

CANADIAN MENNONITE

August 16, 2021 Volume 25 Number 17

Three wooden chairs with a spindle back and a pedestal base are arranged on a light-colored wooden floor. The chairs are positioned in a loose triangle, with one in the upper center, one on the left, and one on the right. The lighting creates soft shadows on the floor.

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EDITORIAL

Moving toward normal

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



The COVID-19 coronavirus will be with us for a while; that's what the health experts are saying. What does this mean for our churches and communities?

A picture is starting to emerge of what life will look like in the coming months—what some have called the “next normal.” More of us are receiving vaccinations, public restrictions are lifting, and communities are examining their unique risks. Some Mennonite congregations have already launched into the next normal, returning to their indoor worship spaces with larger groups of worshippers. Some are taking baby steps by meeting outdoors or in small groups. Others are still doing church activities via the computer screen and discerning what is practical and advisable for the next stage of their re-opening.

Wherever we are in the process, the past year and a half has shown us the importance of staying connected with each other and with God. We've appreciated the ways in which our churches have remained present, despite the physical distances. We have been reminded of how hard it is to live as a disciple all by oneself, particularly in times of struggle. We long to be truly together again.

In this time of transition, let us:

- **Cultivate habits of gratitude**, mindful of the ways that God has been at work in the past months;
- **Continue reaching out** in love and kindness, recognizing that some of us

are particularly vulnerable to illness, both physical and mental;

- **Avoid a spirit of judgmentalism**—of others and of ourselves—instead taking responsibility for our own actions and listening respectfully to those who are making difference choices;
- **Pray for wisdom** for the decision-makers, as they determine how to keep our communities and congregations connected and safe;
- **Encourage each other** to heed the advice of trusted health authorities and support each other in taking those steps;
- **Lobby for access** to health care for all—in our immediate communities and around the world.

Our pandemic experiences can inform the choices we will make for the church's more distant future—the time when, God willing, the world is no longer living in a health crisis.

In the future normal, whenever that might come, we must avoid the temptation to settle back into old routines without evaluating whether they will serve us well. COVID-19 has offered the church—and all of society—an opportunity to ask what was not working well before the virus hit. Might some of our pre-pandemic priorities have been misplaced and, if so, how do we change our practices to cultivate a more loving and just life for all? Where might we need to invest our money and our energies so that the future normal will better reflect God's love for the world?

One place to start is to ponder how we might address some of the problems that were already part our pre-pandemic life:

- **The pulls of busyness** in our personal and communal lives, and the impediments to deep times of rest;
- **The tendency to depend too much** on what happens in one hour of congregational worship on a Sunday morning;
- **The temptation to focus on “us”** and not enough on the neighbours outside the church walls;
- **Our blindness to the racism and structural inequalities** within our immediate reality and beyond.

As Christ's disciples, how will we experience and share God's love in the coming months and years? Now is a good time to dream and to begin shaping the future normal. Let's seize the invitation and listen to the Holy Spirit's call for us in that new future.

For more thoughts on the days ahead, see “What will the church look like?” (p.11), and “Is church online for good?” (p. 13).

Digital-only content

Over the summer, the print issues of *Canadian Mennonite* are mailed less frequently. But, for digital subscribers, the every-two-week schedule has continued, with digital-only content. The next issue, dated Aug. 30, will be the last digital-only issue of the summer. To receive that and future issues via email, you can subscribe online at canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital or email office@canadianmennonite.org. There is no extra cost to current subscribers.



Correction

In recent years, motor vehicle fatalities in Canada total just under 2,000 per year. Incorrect information appeared in the “Is it moral to bike?” column, July 19, page 12. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error ❧



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PHOTO: RALPH BRUBACHER

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FEATURE

Three chairs: In, out and up

Exploring the listening ministry of spiritual direction

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent



PHOTO BY RALPH BRUBACHER

One of the three chairs represents the directee, or client, who is seeking support on their spiritual journey. The second chair represents the spiritual director—the one who is listening in three directions: Out, to their client; up to God; in, to notice their own responses. The third chair is a reminder that the real spiritual director is the Holy Spirit.

When I was taking part in the Ontario Jubilee program in soul care and spiritual direction, one of the principles that guided our time together was that everything we did as a whole group happened in a circle. While some of the focal elements at the centre of our circle changed with the themes of our gatherings, two remained constant: a lamp representing the presence of God, and a cluster of three small, toy chairs representing the nature of the ministry we were learning.

