargo* and *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, will produce and star in the adaptation. Canadian filmmaker Sarah Polley, an Oscar nominee herself, will direct. Inspired by true events, *Women Talking* follows a group of women in a Mennonite colony in Bolivia as they struggle to reconcile their faith with a series of sexual assaults committed by the colony's men. The film's release date has not been announced.

By Aaron Epp



## MIND AND SOUL

# The practice of Lent

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

I like Lent. I wonder how many Mennonites practise this season in the church calendar. And if so, what they do.

For western Christians, Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17 this year, and lasts for six weeks (just over 40 days, since Sundays are not included). For Roman Catholics, that is through Thursday of Holy Week (April 1)—the commemoration of the Last Supper. For Protestants, Lent ends on Holy Saturday. It's even more complicated for Orthodox and other Christians. I asked a Ukrainian friend about her Lenten traditions and she sent me a message longer than this column is allowed to be!

Lent is intended to be a time of self-discipline and self-examination. For many people, Lent means “giving up something.” It could also mean adding something that is worth deliberately cultivating: like increased Bible reading, praying more often or writing a note of gratitude to someone each day.

Sometime over the past year I added a note in my calendar that my Lenten practice would be to pray with someone every day. I am always struck by how little we pray together, even when I have worked directly for Christian

organizations.

Lent has an obscure history, but it probably began around the time of the Council of Nicea in AD 325 (along with the Nicene Creed).

In many ways, Lent is like Ramadan, which is also an act of discipline and is also intended to develop the believer's discipleship. (This year Ramadan begins on April 12). The point is to practise like an athlete for better performance. In this case, it is performance only in the eyes of God, in the hope of running our race better. Lenten practice is a shadow of deeper faithfulness.

Lent is also a time to practice detachment. Changing something reduces attachment to the way things already are and provides an openness to new ways. If we give up something, we reduce our attachment to it.

I used to give up doughnuts. That was important because, in my skinny, younger, all-you-can eat days, eating three doughnuts a day was a regular practice. You can imagine how Lent reduced my attachment!

Giving up doughnuts is obviously a superficial example, but detachment from “the way things are” is an antidote to sticking excessively to “the way we've always done things.” It opens new space

for God to work in us. One new practice is doing a social-media fast for Lent. That's probably a good idea after incessant “doomscrolling” for “new” news over the past year. Fasting is a reduction of something; abstinence means refraining completely from that thing.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, Lenten fasting includes the abstaining from meat on Fridays and the reduction of eating throughout the day. I already go full vegan on Fridays, as a practice of detaching from meat-eating just a little. It means a one-seventh or 14-percent decrease in personal meat consumption. It's a small action I do for environmental reasons (meat-eating is high-cost for the planet), and for reasons of global solidarity (much of the world's population cannot afford meat regularly). There are other “rules” about Lenten fasts, but it is important not to get bogged down in the details. The gospel of Christ is not a law-bound faith.

The last thing to say about Lent is what comes right before Lent starts: Shrove Tuesday, Mardi Gras and various other “carnivals of excess.” Actually, I won't say anything. But do bring on the pancakes! ☘



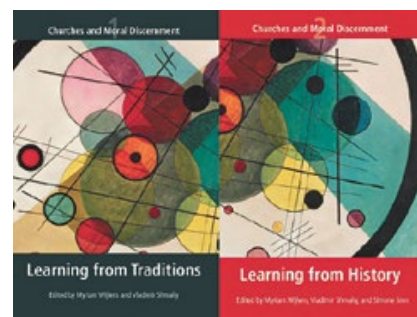
*Randolph Haluza-DeLay has been involved in Bridgefolk, a regular Catholic-Mennonite dialogue.*

## Et cetera

### WCC commission publishes two volumes on moral discernment

Current tensions within and between churches are often the result of disagreements over moral issues. Churches thus face challenges to preserve unity and meet obstacles to restore unity. Seeing the urgency of the matter, the World Council of Churches (WCC) Faith and Order Commission took up the task to assist the churches in finding a way to deepen mutual understanding leading to dialogue. *Churches and Moral Discernment. Vol. 1: Learning from Traditions* ([bit.ly/2L0JvW7](https://bit.ly/2L0JvW7)) provides self-descriptions of how 14 different church traditions engage in moral discernment processes. *Churches and Moral Discernment. Vol. 2: Learning from History* ([bit.ly/2YnsAQC](https://bit.ly/2YnsAQC)) examines concrete historic examples of churches that have modified or changed their understanding of a specific moral issue, including Christian involvement in war and in peacebuilding.

Source: World Council of Churches



## TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

# Living in the middle

Joshua Penfold

Life is full of spectrums, and I often struggle to find my place on them.

Some spectrums, like the light spectrum from infrared through the visible colours to ultraviolet, although fascinating, aren't highly controversial. Other spectrums, like our political or theological views, can harbour very passionate and divisive lines.

Spectrum has been employed to allow a greater variety of possibilities in areas that culturally were once thought of as binary, offering shades of grey.

There's also a spectrum of Bible translations mapping out whether a Bible leans more towards word-for-word or thought-for-thought translation.

Using a spectrum to help visualize an idea or reality can be helpful for identifying, differentiating or comparing.

Sometimes even spectrums are insufficient, and greater possibility is required. I find that wading through these possibilities is fascinating, but it can also be exhausting and overwhelming.

Maybe it's just me as an Enneagram 9. The Enneagram model of personalities is a great tool for understanding yourself and others. It's not a spectrum,

but more of a circle of connectedness, so that there are no extremes, just different but equally valid points. I highly recommend exploring it.

I tend to see the legitimacy and value of nearly each and every perspective and can never seem to land anywhere on certain spectrums of belief or value. So I usually find myself sitting precariously on the fence, somewhere in the middle, with one foot in each possible camp.

This is sometimes a curse. I'm slow to make decisions, I'm always afraid that I haven't considered something or someone. I'm a terrible debater because I'm always swayed by your point. Movement in my life is slow because decision-making is hard. On a personality test I once scored a six out of 100 for "preferred pace of action." Making decisions can be challenging—or maybe painstaking or excruciating—see what I mean?

But, in other ways, living in the middle is a wonderful blessing. I'm able to listen, to empathize with most people, even when our views are worlds apart. I tend to be agreeable and able to bring people together. At its best, living on the fence is active tension-holding, not disengaged immobility.

Sometimes I just wish everyone would aim to live in the middle with me, although we'd probably never get anything done or ever have any interesting conversations. At other times, I wish I could just make a choice and run with it. Better to be wrong, having moved somewhere and learned from my mistakes, than done nothing. My personal proverb the last year or so has been: "The only thing worse than making a bad decision is making no decision out of fear"

Because I know the tricky and exhausting path of the middle, I feel the wisdom of Agur in Proverbs 30: "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God."

The middle road is difficult and ambiguous, even painful, as you feel the tension from both extremes. But often it is valuable and beautiful, and blesses others who lean far out one way or the other. In the case of Agur, to go too far on the wealth spectrum either way was dangerous and potentially sinful. He prayed that he might live in the middle: not too much, not too little. ☿



Joshua Penfold  
(penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) lives between Kitchener and Stratford, Ont.

## Et cetera

### A rom-com with a Mennonite

A Mennonite character figures prominently in a Manitoba-lensed movie released last year. Written and directed by Winnipeg filmmaker Sean Garrity, *I Propose We Never See Each Other Again After Tonight* is a romantic comedy about a Filipina woman and a Mennonite man who meet in the depths of winter. "I just felt like those were two very essential communities in Winnipeg, and they're really under-represented communities, in a way," Garrity told the *Winnipeg Free Press* in March 2020, when discussing how he chose his characters' backgrounds. The *Globe and Mail* described the movie as "delightfully romantic . . . a fun, big-hearted time." It's available on video-on-demand platforms.



