

Recommended reads



Fourteen Mennonites talk about
the books that have impacted them,
pg. 4

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EDITORIAL

What happens when we read together?

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



When my family moved to Canada, I was amazed to learn that the Canadian Broadcasting Company ran a reality show featuring—of all things!—books. Each year, the Canada Reads program selects five books it encourages Canadians to read, with each title being championed by a public personality. Over several months, CBC runs interviews with each of the authors and the individuals promoting their respective books. Then, through a television show and radio broadcast, a weeklong contest pits the “champions” against each other to discuss the books and vote on them, until one title emerges as the book “all of Canada should read.”

Acknowledging that Canada Reads helps sell books, I think it also points to the possibility of more understanding and community connections, through a shared reading experience.

What happens when people in a community read together?

I know of at least one Mennonite university that each year selects one book—non-fiction or fiction—that all students, faculty and staff are encouraged to read and discuss. The community at Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia has found that reading the same book establishes common ground for conversation among diverse people, across the various academic disciplines.

Those of us who belong to book clubs

know that something powerful can happen when a group sits down for conversation about a book all the members have read. In our conversation about books, we also hear each other’s stories. We discover that our reading tastes vary but also that we experience some of the same human struggles—those portrayed by the book and those shared by our reading partners. Looking at a common text, we identify key points of agreement and disagreement and we try to listen better to those with whom we disagree. Book club members come away from the conversation enriched by a common memory they now share.

Last year the CommonRead effort emerged, a sort of book club for Mennonite readers across North America. This is a collaboration between CommonWord, the books and resources arm of Mennonite Church Canada, and MennoMedia, the publisher for both our denomination and Mennonite Church U.S.A. Readers can buy books at a group discount price and can access free study guides and author interviews.

CommonRead recently introduced its fourth book, *Raising Disciples: How to Make Faith Matter for Our Kids*, by Natalie Fisk, as the 2021 spring-summer read. (More at commonword.ca/ResourceView/82/20766)

I’m curious about how the Common-Read effort might help readers have meaningful conversations. North American Mennonites differ in terms of

family backgrounds and the geographical realities we inhabit. We don’t even necessarily speak the same languages. There are generational differences and preferred ways of communicating. And we know that theological perspectives vary among us.

Is it possible that, for those of us who do share a common language, reading together can help us listen better to each other’s point of view? Might our book discussions help us explore how to work on common causes in spite of the differences? Could we find ways to include outsiders in our conversations? Maybe, through shared reading experiences, we can even create common memories that bind us together in new ways as a community.

This issue of the magazine includes *CM*’s semi-annual Focus on Books & Resources. Browsing through the articles and reviews, you might come across a book you would like to read. Maybe you will also think of potential reading partners and will invite them to join you in exploring it together.

Clarification

In the editorial “The gifts of all” (p. 2 in the March 15, 2021 issue), I identified Leah Reesor-Keller as the first woman to serve as executive minister for a regional church. While this is correct, some historical nuance was missing from that statement.

Starting in January 1992, Mary E. Burkholder served as executive secretary for Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada (the predecessor of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada). Mary Mae Schwartzentruber succeeded her, beginning as interim executive secretary in January 1998 and serving in that role until the fall of 1999. In later years, the position was renamed “executive minister,” and the term “conference” was changed to “regional church.” ❧



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PHOTO BY AARON EPP / CANADIAN MENNONITE

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"Generally I only read books once, but there is one that I've gone back to and re-read a number of times," says Anne Andres, one of 14 Mennonites asked to name a book that impacted them. Andres chose *A Severe Mercy* by Sheldon Vanauken.



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FEATURE

Recommended reads

Fourteen Mennonites talk about the books that have impacted them

Story and Photos by Aaron Epp
Online Media Manager

“Rainy days,” *Calvin and Hobbes* cartoonist Bill Watterson once wrote, “should be spent at home with a cup of tea and a good book.”

As part of *Canadian Mennonite*’s biannual Focus on Books & Resources section, the magazine spoke with 14

people about the novels, poetry collections and non-fiction works that have impacted them.

Consider spending time with one of these books the next time it rains.



Anne Andres, 65

Library director at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, B.C.

“Generally I only read books once, but there is one that I’ve gone back to and re-read a number of times. It’s called *A Severe Mercy* by Sheldon Vanauken, and it’s a memoir. There are three parts to this book: the experience of love that the author and his wife share, their spiritual journey when they reach Oxford University, and their friendship with C.S. Lewis. I got this book when I was in my 20s and had just finished university. A close friend gave it to me for Christmas, so that’s one of the reasons I treasure the book.”

Leng Nawn Thang, 47

Pastor at Calgary Chin Christian Church.

“I don’t have a favourite book, but almost every day my devotional reading—in addition to the Bible—is Charles F. Stanley’s *Handbook for Christian Living: Biblical Answers to Life’s Tough Questions*. I also enjoy *God’s Story, Our Story: Exploring Christian Faith and Life* by Michele Hershberger. It focuses on salvation, justification and sanctification, and the mission and the work of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.”

Kai Willms, 13

Grade 8 student at Menno Simons Christian School, Calgary.

“My favourite book is *Internment* by Samira Ahmed. It takes place in the United States, where they’re trying to cleanse the country of Muslims by placing them in internment camps. The book follows one Muslim girl as the prisoners start rebelling against the leaders of the camp and prove that they’re not a threat to America. It shows that if you have good friends and if you believe in yourself, you can do amazing things.”

Wesley Montgomery, 13

Grade 8 student at Menno Simons Christian School, Calgary.

“My favourite book is *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. The main character, Starr, is Black, and she witnesses her

best friend get shot by a white police officer. It’s really relevant to what is happening in the world now. I learned that you never know what somebody’s going through. No matter what’s happening in your life, you have to treat people with respect.”

Jean Lefever, 78

Church librarian at Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton.

“I’ve just recently read *Peace by Chocolate: The Hadhad Family’s Remarkable Journey from Syria to Canada* by Jon Tattrie. It’s about a Syrian family that was sponsored by a group in Antigonish, N.S., because of conflict back home. It’s a remarkable story of how these newcomers were able to start a chocolatier called Peace by Chocolate with the help of the community.”

Cynthia Wallace, 37

English professor at St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.

“Toni Morrison’s novel *A Mercy* is a book I wish more people knew about. It’s a fairly short novel that takes place in the American colonies in the 1600s. The novel tells this incredible story of the moment in the history of North America where race and racism started to develop. It traces how this one household of people—including the family of a Dutch settler, an enslaved Black woman and an Indigenous woman—live together and work together and survive, but when conflict arises, they begin to conceptualize each other in these different categories, confronting readers with how racism developed to divide us. It’s a beautifully poetic novel, and deeply theological, but it’s also a much-needed reminder for white settler readers in North America of how we got where we are. I think Toni Morrison was the greatest 20th-century American novelist, full stop.”

Katrina Epp, 26

High school library technician, Winkler, Man.

“*Smoke Gets In Your Eyes: And Other*

Lessons from the Crematory by Caitlin Doughty is my current favourite. Caitlin Doughty is a mortician and activist in the death-positive movement. This is her first book, and it’s made up of stories from when she was 24 and got her first job working in a crematory. She approaches death-related topics with a bluntness, rather than shame or taboo. As a society we hide from things, and it’s not necessarily good or healthy. Death is one of those things that I think should be a bit more normalized.”

Andrea De Avila, 30

Associate pastor of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

“I recommend people read Rachel Held Evans. I’m currently working through *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church*. I’ve really appreciated Rachel’s stories and words and theology, and how open she is about her faith journey. Even though she grew up evangelical, I think a lot of Mennonites would identify with her reflections.”

Doug Klassen, 54

Executive minister of Mennonite Church Canada, Winnipeg.

“One book that has really rocked my world in the last five or seven years or so is *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* by René Girard. He was featured on CBC Radio’s *Ideas* program, and it just blew my mind. The book they referenced a lot in that series was *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*. It’s helped me understand three things: the uniqueness of Jesus and the gospels, the uniqueness of how conflict works in the world, and how Jesus resolves that. It’s been key for me.”

Sarah Ens, 28

Poet and editor, Winnipeg.

“*Questions I Asked My Mother* by Di Brandt was my first favourite poetry book. It was sort of transformational to read this account of the coming of age of a Mennonite woman from a small Manitoba town. The poems are packed with doubt but also faith, and love but also anger, and shame and desire, and

they're all working at the same time. That's when I really realized, oh, that's what poetry can do—it can convey these extremely nuanced feelings in a way that allows all of them to exist at the same time.”

Jonathan Dyck, 35

Illustrator and designer, Winnipeg.

“I recommend the graphic novel *You & a Bike & a Road* by Eleanor Davis. She's an acclaimed illustrator and cartoonist from the U.S. This book is a travelogue and memoir about her bike trip from her parents' house in Tucson, Ariz., to her home in Athens, Ga. What I like about her work is that she's always attentive to bigger structural problems, and how the systems that we've built don't serve everyone equally—and in some cases do a lot of harm. At the same time, her work is accessible and beautifully drawn. She manages to keep the tone light while speaking movingly about her encounters with the world around her.”

David Driedger, 42

Associate minister of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

“I'm working through *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* by Cedric J. Robinson. I think it's a substantial text for particularly white and western Christians to deal with because it puts forward an account of truth and liberation that does not rely on the west or Christianity for its foundation and inspiration. I think if the western church is interested in reckoning with its historical position of supremacy, it needs to encounter other traditions, like Black traditions, Indigenous traditions, even various Islamic or eastern traditions, and be open to what they offer apart from our own sense of truth, justice, liberation and those kinds of things.”

Magdalene Redekop, 76

Professor emerita of English at the University of Toronto.

“There is no one novel that I most enjoyed teaching during my career, but I guess if I was pushed to choose one, I would choose Alice Munro's *Who Do*



You Think You Are? It's a collection of short stories that make up a kind of novel. I think it's Munro at her very, very best. It's densely allusive but it has an incredible lightness—it's as light as air. She's a highly crafted writer who conceals her craft and sweeps you up in stories. *Who Do You Think You Are?*

deals with violence and is a profound examination of power and class differences, especially in Ontario. I love all of Alice Munro's work, but this is my favourite.”

Leah Reesor-Keller, 35

Executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Kitchener, Ont.

“One novel that had a pretty significant impact on my spiritual formation, and how I think about God, the world and my place in it, is *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle. I probably read it when I was 11 or 12. It's a fantasy adventure book where an ordinary girl has extraordinary things happen to her. In the book, there's an understanding of the universe where God is a force for good at work in many ways, both large and small—in the large, cosmic universe around us and in the very small minutiae of day-to-day life. It was really significant and influential for me.” ✎

/// For discussion

1. What is your favourite kind of book to read? Are there any books that you find yourself reading over and over again? Do you have treasured books that are falling apart? What kind of books do you keep at your bedside?
2. What are you hoping to achieve when you read? For example, do you read mostly to escape into someone else's world for a while, to impact your faith formation, or for knowledge and information? What are some reasons for starting a second book before the first one is finished?
3. How much do the books you read influence how you live your life? What book (other than the Bible) has most influenced your faith formation? If you could recommend a book to your 18-year-old self, what would it be?
4. Can you think of examples of poetry or fiction that have inspired you to faithful living? How do these genres work differently from traditional devotional or theological writing?
5. If you were able to write a book, what would it be about? What books have you given as gifts?

