

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

March 15, 2021 Volume 25 Number 6



## Spontaneous joy in this time of pandemic

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## EDITORIAL

# The gifts of all

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER  
Executive Editor



**O**n March 8, 2021, International Women's Day, I attended the celebration of life for Doris Gascho, who had died a week before, after many years of serving the church. Doris was a pastor in the mid-80s and early 90s and was the first woman to serve as conference minister of the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Ontario, from 1994 to 1999. She was also a mentor and encourager of many, as evidenced by tributes at a celebration of her legacy in March of last year. (See "There was no stopping Doris" in the March 16, 2020, issue of this magazine.)

My daughter and son, both in the millennial generation, have grown up seeing women at the pulpits and in other leadership positions in the Mennonite church. But many in my generation remember a time when that was not so. We also recall courageous women who sensed God's call and bucked long-established traditions, stepping into new territory with courage and persistence. In the early 1970s, they began to find a place in pastoral teams, chaplaincies, conference roles and sole pastorates. Some began providing guidance as spiritual directors. Others contributed in the Mennonite academic world.

These women offered their gifts while navigating educational obstacles, financial challenges, family responsibilities, and expectations in society and in the church. Sometimes they spoke hard truths and experienced pushback.

Sometimes they used their influence quietly, behind the scenes, to bring about needed changes among us.

As a young woman, I watched those leaders bring the perspective of women into our faith story in new ways, as they pointed to the liberating ministry of Jesus and expanded our language for God. They became models for how I might use my gifts in the church and the world.

Now is a good time to honour these women of God, pioneers on the path to more equality in the church. We thank them for how they offered new perspectives and encouraged us to build a church that is more expansive and inclusive of many types of human experiences.

Last year we saw the appointment of the first woman to serve as executive minister for a regional church—Leah Reesor-Keller in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. In recent years, Mennonite Church Canada saw a woman serve as moderator, and two women are currently moderators at the regional level. Others help make decisions as members of Joint Council and in committees in their regions and congregations. Nominating committees continue to seek and invite them.

And yet, the work is not finished. Sometimes past patterns continue to limit the full expression of women's gifts in the church. I ponder, for example, the proportion of male letter writers in our magazine: in the past two years only 26 percent of the entries in Readers Write have been from women.

Why do women hesitate to make their voices heard publicly?

The committee compiling the new hymnal, *Voices Together* (VT), noted the shortage in previous collections of tunes and texts created by women. So they made deliberate efforts to increase the percentage of female contributors. (See "Women's voices in song," p. 22 in the March 1, 2021, issue.)

The percentage of female text writers in *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (HWB) was 14.8, as compared to VT, where the percentage of women increased to 27.2 percent. Only 9 percent of the tune writers in HWB were female, and this increased to 18.4 percent in VT, through the intentional efforts of the hymnal committee. They acknowledge that there is more work in cultivating and identifying those creative gifts among women and girls.

That intentionality must express itself in our life together as well. This is a good time to remind ourselves of the ways in which we in the church can be intentionally nurturing others—both women and men—toward leadership in our congregations and beyond.

And we must ask ourselves hard questions about the very structures that limit women's contributions—the assumptions of patriarchy and the disparities among us. What are the factors that still make the path rocky for women leaders in the church?

As we celebrate the leaders who have gone before us, let's keep finding ways to invite and encourage the gifts of all.

## Correction

Arli Klassen's title was incorrect in "Vaccines inequities," on page 9 of the March 1, 2021 issue. She serves as the coordinator of regional representatives for Mennonite World Conference. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error. ❧



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PHOTO: RUTH BERGEN BRAUN / MENNONITE CHURCH ALBERTA

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**EASTER FEATURE**

# 'I have seen the Lord!'

Adapted from a sermon preached on April 12, 2020; based on John 20:1-18

By Emily Summach

**E**aster is a time to speak a message of lavish grace, of love personified and of unending hope. This is a day to leave guilt, shame and fear tangled up with the linen strips inside that empty tomb. Our Lord has risen! Hallelujah! Today we ask the questions:

- **Who is this** Jesus who loved humanity enough to go into the grave?
- **Who is this** God who is so good and so powerful that death could not hold him?
- **Who are we** now in light of this, as people of the Resurrection?



IMAGE BY ALBRECHT FIETZ FROM PIXABAY

Before we explore these questions, we must recognize how important the resurrection of Jesus is to our faith; indeed, our whole belief hinges on this idea. Death was the great enemy, the great fear, the great separation. In raising Jesus from the dead, God said to humanity, “This Jesus is my son, my Beloved, the One who has defeated death. Listen to him. Put your hope in him.”

The empty tomb of Jesus—the idea that his previously dead body is now up and around in an eternal physical body—is both preposterous and essential to Christian faith. It is the core of all preaching in Acts. If Christ was not raised, we are miserable fools, Paul tells us in I Corinthians.

Reading the story in John 20:1-18, I cried with Mary Magdalene. Here was a woman so grief-stricken, so desperately sad, that she mistakes her beloved Jesus for a gardener. I was struck by the physicality of the story, by Mary’s anguish, by the disciples’ breakneck run to the tomb, by the angels plunked down in the tomb, by the aliveness of Jesus’ voice as he said to her, “Mary.”

The Resurrection is not a story of ghosts, ethereal hopes or far-off heavenly places. This is a story that is alive on the ground; a story of real possibilities, of a God who, in the greatest act of love, came to earth, lived among us, died—as we all will—and then came back from the grave to be with us. And this gospel, this good news, changes everything. That is the story we need to hear.

First, it’s important we know that Jesus was embodied. He was as real and as physically alive as you and I are right now. Jesus is not, and was not, a concept, an idea, a level of goodness that we can attain by just reaching a little further, by just being a better version of our current selves.

During Holy Week, I watched the daily reflections by Kate Bowler on her Instagram account. Kate is a professor and historian of the church, and author of the book *Everything Happens for a Reason and Other Lies I’ve Loved*.

She said, “What is really striking me this week is that what we have in Holy

Week is a story about the past, the present and the future. We have a story about how our world was so broken that we needed God to save us. And then we have a story about the present, where we have a Jesus who walks beside us looking around saying, ‘No, I get it, and I see it too.’ And then we have a story about the future, which is that God does things for us that we can’t do.

“It drives me insane that we’ve got all these self-help brands saying, ‘You can do it!’ Sometimes we can’t! And we don’t just find the goodness inside of ourselves and piece it together. We’re not always good. It’s so freeing to say that sometimes we need to be saved.”

### Coming toward us

These things shouldn’t make us despair about our own human condition. The grace of God doesn’t come to us once we’ve attained some level of perfection or some level of self-loathing.

The grace of God comes to us exactly as we are and exactly where we are—weeping outside a tomb. Sweating from running to see if the body was gone from where it had been laid. In locked rooms, afraid to answer the door for fear of what might be on the other side. God’s grace comes to us in our own reality, not just in some far-off, future reality. Grace comes because Jesus came back to us, real and alive on this earth.

Jesus Christ doesn’t invite us to his heavenly state; he comes to us in our earthly state. God could have demanded that we make the first move. God could have put the onus on us to attempt to bridge the separation, to reach out and grasp for the hand of God. Rather, God reached out to us. God saw that there was division and enmity between us and God, between us and one another, and God made the first move.

In Romans 5:6-11, the Apostle Paul writes, “*When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. . . . But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s*

*condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.*”

There’s a lot of damaging theology that makes God into a jilted lover, a distant judge, a God who is more concerned about us joining him in heaven than about the years we spend here on earth. But that is not the message we get from Romans, nor is it what we see in the interaction between Jesus and Mary in John’s resurrection story.

After her encounter with the risen Jesus, Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” While she was weeping, when she was feeling far off from everyone and everything, when she thought this was all over, Jesus had called Mary by name.

The Resurrection invites us also to see the Lord, to see him here among us, to hear him call our names. Jesus comes to us in flesh and blood, in bread and wine, in birth and death. And that is precisely what makes him a perfect Saviour, precisely what makes his demonstration of love the greatest one we’ll ever know.

So, what does this mean for us? What does it mean to be people of the Resurrection everyday as we walk, work and weep in this world?

It means that we are beloved by God. As I help shape my children’s faith lives, I want them to know that they are loved by God. My daughter, in her growing spiritual perceptiveness, has asked why Jesus didn’t stay dead, like her great-grandmother. We’ve told her that it’s because God’s love is so big, that it was bigger than something as sad and scary as death, so Jesus came back to life.

If Scripture tells that Jesus’ death and Resurrection was the ultimate act of love and solidarity with us and for us, and that God calls us friends, then we must seek to live out that reality, now.

Further, it means that, if Jesus’s Resurrection was real, audacious and physical, surely nothing in us that is



PHOTO BY BOONYACHOAT FROM ISTOCK.COM

dead or lost is beyond the reach of God's resurrection power. No dark secret. No terrifying pandemic. No unjust system. No wounded heart.

The late Rachel Held Evans, in her book *Searching for Sunday*, writes, "Death and resurrection. It's the impossibility around which every other impossibility of the Christian faith orbits. Baptism declares that God is in the business of bringing dead things back to life, so if you want in on God's business, you better prepare to follow God to all the rock-bottom, scorched-earth, dead-on-arrival corners of this world—including those of your own heart—because that's where God works, that's where God gardens. Baptism reminds us there's no ladder to holiness to climb, no self-improvement plan to follow. It's just death and resurrection, over and over again, day after day, as God reaches down into our deepest graves and, with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, wrests us from our pride, our apathy, our fear, our prejudice, our anger, our hurt and our despair.

"Most days I'm not sure which is harder for me to believe: that God re-animated the brain functions of a man three days dead, or that God can bring back to life all the beautiful things we have killed. Both seem pretty unlikely to me."

So, people of the resurrected Jesus, on the days when these things seem pretty unlikely, on the days when we wonder if God's love extends to us, on the days when following Jesus seems too hard, it is my prayer that we will see God's resurrection power and love, and that

we can cry out, like Mary, "I have seen the Lord!" ❧



*Emily Summach is pastor of Langham (Sask.) Mennonite Fellowship.*

### ❧ For discussion

1. Easter is a time for rejoicing. What Easter traditions express that sense of joy? What songs, foods or decorations do we associate with Easter? Are they direct expressions of Jesus' Resurrection or are they connected more generally with the rebirth that comes in springtime? Is Easter a more important holiday than Christmas?
2. Emily Summach writes that the Resurrection of Jesus is vitally important to the Christian faith, saying "[O]ur whole belief hinges on this idea." Do you agree? What does the Resurrection say to us about death and about hope? Summach says that, after the Resurrection, Jesus was "up and around in an eternal physical body." What do you think she means by an "eternal physical body"?
3. Summach says that the grace of God comes to us exactly where we are, not after we have attained some level of perfection. How tempting is it for Christians to assume that grace comes only to those who deserve it? How do we access God's grace?
4. Jesus is here among us now, says Summach. In light of that fact, what does it mean to be "people of the Resurrection?" What kind of people are we called to be? How does the hope of the Resurrection colour our outlook?