Kristian Jordan stars as Simon Friesen in *I Propose We Never See Each Other Again After Tonight*.

## BOOK REVIEW

# Liberating and recovering Anabaptist theology

*Recovering from the Anabaptist Vision: New Essays in Anabaptist Identity and Theological Method.*

Laura Schmidt Roberts, Paul Martens and Myron A. Penner, eds. Bloomsbury, 2020, 200 pages.

*Liberating the Politics of Jesus: Renewing Peace Theology through the Wisdom of Women.*

Darryl W. Stephens and Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, eds. Bloomsbury, 2020, 288 pages

Reviewed by David Driedger

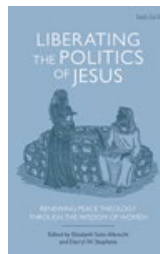
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

The two most influential attempts at Mennonite self-definition in the 20th century were Harold Bender's *Anabaptist Vision* and John Howard Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus*. Both legacies have come under scrutiny, with Yoder's more pointed due to the abuse he levelled personally.

Both theologies acted as a sort of marinade in which Mennonite churches, schools and leaders have soaked for decades, and so it is no small thing to reckon with expressions that have given the modern Mennonite church its flavour. Both books explicitly name these influences in their titles, signalling to readers that one cannot simply start again from scratch or return to some untainted past. To discern future steps, one must be aware of how past events still shape the present.

So what form do these theologies take in the wake of Bender and Yoder?

Mennonite theology was previously distilled through the singular voice of authoritative men. In contrast, these books are edited collections reflecting diversity in terms of gender, race and sexuality. The essays in *Liberating* are exclusively by woman, so race and ethnic diversity are given greater attention. This diversity builds on the often-unfulfilled value of community discernment within the Anabaptist tradition. From here the books diverge

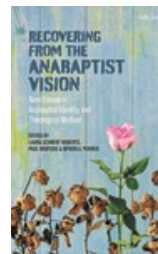


in terms of overall aim.

*Recovering* attempts a broad reflection on, and experimentation with, Anabaptist theology in general, while *Liberating* is a specific attempt at women forming an

adequate peace theology for the present moment.

*Recovering from the Anabaptist Vision* is the culmination of a larger process of reflection on Anabaptist identity and theological method, ranging broadly in style and content. The first three essays address more formal aspects of the theological method. Paul Martens sets



theology exists as a “contested conversation.” The hierarchies of authority are falling, and it is a good time to enter the conversation, so churches and individuals can find their voice.

The remaining essays offer a glimpse into that conversation, placing strong emphasis on the need for external relationships

of collaboration and accountability, whether in ecumenical or interreligious dialogue, acknowledging expressions of theology women have been articulating, or learning from queer and trauma-informed authors. Paul Doerksen concludes the book with an account of the restlessness of theology, saying that,

**While many essays in these books use traditional theological categories, many more have turned to lived experience as a component in Mennonite theology.**

the context, acknowledging the yearning of modern western Mennonites for a renewed sense of identity, and how both Bender and Yoder offered refined, elegant and powerful answers. Martens sees the new critical assessment of both accounts as opening up new opportunities to revisit our connection to historical Anabaptism and the relationship between church and state. Martens concludes with the observation that, in this time of renewal, Anabaptist

even as theology speaks with wonder, conviction and fear, its speech must be accountable to its limitations.

These essays are hesitant to make major substantive claims for Anabaptist theology establishing a relational or collaborative mode of theology beyond Anabaptist distinctives. This understanding helps avoid misguided quests for a fixed identity or kernel of truth around which to build theology, it pushes us to acknowledge that we are

always being formed in a complex of forces. Unless we take account of them, we will likely be determined by them in unhelpful or even harmful ways.

Given this framework, *Liberating the Politics of Jesus* can be read as an example of such a relational, collaborative approach. Peace theology is not built from a single male architect but is gathered from among the lives of a diverse group of women. While this collection definitely understands its relation to John Howard Yoder's work and legacy, it also acknowledges how women have always lived and embodied Jesus' political ways, but who can now "simply get on with reconstruction work and produce new material."

The book is divided into four parts, the first addressing theological method in relation to women's understanding on matters of patriarchy, racism and suffering. Part 2 offers three examples of lived peace theology in the contexts of South Africa, Colombia and the U.S. Part 3 brings peace theology to bear on the shattering realities of sexual violence, correcting harmful notions of forgiveness and salvation, as well as emphasizing the solidarity that must happen, even if all "facts" cannot be known. Symbolically closing the chapter on a larger era, the final part of the book addresses the fallout of Yoder's abuses on the church and its institutions.

While many essays in these books use traditional theological categories, many more have turned to lived experience as a component in Mennonite theology. This may address past abuses and limitations in Mennonite theology, but experience is not self-evident and should not become another foundation for doing theology. Experience should be a part of the "contested conversations" in our theology. The examples of collaboration, acknowledgment of suffering, and struggle for justice and healing provided in these books, offer tremendous resources opening out into the next generation of Mennonite theology. ☸

*David Driedger is associate minister of First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.*



## ONLINE NOW!

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



### Delivering food in the aftermath

A Mennonite Central Committee partner is distributing monthly boxes of food to families in Beirut who were affected by the massive explosion last summer.

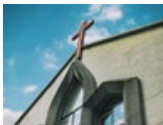
[canadianmennonite.org/beirutaid](http://canadianmennonite.org/beirutaid)



### Spirit of MDS Fund continues

Mennonite Disaster Service has announced a new round of funding from its Spirit of MDS Fund. It will provide grants worth up to \$2,500.

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



### Reconciliation recommendations for worship

Read about eight ideas for how your congregation can focus more on justice and racial reconciliation on Sunday mornings.

[canadianmennonite.org/blog/mrbp](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/mrbp)



### Paul Bergman returns with new single

Altona singer-songwriter Paul Bergman opens up about "I Just Want to Walk in the Dark with You," his first new music since 2015.

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

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Karen Stiller



**My Mother**  
The story of a courageous woman  
Helmut Lemko

Send your suggestion of a new book by or for Mennonites to [edassist@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:edassist@canadianmennonite.org).

CANADIAN  
MENNONITE

## PEOPLE

## PHOTO ESSAY

# Picturing her calling

*Saskatchewan pastor reflects on years in ministry through photographs*

By Donna Schulz

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
SASKATOON

**W**hat she really wanted was a party, but pandemic realities prompted Lois Siemens to find another creative way to celebrate the 10th anniversary of her ordination.

Superb Mennonite Church, near Kerrobert, Sask., called Siemens to ministry, and she was ordained there on Jan. 9, 2011. Today she lives in Saskatoon, where she serves as spiritual-care coordinator at Bethany Manor, a retirement community founded by Mennonite churches in Saskatoon and the area.

As a single woman, Siemens viewed this anniversary much as a married couple would view a wedding anniversary. And even though she couldn't have the party she had dreamed of, she felt she needed to mark the occasion in some way.

On the morning of the anniversary, Siemens went for a walk by the South Saskatchewan River and began taking photographs.

"I started realizing some of images were

connecting to my ministry," she says. "I started looking for them and then realized that they were everywhere."

As she took pictures, memories of her 10 years of ministry came to mind, prompting her to look for images that had to do with being surprised, transformed, reconciled or redeemed.

"I definitely felt God's Spirit at work," she says. "God was leading and, in a way, comforting. I wanted a party. That was a loss. And then this came as a kind of replacement."

Siemens couldn't share her images and captions with her friends in person, so she chose to share them on Facebook.