—By Barb Draper

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www.commonword.ca

CommonWord
 Bookstore and Resource Centre

/// Readers write

✉ Reader calls on Mennonites to reject COVID-19 vaccines

**Re: “A duty to love our neighbours,”
March 1, pages 1 and 18.**

I am deeply saddened that so many leaders of the Mennonite church are endorsing vaccinations for COVID-19, and that this magazine would print such a one-sided article. Surely there are some leaders who at least question the legitimacy of the global panic.

Why should we put our trust in a vaccine from any of the giant pharmaceutical companies when our “fearfully and wonderfully made” bodies can give us a stronger and broader-based protection from every current virus and all future mutations? Why would we put our trust in an injection of genetically modified foreign material into our bodies when the usual long-term test trials have not been conducted? Even the designers of these so-called vaccines acknowledge that they are being rolled out with unprecedented speed.

If we really wish to be good to our neighbours, we will say no to this massive, unnecessary vaccination program that serves only to generate massive profits for the same companies that have destroyed millions of lives and livelihoods across the globe with their proliferation of drugs, chemicals and genetically modified organisms in the name of health protection and crop protection.

It is so sad that the leaders of faith groups across the globe—with a few exceptions—have become complicit in spreading the biased government and media narratives.

I will refuse to accept this vaccine and pray that my choice will not lead to further restrictions of my fundamental human rights.

It is time to return to our Anabaptist roots of independent thinking and to object to this violence that is being inflicted upon humanity.

STEVE MARTIN, CLIFFORD, ONT.

✉ Beware the Trojan horse of humour

**Re: “What is appropriate humour?”
March 1, page 19.**

I agree fully with author Joanne De Jong and Brian Froese that humour is certainly essential to have a healthy life. Proverbs 17:22 tells us, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.”

The concern that I have is that it is with the Trojan

horse of humour that much harm can also be done. Personally, I would place the *The Simpsons* TV show on the top of the list that has mocked and diminished much of what is sacred in our society. Yes, there are issues and hypocrisies that need to be addressed but, unfortunately, many people enjoy the safe place of a soft, comfortable chair from which they laugh at the problem rather than getting up and doing something about it.

When there are hypocrisies in the lives of adults in the faith communities, young people enjoy mocking the inconsistencies because it provides a release for the pain of confusion. For some, it gives them an excuse for not doing what is right. When the leaders fail, as illustrated by Jesus’ comment, “*Do as they say but not as they do,*” they were likely the laughing stock of the community.

Unfortunately, laughing at them did not help to improve or correct the situation. Humour alone can be dangerous when humorists are using the failures of others to get a laugh for their own benefit. In reality, they are mocking the pain of the victim and legitimizing the offence of the offender.

Jesus exposed the failure and he also gave serious instruction as to how to correct the situation. I believe that more than once Jesus might have finished his message with “*Neither do I condemn you, go, but sin no more.*”

Yes, laugh and the world laughs with you. It’s funny until you are the object of someone’s joke. We need to learn to laugh at our own mistakes and never take ourselves too seriously.

DAVID SHANTZ (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ Snail mail and email both appreciated

**Re: “Instead of just hitting ‘Send,’”
March 1, page 23.**

I appreciated Angelika Dawson’s article.

I recently had the misfortune of spending two months in hospital due to some injuries and then living through COVID-19.

I now have a small drawer full of emails, cards and other messages sent to me by family, friends of my children and members of online church. These messages mean a lot to me. I have read and reread them and will do so again.

I appreciate *Canadian Mennonite*.

ANNA NEUFELD, OTTAWA, ONT.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Gangloff—Harvey Robert (b. March 18, 2021), to Brad and Courtney Gangloff, Sterling Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Penner—Norah Clementine (b. March 21, 2021), to Lindsey Banman and Matthew Penner, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Ropp—Lillian Kay and Lochlin David Charles (b. Feb. 27, 2021), to Sarah and Nathan Ropp, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Sider—Evelyn Audrey (b. Jan. 30, 2021), to Chelsea and Brett Sider, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Van Alstyne—Isabelle Naomi (b. March 15, 2021), to Alyssa and Jayce Van Alstyne, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Warkentin—Colby Blake (b. March 16, 2021), to Curt and Cara Warkentin, Morden Mennonite, Man.

Yantzi—Madison Jean (b. Feb. 16, 2021), to Hannah and Dylan Yantzi, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Deaths

Baker—Earl, 89 (b. Sept. 2, 1931; d. March 15, 2021), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Dick—Helene (nee Sawatzky), 86 (b. Dec. 11, 1934; d. March 25, 2021), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Fitzgerald—Robert (Bob), 91 (b. Jan. 20, 1930; d. March 15, 2021), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Friesen—Margaret (Rita), 86 (b. Feb. 8, 1936; d. March 16, 2021), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Heinrichs—Ruth Elizabeth (Zacharias), 90 (b. Aug. 16, 1930; d. Feb. 27, 2021), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Klassen—Aganetha (Aggie) (nee Ens), 102 (b. Aug. 6, 1918; d. Feb. 13, 2021), Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Krause—Hilde (nee Koslowsky), 97 (b. May 4, 1923; d. Feb.

17, 2021), Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Lichti—Lauretta 90 (b. June 20, 1930; d. Feb. 28, 2021), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Neufeld—Hans, 80 (b. Aug. 22, 1940; d. Jan. 2, 2021), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Schmidt—Henry, 93 (b. March 13, 1928; d. March 14, 2021), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

/// Paid Obituary

Margaret Ediger, 87

ABBOTSFORD, BRITISH COLUMBIA—Margaret Ediger, 87, died Dec. 18, 2020, at Abbotsford Regional Hospital. She was born Oct 29, 1933, in Rosetown, Sask., Canada, to Marie (Unger) and William Voght. Margaret graduated from Kelowna High School in 1951. She then attended Bethel Bible Institute in Abbotsford, Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, and Victoria College in Victoria, B.C. She taught in northern B.C. for three years. In 1962, she then went to seminary in Elkhart, Ind., where she met her future husband. She and George Ediger (Inman, Kan.) were married in 1962. They were married for 58 years. She and George spent one year as missionaries in Arizona; 12 years in Colombia, South America; and Dallas, Texas, for 11 years. She and George lived in Inman for a few years in between. They then moved back to Kelowna, B.C., and then Abbotsford. She is survived by husband George; son David Ediger of Langley, B.C.; and daughter Judy Grosbach Ediger of Los Angeles, Calif. She was preceded in death by her parents. Cremation has taken place. Time and date of service have yet to be established. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to any of the following: Mennonite Central Committee, Christian Peacemaker Teams or your local Mennonite church.



Women are powerful,
strong and courageous.

In business, they are
drivers of economic growth.

This Mother's Day,
support women
in business.



FROM OUR LEADERS

Called to hear

Confessions of a selective listener

Kevin Koop

I have a selective hearing problem. When I'm at home on a Thursday night, weary from a day's worth of important religious listening, the certain pleas of a younger family member of mine to discuss the latest plot twist in an all-too-predictable cartoon become easy to ignore.

When I'm at work on a Friday afternoon and an important member of our church community walks through the doors, I drop everything I'm doing to sit in the foyer and listen to whatever that person has to say.

I didn't say I'm not a good listener; I'm

listener. The sheer volume at which the world cajoles us with its many voices means that just getting by involves countless choices of who to tune in and who to tune out. Our daily choices include:

- **Which cable news** channels comfort us?
- **Which social media** platform of choice algorithmically brings a sense of connection to the people we like?
- **Which reminders from** our domestic partners to help with household chores do we actually take to heart?

It has always been easy to surround ourselves with people like us, but we are now technologically aided in this endeavour.

just incredibly judicious about when I put in a listening effort and when I put a pair of metaphysical noise-cancelling headphones over my heart.

To be human today is to be a selective

The key to effective selective listening is jumping to a conclusion about whether or not someone's voice is worth our time. Putting people into categories that disquiet or soothe us aids

immensely with this practice. The particular label matters a lot less than the act of sorting out voices that don't mesh with our preferred way of seeing the world. It has always been easy to surround ourselves with people like us, but we are now technologically aided in this endeavour.

The beauty of a physical community is that we must share space with people who aren't like us. If COVID-19 lockdowns have taught us one thing, it is that to be human is to be connected physically to others. We cannot help but be connected with the people with whom we may share a household, the people we encounter at work and those folks in the church pew. If we're honest, our local church is a community full of people unlike us if we look beyond the unique brand of religious decorum that suits our tastes.

I'll always be a selective listener. I couldn't function in our world without being so. The challenge for me is to pay attention to when and why I'm tuning people in or out, and to avoid the temptation to only listen to voices that let me carry on comfortably and content in my own righteous sense of self. ☺



Kevin Koop is pastor of Carrot River (Sask.) Mennonite Church.

A moment from yesterday



Herman Walde stands in front of the sign of First Mennonite Church in Edmonton, where he served as pastor from 1963 to 1966. Historically, as Mennonites became more accepted, their churches began to look like the churches of their neighbours. Later Mennonite churches began posting signs telling people of the church's name, when services were held and contact information. Some churches began to advertise their services in local newspapers and to have radio programs. Today many churches have a website or Facebook page telling people of their activities and how to participate; even entire services can be watched online. As churches use new methods of interacting with people, new kinds of records are created, such as signs, newspaper ads, websites and digital files.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Canadian Mennonite Bible College Photo Collection / Mennonite Heritage Archives



archives.mhsc.ca

IN THE IMAGE

A precious gift

Ed Olfert

I visited an elderly friend in a small-town hospital. Gaining permission to see “Esther” (all names are pseudonyms) involved a slight untruth, but it was merely a sin of omission, as I simply withheld “retired” when I identified myself as her minister. I slept reasonably well that night.

Esther had fallen and experienced an awkward break. For the first number of days, pain control had involved morphine. This had caused some distress, yet we were able to giggle as she recounted some of her wilder hallucinations. She also accused me of stopping by a day earlier, but I pointed out that was a morphine mirage as well.

In the other bed in Esther’s room, I recognized another old friend. As I stepped up to greet “Maria,” her eyes opened wide. I realized that she didn’t recognize my masked visage. Once identity was established, the warm chatting went all around the room.

My relationship with Esther is such that teasing is comfortable. She asked me to call a nurse as she wanted to be moved from her sitting position to reclining on her bed. I assured her that I had the strength to wrestle her down, and her eyes sharpened, as I knew they would. “Don’t you touch me!” Esther has

a spicy streak.