—By Barb Draper

See related Resurrection resources at [www.commonword.ca/go/2316](http://www.commonword.ca/go/2316)

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## /// Readers write

### ✉ History and generosity 'should count for something'

**Re: "MCC centralizing relief warehouse in New Hamburg," Feb. 1, page 14.**

It was reported—as a “no-big-deal” item—that the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) warehouse in Plum Coulee, Man., will move to New Hamburg, Ont. I live in Plum Coulee, a town of about 1,000 people, and it is a big deal here. Yes, it is the loss of one job, but not just the loss of one job. There will also be 20 to 30 regular volunteers who will lose the opportunity to support MCC, as well as up to 300 volunteers for special projects.

Over time we have lost quite a number of businesses to amalgamation and, without exception, those new entities built expensive new buildings and filled them with expensive help elsewhere, and always with less service and efficiency. I am quite sure that you will find no place in Ontario where you can operate as cheaply as in Plum Coulee.

The local Altona and Winkler MCC thrift stores were the first MCC thrift stores and they have contributed millions of dollars over the years for MCC projects. MCC has a lot of support here in cash and volunteers. That should count for something!

BRIAN DERKSEN, PLUM COULEE, MAN.

### ✉ Ecstasy shouldn't be the main criterion for endorsing popular hymns

**Re: "A hymn by any other number," Feb. 15, page 4.**

Two thoughts regarding "Praise God from Whom."

First, a general plea, that when we announce a hymn to be sung, we use a complete phrase, or the first line in full. This, and many other hymns, may be known to the "insiders" by short mnemonic titles, but during worship the congregants—and the lyricist as well—deserve more dignified names for the compositions.

Second, I cringe when uninformed song leaders label "606" as "The Mennonite Hymn."

And I cringed again when this song appeared yet again in the new hymnal. The following two biblical references come to mind:

- *"Do not be quick to speak, and do not be hasty in your heart to utter a word before God. After all, God is in heaven and you are on earth. So let your words be few"* (Ecclesiastes 5:2, New International Version).
- *"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like*

*pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words"* (Matthew 6:7, New Living Translation).

I imagine that Jesus also warned his listeners about heedlessly shouting at the tops of their voices when singing, although I can see where some song leaders in the early church saw to it that this advice was quietly withdrawn from the biblical canon.

It could be said, of course, that a well-liked hymn with repetitious words reflects the influence of God's Holy Spirit on passionate believers. And, I suppose, likewise, the universal employment of stunning stained glass in church architecture must somehow signify that it has a divine purpose.

Perhaps our over-the-top ecstasy shouldn't be the main criterion for endorsing a popular hymn.

KARL DICK (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

### Deaths

**Bauman**—Lydia Ann, 105 (d. Feb. 13, 2021), Preston Mennonite Church, Ont.

**Brubacher**—Sidney M., 88 (b. June 1, 1932; d. Feb. 1, 2021), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

**Crone**—Marjorie, 88 (b. Oct. 29, 1932; d. Dec. 2, 2020), Poole Mennonite, Ont.

**Klassen**—Harold Henry, 60 (b. Jan. 14, 1960; d. Jan. 8, 2021), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Neufeld**—Susanna, 95 (b. Aug. 15, 1925; d. Feb. 1, 2021), Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

**Schellenberger**—Pete, 66 (b. Aug. 11, 1954; d. Feb. 14, 2021), Poole Mennonite, Ont.

**Steinman**—Rodney, 68 (b. July 10, 1952; d. Jan. 23, 2021), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Willms**—Katharina (Tina), 98 (b. March 10, 1922; d. Feb. 13, 2021), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

*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

# Beginning the journey in prayer

Leah Reesor-Keller

**A**s the people of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, we're going on a journey of courageous imagination. Over the course of the next year we will dream, imagine and listen to each other's stories of faith as we seek to hear God's voice and discern together where God is calling us in the years ahead.

The journey itself is as important as where we end up. Like a pilgrimage, it is a shared experience that will transform us along the way. The outcome is the mission, values and strategic priorities that will shape all of us in the years to come. Beginning this journey in prayer roots us in the past, grounds us in the present and stretches us into the future.

At the virtual prayer gathering on Feb. 14, MC Eastern Canada invited individuals from different faith communities and perspectives within the regional church body to lead prayers for the start of the journey. These prayers, offered live at the gathering and since shared in written forms on the regional church's website, Facebook and Instagram accounts, are shaping how we understand our journey together and where we are going as we listen for God's

leading together.

David Brubacher's prayer offered thankfulness for the many who have invested deeply to bring MC Eastern Canada and the nationwide church to where we are today.

Cedar Klassen's prayer called us to listen for God's voice, not only where we expect it but also from those who have been pushed to the margins.

Ly Vang prayed that we would walk humbly with each other, counting each other as equals and treating each other with love and respect.

Ardith Frey exhorted us to dream courageously, not for the sake of doing new things but so that we may be infused with the Spirit's vision and leading for our community.

Francois Machichi's prayer called on Jesus to strengthen and guide our regional church's congregations and leaders.

These are just a few of the words shared in prayer that are shaping and guiding us to follow God's leading on the journey of courageous imagination ahead of us as a regional church body.

Community prayer opens us beyond ourselves and our own experiences to

hear God through the words and experiences of others. When you pray with others, coming together to praise, lament, listen and dream, you open yourself to transformation in a deep way as an individual follower of Jesus and as a community of faith. You hear God's voice speaking to you in new words through the voice of your neighbour, friend or even your enemy.

To our sisters, brothers and siblings across the nationwide church, please join MC Eastern Canada in prayer that our eyes and ears will be opened as we seek God's leading for the future. ❧



*Leah Reesor-Keller is MC Eastern Canada's executive minister. She lives in Kitchener, Ont., and loves journeys of all kinds. She*

*can be contacted on Instagram @leahreesorkeller or via email at lreesorkeller@mcec.ca. To follow along with the Courageous Imagination journey, visit [mcec.ca/courageous-imagination](https://mcec.ca/courageous-imagination).*



## A moment from yesterday



Text: Lauren Harder-Gissing

Photo: David L. Hunsberger / Mennonite Archives of Ontario

**"The car [is] the child and charm of modernity,"** writes sociologist Donald Kraybill. A century ago, this new technology became another dividing line between Mennonites who contested or accepted—even embraced—modern life. This photo of horse sheds outside Elmira Mennonite Church, Ont., in 1955, captures a moment of embrace. How will coming changes in transportation technology influence our faith?



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



## IN THE IMAGE

# We are now family

Ed Olfert

Some years ago, the person who shares my life experienced a blip in her physical well-being. This resulted in Holly spending several days in hospital.

One result of that experience was encountering a couple whom we will call “Bill” and “Anne.” They are, I suppose, about our age, which slots them into their seventh decade. While trimming trees in their backyard, Bill fell off a short ladder and sustained a severe brain injury. Bill shared a hospital room with Holly.

Although it was but a short overlap, we could not help take note of Anne’s presence. The room was large, so we were not crowded together, and Anne was there from early morning until late afternoon. At one point, I made an observation about her obvious devotion to Bill, and she turned to me, her eyes filling with tears.

“We’ve been married for 44 years, together 47,” she said. “Bill is my everything.”

The story of Bill’s accident rolled out, each painful detail re-experienced. As Anne talked, she ministered constantly to him. His face muscles were gently massaged. A small device, tuned to music, lay on the pillow near his ear. A

sponge ball was placed in his hand; with Anne’s hand over his, Bill’s fingers were squeezed against the resistance again and again. Her arms were around his head as she kissed him over and over.

“They’re probably going to send him to long-term care soon,” she said. “I’m still negotiating with them where that might be. But I’m still hoping that I can take Bill home eventually and look after him myself. The kids tell me I’m crazy: How much energy do I think I have? But if I get exhausted and end up in bed with Bill, that’s not so bad. That’s really where I want to be. And there will be supports if we can make that happen.”

In my years of ministry, I have officiated at a number of weddings. Possibly a third of those marriage contracts have ended. I wonder how those statistics might have been impacted if I could have somehow introduced those couples to the image of Anne and Bill. If I could have presented a story—a picture—of Anne’s commitment to her broken Bill, hugging, teasing, cajoling and weeping. I had never seen a more powerful understanding of “for better or for worse.”

Stories kept coming of who Bill is in their community, in their family. The tense used was always in the present,

never the past.

Anne showed the remarkable ability to ground herself, one foot firmly in reality, the other, equally firmly, in hope. There would be the hard reality of who Bill becomes in the future, how they would live, who they might be to each other.

There was also the hope that the limitations that defined Bill at this moment might not as firmly dictate his abilities down the road. Anne was determined to offer the strongest energy at her command to move Bill toward the best hope.

Bill sat in his chair, moaning, his breathing uncomfortably mixed with liquid gurgling sounds. Anne simply sat and loved him. When she turned to us in conversation, Bill was included, receiving the respect and the importance of his presence. She adjusted the angle of his headrest, then pushed back his dangling legs with her own, challenging him to push back.

I was witness to the love of God. I was invited into the best that one human can offer another. Commitment is a holy thing.

Anne informed me that most of her family, friends and home community are connected to her through her phone. She was texting daily updates, encouraging signs, frustrations, weariness, hope. I asked if we could be added. We are now family. ❧



*Ed Olfert (p2peho@gmail.com) gives thanks for God moments offered.*

## Et cetera

### Invite an MWC speaker

As many congregations currently worship through online services, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) guest speakers connect congregations with the global family. “In times of hardship, it is more important than ever to strengthen our links to one another in the worldwide community of faith, encouraging each other in fellowship, worship, service and witness,” says César García, MWC’s general secretary. MWC’s officers can join a service as guest preacher or as presenter to share stories about the global family. “I very much appreciate having guests who can bring their experience and theological perspectives to help broaden my faith and understanding of being a global community,” says Greg Jantzi, pastor of Nith Valley Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont., who invited García to preach at an online service. To request an MWC guest speaker, email [sandrabaez@mwc-cmm.org](mailto:sandrabaez@mwc-cmm.org). Allow at least a month’s notice between initial contact and expected booking.