Three chairs, clustered together, facing inward illustrate much of the nature of the listening ministry that is often called spiritual direction. Other terms used to describe the ministry are spiritual companionship, friendship or guidance, tending the soul, and holy or sacred listening. They all refer to an ancient and contemporary ministry that cultivates awareness of God's activity in our lives, and offers tools and prayer practices to encourage spiritual growth.

In this ministry, a spiritual director meets regularly with a directee or client, for a series of conversations, usually every four to six weeks for about an hour each time. It is an intentional time of paying attention to the presence of God in the life of the directee. Unlike other listening ministries, such as pastoral care or counselling, spiritual direction is not usually problem-oriented. It is not so much about identifying and understanding an issue, and then working to find a solution or a coping strategy. Instead, spiritual direction is an ongoing conversation focusing on the client's relationship with God.

So what do the three chairs represent?

Sharing in a sacred space

One of the three chairs represents the directee, or client, who is seeking support on their spiritual journey. In a sacred space of trust and confidentiality, the directee is invited to pay attention to their relationship to God. They might:

- **Explore their images** of God and how those have impacted them over time.

- **Describe the different** ways they try to pray and connect to God.

- **Share moments of joy, delight, gratitude and hope**, when God seems near and God's invitations seem clear; or times when they feel spiritually dry, stuck, and distant from God.

- **Try to describe** encounters with God, and what those encounters mean to them.

- **Bring questions, doubts, struggles and fears** related to their spiritual journey.

- **Bring significant questions** for discernment around vocation and discipleship, meaning and purpose, relationships, and life changes.

While conversations centre on a person's spiritual journey, it is inevitable that other life experiences will surface too, such as grief, loss and shame, relationships, family dynamics, and work and its connection to meaning and purpose. In spiritual direction, though, the conversation always returns to how God was experienced and how God might be calling us to grow in that part of life.

Sometimes a directee needs to process how their relationship to God and the church is changing. If they have had difficult, or even abusive, experiences within the church, they need a safe and confidential place to address that pain and its spiritual consequences.

Depending on what arises, spiritual directors do refer directees to other counselling and therapy services, when needed.

In spiritual direction, directees are invited to explore who they are as their truest self, assured that, at their deepest core, there is the image and likeness of God. They can also be invited to identify the ways in which they might have constructed false selves to project a good impression or to cope in certain situations, and then begin to put those aside in order to come home most fully to their truest identity as a child of God. With care and sensitivity, directors can encourage their directees to examine barriers in their spiritual life that block, distract or interfere with their ability to notice the presence of God in their life.

In each session, the invitation to the directee is always to notice where God has been present and active, and to grow more fully into the person that God is calling them to be.

Listening in three directions

The second chair represents the spiritual director—the one who is listening in three directions:

- **Out, to their client.**
- **Up to God.**
- **In, to notice** their own responses.

It is the director's responsibility to create an atmosphere of hospitality and safety. Directors listen to the directee's story, make observations and ask questions without judgment or criticism. They can help a client name and find language for stories of divine encounter. Sometimes they suggest "homework," like journalling, spiritual reading or exploring a particular prayer practice.

The director listens for how the Holy Spirit might be at work with the directee. It is important for the director to be centred and grounded in the love of God, and tuned in to how the Spirit might nudge, prompt and lead in the conversation and in the quiet spaces. What images or metaphors are evoked as they listen, that could help the directee make sense of their story? What biblical stories or characters come to mind that could relate to their experience? Where might the Spirit be nudging new growth? How could the Spirit be challenging unhealthy patterns?

The director also does inward listening, paying attention to whatever is arising for them when they are listening to someone else. What memories and feelings are evoked as they listen? Does anything the client says trigger a particular response? Is their ego tempted to jump in and be heard, or take over and shift the conversation to their own agenda? What if their own questions and doubts arise? Does what the directee says resonate or clash with their own experience and understandings?

Whatever arises within might be important material to take into their own

prayer time and into a conversation with their own spiritual director for reflection and discernment. Attending to their own relationship with God better equips them to listen well to the story of another person.

The Holy Spirit as spiritual director

The third chair is a reminder that the real spiritual director is the Holy Spirit, and the participants trust that God is present and at work everywhere, and in each life. God is made known to people in many ways. Spiritual directors help people notice and respond to the movement of God in their lives by intentionally inviting God into the conversation. Pointing to, and bearing witness to, the activity of God in another is a sacred opportunity.