*"Thankful for the times I received support."*



*"Finding surprises along the way: friendship, questions, allies, teachers, beauty, resources, answers to prayer, places to live, financial resources, extra jobs."*



*Friends and family surround Lois Siemens at her ordination in 2011.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF LOIS SIEMENS

“It was just as satisfying as having a party,” she says. “I missed [seeing] all the people, but it was good to reflect on the past 10 years.” ☞

*All photos by Lois Siemens except where noted.*



*There were celebrations of death and life.*



*always looking for signs of hope*



*Lois Siemens's ordination Scripture verse, Psalm 86:12.*

## NEWS

# ‘We had a huge spike’

*Has the COVID-19 pandemic created lasting change for small farmers?*

By Will Braun  
Senior Writer

**W**hen COVID-19 struck last March, farmers who sell food directly to customers saw a rush on their products.

It seemed like people were just googling farms to go right to the source,” said Sarah Martin-Mills of Growing Hope Farm in Cambridge, Ont.

“We had a huge spike,” said Ben Martens Bartel of Grovenland Farm near Lanigan, Sask.

David Bunnett and his family raise cattle, pigs, and chickens—for meat and eggs—on about 160 hectares near Havelock, N.B. He said sales “shot through the roof” last spring. People were “unsure” about going to grocery stores, so outdoor pick-up from their porch was preferable. Demand came from existing customers as well as new ones and lapsed ones.

Many farmers sold out of their stock quickly. But if you sell pork, beef or eggs, you can’t ramp up supply in short order. So many direct-marketing farmers had to turn customers away once their existing stock sold out.

That was March and April. To what extent has the spring spike led to a sustained change in attitudes toward food? I asked four Mennonite direct-market farmers in four provinces. The people I spoke with said interest in the food they provide has evened off at a level somewhat higher, but not a lot higher, than in pre-pandemic times.

Martin-Mills said that if demand was at a baseline of three out of 10 pre-COVID, then hit 10 last spring, it would now be around four-and-a-half. She guesses that farms that did not have to turn away as many customers early on due to lack of supply may see



PHOTO COURTESY OF GROVENLAND

*A meal at Grovenland Farm near Lanigan, Sask.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF GROVENLAND

*Bacon and sausage from Grovenland Farm near Lanigan, Sask.*

greater sustained demand.

The dynamics for vegetable sales are different, in part because there were no local vegetables available in March. Still, many farms that offer a community-supported agriculture (CSA) subscription model sold out their pre-season orders more quickly than in other years. This was the case for the Metanoia Farmers Co-operative on the grounds of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg.

Megan Klassen-Wiebe, who has been part of Metanoia for nine of the 10 years it has existed, said the co-op sold out its CSA boxes after a May newspaper article about increased interest in local food featured it.

She noted that one challenge Metanoia faced last season was the availability of seeds, since there was a rush on seeds as interest in gardening ballooned.



Although it is hard to gauge, she believes there is some increase in demand for local vegetables, but increasing production to match it is complicated, largely by limited growing space.

Other farmers faced similar challenges. Grass-fed beef takes two years. Pigs take nine months. Barns have limited space. Additional labour may be a challenge.

Other COVID-19-related dynamics that people mentioned include the Canada Emergency Response Benefits payments and reduced travel that resulted in more money for people to spend on food, gaps in availability of farm supplies (like greenhouses), booked-up abattoirs, the pressures of school-aged kids learning at home, and more people in rural areas growing and raising their own food (which, among other things, created a short supply of chicks).

At Growing Hope Farm, the pandemic put a stop to visits to the three-hectare farm. Marten-Mills said they used to have about 30 volunteers a week at the farm—women from a nearby prison, students, people with developmental disabilities and others. COVID-19 interrupted the community-involvement aspect that is a key part of Growing Hope.

Pandemic aside, I asked the four farmers what changes they have observed related to locally grown food over time. In short, the answer is fairly steady, gradual growth.

“Interest in buying local has been a slow, steady increase,” said Martens-Bartel.

Jeanette Sivilay, a former member of the Metanoia Farm, focused her master’s studies on small-scale agriculture in Manitoba. Sivilay, who now serves as coordinator of the Winnipeg Food Council, said there are a lot more CSA farms in Manitoba than there were a decade or so ago. She takes particular encouragement from the fact that a number of young farmers are starting families on the farm, an indication of their confidence.

The pandemic created an opening for advocates of local food to build on this.

“People re-thought a lot of things,” during the pandemic, she said, “including food.” Looking back at a window of dramatically increased interest that is perhaps closing to some extent, she asked: “Did we capitalize on this as much as we could have?” ❧

### News brief

#### Spiritual directors provide materials to pray with the scriptures for Lent



*This visual accompanies the printed Lenten Guided Prayer materials.*

Each year the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada prepare Lenten Guided Prayer materials for use by individuals, churches and small groups during Lent. Rooted in the lectionary scripture texts for the season, and inspired by the worship themes in *Leader*, a publication of MennoMedia that provides worship and other resources for church life, the Lenten Guided Prayer materials invite participants into a journey of “deeper engagement with God, scripture, [self] and the world.” This year, the materials entitled “Deep Calls to Deep,” invite people to hear God’s call “from even greater depths of mystery and grace,” and to “be encouraged, in the midst of uncertainty, to respond to, and find security in, God’s call to relationship, commitment, wisdom, healing, growth and hope.” The materials include prayer sheets for each of the six weeks of Lent, with questions for reflection, and several prayer activities. There are also suggestions for small groups, including an opening and closing liturgy, if people choose to share the Lenten journey with others. The Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada is a partner organization of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. Lenten Guided Prayer materials are available from [commonword.ca](http://commonword.ca).



—BY JANET BAUMAN

### News brief

#### Edmonton First Mennonite Church has talent



PHOTO BY SUZANNE GROSS

*Theo, an eight-year-old beagle-poodle mix only sings when owner Robert Kirchner, left, plays his flute. At the talent show, Kirchner played “All These Endearing Young Charms” as Theo, who is partial to Irish Tunes, sang for the Zoom crowd. Pictured at right is Suzanne Gross.*

Edmonton First Mennonite Church hosted a two-minute talent show on Zoom on Jan. 31. Emceed by Cara Baergen, wearing a black jacket and jazzy red bow-tie, members were invited to share their talents—but only for two-minutes each. Acts included a singing beagle-poodle mix named Theo; a fashion show of crocheted clothing items by Ev Buhr; Lego creations made of thousands of pieces by Herman Neufeld; photos of home renovations; poetry reading; a tour of an eclectic musical instrument collection; a cross-stitch of planet Earth, completed after 10 years by Joanne Moyer, (displayed by headlamp in homage to the lamp that was required to finish the piece); trampoline flips by Blake Lizette; and dancing by Katelyn Lizette. A large countdown clock was used to keep each participant in check, and if participants performed or shared their talent for more than two minutes, an elephant would loudly trumpet. More than 60 people attended.

—JOANNE DE JONG

# Living in the moment (during COVID-19)

By Joanne De Jong  
Alberta Correspondent  
LETHBRIDGE, ALTA.

Even in the midst of a pandemic, six young adults from Germany and France chose to continue with their plans to serve with Mennonite Voluntary Service Adventure in Lethbridge. They arrived last fall, and one more youth was to join them at the end of January after quarantining for two weeks.

Maj-Britt Becker of Karlsruhe, Germany, says the upside of being forced to immediately quarantine was that it gave unit members a chance to really know each other. They also were able to set up a schedule and rotation, so everyone was responsible for daily and weekly tasks such as vacuuming, dusting and taking out the garbage.

Everyone takes a turn cooking, with one of their favourite meals being pancakes, which requires 1.5 kilograms of flour so they can make a minimum of 35 pancakes. Toppings include vegetables and cheese sauce for the main-course pancakes and Nutella for the dessert pancakes.