Source: Mennonite World Conference



MWC PHOTO

César García

## MIND AND SOUL

# Don't be like Jonah

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

**J**onah suddenly became a favourite book of mine after I went to Iraq.

Forget the fish! The book is a comedic satire against ethnocentrism, nationalism and a narrow-minded exclusivity regarding God. In the story, the whiny fellow is sent 900 kilometres to Nineveh, now the site of Mosul, the second-largest city of Iraq. Nineveh was the capital of the reigning superpower at that time.

Jonah is so sure of himself and so sure that God is wrong, that he has no hesitation in telling God so! Jonah's nationalistic and ethnocentric theology is that God is for his people, that is, the Israelites, not the Assyrians of Nineveh. This attitude continues right through Chapter 4—after the Ninevites repented and God relented. Jonah complains about that, then about the heat. A plant grows in one day for shade, then gets eaten by a bug, and Jonah complains about that too! That's funny. That's satire—irony, humour and exaggeration used to convey criticism and expose hypocrisy.

The point of the story is that the one and only creator of all things is concerned about all lands, and the flourishing of all people. (In fact, the animals are also protected.) And the

different cultural practices of the Ninevites in their rituals of repentance were accepted by God. The message is clearly against ethnocentrism, the belief in one's cultural superiority, in this case, that one culture understands that one God best.

Mosul is the site of Jonah's tomb. Well, it was there until 2014, when the Islamic State blew it to smithereens. Fundamentalist Muslims thought they understood what God wanted, and expressed it with explosives despite other believers' understandings. The irony! The shrine built at the tomb of *Nabi Yunas* (Prophet Jonah) was a site of pilgrimage for Muslims, Jews and Christians.

Who are the faithful believers that understand God? Jonah? Ninevites? Which Christians? Believers from what part of the Christian world? What about Muslims? The geographic centre of Christianity has shifted; Africa is now the continent with the largest proportion of the global Christian population. How will that change our understandings of God and the practice of faith? Will Canadian Mennonites go beyond accepting African music in the hymnal?

The Chaldean Catholic Church is headquartered in Baghdad, Iraq. It is one of several Catholic denominations and is

in communion with the one headquartered at the Vatican. Unless something happens between the time I write this and the time you read it, Pope Francis will have gone to Iraq, specifically to Mosul and the plains of Nineveh. The region is the historic heartland of more than 19 centuries of Christianity. Francis intends to encourage the most beleaguered Christian communities in the world. Only 100 years ago, Christians were about 20 percent of Iraq's population. They are down to about 3 percent now. Persecution and emigration have taken a toll. The Pope also travels for dialogue with the most important Shi'ite cleric in the country, as he has been doing with other Muslim clerics.

The issues in Iraq—Kurds and Arabs and Sunni and Shi'ite and others—are expressions of ethnocentrism. Frankly, so was military invasion by western powers. So is the Canadian history of anti-Black/Chinese/Indian racism. And residential schools. And the weak effort at "reconciliation" with the Indigenous peoples. Christians have often been ethnocentric. Similarly, attitudes of superiority, racism and religious nationalism are at work in Israel's vaccinating of Jewish citizens but not Palestinians.

Can we get the message? Jonah is a bozo. Don't be like Jonah. ❧



*Randolph Haluza-DeLay participated in a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation to Iraqi-Kurdistan in 2018.*

## Et cetera

### Old Colony Mennonites move to Peru

In late January 2021, six families from the Shipyard Colony in Belize, Central America, moved to a new settlement in eastern Peru. Leaving Jan. 26, they planned to fly from Belize City to Cancun, Mexico; from there to Panama City and on to Lima, Peru. Another flight will get them to Pucallpa in eastern Peru before travelling the last 50 miles overland. They are joining a half-dozen families who moved there earlier. This group includes two Old Colony preachers.

Source: *Die Mennonitische Post*, Feb. 5, 2021



## TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

## Like an adult on a spinning teacup

Joshua Penfold

I love watching my kids twirl endlessly around at the park on those self-propelling spinners. It reminds me of my childhood spinning on tire swings until we were nearly sick, and then quickly jumping off and attempting to walk, looking like underaged drunken sailors.

When I was a kid, I couldn't understand why my dad refused to go on spinning rides with us at theme parks. You know what I'm talking about—the spinning teacups, ladybugs or what have you, where the ride spins everyone around and, for extra dizzying insanity, you can manually spin your pod even more.

Now, as an adult, I can't do it either. Even thinking about it while writing this turns my stomach. There's something about going in circles that can be either thrilling or sickening, or both.

I feel like this might be kind of what the writer of Ecclesiastes is getting at in Chapter 1, where he famously declares everything as “meaningless,” “vanity” or “smoke,” depending on the translation. He talks about the cycle of the sun; the round and round of the wind; the streams of water emptying into the sea, only to be brought back from whence it came, to repeat the cycle. He's tired of the never-ending spinning and getting

nowhere of life and, like the spinning teapot, it's making him queasy.

There is certainly a risk of falling into despair at the unending, meaningless, circular way of life. You can feel trapped like Bill Murray in *Groundhog Day*, like the teacher in Ecclesiastes or like an adult on a spinning teacup.

But I wonder, if we were to harness our childlike selves, our spin-loving selves, could we see the thrill, excitement and pleasure in the spinning? Maybe the Teacher is right, maybe it's all meaningless in the end, a smoke that can't be grasped or understood.

But that doesn't mean it has to be hopeless and despairing. Maybe part of the reason we're called to be like children is that they have an uncanny ability to find pleasure in what we adults have lost the ability to enjoy.

Sarah Groves has a song called “Setting up the Pins,” comparing life to the endless and menial task of setting up bowling pins for the sole purpose of knocking them down again. It's a contemporary Ecclesiastical image.

She ends the song with this:

“Everyone everywhere some way some how / Are setting up the pins for knocking 'em down / It can feel simple

but it's really profound / . . . / My grandmother had a working song / Hummed it low all day long / Sing for the beauty that's to be found / In setting up the pins for knocking 'em down.”

There is beauty to be found in this cyclical meaninglessness. It can feel simple but it's really profound. I see it when I watch my kids spin in delight and I hear it in working songs. There can be hope in the meaninglessness.

Keep your eyes and ears open. It's in the changing of the seasons; in the repeating life, death and resurrection of creation. Yes, it can feel like an endless cycle, because it is. But I wonder if our perspective and approach determine whether that cycle is tiring and exhausting, or beautiful and profound. I'm quite happy with an endless cycle when it includes the hope of resurrection. ✎



Joshua Penfold  
(penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) blunderingly believes in the bewildering, bizarre, yet beautiful Bible.

## Et cetera

## Women write Spanish-language devotional

A new Anabaptist devotional for women in the Spanish language has recently been published online. Organized by the Movement of Anabaptist Women Doing Theology from Latin America, Anabaptist women from 21 Latin American countries contributed to this collection that provides biblical reflections and addresses themes relating to women's daily lives. The layout and design, also done by Latin American women, provides a page for each day of the year. It is available free as a PDF or as an audio version at [bit.ly/mtal-devotional](http://bit.ly/mtal-devotional). The women hope to do another devotional for 2022 and perhaps make it available in English.

Source: Mennonite World Conference



DEVOCIONALES  
2021



## BOOK REVIEW

# A fresh look at justice and loving enemies

*Who Are Our Enemies: And How Do We Love Them?*  
Hyung Jin Kim Sun. Herald Press, 2020, 115 pages.

*What Does Justice Look Like: And Why Does God Care About It?*  
Judith McCartney and Colin McCartney. Herald Press, 2020, 104 pages.

Reviewed by Barb Draper

BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

Those of us who grew up in the Mennonite church often find it challenging to love our enemies and to work for justice, although these are tenets of our faith and are specifically mentioned in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

The two booklets, *Who Are Our Enemies?* and *What Does Justice Look Like?* examine these teachings from a fresh perspective. They are part of a new series from Herald Press exploring theological questions at a very down-to-earth level.

Hyung Jin Kim Sun, also known as Pablo, serves as assistant pastor of the Toronto Mennonite New Life Church. He calls himself a Korean-Paraguayan Mennonite, as he has roots in both countries. Judith McCartney is a pastor of Soul House, a congregation in Toronto that recently joined Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. She and her husband Colin have been working in urban ministry for many years. Because these writers are not “cradle Mennonites,” they do not rehash old ideas; they approach these subjects with persuasive conviction and passion.

Kim Sun begins his booklet with a dramatic story about a personal violent robbery that made him ask deep questions about what it means to love your enemies. In studying Jesus and the New Testament, he concluded that Jesus meant what he said in the Sermon on the Mount because “Jesus lived out what he taught about the love of enemies.”



For Jesus’ followers, learning to humbly trust in God and loving enemies is how they participate in God’s character. He acknowledges that doing this is risky and requires courage but, he writes,

“We confess that we do not know what result nonviolence will bring, but we engage in it because it is the way of the cross.”

He also explores just war theory and the myth of redemptive violence, concluding that just war theory is a Christianized version of redemptive violence. But, he writes, the myth is flawed because it assumes that violence will bring an end to conflict. Kim Sun is respectful of those who argue for just war theory, but he declares that it has never been properly applied. If violence was used responsibly and justly, it would be a good start, he writes.

Using the examples of Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and other pacifists, Kim Sun explains that nonviolence can be very effective, even in repressive regimes. It can bring social change, especially if there is mass participation. At the same time, he acknowledges that it takes great patience and persistence to bring about this change, and that sometimes suffering and sacrifice cannot be avoided. Nonviolence is not powerlessness, he writes; it is using power the right way.

The McCartneys also use the example of Martin Luther King Jr. in their explanation of what it means to live out



Jesus’ call for justice. Although they describe power imbalances and other injustices in today’s society, the purpose of their book is “to encourage readers to develop a biblical understanding of justice.” They use both the Old and New testaments to explain why justice is important

to God.

Our culture encourages us to think primarily about ourselves, they write. This attitude causes us to ignore what happens to other people and to the environment. Also, the church has been influenced by the ancient Greek Gnostics, and many Christians were taught that God is concerned about people’s spirituality and not about their physical well-being. The McCartneys explain that God’s shalom involves not only spirituality, but also physical, emotional and intellectual health.