While the staff ministered to her, I stepped back over to Maria’s bed, and we reminisced about family and about her current health situation. Soon, Maria, with typical passion, was telling me, “People are so good to me! God always puts people around me when I need them! And I am so blessed to have people who care about me, who look after me!”

By this time, Esther was lying down, without my assistance. I could see that she was near to dozing. We prayed together, then I got up to go. But she stopped me, as she had one more thought to share: “You know, I am so lucky! I have so many people around me that care about me. My children are so good to me, my friends make times like this easier. Everywhere people step up to help me! There is such good staff here! I am so lucky!”

I left that room on a high. Two women, one in her 80s, one in her 90s, had just offered me a precious gift. It was the strong affirmation that life, in all its stages, is good.

One of the most important aspects of healthy spirituality is the preparation for dying. My two friends, although their deaths aren’t particularly imminent,

taught me a lesson on how to live, on how to be. My ministerial role has invited me into many dying realities, and every one has been an honour. Who am I to share the wonder, the awe, the often painful reality, of death? The measure of how a person has prepared for this inevitable event becomes a measure of their spirituality.

I recall a time when I was asked to visit a man who was in the active process of dying. He was able to say the things that were closest to his heart. He acknowledged his torment, as he named children and grandchildren who had not yet “come to know the Lord.” I gave him what assurances I could about the loving nature of God, as revealed to me, but as I left that conversation I experienced a strong wave of anger toward whatever spiritual structure had convinced him of the doom of his loved ones. This heaviness is not a spirituality of hope.

Sit with Esther. Sit with Maria. As they age, as their physical bodies become less able, listen to them process that reality. Hear them as they discover new lessons, new pinpoints of light. Hear them give thanks for the blessings they discover. Share their awe, as they fully experience life in its complicated beauty.

And give thanks. ☞



Ed Olfert (p2peho@gmail.com) gives thanks for lives well lived and for stories shared.

Et cetera

Churches urge Canada to join nuclear treaty

On Jan. 22 of this year the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force with the ratification of more than 50 nations. In a letter to Canada’s foreign affairs minister, the Commission on Justice and Peace of the Canadian Council of Churches urged the government of Canada to sign and ratify the treaty. In part, the letter reads, “We join our voices with other civil society organizations in Canada and global organizations such as the World Council of Churches and other national councils of churches urging their governments to do the same.” To read the letter, visit bit.ly/3IRIMUU.



MIND AND SOUL

What does UN 'peace' mean?

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

"Making Peace with Nature" is the peculiar title of a scientific report recently tabled by the United Nations. That's an attention-getting title for a peace-church eco-geek. My inquiring mind begs to know: How does the UN conceptualize "peace with nature" and how does its version compare with an Anabaptist understanding?

Rooted in Scripture, Mennonites understand peace (or shalom) as referring to God's desires for the world. Peace is coming when all have the opportunity to flourish. That flourishing can be impeded by many things, including human lusts and greed, but also by societal structures.

So far so good. That fits the Sustainable Development Goals, a comprehensive and interconnected set of objectives covering all areas of what we would hope would be a good society in which to live.

According to the UN report (unep.org/resources/making-peace-nature), we are very far from accomplishing those goals. Human-caused ecological degradation is profound and an increasingly prominent barrier to human flourishing. This evidence is the report's reasoning that humanity is not "at peace with nature."

The overall goal of the report's proposals is "transformative systemic change." Particularly targeted are economic and financial systems. But this is no revolution. Transformation is to come through "human knowledge, ingenuity, technology and co-operation."

Religious groups of all types name this as human hubris—founded in the same system that got us into the mess. An Anabaptist inspection of Scripture also sees that peace includes the character of faithful people: those inner characteristics and collective practices that help us be in better relationships with the Creator and with others. Flourishing cannot happen where poverty, degradation, inequity or failure of reconciliation exist.

There is nothing in the UN report with which I disagree. But it is not transformative enough. The report implies, but does not name, acting for the common good; loving one's neighbour; and extending "neighbour" to all humans on the globe, and even to the entirety of the community of creation. It does not name, as faith groups do, the moral characteristics that allow co-operation to operate more intentionally for the good of all. It does not mention reconciliation or inner

peace or ecological conversion.

To be fair, religious theories of social change often overemphasize individual conversion of the spirit. More of a problem is the tendency to see all humanity in the same way. Violence against creation more directly affects "the least of these," that is, the most vulnerable. Even more importantly, this slow, degrading violence is not perpetrated equally; some have power and economic resources to lead more impactful lives (and "impact" is not meant favourably).

Leaders of numerous Christian development agencies struggle to communicate to their faith constituencies the urgency of global needs for ecologically sustainable development. Although environmental degradation substantially affects international development work, it is still often deemed "too political" for North Americans. Could it be that our lifestyles are at war with our intentions?

Clearly, if we humans have been doing violence to creation, "making peace with nature" will require social transformation. But it will also require reconciliation, restoration and transformative change from within the human spirit. ☘



Randolph Haluza-DeLay spent two decades as a university faculty member focused on environmental justice.

Et cetera

MCC meat canner not coming to Canada in 2021

Mennonite Central Committee's 74th annual meat-canning season is moving forward, but with a reduced schedule and no stops in Canada this year. The season began in October as usual but, by Christmas, only six of the usual 12 locations hosted meat canning this year. Because of the novel coronavirus pandemic, new procedures are required, and only the canner operators are allowed to work inside the canning trailer. The Canada-U.S. border has been closed since the pandemic began, and so the canner will not come to the usual locations in Leamington and Elmira, Ont.

Source: *Anabaptist World* / 2005 photo by Barb Draper



Mennonite Central Committee distributes canned meat to feed hungry people around the world.

TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

Matters of life and death

Joshua Penfold

I waffle a lot when it comes to death. Sometimes I welcome the idea, especially when faith in being united with Christ is high, when the weight of the world and its heartache is great. But other times I fear death, when I realize how quickly life passes by, or when my faith flitters and the reality that, despite all we believe, we don't truly know what happens next.

Although I don't necessarily fear the traditional fiery torment of hell, sometimes I find annihilation and the thought of ceasing to exist to be more frightening than eternal torment. I can get so enraptured with the beauty of this life that I can't imagine heaven being any better, or I so love my life that I don't want to die because I don't want this incredible life to end. At other times, I long for Jesus to take me home, take us all home, when I feel the deep pain and sadness of the suffering of the world.

I spend time thinking about death: my death and death in general. I like reading books and watching movies that honestly wrestle with the reality of death, not just killing the bad guy. I've recently enjoyed *The Book of Two Ways* by Jodi Picoult (the main character is a death doula), and *Smoke Gets in Your*

Eyes by Caitlin Doughty (a memoir of a woman who worked at a crematorium and then became a licensed mortician in the hope of reshaping funeral practices), and I'm always open to suggestions for books that take an interesting look at death.

But reading Ecclesiastes I'm still not sure what to think. We all die regardless of the value of our time on earth. The writer of Ecclesiastes really drives home the point that when you're dead, you're dead, and everything you've been vanishes. He says, "*In the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom*" (9:10).

Our understanding of the afterlife has developed since then: a new heaven and new earth, with Jesus preparing rooms for his people. My understanding of life and death, and heaven and earth, is so heavily built on this idea that we all die and then "go to heaven," that this Ecclesiastical idea that we live our meaningless life and then, whether good or bad, we all just die and cease to be is both jarring and refreshing.

The idea that there is nothing after this life, and I cease to be, scares me, but it simultaneously invigorates me to make the most of my life while I have it.

There's a phrase used regarding some Christians: they're "too heavenly bound to be any earthly good." If I can somehow hold in tension the hope of heaven while striving to fully embrace and enjoy my life, or, as Ecclesiastes says, "*Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun*" (9:9), not just surviving in a cosmic waiting room, but revelling in the splendour of this life, maybe Ecclesiastes can help me live better and die better.

I hope I can be, and do, some earthly good. Maybe it's a picture of the Kingdom of God. The kingdom is both already and not yet. It is mysteriously both fully here in this life and yet more than here in this life. The kingdom is yet to be fully consummated, but we are still participating in it. Maybe death and life are kind of like that: Life is good, but a fuller good is awaiting us in death, whatever that might look like. ☘



Joshua Penfold
(penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) waffles while he wanders through the written word.

Et cetera

The EFC laments the passing of Bill C-7

This bill changed Canada's law on medical assistance in dying (MAID) in crucial ways. It allows people who are not dying to be eligible for euthanasia and assisted suicide. For those who are dying, the bill removes key safeguards like a mandatory 10-day reflection period and the requirement for two independent witnesses to a request for euthanasia. And, in a change that will take effect in 2023, it will allow hastened death for those with mental illness alone. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, which includes Mennonite Church Canada as a member, is fundamentally opposed to euthanasia and assisted suicide, but it has consistently fought for the strongest possible protections and safeguards within a legalized regime to try to minimize the harm and risk to vulnerable Canadians.

UPDATE

MEDICAL
ASSISTANCE
IN DYING

EFC
The Evangelical
Fellowship of Canada



Break every yoke

Panel discussion explores the church and economic justice

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

“Loose the chains of injustice . . . set the oppressed free and break every yoke.”

These words from Isaiah are not confined to dusty village squares thousands of years ago—they speak to us today.

They compelled David Driedger, associate minister of First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, to organize a panel discussion on the church and the question of guaranteed income for all.

The pandemic has thrown into sharp relief the failings of economic systems and the suffering that many people experience daily, and basic income proposals have been regaining popularity as a result.

Between 400 and 500 people attended the virtual event on March 24, which was sponsored by Mennonites, Anglicans and the United Church of Canada. It featured speakers Leah Gazan, MP for Winnipeg Centre; and John Clarke, a Toronto-based anti-poverty activist.

The event was called “Break Every Yoke,” after the Isaiah text. The passage calls these bonds of oppression, namely poverty, hunger and homelessness, forms of abuse, not moral failings.

In fact, the whole Bible is clear on this point, according to Driedger. “Of all issues, the Bible seems most consistent and thorough on matters of justice in relation to poverty and inequality,” he said, beginning the event with theological reflection. The prophets condemn unjust gain, food is distributed equitably in the wilderness, the apostle Paul pleads with churches to allocate wealth fairly, Jesus proclaims good news to the poor. “That Christians are to embrace and seek justice in the face of poverty is clear,” Driedger said.

Christians are also called to act because “the church cannot avoid being political,” he said, referring to matters larger than partisan politics. They are being political when they pay taxes, carry citizenship and

obey laws. So they must ask how they can act upon this theological call in this current reality that millions of people in Canada live in poverty.

They cannot understand poverty without considering the ongoing impacts of racism, colonialism and the dispossession of Indigenous land and people, said Gazan, claiming that the capitalist system that arrived with the European settlers values humans only for their work. It disproportionately discriminates against Black, Indigenous,



David
Driedger



Leah
Gazan



John
Clarke

people of colour, the elderly, and people with disabilities and mental illnesses. In Winnipeg, 70 percent of the unsheltered community is Indigenous. “Poverty is a very violent human rights violation,” she said.