Biblical texts and stories can help to centre and ground the practice in God's Spirit. Wendy Miller in her book *Jesus, Our Spiritual Director*, shows how Jesus offered "soul care" to individuals, families, small groups and crowds. He was open and hospitable, listened well without judging, and he called people to respond.

Miller points out a rhythm Jesus established with his disciples as described in Mark 3:13-19. He invited them to come away with him to a quiet place, to spend time with him while he named them and sent them out to practise what they had learned and experienced. This intentional rhythm shows how the practice of spiritual direction, centred in Jesus, inspires and motivates actions, and how actions and life experiences provide the materials to bring into spiritual direction for sharing, reflection and discernment. God is present in all of that cycle of learning and living.

Spiritual direction can also happen in a small group, as it often did with Jesus and his disciples. Sharing with others can be a time of encouragement, learning, growth and inspiration. During the long months of pandemic isolation, members of the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada network met regularly on video calls to pray, reflect, share, inspire and encourage one another. This was a rich experience that helped equip

Spiritual directors help people notice and respond to the movement of God in their lives by intentionally inviting God into the conversation.

them to support the many people searching for spiritual guidance in such strange times.

Whether individually or in small groups, spiritual directors offer a variety of ways for people to invite God into the conversation. This could include designing and leading retreats; or using art, music and journaling to help clients deepen their relationship with God. It might include inviting clients to use their bodies by getting outside in nature to garden, run, walk, hike or canoe, and reflect on how those experiences put them in touch with themselves and with God through the window of the natural world.

In all of these ways, and more, spiritual direction can help people to deepen their relationship with themselves and with

God, and to be formed more and more into the likeness of Christ, so that Christ's love flows through them to others.

The circle of three chairs is a dynamic space where the gift of listening opens people to the moving of the Spirit. ❧



Janet Bauman is a member of the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada, a network offering individual and small group spiritual direction,

contemplative retreats, prayer guides and resourcing for congregations.

It is a partner organization of Mennonite Church Eastern

Canada. Visit

mennospiritualdirectors.weebly.com.



❧ For discussion

1. Other than the family dinner table, what are some occasions where you have been in a circle of people? What does the circle represent to you? What are some factors that can make a circle sacred space? In what situations can it be intimidating?
2. Janet Bauman describes spiritual direction as a tool for spiritual growth. Can you imagine yourself sharing with someone your deepest thoughts and questions about your spiritual journey? What kinds of people would find spiritual direction appealing? Who might find it unattractive?
3. Bauman writes, "Spiritual directors help people notice and respond to the movement of God in their lives by intentionally inviting God into the conversation." Why is it important to consider God's role in all aspects of our lives? What things keep us from seeing clearly in the spiritual dimension?
4. What training do you think is most important for spiritual directors? Why is it important for the spiritual director to do inward listening as they hear another person's stories and reflections?
5. Bauman says there are many ways to get in touch with ourselves and with God. Which of her suggestions speak to you? What is a practice that brings you close to God?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources at
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/// Readers write

✉ 'Big' farmers can be 'Christians with a conscience' too

Re: "Germinating conversations," June 7, page 16.

It seems to me that this article has been written with a negative outlook. Will Braun is right when he says that this is more a "rant" than an attempt to consider any other point than his own.

It also makes it difficult to read this when Braun seems quite proud that he accepts no government subsidy on his farm, and is content to live a self-sustaining, subsistence life with his family as an experiment. In fact, the way he puts it, he found seemingly any values besides his own repulsive. And yet he has equal access to a protected health system and all other infrastructure benefits when his 3.5-hectare farm would likely not generate more revenue than what would cover his family's experimental living.

Another difficulty that I find offensive is when he accuses the "big boys" of seeking and whining for subsidies, and yet not one mention is made of the massive tax bills that they pay annually, especially land taxes. We should remember it is these taxes that subsidize those of us who pay substantially less and still receive the same benefits.

There are big farmers who are Christians with a conscience.

As I see it, the "big boys" and the 3.5-hectare farmers all seek to serve the same Jesus. Wouldn't it be more Christlike to love even the "big boys" rather than let them get under one's skin? It seems to me that the only true equity and fairness will have to wait for that eternal promised land. There, the only exception to true justice will be grace and mercy, something that we all need so that we can truly serve and worship our God.