While both books explore theological questions, they do so at a level that keeps the reader engaged, often using stories to illustrate their points. The McCartneys especially use lots of interesting personal anecdotes. While the topics are deep, the books are written for lay readers, not for theologians.

Both of these small books come with discussion and reflection questions, making them suitable for youth or adult study groups. While not specifically designed for a Mennonite audience, they offer a good opportunity for Mennonites to reflect on what it means to live nonviolently and with justice. ❧

## VIEWPOINT

# Finding the means to the kingdom

George G. Epp

I'm not an astronomer, but I read astronomers' news. I'm not a physicist, but I took an introductory physics course from a physicist, and I read physics. I'm not an archaeologist, but I read what I can about the latest news revealed through that lens. I'm not a geneticist, but I trust the news geneticists have published regarding human history and humanity's present.

I'm not a theologian either, but when I ponder the meaning of those scriptures that have been handed down to me, I balance what I read there against what I read elsewhere and what other experiences have taught me.

There can be only one factual story tracing our history from the first sign of life on Planet Earth to 2021. To reach the pinnacle of truth on origins, the astronomer, physicist, archaeologist, geneticist and theologian would all have to agree at some time. And this could only happen if all of them would be humble, open-minded seekers of wisdom. And it may happen as both scientific and spiritual knowledge and wisdom accumulate.

I used to think that evolution was a challenge to Christian faith until I realized that the Bible as we know it is not about the same subject as Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*. The Bible chronicles the story of Judeo-Christian faith; the creation narratives are not histories of human origins, but rather the setting of a stage for telling the story of God and his relationship to the Jewish people.

There will always be people for whom this distinction proves difficult. We need to keep that in mind in our conversations, or else we'll simply continue to argue, and arguing generally advances nothing.

At the core of both spiritual and scientific "truth" are two common objectives: to reduce human suffering,

and to increase and heighten creaturely pleasure.

Which brings me to the nub of the question. Science has found ways to alleviate physical suffering to some degree. Religions have been the means by which many have been able to settle on a meaning for their lives, relieving existential suffering, and providing—when at their best—a satisfaction with life that is decidedly pleasurable.

However, both science and faith have historically been known to create and perpetuate massive suffering when at their unintended worst: the atomic bomb, the Irish "Troubles," the genocide of the Amerindian culture and the present state of horrors in Myanmar, for example.

If we think of evolving humanity as an entity—putting aside racial, ethnic, cultural and religious heritages for now—as if we are all one species seeking higher goals on one small planet in the universe, science would tell us that survival, let alone advancement, will not be achieved through the means we've counted on so far.

This "Cinderella planet," with its delicate balance of conditions that made life possible, can have that very balance eroded to the point where human life is no longer supported. We are not living in the age of the evolution of diversity; ours is the age of extinctions. As changes happen in climate, agriculture and exploding population numbers, the Earth ceases to enable the survival of hundreds of species, so habitats disappear, natural food sources dry up and populations of animals are overhunted or overfished. And each extinction is a warning, a reminder that we share a vulnerability common to all living species.

So back to finding means to achieving our common hopes. In the lobby of St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon, a wall

graphic illustrates how common across religions is that great adage, "*Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.*"

For Christians, that proverb gains flesh in the words of Jesus Christ and, later, his followers, who, by utilizing their best available knowledge and means, sought to transmit the essence of Jesus' message to future generations. The means we read there fall under the rubric of love and its offspring: justice, peacemaking, humility, patience, forgiveness and honesty, all summed up in those two great commandments: "*Love God and what God stands for as much as you possibly can, and love your neighbour as yourself*" (Matthew 12:30-31).

Theologian N.T. Wright repeatedly makes the point that heaven and hell are not "places other than earth." *The Peaceable Kingdom* by Stanley Hauerwas emphasizes the moral guidance Jesus provides through his life and teaching. As Anabaptists, we see as central the ideal of living the Jesus model, although we've missed the mark as often as we've hit it, unfortunately. If love is the means that inaugurates "the peaceable kingdom," how we practise it, preach it, model it and shout it from the rooftops, is paramount.

It's that kingdom's coming for which the whole world longs. When all agree, when all recognize the means by which the coming of the kingdom is realized, then truth will blossom like prairie crocuses in spring. ☘

*George G. Epp is the curator of the Mennonite Interpretive Centre in Rosthern, Sask., and author of three books. He is a member of Eigenheim (Sask.) Mennonite Church and was moderator of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan from 2013 to '14.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# My mother's patches

Janet Bauman  
Eastern Canada Correspondent

**W**hen my mother, Reta Martin, died nearly four years ago, she left behind boxes stuffed with cut-up patches and leftover fabric from her sewing projects over the years.

As a young girl she had learned how to sew from her mother. As a young woman she made her own dresses. All her married life she sewed clothes for herself and her family. She mended and patched, and, finally, when a piece of clothing was no longer useful, it went into the cupboard where she kept scraps of fabric.

Eventually, she would get around to cutting them up into strips to be braided or woven into mats, or into squares and triangles to be pieced into quilts or comforter tops. She made quilts for her children and grandchildren when they got married. She made flannel pillowcases for all the grandchildren and great-grandchildren as Christmas gifts one year. She made flannel receiving blankets for newborn babies in the family.

She pieced comforter tops that she took to the women's group at church to get knotted, which were then sent to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for relief. And we had mats underfoot, woven from strips of cloth she cut and saved.

But the fabric had a way of piling up. She couldn't throw out anything that might someday be useful, so she moved those pieces with her out of the farmhouse, when she and Dad relocated to an apartment in town. She kept working away at them, but when cancer slowed her down, she had little energy left for that kind of work. Boxes of her fabric pieces were left behind when she died.

Dad kept asking us what we planned to do with them. They were taking up space but, somehow, we just couldn't throw them out.



PHOTO BY MARY ANNE MUSSER

*Lois Cressman and granddaughter Cora Musser knot a comforter made with leftover patches from boxes of fabric left after Lois's mother died nearly four years ago.*

Two years after our mother died, my oldest sister, Lois Cressman, lugged those boxes home with her, mostly just to get Dad off our case.

Over the winter, she dug through them. The fabric smelled like the family farmhouse, a hint of wood smoke from the old cookstove lingered. Some pieces were more than five decades old from dresses that Mom wore when she was first married! There were swatches from dresses, skirts and tops that we wore as children and teens.

I started digging through old family photos, remembering the places we went and the things we did in those clothes. Lois started to piece together a comforter top with the patches Mom already had cut up, and then she did another. And then a third.

She set up quilt frames in her church basement and invited her sisters, daughters and grandchildren to help knot the comforters. When we were finished, we had three comforters full of memories, one for each of my sisters and one for me.

But there were still more patches. So the next winter, Lois kept going. She recruited her daughters Mary Anne Musser and Bethany Ruby. It was the year that MCC was celebrating its 100th anniversary of relief, development and peacemaking in the name of Christ.

During her life, Mom, along with the women at church, baked tarts by the dozens, and sewed millions of stitches into quilts that were sold at the MCC relief sales, and pieced and knotted comforters that were shipped overseas to provide warmth and comfort for displaced people.

To celebrate its centenary, MCC initiated a blitz to finish 6,500 comforters. It seemed fitting to include some made with Mom's patches. So Lois and her daughters kept cutting and piecing, making six more comforter tops.

There were still some patches left. This time I joined in, by taking home bags of fabric and cutting them into patches. I didn't have a working sewing machine, but I could cut patches, and it felt like something helpful to do during those first weeks of the COVID-19 shutdown.

I laid out patches on the floor, mixing and matching them until I had four more comforter tops. I pinned them together and sent them back to Lois and her daughters for sewing.

Just when we were getting toward the end of Mom's bins of fabric, Lois got another donation of fabric from a friend. So we kept going. Our sister Nancy Martin took some swatches of fabric home, picked up a second-hand

sewing machine from the thrift store and pieced another four comforter tops. We depended on Lois to sew backs on the comforters and finish the edges.

Lois set up a quilt frame in a spare bedroom, where she worked on knotting comforters. One warm spring day we set one up outside and knotted a comforter there. And when COVID-19 restrictions eased in the summer, Lois recruited some of her grandchildren to knot comforters at her house.

I am not sure in the end how many comforter tops we will make with the leftover fabric. A few still need to be pieced and knotted. Without intending it, making comforters became a healing journey—a way to grieve Mom's death and honour her life.

"Make do with what you have" was one of her practical sayings. Comforters represent her well. Let nothing go to waste and turn scraps into something durable and practical.

So, when a displaced mother in a refugee camp wraps her children in a comforter made from Mom's patches, her legacy of sharing warmth and love will go on. ❧



PHOTO BY LOIS CRESSMAN

*Cousins Camille, left, and Hannah Cressman knot a comforter at their grandma Lois's house, made from fabric patches left over from their great-grandma Reta's sewing projects.*



## ONLINE NOW!

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



### Sourdough bread and communion

Louisa Adria from Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary, Alta., reflects on why making sourdough bread has become meaningful to her during the pandemic.

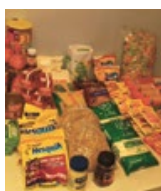
[canadianmennonite.org/blog/sourdough](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/sourdough)



### Goshen president appointed to second term

Rebecca Stoltzfus, the 18th president of Goshen College in Goshen, Ind., has been unanimously reappointed to a second term.

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



### MWC continues pastoral response to COVID-19

Mennonite World Conference is blessing and affirming Mennonite-Anabaptist mission and service agencies as they continue their pandemic response efforts.

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



### Watch: Behind the music with Phil Campbell-Enns

Winnipeg pastor and songwriter Phil Campbell-Enns reflects on "Fill Us with Your Feast," a song he contributed to *Voices Together*.

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

#### NOTICE

### 50<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service Annual Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the members of the Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service (CMPS) for the year ending December 31, 2020, is scheduled for **May 8, 4:00 p.m. PT** by Zoom.

CMPS is the non-profit corporation that publishes *Canadian Mennonite*. The agenda includes receiving reports from the board of directors, the 2020 financial statements, and election of new directors. The meeting is public. Voting is limited to CMPS members (*individuals who donated at least \$25 in 2020 and who register in advance*), and board members who represent the regional and nationwide Mennonite Church.