One thing unit members miss from back home is homemade bread. Thankfully, Noah Sommer of Pontarlier, France,

volunteers at the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) thrift store, where he has found many treasures, including a bread maker, which is used daily to provide for the team. Additional finds have been disco lights for kitchen parties, a sophisticated bottle opener, a carpet and a bullet-proof vest, which so far has not been needed.

Hanna Schacher of Esslingen, Germany, jokes that the unit is “like a family—but with less arguments.” “The honeymoon will hopefully continue,” she says.

Many expressed how they look forward to going home at the end of each day to share stories and a meal around the table.

Sven Kobel of Weidenthal, Germany, shares his experiences with Streets Alive, an organization that works with homeless people in downtown Lethbridge. “Sometimes it’s scary,” he says, “when a lot are drunk or take drugs in the bathroom, but they are friendly, easy to talk to, and very open and thankful.”

Four team members work with people with disabilities through organizations such as L’Arche, Peak Vocational and Support

Services, and the Ability Resource Centre.

“These people bring me joy every day,” shares Schacher, who loves the experience of seeing those with and without disabilities living together as a community. This integrated approach was something she had not seen in Germany. Lessons learned are patience and the need for humour, like when working with someone who repeatedly likes to poke people saying “Infected!”

The volunteers have discovered over time that their different assignments are interconnected. The MCC thrift store gives its excess to Streets Alive and Streets Alive passes on things to Peak, and so on.

The volunteers come from different denominations and have really enjoyed spirited and meaningful theological debates. They have come to realize they share the same vision of the world, and all love God, so they can look past differences.

“It’s a beautiful thing,” says Sommer.

The group prays together and reads the Bible together. Members agree that their faith affects their service in that they all try to approach each person with love and not suspicion.

The only sadness has been the limited chances to get to know the Lethbridge Mennonite congregants because of pandemic restrictions. Even so, each volunteer has been assigned a host family to connect with them and check in regularly.

Evelyn Bechtold of Pforzheim, Germany, plays Scrabble daily online with Anne Martens, a church member in her 80s.

Johannes Roesch of Wiesloch, Germany, plays video games online weekly with the Moyer family. Games include Carcassonne and 6 Nimmit!

They have also been taken hiking, snowshoeing, ice skating and sharing hotdogs outside. They say they were spoiled at Christmas with so much food, gift cards and presents.

Two families in the church made them a whole New Year’s supper and lent them a raclette pan to roast things with melted cheese. They are very grateful for the church’s support.

Canada has been a new experience and truly a “service adventure,” says Sommer. As far as the inconvenience of COVID-19, he says, “We are just living in the moment—not a problem!” ❧



PHOTO BY ELAINE KLASSEN

*The current Mennonite Voluntary Service Adventure unit hikes in Waterton Park for the first time, together with some of the members of Lethbridge Mennonite Church. Pictured from left to right: volunteers Maj-Britt Becker, Sven Kobel, Evelyn Bechtold, Hanna Schacher, Johannes Roesch and Noah Sommer.*

# FOCUS ON

# Camps

## 'A marathon of uncertainty'

Story and Photos by Willowgrove  
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE, ONT.

If you pivot enough times, it becomes dancing. And over this past year, Willowgrove found that, despite its Mennonite roots, it has taken to dancing quite naturally.

Johnny Wideman, Willowgrove's executive director, only took the helm this past February, having just three weeks in the office before the COVID-19 lockdown.

"I was amazed by the tenacity of Willowgrove's staff," he says. "Many of our team members have been with the organization for over a decade, yet everyone seemed to acknowledge that this year was going to be different and committed wholeheartedly to a marathon of uncertainty."

Willowgrove's Outdoor Education Centre typically hosts around 17,000 students every year. However, with field trips halted during the pandemic, Willowgrove pivoted its day programming into a full-time Nature School, designed to supplement the Ontario curriculum and provide hands-on, inquiry-based learning through an outdoor classroom. Offering five- and three-day programs for students aged 6 to 12, Willowgrove's low student-to-teacher ratios of two teachers for every 15 students meant the organization was able to safely meet the educational needs of its community, while also nurturing children's emotional and social well-being during an otherwise scary time.

"It's so refreshing to see smiling faces at drop off and pick up," says Corrin, a Nature School parent. "[Our son] runs to the car in the morning. Such a difference from school last year. What a great thing you've all done."

Willowgrove's Day Camp was one of the many camps that was unable to offer its typical summer programming this past summer; the first time since 1968. However, the energy and creativity of Willowgrove's camp minds came together in partnership with Autism Ontario, to provide drive-through scavenger hunts, and DJ sets and Halloween parties on site for families with children with special needs.



*A Harvest Fest wagon ride at Willowgrove.*

Willowgrove also hosted a drive-through fundraiser, providing farm-fresh meals alongside a local chef, as well as a drive-through Christmas "eye spy" event.

The Day Camp also provided "bubble programs" for families to explore the creek, hike trails and rent the pool. We also created a bubble-focused Harvest Festival for groups of 25 to come apple picking, buy produce and go on wagon rides.

"There was a lot of excitement around these events," says Maeyken Jones, director of the Day Camp. "We had to think of unique ways for our community to safely experience camp. This meant bubbles and cars, but so many families thanked us

profusely for simply providing something during COVID."

Willowgrove Day Camp is already deep into its summer planning and has fully modified the camp program, placing campers in unique cohorts with revised daily schedules that ensure these groups never mix.

"We have such a talented, passionate group of people at Willowgrove," says Wideman. "Our community of local churches pours so much into this place as well. I have every reason to believe we will ride out this season of strange uncertainty and will be all the stronger for it." ❧

## FOCUS ON CAMPS

# Grief and loss

Story and Photo by Tim Larson  
Camp Squeah  
HOPE, B.C.

In the late hours of a wintry night, a cold wind blew hard up the valley. It howled from an unusual direction, bending tree and limb. Under the unaccustomed pressure, seemingly sturdy trees gave way to the unyielding force, grasping desperately to the earth as their mass was moved inexorably to the ground.

With a house-shaking thump I was jolted awake, wondering at first what it was, then where it fell and what was lost. In the shock of a mere moment at midnight in my bed, I was confronted with the pain and fear of

further loss in a year bursting with it.

Camp Squeah, like most other church camps, has had to grapple with an unaccounted amount of grief and loss. Loss of community, opportunity, revenue, relationship, employment; loss of the chance to give generously to thousands of lives who typically grace our beautiful place. My heart has been a basin constantly filled with the overflow of grief over these losses.

And yet there seems to be an oddly poignant grace that has accompanied this grief.



*Thinking of our remarkable trees, never in my 14 years at Squeah have we had such losses to life and limb—trees, that is. Buildings damaged, activities crushed and some truly magnificent softwood giants have fallen.*

Thinking of our remarkable trees, never in my 14 years at Squeah have we had such losses to life and limb—trees, that is. Buildings damaged, activities crushed and some truly magnificent softwood giants have fallen.

And yet, when we see the inside of some of these tree trunks, we see that many were quite rotten. It is also strikingly apparent that, to have had these losses with hundreds of people on site, would have put at risk the lives of countless children. Now, in the midst of my grief, I find thankfulness a constant companion.

How our Lord Jesus uses grief as a vital tool in spiritual growth is a great mystery and profound miracle. It is an echo of the grief of Christ that drives me towards God. And now that the whole of my life at camp has recently become a cauldron full of difficulty, the Holy Spirit is stirring up to bring me to deeper understandings of his great love, joy and life. How much more is our whole community and ministry at Camp Squeah, and what it means!