ARMIN ENS, WINKLER, MAN.

(FORMERLY OF REINLAND, MAN.)

✉ Differences of cohabitation by the young and the old

Re: "The growing phenomenon of cohabitation," June 7, page 20.

Young couples living together for whatever period of time outside of the marriage covenant was considered a sin by the Mennonite church up until a few years ago. The leadership in the Mennonite church, its colleges and universities need not look any further than the inconsistency in the dormitories, discipline off campus, basic teaching and

indifference towards this issue.

Trinity Western, a university with Christian standards in British Columbia, had detailed policies forbidding all forms of male/female cohabitation outside of the covenant of heterosexual marriage, and a lot of pressure was put on it to rescind its policies.

Is cohabitation practised where the faith community has a clear stated position against it? No.

Irma Fast Dueck noted that "many congregants who cohabit leave the church, returning after marriage." There may be a few different answers for this, but I believe that their consciences are telling them that it is a transgression of God's will.

Many older people who were living alone because of divorce or the death of their partner are now simply living together. They prefer not to get married because of all the legal requirements and adjustments to their wills.

For older couples, a covenant of commitment can be celebrated in the presence of their families and communities, directed by a pastor or a person with good discernment. Vows are said by the couple to each other and a blessing is bestowed upon them.

I personally witnessed this service, and it was a meaningful, godly and practical way for older people to declare their sincerity and love for each other before the community. They have no need of the civic registration.

This covenant, which is similar to our baptism vows, has moral implications but no legal jurisdiction. In the understanding of God's wisdom I believe the vows based on moral principles are more divinely blessed.

DAVID SHANTZ, MONTREAL

✉ Do men have a role to play in 'creating a culture shift'?

Re: "Creating a culture shift" feature, June 21, page 4.

I noticed seven women contributed to this article about abuse and only one man. The reason for that may be that more women are victims of abuse.

Some suggestions to create a culture shift were: better church policies, extending peace theology to the family, guides for church discipline, workshops for abuse prevention, and healthy relationships to dismantling patriarchy. These suggestions may be very valuable if applied, but are they enough?

Where are we men? What are our possible contributions to a culture shift?

Extreme male abusers are often too proud to take advice from women, or may think this is the pastor's

problem to deal with. Should the church perhaps encourage men's groups, if possible led by an exemplary husband and loving father? Would a male abuser be more receptive to a man-to-man talk from a mature fellow companion who could tell him what he misses having a loving supportive wife and happy children, instead of a defensive wife who is afraid of him, who has to keep secrets from him, and children who hate him? Would that make him think about his situation more seriously and perhaps change his behaviour?

HELMUT LEMKE, VANCOUVER

The writer is a member of Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Vancouver.

✉ **Zero tolerance not a Christian teaching**

Re: "Creating a cultural shift," June 21, page 4, and "Investigation reveals misconduct by influential Mennonite leader," June 7, page 24.

In the area of discipline and abuse, I have been wishing for an article that addresses zero tolerance. The Canadian government is currently squirming after espousing that policy.

It is my contention that believers' ethics do not so much teach—or expect—zero tolerance as a response to the reality of transgression. We all like to cite Matthew 18 with regard to reconciliation, and that is clearly more helpful than planning retribution or sanctions against offenders.

ED ZACHARIAS, MORDEN, MAN.

The writer attends Pembina Fellowship in Winkler/Morden.

✉ **Indigenous-Settler reconciliation is what we should be 'doing'**

Re: "Being, doing and becoming," June 21, page 11.

"Few of us arrive at pure being. I'm not even sure what that looks like," writes Troy Watson. I find this slippery logic unworthy of the topic.

But this is a minor flaw compared to his oft-repeated assertion "that our doing should flow from our being, not the other way around," which is admittedly vague and possibly false.

Much has been made about the value of meditating in silence and allowing some external force (possibly the Holy Spirit) to permeate our being with meaning, and perhaps this column is attempting another way to say this.

It's not surprising that the column should end with

his "I'm not sure what it looks like" caveat. To search for one's "true essence" doesn't resonate with Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet, his submission to the cross, his feeding of the four or five thousand. Contemplative monasticism only leads to ghettos of contemplative monks, steeped in the singularity of each one's "true essence," never self-confident enough to give up psychological self-flagellation in the search.