The board of directors as appointed by Mennonite Church Canada and the Regional Churches includes:

- MC Canada: Henry Krause (British Columbia), Rod Wiens (Saskatchewan), Aaron Penner (Manitoba)
- MC British Columbia: Annika Krause
- MC Alberta: Arthur Koop
- MC Saskatchewan: Larry Epp
- MC Manitoba: Ken Reddig
- MC Eastern Canada: Karen Heese
- Elected by CMPS: Lois Epp (Alberta), Kathryn Lymburner (Ontario)

To register as a member for the annual meeting, please email [office@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:office@canadianmennonite.org) by **May 1, 2021**, noting "CMPS annual meeting" in the subject line.

The annual report and audited financial statements will be posted at [www.canadianmennonite.org](http://www.canadianmennonite.org), after the meeting.

**CANADIAN  
MENNONITE**

## PEOPLE



## Spontaneous joy in this time of pandemic

By Joanne De Jong  
Alberta Correspondent  
CALGARY, ALBERTA

**L**ouisa Adria, Foothills Mennonite Church's congregational support worker, and Ruth Bergen Braun, communications coordinator of Mennonite Church Alberta, sparked joy when they

spontaneously decided to do a photo shoot on Feb. 26, next to a brightly painted shipping container near downtown Calgary.

Inspired by a random bunch of balloons left in the back of Adria's father's

limousine, Bergen Braun took photos while Adria proved that spontaneous joy is possible during COVID-19. ✎



PHOTOS BY RUTH BERGEN BRAUN





# Blessed by a generous God

*Celebrating the life of John Cornies*

By Lisa Williams

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

“Leadership can be rewarding as well as lonely,” wrote the late John Cornies in his memoir. “I have, however, felt God’s leading and calling in these endeavours. While I felt that God called and equipped me when placed in positions of leadership, my human failings got me into difficulties at times. And yet, I have felt blessed by a very generous God throughout these experiences.”

Born on March 23, 1940 in Leamington, Ont., to émigré parents from the Soviet Union, John, along with his three sisters, learned at an early age about hard work on a family farm. He was baptized in 1959, preparing the way for a lifetime of service to the church.

As an educator and principal, he placed great value on his students, and would spend time with them during the day despite the work that needed to be done in his office. He wrote in his memoir, “Helen [his wife] would be dismayed to see the hole in my suit pants derived from playing sports outdoors with the students during recess or noon hour.”

“He always looked to God as his guide,” says Helen. “His daily discipline of Bible reading and prayer helped him in all areas of life as he strove to follow God’s will.”

Driven by his love for God, John volunteered for many organizations, often finding himself in leadership positions. He was a strong champion for the Welcome Inn Community Centre in Hamilton, Ont.

Tim Epp, then a volunteer at Welcome Inn and now associate professor at Redeemer University in Ancaster, Ont., recalls: “John was a good listener. When he was talking with you, you were the focus of all of his attention because he was truly interested in your life.”

Marv Friesen, a former pastor of Welcome Inn Church, agrees: “It was always the relationship with people that



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CORNIES FAMILY

**John Cornies and his grandson Henry are ready to set off on the Out-Spok’n Bike-A-Thon, MennoHomes Ride for Refuge in support of affordable housing.**

mattered the most to him.”

John was moderator of the Conference of United Mennonite Churches of Ontario in 1988, when three Ontario Mennonite conferences integrated to form the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada.

Glenn Zehr, who was moderator of the Inter-Mennonite Conference, spent many hours at the board table with John. “I appreciated John’s gentle and capable ability to understand and explain complex situations and help to move us forward,” he says. “His personal faith in Christ shone through as we rubbed shoulders in this context.”

John returned to the role of conference moderator in 1997 with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, a conference body that he had helped to shape.

“John loved Christ and the church,” recalls Mary Mae Schwartzentruber,

interim executive secretary of MC Eastern Canada in 1998. “When he put his hand to a task for the church, he did it with his whole heart and mind.”

David Brubacher, MC Eastern Canada’s minister to conference in 2000, says, “John was instrumental in leading the executive board in a visioning process, and I feel that he was the right person for the time that he served as . . . moderator.”

John enjoyed telling people that he “camped at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp even before there were buildings!” He poured his energies into building the Pines at Silver Lake, even finding himself insulating the small crawl space under the building.

He chaired the Generations Mennonite Central Committee thrift store board through its move to 50 Kent in Kitchener, Ont.; travelled with a working tour to Colombia with MC Canada; and volunteered with Circles of Support and Accountability to support offenders as they reintegrated into the community upon release from prison.

John and Helen, through volunteering with Mennonite Disaster Service, also helped to rebuild and repair homes damaged by Hurricane Rita in Texas.

John took great pleasure in spending time with his children and grandchildren. He loved his family very much. One of his favourite things to do was listen to Helen play hymns on the piano. He was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour at the end of August 2020. His family was able to care for him at home during his illness. He died on Oct. 22, 2020.

“It’s only by God’s grace that I can do this” is an expression Helen recalls hearing John say many times. Faith was important to him and he showed that deep faith by caring for the church that belonged to the God whom he loved. ❧

## GATHERING AROUND THE TABLE

# Communicating at the table

Story and Photos by Virginia A. Hostetler  
Executive Editor

**A** formative experience for me was a youth work camp I participated in during my teenage years. The event was organized in connection with the ninth assembly of Mennonite World Conference, held in Curitiba, Brazil, in July 1972.

The week before the large multinational assembly, Mennonite youth from different parts of the world gathered in three locations to work on projects benefiting the Curitiba community. My group was located in a poor neighbourhood, where the group built simple wooden houses. Our group of some 20 youth lodged at a small Mennonite church building, with different

cold water. We had some basic dishes and cooking utensils, and I think there was a small fridge. A local man took me shopping each day for the essential elements for that day's meals.

A menu my team and I prepared that week—likely several times if I recall correctly—was the traditional Brazilian rice and beans meal. These are the daily staples of cuisine throughout Brazil, a wholesome and inexpensive combination eaten by people of all economic classes. Rice and beans are generally eaten at midday, as part of the main meal, accompanied by a fresh salad or other vegetables. Sometimes the

required several layers of translation, and the conversations were occasionally accompanied by misunderstandings and laughter. Friendships blossomed across the cultures.

The following week the youth met with the entire assembly, several thousand Mennonites gathered in a large venue, speaking and singing in a multiplicity of languages. Once again we experienced the efforts to communicate with each other, this time with the help of official translators.

For the last worship service, the entire assembly gathered to celebrate communion. Seated near the top of the large gymnasium, I watched as the many



*An impromptu soccer game.*



*A neighbourhood work project.*



*International friendships develop.*

parts of the building assigned as girls' and guys' dormitories. A Sunday school room was commandeered for the kitchen. The main meeting area became our dining and living room.

My assignment for the week was to plan and coordinate the meal preparation and serving, with the help of a small team of other young women. It was a challenge, considering that our barebones "kitchen" had one gas stove, Sunday school tables for counter space, with little storage and no sink. The only running water was at a tap in the yard outside the door, with

cook adds french fries, a small piece of meat or a fried egg. There's also lots of fresh fruit.

Throughout the week, our international group gathered at the church's tables for mealtimes. The youth working in the community would return to the building dirty, cold and hungry. They ate well and a lot!

Through our informal translation efforts, at the table we reported on the events of our day and told stories about life in our home countries. Portuguese, Spanish, German and English were all heard at the dinner table, as we tried to comprehend each other's words. Communication sometimes

ushers served the communion elements and I heard the words of blessing, spoken in several languages. But for this young Christian, right then the words didn't really matter. Here we gathered with the bread and the cup, at Christ's table, where the love for our Lord drew us together, and everyone was understood—across the language barriers. ❧

*To see a recipe for Brazilian beans visit [canadianmennonite.org/Brazilian-beans-recipe](http://canadianmennonite.org/Brazilian-beans-recipe).*



## NEWS

# Making the Bible come alive

*Telling Scripture by heart brings new meaning to text*

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent

**D**euteronomy urges people to “*fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds*,” and Ken Quiring has dedicated himself to this call. Telling Scripture by heart is an integral part of daily life for the pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Brandon, Man.

He formally got into the practice of sharing Scripture from memory when he attended his first festival gathering of the Network of Biblical Storytellers International in 2012.

The annual four-day festival of interactive workshops celebrating biblical storytelling is “basically like going to the Winnipeg Folk Festival for Bible nerds,” he says, adding that the transformative experience made him realize, “Oh my goodness, I’ve never heard Scripture alive before!”

Telling Scripture by heart is now a regular fixture of worship services at Grace Mennonite. Quiring works on memorizing—what he calls internalizing—three

stories at all times: one for the upcoming Sunday and for each of the following two weeks. This is the main portion of his sermon, which also includes interactive conversation with the congregation. Church members, grey-haired and youths alike, have also begun to take turns doing biblical storytelling.

John Braun has seen how hearing Scripture engages people. “You can tell by the way they listen and how attentive they are and the emotion on their face,” he says. “There’s a power to [Scripture] that is quite extraordinary I think,” he says.

Braun was a pastor of Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg for 25 years before retiring in 2019. He has been reciting Scripture ever since he started working in ministry more than 40 years ago.

He says he was inspired by memories of his maternal grandmother: “She would recite these epic German poems, and I remember her doing that publicly . . . that struck me.” When he witnessed fellow Mennonites Arlyn Friesen Epp and Rudy Franz recite Scripture, he was intrigued.

Braun began by committing to memory the text he was preaching on each week. Soon he began learning longer passages. He has memorized the Sermon on the Mount, the passion story and the Resurrection story, among others, some lasting 15 to 20 minutes long.

“When I do this practice, I become aware of how much Scripture was meant to be an oral experience, and that’s the way it started,” he says. “As I started to learn how to memorize, I realized more and more how there were cues in the text itself that helped the memorization process.”

Internalizing Scripture connects him with the ancient peoples who would have done the same, helping to form Scripture before it was ever written down. “It helps me to understand the story anew in a fresh



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN BRAUN

*John Braun is pictured in 2010 by the ancient steps that lead from the upper city of Old Jerusalem down to the Kidron Valley and the Mount of Olives.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF KEN QUIRING

**Ken Quiring is a member of the Network of Biblical Storytellers and pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Brandon, Man.**

way, and it also helps me to present it that way," he says.

While on a sabbatical in the Holy Land, Braun would walk from Bethlehem to Jerusalem and recite aloud the Passion Story in Luke. "I would look around and I would see the geography, and it became a very meaningful experience."