How might we in the camping world embrace all our grief, discover thankfulness, have eyes to see God's grace in our losses, be willing to grieve with one another honestly and listen to what his Spirit is saying? These are the difficult yet essential questions I wish to ponder. How about you? ❧

*Tim Larson is Camp Squeah's summer and outdoor education director*

## Squeah summer camp season uncertain

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

After last year's cancellation of summer camp due to the pandemic, staff at Mennonite Church B.C.'s Camp Squeah are hopeful that a regular camping season can resume in summer 2021.

Gatherings such as group camps are

currently prohibited in B.C. A decision on overnight camping is conditional on restrictions being lifted and operational plans approved by regional and provincial health authorities.

"The future is still rather murky," admits



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAMP SQUEAH

*Children in B.C. hope to return to activities at Camp Squeah this summer but will have to wait until spring to see if the camping season can proceed.*

## FOCUS ON CAMPS

camp director Rob Tiessen. “One week we are optimistic with the advent of vaccines, and the next we’re discouraged by the continued emphasis on lockdown and news of lack of vaccine availability.”

Nonetheless, Tiessen says, “We are tentatively still making plans for a summer of ministry.”

Final decision-making will come later this spring: mid-April for a decision about forecasting for July camps, and mid-May

for assessing August program plans.

“We’re hoping that our plans for summer 2021 at Camp Squeah will be able to adapt to whatever restrictions may be in place,” says a link on the Camp Squeah website. “We will endeavour to continue keeping campers safe while providing a fun place to make lasting memories together.”

If youth camps do proceed, safety measures will be put in place. These include close contact limited to small groups, as

close as possible to the traditional summer camp experience with limitations based on physical distancing requirements, but not including the usual backpacking overnight camping experience.

“Naturally we wish we could plan with more certainty, as program prep, staffing, et cetera, is a process that can’t wait until the last minute,” says Tiessen. ❧

# Keeping the excitement of camping alive

By Laura Grassing  
Camp Elim  
LAC PELLETIER, SASK.

Last year marked Camp Elim’s 75th anniversary, but it was a challenging year for us. Our plans for running camp as normal were quickly thwarted with the looming pandemic. By mid-May, it became apparent that we would not be able to operate our camper program due to government restrictions forcing the closure of overnight summer-camp programs across Saskatchewan. Government reopening plans and sanitizing protocols also made it difficult to operate as a rental facility, other than that of our recreational vehicle park.

Instead of preparing for campers, we seized the opportunity of a “maintenance summer” to repair, refresh and restore our facilities. Although we would not be hiring our regular staffing numbers, the board mandate became to provide three students with summer jobs, as we had received funding through the Canada Summer Jobs federal grant program.

Together with our facility manager, the students worked at a variety of tasks, such as painting, cleaning, organizing, maintaining grounds, sanitizing for COVID-19, demolishing and replacing our expired refrigeration units, and doing improvements to our craft shack. They also made good progress at increasing our online presence on Facebook and Instagram.

Our 75th anniversary was celebrated virtually this year. Subscribers to our social-media channels were taken down memory lane through the last 75 days of



CAMP ELIM PHOTO

*Campers enjoy a bonfire at Camp Elim.*

2020, with daily posts highlighting Camp Elim’s growth and change throughout our history.

This year, we are hopeful that we will be able to increase our rental availability throughout the peak season, in order to increase our income. Rentals provide a great opportunity for groups to enjoy our space, and they supplement our costs substantially. In addition to this, we are in the process of hiring an executive director to help us manage the overall umbrella of our operations.

With the 2021 season upon us, there continues to be uncertainty surrounding the ability of camps to operate as we

normally would. At the time of writing this article, the Saskatchewan government has provided guidelines for day camps, but overnight camping is not permissible under current health restrictions.

This season, Camp Elim is planning to run day camps for the month of July that will cater to a variety of age groups. In this way, we still hope to be able to provide a valuable service to our community, increase our visibility in southwest Saskatchewan and keep the excitement of camp alive! ❧

*Laura Grassing is a Camp Elim Board member.*

## FOCUS ON CAMPS

# A chance to try new ideas

By Brent Musser  
Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp  
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

**A**s I reflect on a year of “being camp” during COVID-19, I hear Psalm 32: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”

We have seen the waters of uncertainty surging. We have experienced fear, loss, disorientation and anger. At moments we have succumbed to despair and anxiety. Often, however, we have persevered and regrouped, adjusted and dug in while charting a new course forward. At Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, we trust we have been guided by the loving eye of God along a path we never would have chosen ourselves.

Our aim has been to remain faithful to our calling: to be a welcoming, peaceful gathering place where diverse groups of people experience life-giving connections with God, one another and nature.

But we have done so in new ways, adjusting to new circumstances and the limits set by our current reality. We miss what we have lost: school groups, summer campers and summer staff, who usually bring an incomparable energy to this space; familiar faces at retreats in our buildings; meeting

folks from new groups; and the annual chicken barbecue fundraiser that allows many of our friends and supporters to reconnect with us and each other.

But without these losses we would not have had the chance to try new ideas:

- **We brought** camp into homes virtually via live-streamed and pre-recorded social-media events, and through our camp-in-a-bag initiative.
- **During the summer** we opened our space for individual families to camp and for day use.
- **In the fall** we offered outdoor events, including two fundraising dinners and two bird walks.
- **We also** had the opportunity to develop a new Community Life and Skills Program (CLASP) for young adults with special needs.

Through these initiatives we welcomed new people to camp and gave some people a chance to experience camp in a new way. For that we are grateful.

None of us would have chosen this path.



PHOTO BY CHRIS POT

*Hidden Acres 2020 summer staff cabin, pictured from left to right: Chris Pot, Brittany Ratelband, Cassie Zehr, Julia Lantz, and Sam Bielby, (hanging upside down).*

We acknowledge with sadness the suffering it has brought to many people. We long for days when the pandemic is a memory, and look forward with hope towards a full summer of camping this year and the eventual return of our retreat groups. But, whatever happens, we believe God will continue to be present here and lead us as we and others experience this sacred space in familiar and unfamiliar ways. ✎

*Brent Musser is the facilities and environmental stewardship director at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp.*

## ‘Love thy neighbour’

Story and Photo by Mark Wurtz  
Youth Farm Bible Camp  
ROSTHERN, SASK.

**I**nnovation, creativity and pivoting were key strengths that non-profit organizations used in 2020, especially if their main revenue streams involved gathering people together in large groups.

At Youth Farm Bible Camp, we quickly adapted in the middle of our fundraising season to be a safe place from which to deliver groceries and meals. We cancelled our traditional Vereniki supper and were blessed with hundreds of people ordering groceries online and coming to the camp

for pickup every Thursday. In addition to groceries, many purchased our delicious, made-that-day cinnamon buns and the hot meal of the week that was slow-roasted on our smokers. Our staff were engaged with our constituents and rallied to maintain many ministries going on at our site.

There was a buzz of activity onsite that included equestrian lessons (when the province opened), respite camps for special-need adults, day camps, Moses’ tabernacle tours, and family fun at the

Youth Farm corn maze.

Our summer camp program was very different than previous years, but all of the opportunities helped our staff and board learn new lessons. There are new programs, policies, and procedures that we would never have tried if it were not for the new challenges experienced. Many will stay even when we are no longer living in a pandemic.

Psychologist Henry Cloud has expressed the value churches and ministries have in today’s mental-health epidemic. What we offer at the farm—equestrian-assisted learning, animal therapy, retreating, family adventures in creation with creatures, and connections with people who are especially challenged—increases mental and emotional health. There is also so much

## FOCUS ON CAMPS

more that camps offer to our world that give opportunities for healthy spiritual, emotional, physical and mental growth.

For the last 80 years, the mission statement of Youth Farm Bible Camp has been to “Share Jesus with people and provide a place to serve.”