Gazan said that politicians picking and choosing which human rights to support is unacceptable. She said that Canada needs an all-encompassing solution to poverty, like Motion 46, which she presented to the House of Commons last summer. It calls for the government to convert federal pandemic funding into a permanent guaranteed liveable basic income.

A study done in Dauphin, Man., in the 1970s, showed that, with a guaranteed liveable basic income, people became healthier, more students graduated from high school, spending in healthcare decreased and people remained motivated to work. When people are cared for, they not only survive but thrive with dignity, the report concluded.

While Clarke shared Gazan’s goal of ending poverty, he opposed a guaranteed liveable basic income. He made the case that a basic income would cause cuts to publicly funded social services and take the pressure off employers and government to raise the minimum wage. Instead of spending billions in cash payments, he said that strengthening social programs is the answer. Employers must pay living wages and governments must increase supports like health care coverage and disability benefits, he said.

As the speakers shared their contributions, participants engaged in lively discussion through a constant stream of comments and questions in the Zoom and YouTube livestream chats.

Although Gazan and Clarke disagreed on how to implement supports, they agreed that Canada’s current economic structure must change and action needs to happen now.

“I think we can think in very bold terms about the demands we put on the table,” said Clarke.

“I don’t think human rights should be up for debate. I don’t think it’s partisan,” said Gazan. “It’s time to stop making excuses for ending poverty.”

So how can the church act? Driedger said Mennonites can support the extensive work the Anglican and United churches have done around basic income. He has had a few preliminary conversations about starting a working group on poverty within Mennonite Church Manitoba and he hopes to pursue that further.

“What I’m increasingly invested in is how do we really understand that our well-being is tied into the well-being of our neighbour?” he said. “How do we extend those types of relationships [with family and friends] so that we become invested in the well-being of more people around us?” ❧

‘How blessed were we?’

MC Alberta ends fiscal year with a \$95,000 surplus

Story and Screenshot by Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent

Brenda Tiessen-Wiens, Mennonite Church Alberta’s moderator, said “Wow!” Peter Za Zor Sang, the secretary of the Calgary Chin Christian Church, kept repeatedly asking, “How blessed were we?” And Werner De Jong, pastor of Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton, declared, “Grace danced!” when describing what God has done this past year in the regional church.

Delegates heard these words of affirmation while gathered on Zoom on March 20, for this year’s annual meeting.

Instead of the expected bad news of a \$34,000 deficit, good news of a \$95,000 surplus was reported. Although part of the reason for this was decreased ministry expenses due to COVID-19 and increased government subsidies, MC Alberta was still able to give \$18,000 to the Calgary Chin Christian Church, whose new church building needed renovations before its official opening on March 14, 2021. The regional church also gave \$12,000 to Mennonite World Conference in response to its COVID-19 relief appeal.

And, according to finance chair Wayne Janz, “Support for the Witness program was strong, with donations exceeding our forecast by over 40 percent.”

Multiple fundraisers for Camp Valaqua exceeded expectations, including the Family Feud fundraiser and the annual hike-a-thon. Church giving exceeded budget projections, with some congregations giving more to cover congregations who had less to give.

Nine pre-assembly workshops were held online over a number of weekends in February and March, in place of the workshops usually held at MC Alberta’s in-person assemblies. The workshops were well attended and, as Jake Froese from Trinity Mennonite Church in DeWinton, noted, “I really appreciated the workshops. No written report accurately

describes what’s happening. Workshops show the life of the conference.”

Excitement was expressed over the re-opening of Camp Valaqua this summer, even if only at 50-percent capacity. There was discussion around increasing camper registration fees, since some costs remain the same even while there are a smaller number of campers allowed.

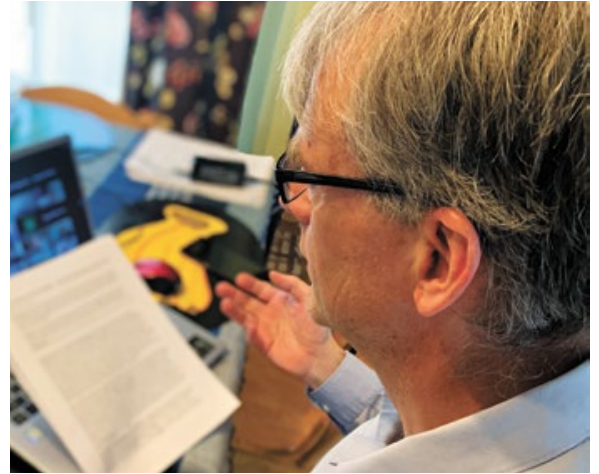
Even completing the constitution and bylaws was given a “wow!” after hours and hours of work was poured into updating them in response to MC Canada’s recent restructuring.

All resolutions were passed unanimously.

Delegates met Gwen and Ken Wellington, who have approached MC Alberta about church planting in Cranbrook, B.C. Cranbrook is located closer to an MC Alberta congregation than to any in B.C. Also, Gwen used to attend Springridge Mennonite Church in Pincher Creek, Alta., so they thought it could be a good fit.

According to Gwen, “We want to create an Anabaptist presence. We have a heart for people who have been hurt by the church—marginalized people.” They are looking for people to come and work with them.

In spite of a projected deficit for the next fiscal year, the delegates agreed to hire a half-time church engagement minister. According to Tiessen-Wiens, “The three priority areas in this position are: to help us think and share our faith story within our local communities; building relationships among churches, with attention to inclusion and cultural diversity; and nurturing financial sustainability and



Werner De Jong was the plenary speaker at this year’s MC Alberta annual delegate sessions, held on Zoom this year. His messages focused on the theme ‘Love one another,’ as part of the regional church’s launch of its Year 2 vision: ‘Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ in Community.’

generosity.”

After lunch, the focus shifted to launching Year Two of the MC Alberta vision: “Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ in Community.” The Chin Church, which had led the morning worship, continued into the afternoon.

De Jong challenged the congregations to love each other deeply, using John 13:34b-35 as the theme verse. “*When you love one another, you are a visible sign to the rest of the world that there is hope, that another world is possible,*” he said, urging everyone to see this vision not as something thrust upon them, but as something discerned in community through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, everyone should be open and listen to what God wants to teach the church.

The following day, a joint MC Alberta worship service was held, with all 12 congregations represented. More than 350 attended. ❧

Taking action for climate justice

Kitchener church hangs 'Act Now' Banner

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

March 19 was a “day of action” around the world for climate justice, as part of the Fridays for Future Campaign. At Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, it was a day to hang a large banner with the words, ‘Join communities for climate justice: Act now’ on the church’s front wall, to raise awareness and call for climate action.

The banner comes from Faith Climate Justice Waterloo Region, which bills itself as a “growing collective of faith communities . . . advocating for climate action and a just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Started in late 2019 by a few local Mennonites concerned about “the lack of ambitious action by faith communities in response to the global climate crisis,” the organization says it brings a “faith perspective to the conversation” and invites people of “all local faith communities . . . to work together for climate justice.” It advocates for “a sustainable, low-carbon local economy” that is “more equitable for everyone.”

Climate action working groups were formed at Stirling in the fall of 2019 to explore individual, congregational and community advocacy and action, as well as spiritual aspects of the work.

Eric Hunsberger has been involved with Faith Climate Justice from the start and is part of Stirling’s Missions, Peace and Justice Committee, which supports the congregation’s climate-action working groups. In an email, he wrote that hanging the banner is “a great way to both outwardly express our congregation’s commitment to climate justice, and to inwardly remind us that this is . . . important for us, particularly once we’re back in the church building and are seeing it regularly.”

He says he anticipates that the banner

will spark connections with other faith communities, and “action in the broader community, including conversations with local government.”

Several other Mennonite churches in the area have expressed interest in getting a banner. ☸



PHOTO BY D. MICHAEL HOSTETLER

March 19 was a ‘day of action’ around the world for climate justice, as part of the ‘Fridays for Future Campaign.’ At Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., it was a day to hang a large banner with the words, ‘Join communities for climate justice: Act now’ on the church’s front wall, to raise awareness and call for climate action.

Canada-Colombia relations revived

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

Mennonites in Colombia and Canada are reinvigorating a 76-year-old relationship. It started last fall when Iglesias Cristianas Menonitas de Colombia (IMCOL)—the Colombian conference of 25 congregations—shared a statement about violence, suffering and peacebuilding with Mennonite Church Canada and others.

In addition to several video calls between leaders and others in the two countries in recent months, MC Canada recently sent a letter to Iván Duque Mártez, Colombian's president, as well as a formal letter to IMCOL. Also in the works is a webinar in which people in both countries will share thoughts on how to address human rights violations in light of Jesus' teaching to love our enemies.

There are also two Colombian

congregations prepared to “sister” with congregations in Canada.

The intent of the renewed collaboration is to learn from each other and walk prayerfully with each other in the various challenges we face.

Jeanette Hanson, director of International Witness for MC Canada, is leading efforts on the Canadian end, organizing a volunteer group that stewards the vision. That group is informally anchored by Robert J. Suderman, former head of MC Canada who lived in Colombia for many years, and Isaias Rodriguez, former treasurer of IMCOL, who now lives in B.C.

Hanson says Canadians have much to learn from their sisters and brothers in Colombia. Referring to numerous exchange programs and other involvements over the years, Hanson says, “There

have been so many Canadians who have been formed in their faith journey by their connections to Colombians.”

Hanson, who recently tuned in to part of the IMCOL annual gathering, says of the Colombian Mennonites she has been connecting with: “I am so moved by how their work in peace and justice is completely wrapped up in their faith and spirituality. . . . [T]heir work in peace and justice is such an authentic expression of their faith. It is so beautiful to see. I want to learn to do that. I want that to transform my life.”

While the Colombian church is characterized by much more than its response to violence and suffering, the decades of turbulence in the country have given rise to a profound expression of Anabaptist faith.

A 2016 peace accord raised hopes of ending 50 years of bloodshed. It required the demilitarization of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (known as FARC), which was the main armed insurgent group in Colombia. In exchange, the government promised massive investment in poor rural areas formerly controlled by FARC, and government incentives for farmers to grow crops other than coca, a crop used in the production of cocaine and a major source of financing for FARC.

The government was supposed to fill the void that would be left in FARC-controlled areas. In most cases that has not happened. Other armed groups now jostle violently for control, and coca production continues.

As of December 2020, Colombian Mennonites



PHOTO BY JONATHAN STUCKY

The Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogotá, Colombia, provides food, programs and care for children in need, including those displaced by violence elsewhere in the country and Venezuelan migrants.

had reported 91 massacres, 249 people—including children—killed after laying down their weapons in compliance with the peace accord, and 310 civic and community leaders murdered, all in 2020.

In addition to those directly targeted, the persistent climate of violence and instability affects everyone.