**Andrew Dyck**

Andrew Dyck memorized the entire Book of Ephesians, living in close relationship with the gospel over the span of a couple months. It engaged him on a deeper level than studying or teaching it had, although those experiences gave him

an essential foundation. "It's as if Ephesians became a friend," says Dyck, assistant professor of Christian spirituality and pastoral ministry at Canadian Mennonite

University. "I think I grew theologically in my understanding of Ephesians because I started making connections through the book that I wouldn't have made otherwise. You start to see themes that trace through."

In Quiring's experience, the modern western church has prioritized head learning over heart learning. He has been disappointed when some congregants have deemed biblical storytelling to be too emotive and susceptible to error, assuming it's only for children or associating it with negative charismatic stereotypes.

"Biblical storytelling, for me, has been a very visceral experience, but it has also been a deeply multi-sensory experience, partnering print-literate, academic scholarship together with spiritual directors and spiritual practices that are more heart-focused," he says.

He says that embodied worship experiences add so much to spiritual life, something he has learned from Indigenous youth and Pakistani Muslims, who are passionate about their own oral traditions. He is enthusiastic about exploring how biblical storytelling can be used for interfaith dialogue and reconciliation.

For Braun, reciting Scripture became a spiritual practice that helped centre him during difficult times in his pastoral work. He says it is "the listening side of prayer" and it continues to be an important practice for him. "There comes a point where you internalize it, and the story just comes out of you." ❧

*To watch a video of Ken Quiring doing biblical storytelling, visit [canadianmennonite.org/quiring-storytelling](http://canadianmennonite.org/quiring-storytelling).*

## How to tell Scripture by heart

BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Manitoba Correspondent

**M**emorizing chapters of Scripture, or even a few verses, may seem daunting. But with time and practice, and some of the helpful tips below, it's possible to become a biblical storyteller.

- **John Braun:** "Start with a shorter passage and slowly work up to something longer. Read the whole passage out loud over and over again. After a week or two of doing this every day, you'll be able to look up and remember sections. One day you'll find you can do the whole thing. I've found that the more I've done it, the easier it gets."

- **Ken Quiring:** Have multiple copies, in large font, in your vehicle, at your office, on the dining room table, so you can practise everywhere. The best trick is called repetition. Incorporate movement and gestures, internalizing the story through muscle memory, like a musician.

- **Andrew Dyck:** "Memorize one verse at a time, moving on after each one. Once you have done this with the whole passage, return to the beginning and memorize two verses at a time. Next, groups of three verses. Continue until you are able to recite the whole passage. This method from Tim Geddert, professor at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, always keeps the process moving forward and never boring."

*Ken Quiring and his fellow members of the Network of Biblical Storytellers of Canada are hosting an online ecumenical Festival of Biblical Storytelling from April 9 to 11. For more information and to register, visit [bit.ly/3bUIROw5](http://bit.ly/3bUIROw5).*



# 'The bonds among us grew stronger'

*Catholics and Mennonites celebrate 10 years of spiritual friendship*

By Joanne De Jong  
Alberta Correspondent  
EDMONTON

The Roman Catholic Church has a global baptized membership of 1.3 billion parishioners. Mennonite World Conference (MWC), on the other hand, has just over 0.16 of one percent of that number, with a global baptized membership of 2.13 million. What reason or benefit could there possibly be for an elephant and mouse to be friends?

Julien Hammond, mission engagement senior lead at the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton, says that, although the Catholic church is a huge denomination, it needs Mennonites to help it grow in its understanding of peacemaking. He adds that part of the Christian journey is working towards reconciliation, saying that Catholics and Mennonites have historically had a rocky relationship, so true reconciliation involves the healing of memories, which best happens in relationship.

Kevin Guenther Trautwein, a Mennonite Brethren pastor, admires the huge Catholic umbrella that covers so many groups, like Franciscans and Jesuits, and diverse cultures from all around the world. "There is great diversity in the Catholic church, and Mennonites can learn from them." He points out that Mennonites tend to splinter when they have differences, while Catholics have remained unified.

Edmonton Mennonites and Catholics have had a special and unique relationship for the last decade, which they were hoping to celebrate in 2020 but were unable to do so due to COVID-19. The dialogue group, which meets monthly or bi-monthly, also holds a large public forum annually, and members from both denominations participate in joint activities and attend conferences together.

The initial vision in 2010 came out of the realization that many of the Christian social-justice ministries in the city sprang from Catholic and Mennonite initiatives, so



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARVIN BLOOS

*Members of the Edmonton Menno-Catholic dialogue on a two-week study tour in Cappadocia, Turkey, sponsored by Edmonton's Intercultural Dialogue Institute. Pictured from left to right: Roger Thiessen, Eleanore Woollard, Marvin Bloos, Ibrahim Cin, Bob Thiessen, Doreen Bloos, Julien Hammond and John Woollard.*

they explored working together. There was also an interest in growing closer together in Christ.

Sister Gertrude Sopracolle says her heart "burns with desire for unity among Christians," and the dialogue group was a chance to see this happen.

On March 23, 2010, a small group of Mennonites and Catholics gathered at Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church (now known as Lendrum Mennonite Church but still an MB congregation) to consider engaging in a theological dialogue. They began with a study of "Called together to be peacemakers," a report compiled by representatives of the Catholic Church and MWC between 1998 and 2003. The members took a thematic approach as they completed a seven-week series.

But, according to Hammond, their attempt to discuss theology resulted in a lot of dead air.

It was decided that, before discussing more theology, they needed to build trust and get to know each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. This was the beginning of a series of events at which both groups shared their personal faith stories and how Christ called them as disciples to serve in the world.

Sopracolle says these stories really changed her initial misconceptions that the divisions and differences between the two groups were deep ones. "Meeting after meeting, I recognized that we were very close to one another in both our faith and how it influenced how we lived our lives," she says.

# COVID, community-building and care

By Jace Jaeden Ellis  
Conrad Grebel University College  
WATERLOO, ONT.

Ike Glick of Holyrood Mennonite Church says the dialogue has been a refreshing and surprising journey towards mutual respect. He has surrendered his suspicions and appreciated the freedom to talk openly, saying, “Since we both claim to be followers of Jesus, it’s hard to defend the centuries-old practice of avoiding each other.”

As the group grew closer, it broadened its approach to include historical and denominational stories as told from both perspectives. Although some topics were not revisited—like baptism—others were repeatedly discussed, including peacemaking, Indigenous relations, environmental justice and martyrdom.

Meetings, which were followed by fellowship and food, alternated between Mennonite and Catholic church buildings. Works like *Martyr’s Mirror* by Thielemann J. van Braght and *Laudato Si’* by Pope Francis have been studied over the years.

A highlight for both groups has been Mennonite-Catholic hymn sings.

Hammond says he will never hear the hymn “Now Thank We All Our God” in the same way again, after a Mennonite told the story of Mennonites leaving Russia under duress, and how, as soon as they left the train, the entire group began to sing this hymn.

A study tour to Turkey, a reflective prayer walk along the banks of the Edmonton River Valley, a pilgrimage “in the footsteps of St. Francis,” and multiple Bridgefolk events, where Mennonites and Catholics get together for deep-level conversation and worship in different locations across North America, are but a few of the shared activities experienced in this pioneering ecumenical group.

Advice the group has received through various writers are:

- **Avoid the** use of us/them language.
- **Affirm each** other’s identity.
- **Work together** for the common good.
- **Foster an** image of being one family despite differences.

Says Sopracolle, “The bonds among us grew stronger with each gathering, and we’ve loved coming together.” ❧

**T**his past year, many Conrad Grebel University College students were drawn to care for others in congregational living settings for summer jobs and co-op work terms. L’Arche, a community that supports adults with intellectual disabilities, and long-term-care facilities were two such settings.

Although COVID-19 has changed the way students performed in their roles and has posed some challenges, the pandemic did not diminish the experiences, connections and joy involved in these placements.

“COVID made life difficult,” says Henry Stevens, a third-year student in political science who worked at L’Arche Quebec

has been the times that my residents and I sing worship music together. Whether around the piano, in the family room or at the campfire, it has been so amazing to worship the Lord with one another.”

Hanne Kuhnert, a second-year psychology and business student, worked as a live-in assistant at L’Arche Calgary. She says her job involved “a lot of community building.” A part of her role was to engage with the community and “form strong, genuine relationships with them.”

“Through working with L’Arche, I not only had my eyes opened to a new reality of life for a large community of people worldwide,” she says, “but I was introduced



Henry Stevens



C.C. Weber



Hanne Kuhnert

City. He cared for intellectually and physically disabled people, as well as the elderly, providing many of their daily needs.

“The worst part” for him, he says, were “outsiders who cared little for COVID precautions would come and go, without so much as wearing a mask. I woke up every day not knowing whether those I cared for would be alive or dead by the end of the week.”

C.C. Weber, a second-year social development studies and peace and conflict studies student who worked as a “good neighbour” in a long-term care apartment, says: “One of my fondest memories so far

to an alternative workplace environment where the needs of those who you work with always come first.”

Due to the changes in protocol, students have also been able to let their imagination shine in order to make the best of a bad situation. “We have had to be very creative in how we connected as a community and with our residents,” says Weber. “There are many restrictions on what we can and can’t do with one another and in public, so we have enjoyed going for lots of walk and bike rides, having barbecues, as well as campfire and outdoor movie nights.” ❧

# 'The cookie war'

Archivist shares 'a sweet and true tale' in virtual museum tour

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

**B**ig city lawyers paid Old Order Mennonite women \$20 an hour to bake cookies, all in an effort to gather evidence in "the cookie war." This "sweet and true tale" was shared recently as part of "The Anabaptist Story lives on: Virtual museum and archive tour," sponsored by TourMagination, in which archivists and historians show unique artifacts, photos and documents as they share parts of the Anabaptist-Mennonite story.

During a recent virtual tour, Laureen Harder-Gissing, archivist at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario that is housed at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, explained how Old Order Mennonite and Amish women in their kitchens across North America were drawn into "the cookie war," and how a cookbook featuring many of their traditional recipes held important evidence.

It was the 1980s and the wholesale industrial cookie market was crumbling, according to Harder-Gissing. Consumers

wanted something that tasted "authentic and homemade." In an effort to meet that demand, Procter & Gamble spent six years developing and testing a cookie recipe that was "soft on the inside and crispy on the outside."