We hope that our summer camping program will come back and thrive. We also know that, as our programs shift and change, our overall mission will stay the same. The summer camp program does not define our corporate identity as much as it did a year ago. ☘



*Youth Farm Bible Camp's corn maze theme last year was 'Love thy neighbour,' honouring its neighbour, the Mennonite Nursing Home, and its dedicated staff.*

## Two-week music camp being planned

By Rachael Driediger

Ontario Mennonite Music Camp camper  
WATERLOO, ONT.

**O**ntario Mennonite Music Camp (OMMC) is a two-week camp hosted at Conrad Grebel University College, offering teenagers aged 12 to 16 an opportunity to explore both music and faith.

Much of a typical day at camp is spent making music together in choir, small ensembles or around evening campfires. Everyone arrives at camp playing a variety of instruments at different levels, and it is amazing to watch how quickly the musical, choir songs and ensemble pieces come

together in only two weeks.

Besides a love for music, campers and staff find connections through their common faith. In addition to the morning chapel service, one hour each evening is devoted to staff-led small-group Bible studies. Some campers and staff have Mennonite connections, while others do not but, regardless, everyone shares a common Christian faith that allows us to explore scriptures together and grow in our faith.



2018 ONTARIO MENNONITE MUSIC CAMP PHOTO

*Ontario Mennonite Music Campers participate in daily master classes with their instrument of choice, as part of two action-packed weeks of music, games, faith, concerts and friendship, in 2018.*

Both Grebel and the camp place a large emphasis on community. The sense of community doesn't stop at Grebel's doors but extends to include serving our broader community. Campers have frequently volunteered at Mennonite Central Committee's warehouse in Kitchener, Ont., by helping to sort items to be sent overseas, and by tying

quilt tops that volunteers have graciously donated. Another avenue for service is through leading Sunday morning worship at a local Mennonite church, where campers and staff plan the entire service, from the music right down to the message.

One disappointment of 2020 was not being able to attend camp in-person; however, the resourceful camp group offered a one-day camp called “OMMC in a Box.” Campers received a box of supplies in the mail, containing everything from songbooks and snacks to a camp T-shirt. Although an online version of camp could not include all the usual traditions, there was one OMMC tradition that even COVID-19 could not stop: wacky utensil meal!

We are thankful for the impact of OMMC on our lives, and we look forward to seeing what summer 2021 holds!

OMMC is planning an exciting, musical two weeks of in-person camp, from Aug. 15 to 27. Registration will open on March 1. OMMC will follow COVID-19 protocols and take guidance from Public Health, so no fees will be collected until May at the earliest. ☘

## FOCUS ON CAMPS

# Silver Lake marks 60th anniversary in 2021

By Karen Cornies  
Silver Lake Mennonite Camp  
SAUBLE BEACH, ONT.

Camp can make such a difference in the life of a camper, even over Zoom. That was the great discovery of the summer of 2020. We were very happy to see so many faces in this online experience!

The theme of the summer was “Seek, love, walk,” based on Micah 6:8. Seeking justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God is a call and guide to how to live life, and Silver Lake Mennonite Camp embarked on that journey in unique ways last year.

Assistant directors Robert MacGregor and Sarah Plant wrote about their experiences: “This past summer was like nothing we had ever seen at Silver Lake. Due to COVID-19, we unfortunately had to close for the summer, but camp continued. We quickly found that our community could still be fostered over Zoom. We offered seven weeks of Camp@Home and five weeks of the Camper in Leadership Training (CILT) program. We welcomed more than 200 campers, and many friends joined weekly campfires!

“Spring outdoor education staff put together a fantastic opening Zoom campfire for the Silver Lake community. More than 90 friends of Silver Lake signed on that night, and many continued to do so week after week. Classic camp songs were sung live or played through past camp

recordings, and skits were performed with the clever use of Zoom virtual backgrounds and fun costumes.

“Usually at camp, during our last song of the night, all campers and staff hold hands. This became a tradition of Zoom campfires! Campfire goers crossed their arms during the last song to emulate holding hands together at camp, creating a link of arms across Zoom screens.”

“Zoom allowed us to get creative with programming. We introduced the first-ever Silver Lake book club, where campers and staff read Kenneth Oppel’s *Inkling* together, the highlight being a guest appearance from the author himself!”

Sadly, there is also grief reflected in the past year. With heavy hearts, the Silver Lake community grieved the passing of Fred Neufeld, Henry Pauls, Annie Bergen, Dennis Dick and John Cornies. Each of these pillars of Silver Lake was a long-standing friend of camp.

We thank God for another year and look forward to what 2021 will bring. At the start of this year, Silver Lake marks 60 years of camping and is preparing for another unique summer. It is still unclear what this season will hold, but Silver Lake is preparing for what may come, offering day camps in 14 locations across Ontario, cabin rentals, a modified

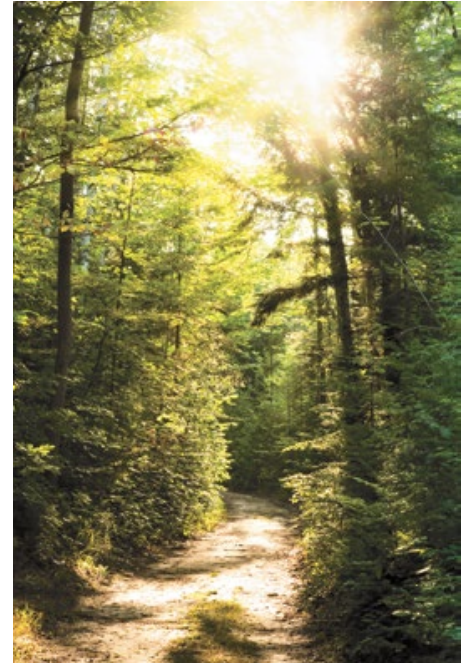


PHOTO BY JENNIE WIEBE

*Sunlight-splashed trees at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp.*

overnight summer program and online back-up plans.

For information about 2021, visit [slmc.ca](http://slmc.ca).



## Camping with a purpose

By Jason McDowell  
Fraser Lake Camp  
BANCROFT, ONT.

Last year, Fraser Lake Camp’s cabins, which magically turn groups of kids into little families each summer, went empty. There were no echoes of rambunctious camp songs to rattle across the lake. No one reached the top of the climbing wall to the cheers of their counsellors and

fellow campers below. No one shared a conversation paddling across the lake with a new friend, sat at the dock to view a precious sunset or got dressed up for a banquet.

For the first time in 65 years Fraser Lake Camp did not host an overnight camp.

While seeing the necessity, and certainly agreeing with the decision last summer, my heart also remains deeply broken for the lost opportunities. Camp is a place for community, for growth. Memories children make at camp often become cornerstones in their lives. As the director, I hear people share these memories with me, and it is truly humbling.

To be honest, I have the best job in the world. My primary task is to remember: remember what it was like to be a child at camp, remember what it was like to be a staffer, and to remember what makes us



## FOCUS ON CAMPS

human and connects us.

The pandemic hit right after I hired my last staff. Like a ragtag group of superheroes, we knew our families needed us now more than ever. So we pivoted into an online program called Camp@Home (campathome.com). Amazingly, C@H ended up booking roughly as many camper weeks as our physical programming did in 2019—and from all over the world.

It was a fascinating exercise to distill what camp does and then develop that into a two-hour daily program that aimed to achieve the same goal. Our tag line ended up being “Building genuine, social interactions online.” I’m so proud of our team, because they were able to make that a reality for many campers last summer,



PHOTO BY KARIE COTRONE

*Jemma Cotrone is dressed as RBG for a costume dance party at Fraser Lake Camp.*

over the Christmas break with “Winter week,” and we will do so again this March break.