Partly through Justapaz—the peace, justice and nonviolent action arm of IMCOL—the Colombian church documents human-rights violations, accompanies people in many of the most violent parts of the country, and supports a wide range of peacebuilding activities.

Justapaz publishes an ongoing series of reports called “Un Llamado Profético, A Prophetic Call.” These documents integrate theology, human-rights law, intricate explanations of methodology and thorough documentation of human-rights violations. They quote the Bible, academics, legal documents, pastors and peasants.

In response to the situation in Colombia and the work of Mennonites there, the MC Canada letter to the Colombian president

urges him to “increase the progress on the implementation of the peace agreement . . . especially in land restitution and guaranteeing the social participation of ex-combatants, victims, and indigenous and peasant movements.”

It further expresses concern over the practice of spraying glyphosate to kill illicit coca crops. In reference to the collateral damage of spraying this herbicide, the letter to Duque Mártez states that the fumigation is “seriously affecting the health of your citizens—our brothers and sisters in faith—and the environment where they live and where they need to grow their food.”

The letter also urges protection for IMCOL and Justapaz leaders who were subjects of death threats from armed groups in 2020.

In its letter to IMCOL, MC Canada writes, “We have heard your call . . . to walk with you.” Echoing commitments in the IMCOL statement from last fall, MC Canada writes: “We walk with you in your commitments.” Those commitments include denouncing violence,

teaching nonviolence, training members and leaders as “promoters and agents of nonviolent conflict transformation,” accompanying victims, inviting perpetrators of violence to repent; and practising solidarity by “doing what we can to bring better opportunities and improved living conditions.”

In addition to the letters, MC Canada recently passed on an urgent prayer request from Colombian leaders asking Mennonites to pray for evangelical churches in the municipality of La Tola Nariño in western Colombia, where hundreds of people have been forced to flee fighting in rural areas. One church is housing 12 families who fled with nothing. Some were wounded by gunshots as they fled.

Justapaz also reports 12 people killed in nearby municipalities. ☿

For more information, or to become involved, email Jeanette Hanson at jhanson@mennonitechurch.ca.

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Supporting communities in challenging times



‘Think of others first’

Churches asked to support COVID-19 meeting guidelines
by MC B.C. leaders

Story and Photo by Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

With some Fraser Valley congregations insisting on their right to meet for public worship during the current pandemic, Mennonite Church B.C. leadership is encouraging its churches to follow current COVID-19 guidelines for gathering.

“MC B.C. supports and encourages your congregation to follow the recommended restrictions of the B.C. government and the provincial health officer stipulating no indoor worship services,” wrote moderator Gerry Grunau in a letter to MC B.C. members this spring. “MC B.C. does not believe [insisting on the right to worship in-person indoors during a

pandemic] is consistent with the message of love, concern and community that Jesus teaches us. MC B.C. supports and affirms the health restrictions as measures to care for others and to preserve the capacity of our health system.

“Jesus calls us to serve our community and to follow his example of thinking of others first. To insist on our rights is contrary to the Christian message of doing to others as we would have them do to us,” he wrote.

Several Fraser Valley congregations—none of them Mennonite—have recently made news by advocating for the right to hold in-person indoor worship services,



Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., advertises that worship services are to remain online for the time being, as churches in the province remain closed.

citing provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They have been fined for holding the services contrary to B.C. provincial health restrictions.

On March 24, Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.’s provincial health officer, relaxed orders, allowing for limited indoor religious gatherings between March 28 and May 13. The one-time variance was to accommodate several faiths’ holidays, including Easter, Passover, Vaisakhi and Ramadan. Organizers were required have to have a COVID-19 safety plan in place. On March 30, Henry announced that, due to rising infection numbers, worship services in B.C. have been suspended until at least April 19.

In discerning the wisdom of the biblical message, MC B.C. has chosen to support the decision to continue to gather through alternate means such as online worship. Some also host informal weekly online visiting times. Sherbrooke Mennonite and Chinatown Peace churches in Vancouver held some socially distanced outdoor services last summer.

Other congregations have found creative ways to observe limited safe connections. Level Ground Mennonite of Abbotsford held a bring-your-own communion service and an interactive family-friendly Thanksgiving prayer walk last October. Cedar Valley Church in Mission invited members to a drive-in service on Good Friday in the church parking lot, including communion and stations of reflection and devotion. ☸

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COME BY HERE,
MY LORD

Seen in a Mirror Dimly

Robert G. Proudfoot

Turbulent times, European colonialism and apartheid. **Come By Here, My Lord** is a novel set in 1974 Lusaka, Zambia. The country asserts itself as a dynamic, African-led nation and Canadian 20-year-old Orwell Hughes enjoys white privilege. He turns to Tracy MacDonachie, to mentor him through challenging times.

Purchase the book at www.proudfootfamilyart.ca or at FriesenPress bookstore.

Author Robert G. Proudfoot lives in Edmonton and attends First Mennonite Church. His stories bridge cultural divides and address social struggles, human rights abuses, mental health, racism, and poverty.

'Covid composition' wins Chronos competition

Choral piece speaks to environmental issues

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

When the novel coronavirus pandemic broke out last spring, shutting down so many activities, Leonard Enns gave himself a challenge: to write a short choral work of three to four minutes in length each week. It is a commitment he kept up from April to June 2020.

"A Little More Time," the last of his eight "Covid compositions," recently won the 2020 grand prize in the Edmonton-based Chronos Vocal Ensemble's fourth annual composition competition. Through a blind adjudication process the jury selected Enns's work out of 22 entries from five provinces.

Enns, professor emeritus at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, and founder and director of the DaCapo Chamber Choir based in Waterloo, says his composition challenge during the pandemic was a way to "stay sane," and it gave him a "reason to get up in the morning."

He says that, over the years, he collected texts that might be good for a choral setting, adding that, during the pandemic, he had time to begin "working through that list." He was drawn to the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke and, in particular, "Studenbuch," a "compelling text" on which he based the winning composition, "A Little More Time." Rilke's text speaks

to environmental issues directly. It is a theme to which Enns intends to dedicate the next season of DaCapo's music making, whenever that can happen.

The criteria for the competition was to compose a piece that has both immediate and long-term relevance. Enns says his piece speaks to the "immediate concern of the environment and our abuse of it," as well as the "potentially devastating long-term impact" of that abuse.

In his notes on the piece, Enns says that Rilke's text "speaks of the very little time that is left for us to 'love all things . . . until they blossom and are worthy of your name.'" As well it speaks of "the walls and barriers we have set up . . . that block the image of the divine in our world." Rilke shows a "sacred respect for nature," addressing the divine as a "darkening deep" (*Du dunkelnder Grund*), in which the dark is seen as a positive, revealing reality that is always "becoming." Enns adds, "We owe nature our care and respect, not only for selfish existential reasons, but also for sacred reasons."

Enns entered "A Little More Time," written for an unaccompanied mixed choir, at the last minute, and he says he was thrilled to be declared the winner because he highly respects the musicians who formed the jury: "I hope I have created

an effective musical 'reading' of the text, and that the music might give the words a particular impact." He says that "theologizing sometimes limits the spirit [but] music can open up the way we hear or experience something you can't always put into words."

Enns describes his music as tonal and text oriented. He says, "The major generating energizer is the text . . . my music tries to open the text." While he likes melodies, he says, "the stuff I write is not easy." The music "is not all major triads."

To keep his DaCapo Chamber Choir reading music and singing during the pandemic, Enns resorted to meeting with the group in a Waterloo parking garage when the weather co-operated. So far, this "parkade practice," as he calls it, is the only opportunity his choir has had to sing through his award-winning piece, he says.

The choir has recorded several other pieces in the parkade that he dubbed the "concrete cathedral." The recordings can be found on the choir's website (dacapochamberchoir.ca). Chestnut Hall Music provided equipment and engineering.

In reflecting on the impact of the pandemic on music-making, Enns says that COVID-19 has presented an "existential challenge" to performing musicians who are faced with the question, "How long can you keep the intention and your craft?"

Recording and sharing music online is helping to keep musicians and churches going during the pandemic, Enns says, but "it doesn't satisfy me." He calls congregational singing a "huge binding exercise. . . Music can open a door to the divine, and also create an amazing bond between people." He says that "music is a way of expressing ideas" that is "so central" for church and theology. It is "not just to listen to as a distraction." ❧



CHESTNUT HALL MUSIC SCREENSHOT

Leonard Enns conducts a DaCapo Chamber Choir rehearsal in a Waterloo parkade during COVID-19 restrictions. Enns won a recent composition competition with a piece called "A Little More Time," which he wrote as part of a personal challenge to write a short choral work each week during the early part of the pandemic.

FOCUS ON

Books & Resources

Serving up nourishment with a sense of belonging

New book offers Mennonite recipes with a plant-based twist

By Aaron Epp
Online Media Manager



PHOTO COURTESY OF JO SNYDER

'I've always loved to have people over and feed them,' says Jo Snyder.

Jo Snyder has moved around Canada pursuing a career in communications and toured across Europe playing punk music, but a new project has brought her back to her Mennonite roots in the Waterloo Region of Ontario.

Snyder is the author of *The Vegan Mennonite Kitchen*, a new cookbook published by Pandora Press. Subtitled *Old Recipes for a Changing World*, the book includes recipes from the beloved *Mennonite Community Cookbook* that Snyder has reimaged using plant-based ingredients.

Written by Mary Emma Showalter and first published in 1950, the *Mennonite Community Cookbook* is touted as “the grandmother of all Mennonite cookbooks.”

Snyder, who became a vegetarian when she was 18 and a vegan 15 years later, started experimenting with recipes from the *Mennonite Community Cookbook* with her friends, after inheriting her grandmother's well-used copy.

“I've always loved to have people over and feed them,” the 43-year-old says. “It was kind of a natural development to go through these recipes.”

Snyder thought it would be fun to put together a cookbook for her loved ones. As she kept adapting and testing recipes, she realized that perhaps a book featuring a plant-based spin on Mennonite comfort food might appeal to people beyond her family and friends.

“I really think that a primarily plant-based future holds the possibility to improve our environmental outlook for future generations,” Snyder writes in the book's introduction. “It eliminates unnecessary cruelty, suffering, pollution and the psychological human toll of factory farming.” The recipes rely on food that can mostly be sourced locally and ask readers to share what they have in abundance and leave nothing to waste.

“I'm not expecting to turn the Mennonite world vegan—that's not the intention,” Snyder tells *Canadian Mennonite*. “I hope it will find a place on people's shelves with their other Mennonite cookbooks and other vegan cookbooks. I hope maybe it will bridge those worlds.”

In addition to adapting and testing recipes, the two-year book-writing process gave her the chance to connect with family members and hear the stories behind her family's food traditions, some of which she shares in the book.

Snyder grew up on a crop farm in southern Ontario, with all the members

of her big extended family living within a one-kilometre radius. As a child, she attended Bloomingdale Mennonite Church.