But it seems the idea of an industrialized cookie that tasted homemade had been "oversold," and companies seeking to "gain market advantage" started to scrutinize their competition, she said. Two of the "big players" in the world of industrialized food production, got into a spat. In 1984, Procter & Gamble sued Nabisco for patent infringement over a cookie recipe. Nabisco set out to prove that the recipe existed long before Procter & Gamble developed it. The recipe in question was for a cookie that swirled together a light sugar cookie dough with a dark molasses dough, for a treat that was both crunchy on the outside and soft and chewy on the inside.

Off went the big city lawyers and their researchers from both sides to gather

evidence. It was not long before the trail led them to Mennonites and their recipe books. It appeared that the evidence lay on page 193 of the late Edna Staebler's *Food That Really Schmecks* cookbook, featuring traditional recipes from the homes of Mennonites in Waterloo Region. Known as *rigglevake kucha* in Staebler's cookbook, which is Pennsylvania German for "railroad cookies," they are also called pinwheel cookies or ribbon cookies elsewhere.

By the mid 1980s, Staebler's collection of "simple, country" recipes from Mennonite kitchens, interspersed with stories and commentary, had become "a tremendous hit," according to Harder-Gissing. Staebler was often called on to "interpret" Old Order and Amish life to an "increasingly curious" national audience.

Staebler had many visits from lawyers, wanting her to find Mennonite women to bake sample cookies. They offered \$20 an hour. At first she thought it was "great fun," according to Harder-Gissing. Later, Staebler was concerned that she and the Mennonite women could be compelled to testify in court. Nabisco lawyers assured her, "Nothing could be worse for the image of Nabisco than subjecting Mennonite ladies in white bonnets to a session in court."

Lawyers also visited Pathway Publishers and the Amish Historical Library in Aylmer, Ont., where the Amish community



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

**A sample of cookies baked as evidence in 'the cookie war' were preserved at the Amish Historical Library and donated to the Mennonite Archives of Ontario. In Laureen Harder-Gissing's virtual archive tour, they helped to document one of the food stories from Mennonite history.**





SCREENSHOT BY JANET BAUMAN

**Edna Staebler, author of *Food That Really Schmecks*, is shown holding the cookies in question, in an article she wrote for Saturday Night Magazine in 1987 about 'the cookie war.' The photo was shown as part of the virtual archives tour by Laureen Harder-Gissing, far right, describing a patent dispute over a cookie recipe that drew Mennonite women into the conflict.**

magazine, *Family Life*, was published. They took out an ad in the magazine offering \$15 to the first 10 people to send in samples of cookies that were both crispy and chewy. Archivist David Luthy kept some of the sample cookies "for historical interest," which he donated to the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, along with other artifacts from the Amish community.

"Archives won't always preserve baking," said Harder-Gissing. "Maybe, if they come with a really good story!" she added.

The patent dispute was settled out of court in 1989, but that was not the end of the story. Kathleen McDonell wrote a play in 1988 called *The Cookie War* that was staged at least three times, including at the Blyth (Ont.) Festival and at the United Mennonite Education Institute in Leamington, Ont., now known as UMEI. As the legend grew, it "hit the press nationally" and, while the rights to a movie screenplay were sold, a movie has never been produced, Harder-Gissing said.

Staebler noted that these cookies "are a lot of work" and Mennonite women tend not to bake them on a regular basis. Nevertheless, Harder-Gissing said that, until the case was settled, "I suspect a lot of lawyers ate a lot of cookies!" ❧

*This and many other virtual tours in The Anabaptist Story Lives On series can be found at [tourmagination.com/vtour-3/](http://tourmagination.com/vtour-3/).*



## Carrying the light

*Mennonite groups hold first Thailand Anabaptist gathering*

From a release by Pat and Rad Houmphan

**L**iving Water Church in Borabu, Thailand, was honoured to host the first Anabaptist gathering in that country from Nov. 25 to 27, 2020.

Five Anabaptist missions organizations were represented: Eastern Mennonite Mission, Mennonite Brethren, Brethren in Christ, Rosedale Mennonite Mission, and ourselves: Dayspring Christian Ministries International / The Great Commission Foundation.

More than 70 people attended, including Thai leaders and five missionaries. The meeting went well and everybody was encouraged and rejuvenated. Our schedule was full but it was also more relaxing, in that we gave everyone the opportunity to come up and share their testimony. Each group leader and all missionaries were encouraged to share about the work they were doing, the challenges they were facing in their ministry, and how their experiences might be an encouragement to others in similar service.

We prayed and laid hands upon each group after they had spoken and we were all encouraged by the Holy Spirit.

On the last day of this gathering, we had a foot-washing ceremony, followed by the Lord's Supper in our unique Isaan way. We used sticky rice for bread because this is the Isaans' main food, and sticky rice sticks all grains together. We also use kaliap juice instead of wine.

At the end of the meeting we had a candlelight service. It was very touching to see the missionaries come up first, light their candles and, in turn, go and light the candles of their leaders. The Thai leaders then lit the candles of other Thai believers, and then all went outside and met under the cross of the church. This was symbolic of how missionaries go out and share the light of Jesus to Thai leaders who, in turn, carry the light to their own people. ❧

*The Houmphans served as missionaries in Thailand through the Commission on Overseas Mission from 1996 to 2002 and Mennonite Church Canada Witness from 2002 to 2011. They continue their work as independent missionaries in Thailand with support from Bethel Mennonite Church, Langley, B.C.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAT AND RAD HOUMPHAN

**Members of several Anabaptist groups in Thailand met together for the first time on Nov. 25, 2020.**

# New directions for MC B.C.

*Organizational restructuring approved at virtual annual meeting*

Story and Photos by Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

**A**lthough faces on screens had to replace in-person contact, participants at the 2021 Mennonite Church B.C. annual general meeting, held on Zoom on Feb. 27, managed to create a sense of connection for participants and allowed them to transact business as in previous years.

This year, there was no inspirational LEAD conference the day before, and sessions were limited to the morning, although they did go longer than the allotted three hours.

First-year moderator Gerry Grunau greeted the 114 delegates, plus guests, with the assurance that “Your presence is valued.” This year’s biblical theme was from Hebrews 12:2: “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”

New this year were annual reports from staff and committees by video, that were available for viewing in advance, and a pictorial memorial of those regional church members who had passed away since 2020.

Generating the most discussion was the resolution to restructure MC B.C. Under the general umbrella are the key themes identified six years ago as “Cultivating Anabaptist vision, growing community and engaging God’s world,” with Jesus and the missional congregation at the centre. The new structure calls for task groups within the three core areas to carry out specific projects as ministries are imagined. When these ministries are completed, the task group could come to an end.

Conversations in MC B.C. revealed that a more appealing model for many was to work together on an area of common interest for perhaps a shorter period of time, rather than sitting on a committee and attending monthly meetings.

The proposal sparked considerable discussion.

Cheryl Berto of Living Hope Christian Fellowship in Surrey wondered if the new format would put power into the hands of fewer people, having only one person taking over what a committee previously did. “It’s been only lately that I’ve seen what committees can accomplish,” she said. “Disbanding committees would be a tremendous loss.”

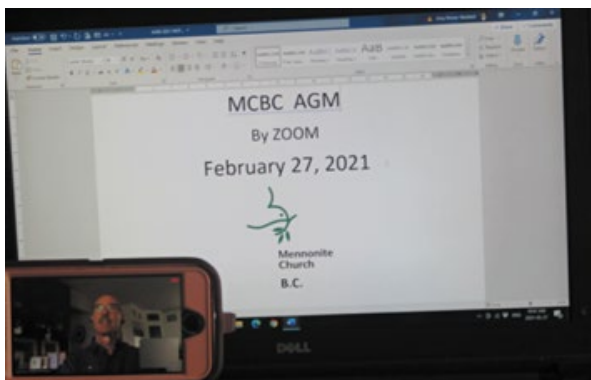
Several others questioned the open-ended terms of the task groups, specifically,

be approved and implemented with the proviso that the Leadership Board will work out outstanding questions during the next year.

The other proposal dealt with the matter of revising a bylaw concerning the policy of the regional church holding titles to individual church properties, which has been the case since MC B.C.’s beginning in 1940. Historically, the communal ownership of congregational assets, has had many beneficial results, participants were told.

However, from a legal and liability perspective, there are also disadvantages. The Leadership Board recommended that congregations that are not currently functioning as their own “society,” register as such, giving them actual and legal oversight of their own local congregation and church building, and protecting them from third-party claims against the regional church. Congregations wishing to keep their title with MC B.C. would be able to do so. This bylaw change also passed.

After the meeting, Gerry Grunau told *Canadian Mennonite*: “The MC B.C. AGM worked out very well, with excellent support from MC B.C. staff. The memorial presentation recognizing MC B.C. constituents who had passed away in 2020 was a celebratory and sombre reflection on the impacts of COVID. Delegate participation exceeded previous years, and the discussions were engaging and productive. Delegates had obviously read the reports and viewed the videos in advance. All resolutions passed with more than 90 percent approvals, which was very supportive. We are excited to move forward with MC B.C. organizational restructuring opportunities.”



**The 2021 annual general meeting of Mennonite Church B.C., held virtually on Feb. 27 ‘worked out very well,’ according to moderator Gerry Grunau, lower left.**

how to deal with a potentially toxic member and how a group would know when it is time to dissolve.

Ken Kehler of Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond suggested that there are questions that needed to be addressed yet, saying, “There are a host of people who need to get involved as sheep and goats, not just shepherds. This needs to be explored by all of us, not just a few.” He proposed an amendment that the delegate body discuss and deliberate the proposal for another year at the congregational level and return for a vote at next year’s annual meeting.

After some discussion, delegates approved the amended motion that the organizational restructuring proposal

### /// News brief

## Experiential Kairos blanket exercise goes virtual

Kairos Canada launched its virtual blanket exercise after six months of development, offering participants an alternative to the in-person event during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Hosted on the Zoom platform, the virtual blanket exercise has incorporated new interactive and engaging elements that visually and emotionally demonstrate the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada through colonization to present times. It is neither a webinar nor lecture, but a live, interactive experience. The virtual exercise underwent extensive testing among Kairos's network and partners and started with a soft launch in January. It is suitable for groups of 15 to 46 participants. Facilitators support participants through online features and special measures such as group and individual check-ins, in addition to hosting virtual talking circles during the second half of the exercise. While the virtual exercise was developed in response to the physical distancing restrictions of COVID-19, it offers Kairos a new opportunity to reach areas too remote for in-person events and the ability to facilitate cross-team training. To book a session or request a quote for a private online event, visit [bit.ly/vKBE-booking](http://bit.ly/vKBE-booking). For general enquiries, email Jessica Pichard at [jpichard@kairoscanada.org](mailto:jpichard@kairoscanada.org).