It was such a success that this summer we’ll run C@H along our physical programming at Fraser Lake, which will include three weeks of family camp, and reduced-capacity, small-cohort experiences for children and youth.

After the pandemic settles, we will all need a place for unity, we will need a place for healing, we will need a place to rebuild ourselves and each other. We are excited at Fraser Lake Camp to do whatever it takes to offer that place. We are excited to continue being a nimble and creative force that can shift with the wind while still maintaining a course towards being a camp with a purpose. ☘

# Many hands make the work doable

Shekinah Retreat Centre  
WALDHEIM, SASK.

**A**t Shekinah we struggle to sit still. When we decided to shut our doors in March 2020, in response to the coronavirus pandemic, it not only felt foreign, it also felt wrong. It is much easier to work harder to try to solve a problem than it is to wait, watch and be still. What we have found as a staff is that slowing down and letting go has opened up new opportunities.

While the staff was laid off, nature took over. Trails were harder to find and the grass became more appealing to mosquitos. In order to keep up with general maintenance, Shekinah invited volunteers out for a much-needed workday.

Volunteers got to work on cleaning cabins, mowing grass and pulling weeds. One of the other tasks set out for the day was beginning a new project to build a new bridge on Shekinah’s Ravine Trail. This work involved bringing large beams out to the bridge-building site.

Now anyone who has enjoyed Shekinah’s Ravine trail will know that it is impossible to get even a small vehicle on

this trail. So, in order to get the three-metre beams two kilometres to the building site, we needed to get creative.

I would ask you to imagine with me what this process looked like, but we have a photo that will do the trick. It took no less than five people to carry, steer and manoeuvre the post down the windy trail. Two people steered at the front, one pushed at the back, and as many hands as we could get to alleviate the weight in the middle of the beam.

This is an example of how Shekinah has approached the pandemic. We know we want to get through this and we know it will be difficult, but with many hands the work is doable.

Over the past few months, the staff has witnessed unbelievable support from the Shekinah community. We are uplifted and hopeful as we live through this difficult time. ☘



SHEKINAH RETREAT CENTRE PHOTO

*Volunteers carry out building supplies on Shekinah’s Ravine Trail.*

## FOCUS ON CAMPS

# Churches helping camps helping churches

*'We can only do it if we're all doing it together': Janet Peters*

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent

**A**fter a week of non-stop activities soundtracked by endless cheering and screaming kids, you might think the staff of Camp Koinonia would sleep in. Instead, every Sunday morning they put on their Birkenstocks and cleanest clothes and head to Whitewater Mennonite Church in nearby Boissevain.

Many Mennonite Church Manitoba congregations are involved in Camps with Meaning (CwM), the regional church's ministry that consists of Camp Koinonia and Camp Assiniboia. Congregants volunteer, pray, donate, send their children, give their pastors time to serve there, and pay their young adults who work as staff.

But some congregations have developed special relationships with the camps. Attending Whitewater has been a tradition of Koinonia staff for as long as Molly Schaefer can remember, even back when weekend breaks between camp sessions were less than 24 hours. Schaefer worked at the camp for 10 years, doing everything from counselling in summer to managing the camp while living onsite throughout the year.

Every summer, camp staff plan and lead a worship service for Whitewater. Congregants host the workers for tailgate barbecues and pancake breakfasts, young mixing with old, conservative and liberal churchgoers connecting with each other.

"The staff are really great about spreading out at tables . . . they're getting to know the church members," says Matt Heide, a Whitewater member and general manager of Koinonia. He says they bring a new energy and bigger purpose to the roughly 50-person congregation. "You think of just the singing alone, and you add 20 staff into that, well that's a big deal. . . . Whitewater, the members, appreciate them so much."

The feeling is mutual. And not only because of the constant supply of homemade cookies that Whitewater congregants send to camp staff by the pail, although their rallying effect on dozens of tired young adults must not be underestimated.

When Schaefer was working as resident manager and needed help, she could pick up the phone and, in 20 minutes, someone from the church would be on their way.

many of whom attend Whitewater, operate the camp under the name Camp Koino Inc. and rent it back to Camps with Meaning for summer programming. "There's just too much passion yet in this area to let Koinonia go," Heide says.

Springstein Mennonite Church's proximity to Camp Assiniboia, near Headingley, means that the two are also a closely intertwined community. Springstein receives the first phone call when a



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID HOGUE

**Springstein congregants join others to help place sand bags at Camp Assiniboia during the flooding of 2011.**

"People were, from my experience, really willing to show up and help out . . . that community was there and ready to jump in whenever the time called for it," she says.

Camp Koinonia was initiated by a group of several churches in southwestern Manitoba in the 1960s. Now a group of locals,

windstorm knocks over trees or a building project needs extra help, says Dave Wiebe, a Springstein member who grew up working at the camp. He has been a member of committees supporting Assiniboia for more than 15 years.

Springstein was instrumental in the

## FOCUS ON CAMPS

founding and development of Assiniboia in 1949. To this day, camp is still one of the church's top two mission priorities, Wiebe says. "It's in our DNA, that's for sure."

Assiniboia's summer staff don't regularly attend Sunday morning services at Springstein the way their western counterparts do. But they connect and visit every summer when camp staff lead a worship service for the congregation. For Springstein, the stronger connection is with Assiniboia's year-round staff, who live at the camp or in the area and are active members of the church.

The eager enthusiasm of these dedicated

staff "is what keeps the passion in me and our church," Wiebe says. "It's infectious . . . when you see new people coming in, and that candle gets reignited with that excitement, that flame keeps going and that's the exciting part of being part of this."

Wiebe says he finds this work compelling because camp is a "mission field of equipping our young adults to become better leaders within the Christian community. . . . To me, it's the best place where leaders are shaped and formed."

Schaefer adds, "[Camp] gives a really unique and beautiful access point to faith and church for an age group that often

starts to stray away from the church."

In addition to Whitewater and Springstein, dozens of other MC Manitoba congregations are deeply invested in CwM's ministry, while still others choose to send their kids elsewhere and have never set foot in either camp.

"I think it just needs to be said that Camps with Meaning is a ministry of all of the MC Manitoba churches," says Janet Peters, CwM's associate program director, "It's a huge piece of what we do together, and one church couldn't do it. We can only do it if we're all doing it together." ❧

## Camps 'pop up' around Manitoba

Story and Photo by Janet Peters  
Camps with Meaning

Summer Camp 2020 was full of innovations. Almost everything needed adjustments. We held staff Zoom parties in the spring to build the camp community feeling that usually happens naturally at our staff training week.

When at camp, staff were outside almost all of the time, eating, meeting and hanging out in large circles on the grass. We introduced "Trish the Fish" to our campers, a two-metre, colourful, plastic foam fish that would "swim" through the group to ensure proper distancing, and other fun tricks to remind the campers to stay safe.

One of my personal favourite innovations was the "Pop-up Camp." We knew that not all of our camper families would be able to drive to camp twice a day, five days in row, to attend the day camps we ran at Camp Assiniboia. Although the camp is just a short drive west of Winnipeg, a number of our campers come from rural settings hours away or would have been limited in other ways. And Camp Koinonia, being in the southwest corner of the province, was even harder to get campers to without the bus we are usually able to provide. So, how would we connect with more of our campers? Well, we would pop up where they were, of course!

Our staffers were a little sceptical when

the idea was first proposed. The whole point of camp was to be at camp, right? But, the pastors and churches were excited, and we had no trouble finding places to "pop up": at two churches in the city and two in southern Manitoba, as well as at our very own Camp Koinonia. Each "Pop-up Camp" followed a similar structure, with a morning activity, a Bible and nature lesson, crafts and games, another Bible and nature lesson, and a group treasure hunt game. But each one looked different as we adapted to new spaces, each with their bonuses and challenges.