After high school, Snyder lived for a decade in Winnipeg, where she studied at the University of Winnipeg, worked as a newspaper editor and fronted the bands *Sixty Stories* and *Anthem Red*.

She moved to Vancouver for a year to complete her master of publishing degree from Simon Fraser University before living in Toronto for 12 years. After the pandemic started, Snyder and her husband Paul relocated to Waterloo Region with Jean-Luc, their dog.

In her cookbook, Snyder writes that, while she hasn't been to church in decades, there are two big themes in her life, both of which she attributes to her upbringing.

The first is hard work and the philosophy that you always “leave it better than you found it.” The second is the “Big Tent” philosophy—gathering people around the table and serving up “kindness, nourishment and a sense of belonging.”

Snyder hopes *The Vegan Mennonite Kitchen* finds an audience among Mennonites, including those who are accustomed to a steady diet of meat. “I didn't want it to feel judgmental or preachy,” she says. “I wanted it to be something that people can enjoy and try for themselves.”

While she never anticipated writing a cookbook, she's glad she did, saying, “It turned into a lovely, fun project that really connected me to my Mennonite roots in a way that I haven't felt in a long time. It was a nice way to remember my childhood and honour my grandmothers.”

The *Vegan Mennonite Kitchen* is available now at veganmennonite.com.



FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

Horse Lake 'shaped my life'

*Author reflects on early childhood years
in a remote Mennonite community*

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent

Aldred Neufeldt was only 10 years old when his family left their farm in Horse Lake, Sask., but his memories of a childhood spent in this community are vivid.

He recounts those memories in his book *Horse Lake Chronicles*, published in 2020 by Your Nickel's Worth Publishing. On March 3, the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan held a virtual book launch for Neufeldt's book.

"It's not really so much my story as it [is] my observations of what was going on around me in my life," he says. His primary motivation for writing was to tell his children and grandchildren about a way of life that doesn't exist anymore. He also wanted to shine a spotlight on a place often overlooked, but about which he knew there were interesting stories to tell.

In 1940, when Neufeldt was born on his grandparents' farm, about 11 kilometres east of Rosthern, his father was already building the log cabin that would be his home for the next decade. Situated on four hectares of cleared land in the Nisbet Forest north of Duck Lake, the farm was



Alfred Neufeldt

a wonderful place to grow up for Neufeldt.

Early childhood memories can be somewhat sketchy, so Neufeldt says he began with his memories and then talked to others to see if they could substantiate them. "I'd dig around to see if it was a memory," he

says, "and then, in talking to others, I added bits and pieces, and tried to triangulate them. . . . They aren't in there without some substance."

One such memory revolved around the Horse Lake name. Neufeldt remembers being curious, as a small boy, about how the community got its name. He figured out on his own that Lac Cheval, the name of the local one-room school, was just Horse Lake in another language. He asked his father where the name came from, and his father told him the legend of a drunk and abusive trapper who tried to make his horse wade through a slough instead of walking around it. The trapper fell and drowned, but the horse survived.

Another early memory was of attending the funeral of an uncle who had joined the armed forces. Neufeldt remembers being in his father's arms at the graveside, and noticing a tear trickling down his father's cheek.

"The book didn't get written overnight," Neufeldt says. In fact, he spent more than 15 years talking with people and learning about their different perspectives.

Neufeldt describes Horse Lake as "the place where the warp threads of my life got woven." Those threads included the influence of neighbours, church and school, and in the book's chapters Neufeldt explores each of these.

"It shaped my life," he says. "There are lots of things I learned [in that community] that have stood me in good stead." One lesson was how to live and enjoy life with



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALDRED NEUFELDT

The Neufeldt family is pictured in front of their log home in Horse Lake, Sask. in 1944. Aldred Neufeldt is standing in front of his mother, Agatha (Olfert) Neufeldt, and his father, Henry Neufeldt, is holding his younger brother, Boyce.

very little material wealth. "Most everybody was poor," he says, "but I never felt that. We lived off the land. I had the idea that all things were possible."

When an early frost destroyed an already poor crop, Neufeldt's parents left their farm in Horse Lake and moved their family to Rosthern, where Neufeldt continued his schooling, eventually graduating from high school at Rosthern Junior College in 1958. He went on to pursue a career in psychology, working in the fields of mental health and developmental disabilities.

Neufeldt says he will leave it up to readers to determine what significance his book will have with regard to the history of Mennonites in Saskatchewan. He is pleased that it has sparked interest outside the Mennonite community, particularly in Toronto, where he lives. He hopes that his book will encourage readers to reflect on their own origins. ❧

The *Horse Lake Chronicles* can be purchased from the *Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan* (mhss.sk.ca) or from *SaskBooks* (skbooks.com).



Aldred Neufeldt visits the site of the former Lac Cheval School with his aunt, Marie Neufeldt Friesen, in 2005.



FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

Finding connection through communion cups

Pastor explores the meaning of communion through photo book

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

What does one do with a cracker box full of used communion cups? This was the dilemma facing Lois Siemens as she drove from Saskatoon to Winnipeg in July 2016.

Siemens had just attended the Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Saskatoon. She recalls how, in the small group she was part of, a pastor had announced that, if delegates voted in favour of a certain resolution, he would get his congregation to leave the

conference.

During closing worship, Siemens noticed this pastor go forward to receive communion. She wondered whether he would encourage his congregation to leave the conference or not.

After the service, a woman approached her and said, "I understand you're taking care of the used communion cups." Siemens was surprised. Although she told the woman she hadn't been asked to do this job, the woman seemed upset.

"She probably mistook me for somebody else," says Siemens, "but she was clearly overworked or overwhelmed, and needed help." Siemens had seen ushers picking up stacks of communion cups right after the service, but there were still a lot of individual cups on the floor, and cleaners were already vacuuming.

She picked up about a hundred communion cups and put them in an empty cracker box she found lying around. Then she put them in the back seat of her car and headed for Winnipeg.

Along the way she thought about what to do with the cups. She remembered the teachings of her seminary professors, Rebecca Slough and Marlene Kropf, on what to do with communion elements after the service. "You don't just throw them in the garbage," she says. "You handle them as holy. They've been blessed." She thought about washing them and then throwing them out. She also considered recycling them.

"All of a sudden it came to me to connect communion to the local church," says Siemens. She decided to photograph the cups in churches across MC Canada.

The first church she stopped at, once she got to Winnipeg, was Springfield



ALL PHOTOS BY LOIS SIEMENS

While photographing in Altona (Man.) Mennonite Church, Lois Siemens met a woman who told her she had kept her communion cup from the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly that was held in Winnipeg in 1990. This image shows the woman's MWC cup framed by the MC Canada cups.



When Lois Siemens travelled to Ukraine, she took several communion cups with her. Pictured are two communion cups in a former Mennonite church in Petershagen.



PHOTO BY ALISSA BENDER

Communion cups nestle among candles at Hamilton (Ont.) Mennonite Church.



The first stop Lois Siemens made in her communion photo project was at Springfield Heights Mennonite in Winnipeg. Here the cups are photographed on a ledge overlooking the sanctuary.



Peace Mennonite is a house church that meets at the home of Florence and Otto Driedger in Regina. Lois Siemens noticed that even in this house church there was a place for children.

FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

BOOK REVIEW

Stories give insight into refugee experience

Finding Refuge in Canada: Narratives of Dislocation.

George Melnyk and Christina Parker, eds. Athabaska University Press, 2021, 190 pages.

Reviewed by Barb Draper

BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR



Communion cups photographed in the pews at Eden Mennonite in Chilliwack, B.C.

Heights Mennonite. “The pastor there was so warm and welcoming and open to having the communion cups photographed there that it solidified my idea to keep going,” Siemens says.

She visited 17 churches across Canada, enlisting Alissa Bender’s help to photograph the cups in two Ontario churches. She even took a few cups on a trip to Ukraine and photographed them in a former Mennonite church there.

Siemens says she sought to connect the communion with something unique to each congregation. She wanted someone from that congregation to be able to look at the image and say, “Oh, that’s my church.”

Over the course of the project she was struck by the things Mennonite congregations have in common.

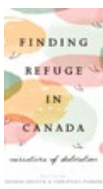
“We all have a place to sit, a pulpit to preach from and some kind of musical instrument,” she says. Almost every church had an open Bible, prominently displayed. And there was room for children in every church.

“It reminded me that we’re not so different,” she says. “We use those elements in different ways, but the foundation of our worship is all the same. It just helped me to feel strongly connected with every church across Canada.”

In 2020, Siemens published her images in a full-colour photo book entitled *The Communion Photo Project*.

Siemens hopes those who look at her book will also discover connections with other churches. “I’m hoping people see that there are a lot of similarities and a lot of places we can connect.” ❧

The Communion Photo Project is available through CommonWord.ca.



Canadians who sponsor refugees often discover that the task comes with surprises and challenges.

This collection of essays provides insight into Canada’s changing refugee policy and

how difficult it can be for people who have been forced to flee their homes and settle in Canada. These are not academic papers; they are first-person accounts written by former refugees and those who work to help them get established.

Canada has sometimes taken pride in its welcome of refugees, but the record has significant blemishes. In recent years, although the world’s refugee population has increased dramatically, Canada’s immigration system sets limits and has a huge backlog. Those who seek asylum find the system difficult and frustrating to negotiate. They very much need the help of newcomer services.

Although Canada welcomed many Europeans displaced by the Second World War, it was not until 1969 that the country adopted the official United Nations’ definition of a refugee. In 1972, when Idi Amin ordered thousands of people of Asian descent to leave Uganda, Canada tweaked its immigration policy and welcomed 6,000 of them who had no place to go. In the following decade, 70,000 refugees from Indochina were resettled in Canada.

William Janzen, the former director of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ottawa Office, is one of the writers. He describes MCC’s negotiation with the government in 1979 to allow private groups to sponsor refugees above and beyond those sponsored by the government. The agreement resulted in hundreds of Mennonite congregations, and other

groups, sponsoring refugees. Janzen also appealed for change to Canada’s policy toward refugees from Central America in the 1980s and ’90s. Like other writers, he is critical of the Safe Third Country agreement with the United States that came into effect in 2004.

Shelley Campagnola of the Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont., is another contributor. This organization, which recently changed its name to Compass Refugee Centre, has helped thousands of people since 1987. Without this help, Campagnola estimates that more than half of them would have been deported. She writes poignantly, describing the challenges of people who live in fear. Not only do they need shelter and food, they have only 15 days to apply for asylum, which involves collecting documents and getting them translated. They then wait in limbo for a hearing, which took an average of 22 months in 2020.

This book has many stories from refugees who look back at how challenging it was to settle in Canada. Flora Terah, from Kenya, writes, “Nobody brought up the post-traumatic stress disorder, grief and depression that come with forceful relocation.” That trauma is echoed in many other stories of refugee families struggling with sadness due to loss and fear for the safety of friends and relatives. At the same time, these are stories of hope in spite of the pain.