—KAIROS CANADA



### /// News brief

## Kindred donates \$250,000 to MennoHomes project for affordable housing

Kindred Credit Union, a member-owned financial cooperative based in Kitchener, Ont., recently announced that it will make a \$250,000 contribution to the MennoHomes's capital campaign, "A Place to Call Home." The new "innovative partnership commitment," as it is described in a Kindred news release, "underscores the credit union's ongoing support for this urgent issue and advances access to appropriate, safe and financially accessible housing in our community." Phase 1 of the the building project, which is nearly complete, will provide 48 units for some of the 6,000 households waiting to find adequate housing, including newcomer families. Dan Driedger, executive director of MennoHomes, describes affordable housing as "housing that costs less than 30 percent of their household income, so that people have sufficient funds for other necessities of life, such as nutritious food and proper clothing." Ian Thomas, Kindred's chief executive officer, says this "new agreement will include a significant capital contribution, and it will expand our partnership to include financial literacy programming and a commitment to explore other innovative ways to inspire peaceful, just and prosperous communities." Driedger thanked Kindred and other partners that are "helping us create a caring community where more people can thrive in a safe and affordable home."

—BY JANET BAUMAN



PHOTO COURTESY OF MENNOHOMES

**Phase 1 of MennoHomes's recent project, 'A Place to Call Home,' will provide 48 affordable housing units for Waterloo Region residents.**

### /// News brief

## Churches encouraged to examine biblical aspects of creation care



With Earth Day approaching, Mennonite Church Canada's Sustainability Leadership Group is encouraging congregations and study groups to look at the biblical and theological aspects of caring for God's creation. One resource that is available for this study is the "Every Creature Singing" curriculum that was developed by the Mennonite Creation Care Network for MC U.S.A. in 2014, and later adapted for the Canadian context. "Every Creature Singing" uses the concept of the "watershed," both as an encouragement to

look at local ecological harm and sustainability, and as a metaphor for "a watershed moment," a "point in time when everything comes together and we must act," according to Kairos Canada. A study group at Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary recently worked through the curriculum. Said participant, John Dueck of the experience: "The curriculum suggested to explore and to become aware of the watershed in which you live. . . . I walked 'downhill' to the creek that drains my part of the city, my neighbourhood, my yard. As a result, I learned something about my physical environment that I had not thought of before." The curriculum (including a leader's guide) is free and available online at [bit.ly/3qfdGrV](http://bit.ly/3qfdGrV).

—MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA



# A response of love

*New relationships established through COVID-19*

By Lisa Williams

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

It was hard!" says Pastor Ashenafi Fulase of Freedom Gospel Ethiopian Church, a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation in Toronto, whose wife Hiwot Tesfaye self-isolated in one bedroom for two weeks while the rest of the family stayed in the rest of the apartment.

"The younger children couldn't understand why they weren't able to be with their mommy," he says.

During the early months of the pandemic, Tesfaye's fears were realized. As a front-line personal-support worker at the St. Clair O'Connor Community Inc. in Toronto, she contracted COVID-19 and became ill. Fulase, Tesfaye and their four children, who live in a two-bedroom apartment in Toronto, felt cut off in their isolation from their friends, cut off in their isolation from the outside world and cut off in their isolation even from each other.

Fulase fell ill two weeks later. To heighten the stress, loud construction noises filled the apartment complex all day, every day! For a total of six weeks, the family was isolated.

Tim Reimer, pastor of Danforth Mennonite Church; Brian Quan, pastor of Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church; and other MC Eastern Canada pastors in Toronto soon began to hear of the family's needs.

Sandy Yuen, a member of Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church, quickly stepped in to organize a response. "I think it is amazing that front-line workers are risking their lives," says Yuen. "I really am grateful for people like Hiwot for caring for the elders and the people who are sick in our community during this time." To organize, Yuen developed a spreadsheet and the Toronto area MC Eastern Canada congregations began to respond. "We just tried to juggle people's availability with the needs of Pastor Ashenafi's family," she says. "We knew that we had to help in some way. Everyone chipped in."

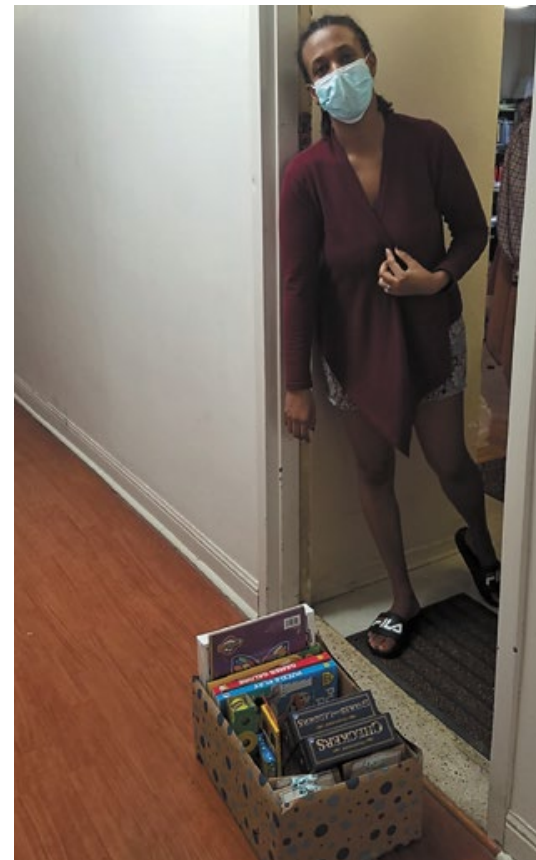
The community of care surrounding Fulase and Tesfaye began to grow. The Greater Toronto Area congregations gathered food, games, books and money for the family as they remained in isolation. Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church was also able to use funds from the Spirit of Mennonite Disaster Service Fund.

"Through this I've learned real love. I saw Jesus and how Jesus would love us," says Tesfaye. "They stood with us in this difficult time. Each morning, Pastor Tim texted me a verse to encourage me. Pastor Brian and Sandy brought us food."

Tesfaye continues: "A day I will never forget is when Sandy phoned and asked what kind of food she could bring, as

opposed to bringing only Canadian food from the grocery store. I told her that we love injera (an Ethiopian bread). She went to an Ethiopian restaurant and bought injera! We had enough for a week! It was wonderful."

Fulase says: "Jesus said, 'I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was in prison and you came to me and



PHOTOS BY SANDY YUEN

*Hiwot Tesfaye, a personal support worker, finds donations at her door, from people in Toronto area Mennonite churches who supported her and her family when she contracted COVID-19 and had to isolate from her family in one room of their two-bedroom apartment.*

Have a passion for teaching?

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**Ashenafi Fulase, pastor of Freedom Gospel Ethiopian Church, and his children find donations at their door from people in Toronto area Mennonite churches who supported the family when Ashenafi's wife, Hiwot, a personal support worker, contracted COVID-19, and had to isolate from her family.**

*visited me.* I learned what this truly meant from the people who cared for us.”

“They showed us real love.” says Tesfaye. “It’s not about skin colour or race—whether we are Ethiopian, Chinese, Spanish, English or Tamil. We are one in Christ. I can’t find the words in English to express how I feel! God bless all of our

brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank you so much for your care and prayers. We really appreciate you all!” ❧

*This story originally appeared in the Fall 2020 issue of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s Sprout publication. Reprinted with permission.*

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## Calendar

### 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. MST, and evening prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9 p.m. MST, for about 15 to 20 minutes, using Take Our Moments and Our Days. Register online at [mcab.ca/events](http://mcab.ca/events).

### Saskatchewan

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

### Manitoba

**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

**April 24:** MC Eastern Canada annual delegate sessions, on Zoom.

### International

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

**July 5-10, 2022:** Mennonite World Conference's global assembly, in Semarang, Indonesia. Theme: "Following Jesus together across barriers." For more information, visit [mwc-cmm.org/assembly/indonesia-2022](http://mwc-cmm.org/assembly/indonesia-2022).

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

@canadianmennonite.org. For more Calendar listings online, visit [canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar](http://canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar).



## Classifieds

### Employment Opportunities



Employment opportunity  
**Lead Pastor**  
Calgary, Alberta

We are a multigenerational, urban church of 174 members. The fellowship was established in 1956 and is a member of Mennonite Church Alberta and MC Canada.

A Lead Pastor is sought to guide the congregation after an 18-month interim ministry following our Lead Pastor's 20-year pastorate. Meet us by going to [www.foothillsmennonite.com](http://www.foothillsmennonite.com). Foothills MC is an Anabaptist faith community that desires to embody, share and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Job description available on request.

Calgary is a large, modern city with excellent educational opportunities and ready access to Canada's national mountain parks.

Please direct inquiries to: [office@foothillsmennonite.ca](mailto:office@foothillsmennonite.ca), Attention of the Chair, Search Committee.

# MDS early response teams head to Texas

Mennonite Disaster Service

**E**arly response teams from Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) are heading to Texas with a focus on repairing broken pipes and waterlines, so residents hard-hit by the deadly ice storm in February can make their first step toward recovery.

The storm sent some 29 million people into a state of crisis and, although power is back on for many, burst pipes have flooded thousands of homes and water shortages are still dire.

MDS is working to secure bulk plumbing supplies; its American volunteers are asked to bring their own tools and personal protective equipment, so they are ready to work while observing MDS's COVID-19 safety protocols. Canadians can still not volunteer due to border restrictions related to COVID-19.

"We will not be repairing drywall, flooring, walls or other damages at this point," says MDS executive director Kevin King. "Our sole focus will be on restoring the integrity of the water supply lines in the homes. . . . MDS is still responding to needs in Texas related to Hurricane Harvey, which struck in 2017," he says. "Please pray for those in dire circumstances from this winter storm, as well as those who are still facing pain and trauma left by other disasters." ❧



PHOTO BY MARTY TROYER

*A broken pipe at the home of Marty Troyer, pastor of Houston Mennonite Church, as the result of an ice storm that devastated much of Texas in February.*



MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE PHOTO

*Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers Terry Yoder, left, and Paul Yothers from Lancaster, Pa., load plumbing supplies to transport to Texas homes hit by the February 2021 deep freeze.*