The staff quickly came around and have said "Pop-ups" were a highlight of the summer. These days felt like camp, and connections were created with churches in new ways. Campers who had never tried our camps before got a small taste, which we hope has made them hungry for more.

Sometimes a necessary innovation holds new possibilities for connection



Campers do a nature activity at the 'Pop-up Camp' at Morden (Man.) Mennonite Church.

and growth. Who knows where and how we will "pop up" in the future? ❧

FOCUS ON CAMPS

# Focused on the good things

Camp Valaqua  
WATER VALLEY, ALTA.

In this year of so many disappointments, it is easy to lose track of the good things. Even when summer camp is cancelled and so many major events are postponed, God brings us joy.

This was the year of the remote event, and our annual hike-a-thon was no exception. We ran a physically distanced hike-a-thon fundraiser and 36 participants from across Alberta went hiking. They raised more than \$32,000, a record!

We planted and cared for the camp garden with help from more than 20 volunteers, who planted, weeded and harvested a garden full of wonderful food.

A cancelled summer camp season allowed us to present families with a rare opportunity to enjoy their summer holidays

here at Valaqua. It was great to see families escape the city together and enjoy creation.

Thanks to a generous donation, we built yurts for families to enjoy, and we created

an amazing space near the river.

We rested, we enjoyed this space and we worked on projects. We can't wait to welcome you back to Valaqua, but, for now, we'll keep focusing on the good things.

What good things have you experienced? ☘



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BRITISH COLUMBIA Camp Squeah  
ALBERTA Camp Valaqua  
SASKATCHEWAN Shekinah Retreat Centre  
MANITOBA Camps with Meaning:  
Camp Assiniboia & Camp Koinonia  
ONTARIO Willowgrove:  
Fraser Lake Camp & Willowgrove Day Camp  
ONTARIO Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp



CANADIAN  
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MENNONITE CAMPING ASSOCIATION  
[WWW.MENNONITECAMPING.ORG](http://WWW.MENNONITECAMPING.ORG)



NIH RESEARCH STUDY



*bipolar genetics*

- Study participation includes an interview (2-4 hours) and a blood sample.
- Participants must be 18 or older and may be eligible if they have either a bipolar diagnosis or a family member with bipolar disorder.
- No travel necessary. No cost to participate. Financial compensation provided.

*Join A Study!*

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Call 1-866-644-4363 or TTY: 1-866-411-1010  
Email [bipolargenes@mail.nih.gov](mailto:bipolargenes@mail.nih.gov), [www.nlm.nih.gov/JoinAStudy](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/JoinAStudy)  
Write to National Institute of Mental Health  
10 Center Drive, MSC 1264, Bethesda, Maryland 20892-1264



Department of Health & Human Services  
National Institutes of Health



National Institute  
of Mental Health  
[www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) Protocol No. 80-M-0083




**Introducing  
Doug Amstutz, M.Div.**

Our new Development Associate  
for Canada

Reach out with any questions  
you may have about AMBS!  
[damstutz@ambs.edu](mailto:damstutz@ambs.edu)  
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## Calendar

### Nationwide

#### 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](http://mcab.ca/events).

**March 20-21, 2021:** All delegate sessions, to be held via Zoom. More details to follow.

### Saskatchewan

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

### Manitoba

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

**March 6:** MC Manitoba annual church gathering, on Zoom, from 9 a.m. to noon CST. Theme: "Rooted in Christ, reaching out in love," based on Colossians 2:1-7. The event includes the installation of Michael Pahl as executive minister.

**March 10:** CMU Wednesday webinar, "Pre-professional tracks at CMU," 4 p.m. CST. For more information or

to register, visit [cmu.ca/webinar](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://bit.ly/38RJDAj). For more information, visit [bit.ly/3nVDgjR](http://bit.ly/3nVDgjR).

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



## Classifieds

### Employment Opportunities




Employment Opportunity

We at Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ontario, believe in the vision and potential within our youth and children. Our community is looking for person or married couple to serve as full-time Pastor of Youth and Children's Ministry.

We seek a leader(s) willing to grow with our youth and children in their faith journey. The successful candidate(s) will provide leadership to youth ministries and coordinate and oversee children's Sunday School ministries, mentoring and empowering young leaders and providing pastoral care for youth, children, and related volunteers.

For more details visit [www.avonmennonite.com](http://www.avonmennonite.com). Submit inquiries and resumes to the Avon Pastoral Search Committee at: [amcpastoralsearch@gmail.com](mailto:amcpastoralsearch@gmail.com) We will confirm your application email upon receipt. Applications will be accepted until March 1, 2021.



## A 55-Plus Enrichment Program


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**Wednesdays and Thursdays March 3 to April 8, 2021**

- Worship as the People's Work
- The Power of Music: From Bach to the Beatles
- Indigenous Spiritualities and Christianities
- Hearing the Old Testament Prophets Today
- Abrahamic Faiths in Dialogue

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**For more information on courses offered visit [cmu.ca/xplore](http://cmu.ca/xplore).**



### Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
March 15	March 1
March 29	March 15
April 12	March 29
April 26	April 12
May 10	April 26

Contact  
 1-800-378-2524 x.224  
[advert@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:advert@canadianmennonite.org)

# Seven tips for creating engaging online events

Mennonite World Conference

Gathering in person was limited or restricted around the world in 2020. Many congregations moved their services online, using this virtual means of connection. These trends will continue in 2021 and beyond.

In-person events provide many small ways to interact; online events offer even more tools, but they need to be implemented intentionally. Online users expect a personalized experience.

Here are some tips from Pastor Anton Sidharta of Jemaat Kristen Indonesia Maranatha, Indonesia, to deliver a online rich experience:

1. **Do something** different. Don't just broadcast your normal service. This is a different way of gathering; it demands its own ways of interacting.
2. **Engage your** viewers. The most important thing in online events is keeping viewers' attention. Reach out to them virtually. Offer ways to participate.
3. **Keep live** chat alive. Your social media administrators are the "ushers" of the church. They keep viewers engaged by asking probing questions, responding to comments and displaying key points that viewers can copy and paste onto their own social media feeds.
4. **Provide contact** information. Always put links and contact details in the description box of the broadcast and invite viewers to use them. For example: Is this your first time attending our event? Do you need prayers? Do you want to talk to someone? Contact us at . . .
5. **Use breakout** rooms. On platforms like Zoom, you can provide a link to join a private breakout room with a facilitator. This is great for counselling, altar call follow-up and private prayer support.
6. **Apply data** insights to improve. What are the most engaging parts of the broadcast? At what point does participation and viewership dwindle? Where are your viewers coming from? What time of the day is your platform busiest? Use this data from platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Google Analytics, YouTube or Zoom to improve on your events. What happens if you change the sermon length? Does viewership go up if you select a different time slot?
7. **Follow up.** Reply to comments and send direct messages to keep followers engaged. It's laborious, but you need to continue building relationships. Train staff and volunteers to use chat apps like WhatsApp for one-on-one follow-up or small-group discussion.



UNLIMITED FIRE PHOTO

*A media team works hard to deliver an engaging online event for Unlimited Fire, an annual Mennonite youth event in Indonesia.*



UNLIMITED FIRE SCREENSHOT

*The Indonesian youth event Unlimited Fire uses digital media to connect with participants.*

In summary, make the virtual experience as personal and engaging as possible.

Over the ages, churches have adapted to changing expectations and needs. Today's adaptation to online services won't be the last innovation.

And once church doors open again without restrictions, congregations can continue to use the online tools learned in this time to reach the wider community. ☘