While Canada has welcomed a variety of displaced people, its immigration policy has not always been humane. Anyone interested in knowing more about this country’s refugee policy and how it works out in real life will want to read this book. ❧

FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

A wizard, a child, a goblin and grief

Wordless children's book invites readers to imagine their own story

By Aaron Epp
Online Media Manager

A new book invites readers to explore themes of loss and grief while imagining their own story.

Once a Wizard is a wordless children's book created by Winnipeg author and illustrator Curtis L. Wiebe. It tells the story of Ari, who attends the funeral of Uncle Wizard. Later, Ari meets Uncle Wizard in a dream. Together, they embark on an adventure through a snowy land, encountering a magic candle, a living stuffed toy, a goblin and a giant.

Wiebe, who attends Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, had the initial idea for the book more than 10 years ago.

"I have always had a love for stories of fantasy and adventure—tales that follow a young protagonist through other worlds of strange beauty and hidden dangers," he writes in an author's note in the book. "For me, these books and films were not merely escapist entertainment, but stories that interpreted the shadow play of my inner world as something I could understand."

He goes on to recall "the impact of meeting death face-to-face the first time I saw a loved one's body in an open casket." Looking at his grandfather's lifeless body, Wiebe felt fear, fascination, sadness and curiosity.

"In the story of *Once a Wizard*, the emotions I experienced as a child seeing my grandpa's body and confronting the reality of death are translated through Ari's dream journey," Wiebe writes.

The Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute in Winnipeg published the

book. Vicki Enns, the institute's clinical director and a registered marriage and family therapist, served as a consultant on the project. Together, Wiebe and Enns aimed to create a book that would be both interesting for children and helpful for them to explore the topic of grief.

The book is wordless so that young readers can help tell the story and fill in details that reflect their own experiences and imagination. "No way is the wrong

that feels right for them," she said.

Hoover used the book in a session with a nine-year-old client who was struggling with her parents' divorce and who had trouble talking about difficult things. A straightforward story about divorce would not have been appropriate for this child, Hoover said, so she turned to *Once a Wizard*. "When we were done [reading] the book, I noted there are many kinds of losses, and this opened the door to her

talking about her own loss."

The book includes tips for helping young people to read the story, questions adults can ask the children they are reading the story with, and ideas for activities related to the book. The Winnipeg institute has also produced additional resources that are available for free online.

For Wiebe, who is an accomplished sculptor, animator, costume designer, puppeteer, musician and teacher, and an award-winning filmmaker, working on *Once a Wizard* was a chance to return to his first love: drawing. He has always enjoyed children's books, he said, because they give the author "licence to be

simple—often deceptively so."

"The best ones . . . speak to the child in all of us," he said. "Hopefully [people of all ages] will pick up this book and see something of themselves in it, and no matter what they are feeling, know that they are not alone." ❧

For more information, visit bit.ly/WizardBook.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CURTIS L. WIEBE

Once a Wizard was inspired by the author's first experience with death.

way to interpret the story," Wiebe said during a book launch event held on Zoom at the end of February.

Tanya Hoover, a counsellor who often uses children's books when she meets with young people for therapy, said at the launch that she is already incorporating *Once a Wizard* into her practice. "It opens the door to the topic of loss and it leaves so much room for the child and the adult they are reading with to take it any direction

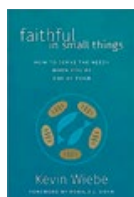
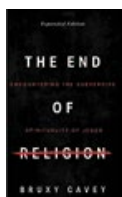


FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES



Spring 2021 Book List

Theology, Spirituality



The End of Religion: Encountering the Subversive Spirituality of Jesus, Expanded Edition. Bruxy Cavey. Herald Press, 2020, 375 pages.

Cavey has updated and added five new chapters to his original book by this title, published in 2007. Jesus challenged the religious institutions of his day, says Cavey, and our spiritual connection with God needs to be based on the radical teachings of Jesus.

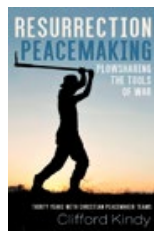
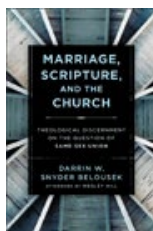
Faithful in Small Things: How to Serve the Needy When You're One of Them. Kevin Wiebe. Herald Press, 2021, 208 pages.

Wiebe explores how Christians can relate to others who struggle with poverty. Using examples from his own life, he suggests that we can make a difference if we recognize the importance of dignity and relationships. Wiebe is Canadian with roots in La Crete, Alta.

Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization. Elaine Enns and Ched Myers. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021, 420 pages.

Enns and Myers examine Indigenous justice issues, including how Mennonite

settlers in Canada and the United States have been part of this history of violation. As they explore the family history that has shaped their lives, Enns and Myers invite readers to join them in a journey of working for decolonization.



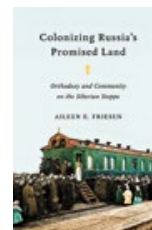
Marriage, Scripture and the Church: Theological Discernment on the Question of Same-Sex Union. Darrin W. Snyder Belousek. Baker Academic, 2021, 330 pages.

Blessing same-sex marriage damages the church's traditional view of marriage, says Snyder Belousek, gently arguing that the church should respect the biblical prophets. He teaches philosophy and religion at Ohio Northern University; his wife is a pastor at Salem Mennonite Church in Elida, Ohio.

Resurrection Peacemaking: Plowsharing the Tools of War. Clifford Kindy. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020, 176 pages.

Cliff Kindy reflects on his personal experiences with Christian Peacemaker Teams and what it means to live peacefully in daily life as well as in the world's conflict zones. He is an organic market gardener from Indiana and part of the Church of the Brethren.

History

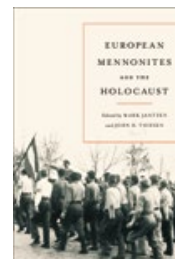


Be It Resolved: Anabaptist and Partner Coalitions Advocate for Indigenous Justice, 1966-2020. Steve Heinrichs and Esther Epp-Tiessen, eds. Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), 2020, 449 pages.

This collection brings together 90 documents, including such things as public statements, conference resolutions and parliamentary submissions relating to Indigenous justice and decolonization. It also includes a study guide.

Colonizing Russia's Promised Land: Orthodoxy and Community on the Siberian Steppe. Aileen E. Friesen. University of Toronto Press, 2020, 240 pages.

In the early 20th century, tsarist Russia organized the movement of many settlers to Siberia. Friesen examines the role of the Orthodox church, especially in the diocese of Omsk. Friesen teaches history at the University of Winnipeg and is executive director of the Plett Foundation.



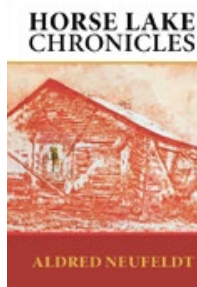
European Mennonites and the Holocaust. Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen, eds. University of Toronto Press, 2021, 352 pages.

The essays in this collection probe the difficult question of the role of Mennonites in the Holocaust, building on the conference held at Bethel College in Kansas in 2018. Many of the contributors are Canadian, but there are also essays from American and European historians.

FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

Finding Refuge in Canada: Narratives of Dislocation. George Melnyk and Cynthia Parker, eds. Athabaska University Press, 2021, 196 pages.

This collection includes personal stories of refugees and reflections from those who work to help them, as well as an overview of refugee policy in Canada. Among the contributors are William Janzen, a former worker with MCC, and Shelley Campagnola from the Mennonite Coalition of Refugee Support.

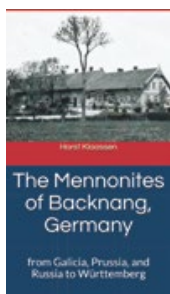


Horse Lake Chronicles. Aldred Neufeldt. Your Nickel's Worth Publishing, 2020, 192 pages.

In this delightful and engaging memoir, Neufeldt describes his growing-up years on a subsistence farm in northern Saskatchewan in the 1940s. He writes from the perspective of a child, but also with the wit and insight of someone looking back after years of experience.

Landscape of Migration: Mobility and Environmental Change on Bolivia's Tropical Frontier, 1952 to the Present. Ben Nobbs-Thiessen. University of North Carolina Press, 2020, 342 pages.

This scholarly book explores the changes that came to eastern Bolivia as migrants, including Mennonites, began farming this tropical frontier. Ben Nobbs-Thiessen is the chair of Mennonite studies at the University of Winnipeg.



The Mennonites of Backnang, Germany: From Galicia, Prussia and Russia to Württemberg. Horst Klaassen, translated by Ervin Glick and Mario Wenger. Privately published, 2020, 161 pages.

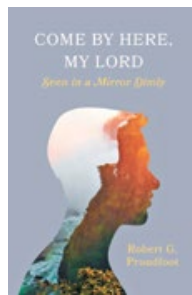
This English translation describes how Mennonites arrived in Backnang, Germany, after the Second World War, and the role of Mennonite Central Committee in helping the refugees find housing. The PAX volunteers also played a role in this story.



Service and Ministry of Reconciliation: A Missiological History of Mennonite Central Committee. Alain Epp Weaver. Bethel College, North Newton, Kan.; 2020, 146 pages.

Epp Weaver discusses how the mission of MCC has changed over the last century. He explores various debates, such as helping everyone in need versus “those in the household of faith,” and the role of evangelism. MCC volunteers tried to move beyond colonialism in the 1960s and '70s, and today they emphasize partnerships with local groups.

Other books



Come By Here, My Lord: Seen in a Mirror Dimly. Robert Proudfoot. Privately published with FriesenPress, 2020, 546 pages.

This novel is set in Zambia, where a young Canadian is living with his family, struggling to overcome cultural hurdles. The author is from Alberta but spent many years in Africa, including four years as a student in Zambia.

The Confession. Richard Toews. Privately published, 2020, 328 pages.

This novel describes Mennonite collusion with Nazis in Ukraine and explores the theology of suffering. Toews portrays the Mennonite Church

of Ukraine in the early 1940s as pro-Nazi and filled with anti-Semitism. Historians may well dispute some of his assumptions.



Essential Tremor: Poems. Barbara Nickel. Caitlin Press Inc., 2021.

This is Nickel's third collection of poems. It takes its title from the nervous system disorder that causes involuntary shaking, and explores bodies of all kinds, spiritually as well as physically.

Once a Wizard: A Story About Finding a Way Through Loss. Curtis L. Wiebe. Achieve Publishing, 2021, 38 pages.

This wordless children's book is intended to be a resource for children to find a way to talk about loss. The many drawings are an invitation to shape the story around personal experiences of loss and hope for the future for adults as well as children. Wiebe attends Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.



A Sword Shall Pierce Your Soul: The Story of Jesus' Mother. Lorne Brandt. Privately published with FriesenPress, 2020, 210 pages.

Using the biblical story as a base, Brandt tells the story of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as it might have happened. This fictional account is informed by Brandt's years of study, visits to the Holy Land and his work as a psychiatrist.

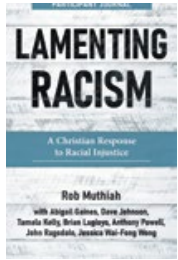


FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

Thy Geekdom Come (Vol. 2): 42 Science Fiction-Inspired Devotionals. Various authors. Mythos & Ink Publishing, 2021, 292 pages.

This collection of Christian devotionals is written by a group of authors and pastors from a variety of denominations, including Mennonite. They explore questions of faith using well-loved science fiction stories and themes.

Resources



Lamenting Racism: A Christian Response to Racial Injustice. Rob Muthiah. MennoMedia, 2021.

This streaming video series, with a leader's guide and participant journal, is designed to help churches talk about racial injustice. The six videos are conversations by multiracial pastors and theologians, and provide a guide to using lament for anti-racism practice.



What Is God's Kingdom and What Does Citizenship Look Like? César García. Herald Press, 2021, 88 pages.

Who Was Jesus and What Does It Mean to Follow Him? Nancy Elizabeth Bedford. Herald Press, 2021, 92 pages.

These booklets are part of The Jesus Way: Small Books of Radical Faith series and have discussion questions for each of six chapters. García asks how Christians should interact with the state, while Bedford explores Jesus' humanity and divinity. ❧

—Compiled by Barb Draper
Books & Resources Editor

Many of the featured titles on the book list are available for purchase or to borrow from CommonWord Book Store and Resource Centre in Winnipeg. For more information, visit commonword.ca

or call 204-594-0527 or 1-877-846-1593 (toll-free).

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Thy geekdom come

New devotional explores how faith and geek culture intersect

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

Upon opening a devotional book, readers likely wouldn't expect to read an in-depth analysis of *Star Trek* and how it relates to faith. Yet that is exactly what *Thy Geekdom Come (Vol. 2)*, a collection of 42 devotionals inspired by science fiction, offers.

Released on April 11 by Mythos & Ink Publishing, the book consists of contributions from 27 authors across Canada and the United States, but primarily Manitoba. The writers are an ecumenical bunch, from Anabaptist to Catholic and Free Methodist, as well as many others. They explore how faith and geek culture intersect, incorporating franchises like Doctor Who, Star Wars and Kipo and the Wonderbeasts.

Science fiction and Scripture are a lot more compatible than some might think, says Kyle Rudge, the business and marketing director for Mythos & Ink and a Mennonite Central Committee employee.

"Stories are something that have always connected us. Even in the early days of Christianity, the Bible was so much story driven," he says.

Jesus told a multitude of parables—stories that represent larger truths. The fantastical and futuristic tales of the science fiction genre also contain meaningful insights into faith and God, he says.

Being able to share these ideas through reading *Thy Geekdom Come (Vol. 2)* is meaningful to Rudge and many others, he says, adding, "When I go about my day, I'm filled with that little moment of kinship with another geek of faith."

Science fiction can make Christianity



accessible again to people who have had negative experiences with the church and can challenge their assumptions about the church.

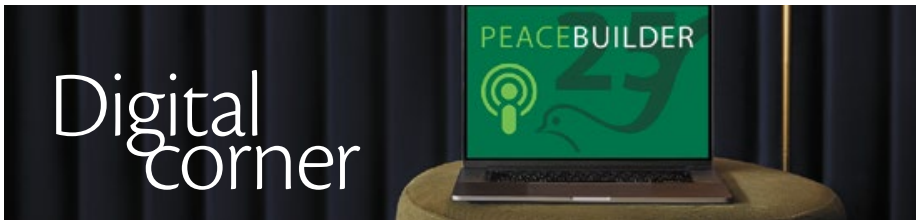
Rudge says this latest book calls for deeper engagement than many conventional devotional books, something that aligns with geeks' love of fully immersing themselves in their passions.

It follows the first volume, which was published in 2019 and focused on fandom-inspired devotionals. ❧

To learn more, visit geekdevo.com.



FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES



To watch

“Who cares? The elderly among us...”
(length 1:27:30).

In the light of COVID-19, a panel explores how the pandemic has challenged systems that care for elders and offers insight into the experience of seniors. Part of the Face2Face series offered by Canadian Mennonite University at cmu.ca/face2face.

“Voices Together Launch III: For the Joy of Ear and Eye” (length 1:05:11).

Visual artists who contributed to the new Anabaptist song collection talk about their art, interspersed with music and prayers from the collection. Part of a series launching *Voices Together*. To view, visit youtube.com/user/mennomedia.



“Transmission Ethiopia 2020” (10 min.).

This video features the Meserete Kristos Church as seen through the eyes of a French Mennonite young woman. Video in English, Spanish, French, German, and with Amharic subtitles, and an English study guide. To view, visit bit.ly/2OfmX5C.

To listen

“Just Plain Wrong”
podcast.

Three Mennonite librarians discuss depictions of Amish,



Mennonites and other plain groups in media and popular culture. They're also on Twitter & Instagram: @plainwrong-pod. To listen, visit bit.ly/3cCIGH6.

“Peacebuilder” podcast.

Interviews with a variety of practitioners in the field of conflict transformation. Produced by the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. To listen, visit bit.ly/31C7NKx.

“Modern Anabaptist: The Conversations That Shape Us” podcast.



A Mennonite pastor and a psychology graduate student debate contemporary topics in the light of Anabaptist Christian faith. To listen, visit bit.ly/3wcNJMV.

—Compiled by Virginia A. Hostetler

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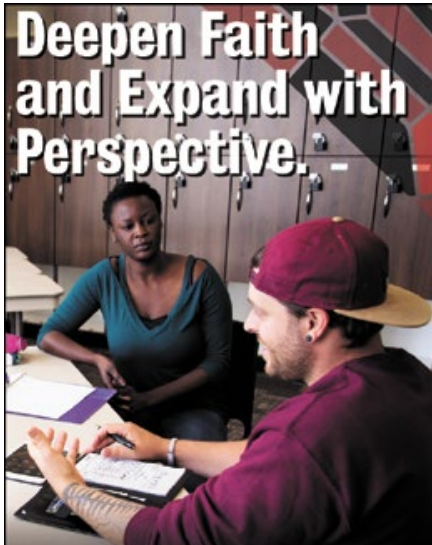




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The newest Mennonite Central Committee resource kit will support vulnerable women and girls with dignity.
canadianmennonite.org/dignitykits



Making welcoming spaces for all

Jeanne Davies, executive director of the Anabaptist Disabilities Network, explores what it means to make church spaces comfortable and nurturing.
canadianmennonite.org/allwelcome



How to join the MWC family

This article answers the question: How does one join the Mennonite World Conference global community of faith?
canadianmennonite.org/howto



Watch: Jane Philpott shares lessons from detours

In a new TEDx talk, former member of parliament Jane Philpott reflects on a personal tragedy and a professional crisis that changed her path.
canadianmennonite.org/detourstalk

UpComing

Conscience Canada annual meeting on May 1

Four decades ago, a group of Quakers in Victoria, B.C., birthed an organization to support and propagate war-tax resisters. It attracted Mennonites, Friends and various other peace-minded people across Canada. Conscience Canada (CC) members worked for 20 years trying to get the government to allow people to pay taxes for peace instead of for war. However, CC's board ran out of steam and thought it best to wind down its operations. Then some Ontario activists rescued CC from the dustbin of 20th-century peace movements and resuscitated it. Today, people continue to deposit the military portion of their taxes into a trust fund and use CC's Peace Tax Return to send their reasons and objections to those in Ottawa most responsible for military policies. Again, many of CC's current directors are aging, and replacements are needed to keep the organization going. If the board cannot be renewed, another option is to seek out a peace organization to take over CC's key functions. Critical action must be taken at the upcoming annual general meeting, to be held virtually on May 1 at 3:30 p.m. EDT. To register, email info@consciencecanada.ca to get a Zoom link. Use the same address to volunteer for the board or suggest another person or organization having the wherewithal to perpetuate CC's goals.

—BY MARY GROH



Conscience Canada

Work for peace. Stop paying for war!
Travaillons pour la paix. Cessons de payer pour la guerre!

Organizing a virtual event?

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Calendar

Nationwide

April 22: CommonWord is hosting a virtual book launch for “Growing a Generous Church: A Year in the Life of Peach Blossom Church” by Lori Guenther Reesor, at 6:30 p.m. CDT. To register, visit bit.ly/GAGClaunch. For details about the book, visit commonword.ca/go/2327/.

Ontario

April 23-24: MC Eastern Canada annual delegate sessions, on Zoom. Theme: “Courageous imagination: Join us for a journey.” Sessions: (23) “Courageous journey following fGod together: Who are we together?” from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.; (24) “Making kimchi with Pablo Kim: Following Jesus together while having different beliefs,” from 10 a.m. to noon; (24) “The journey forward: What is the church that we are becoming?” from 12:30 to 2 p.m. To register, visit mcec.ca/cell/event/register/id/10492/.

May 1: The public is invited to Conscience Canada’s annual general meeting, which will be held virtually on Zoom at 3:30 p.m. EDT. Critical action regarding the future of the organization will be taken at this meeting. Email info@consciencecanada.ca to get the Zoom link.

June 8-22: Ninth International Conference on Aging and Spirituality, a virtual conference hosted by Conrad Grebel University College. Theme: “Vital connections: Claiming voice and learning to listen.” Seven 90-minute conference sessions will take place between June 8 and 22. To learn more or to register, visit uwaterloo.ca/aging-spirituality.

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.

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

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



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities




Employment opportunity
Lead Pastor
Calgary, Alberta

Foothills MC is a multigenerational urban church of 169 members. The fellowship was established in 1956 and is a member of Mennonite Church Alberta and MCCanada.

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. Foothills MC is an Anabaptist faith community that desires to embody, share and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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, Attention of the Chair, Search Committee.



Employment opportunity
Youth Pastor

North Leamington Mennonite Church (NLUMC) seeks an enthusiastic and passionate disciple of Christ to join our three-member pastoral team as a half-time Youth Pastor.

NLUMC is a multigenerational congregation of approximately 270 active members. Located near Point Pelee National Park and the shores of Lake Erie in southwestern Ontario, the town of Leamington is a rich multicultural community of 30,000 people, with a local economy including agriculture, food processing, manufacturing, and a rapidly growing greenhouse industry.

Primary focus: To nurture lifelong disciples of Jesus who are committed to the church community.

Education and experience

- Committed to Anabaptist theology and practices, with post-secondary training from an Anabaptist seminary or university, or pastoral experience in an Anabaptist congregation.
- Training and/or pastoral experience in other theological backgrounds will be considered.
- Recent graduates are welcome to apply for this opportunity to learn and grow within a supportive team.

Submit application to: pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca by May 14, 2021. For more information, contact the Search Committee at: office@NLUMC.com or call (519) 817-5929.

northleamington.com

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— HERMAN SHIMPOCK

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