We are in a time in Canada when it's becoming clear to me what the Mennonite church as a community really is, what its being consists of. I'm talking about our doing—or not doing—in regard to the reconciling of an Indigenous culture tremendously wronged by the residential school system. It seems to me we'd rather search for "our true essence" than pick up a pen, a placard, or do things that are more than the contemplation of the problem in discussion groups.

Have we really grasped who the Indigenous sufferers are? What the needs are? What means we have to contribute to healing? Are we really doing anything?

I would argue that it's in doing that we rediscover our true essence in each succeeding generation.

GEORGE G. EPP, ROSTHERN, SASK.

✉ **Finding a balance between pacifism and reality**

Mennonites appreciate the enormous benefits of good policing, reasonable national defence, international peacekeeping and other securities, but few say so. Officially, all religious Mennonites embrace nonresistance, and don't support or participate in normal securities, no matter how necessary or well done. Actually, they implicitly condemn them, as well as the people who provide them—those who risk and sacrifice themselves to protect us, society and the world.

Jesus taught nonviolent ideals but let his disciples carry swords, encouraging it at one point. He knew people need to compromise. We know it, too, and so we live by blending ideals with pragmatism. At the same time, many are also obsessed with ideals. Almost no one can live them fully, but many pretend they can, and state or imply that everyone should.

Without many protections, many more people would suffer greatly and be killed. Crime, violence and anarchy would reign.

Mennonites experienced anarchy in Russia. The reviews weren't good. So, we now live as peacefully as possible, but also practically, like everyone else. We rely on cops with guns and on other things, which is fine, unless you want to risk and sacrifice all

for nonviolence. Pacifism is willingness to give up everything, including yourself and others, so true pacifism is rare.

A few might choose it, but it isn't necessary. Perfect living isn't very possible in a far-from-perfect world. But we can be perfect within, which is what's important. It's where peace begins and ends, regardless of outer compromises.

Many Mennonites don't get that, hence the obsession with outer ideals and the shunning of securities, which they also secretly like, want and need. It's all quite nutty, frankly.

I hope for far more balanced, honest and realistic conversations on peace and security issues.

HOWARD BOLDT, OSLER, SASK.

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

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Blacklock—Oakley Paige (b. June 9, 2021), to Lauren and Michael Blacklock, Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Pealo—Murray Jackson and Andrew James (b. June 30, 2021), to James and Laura Pealo, Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Ropp—Rebecca Joy (b. May 23, 2021), to Heather and Brent Ropp, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Weddings

Bender/Cummins—Hannah Bender and Matthew Cummins, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont., June 27, 2021.

Boss/Wideman—Elena Boss and Dan Wideman (Listowel Mennonite, Ont.), in Virgil, Ont., July 3, 2021.

Horst/Zyta—Josh Horst and Lorelei Zyta (both members of Listowel Mennonite, Ont.), in Staffa, Ont., June 19, 2021.

Deaths

Boyle—Alan Lewis, 58 (b. May 1, 1963; d. June 21, 2021), Steinmann Menonite, Baden, Ont.

Braun—Harvey, 86 (b. Dec. 20, 1934; d. May 10, 2021), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Braun—Helen (nee Neufeld), 86 (b. Nov. 7, 1934; d. May 10, 2021), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Braun—Henrietta (nee Kehler), 86 (b. July 22, 1934; d. March 15, 2021), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Braun—Henry Ernest (Ernie), 89 (b. Aug. 18, 1931; d. July 3, 2021), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Driedger—Helga (nee Neufeld), 91 (b. Feb. 5, 1930; d. July 18, 2021), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Dueck—Jake G., 85 (b. March 1, 1936; d. June 23, 2021), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Dyck—Frank John, 98 (b. Dec. 28, 1922; d. June 29, 2021), Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Erb—Garry, 66 (b. May 3, 1955; d. May 23, 2021), Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

Fast—Margaret, 80 (b. Aug. 20, 1940; d. July 16, 2021), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Freeman—Leah (nee Brubacher), 94, (b. June 23, 1926; d. Jan. 26, 2021), Hawkesville Mennonite, Ont.

Frey—Eileen (nee Martin), 88 (b. Feb. 4, 1932; d. Oct. 18, 2020), Hawkesville Mennonite, Ont.

Froese—Gerry, 58 (b. Sept. 19, 1962; d. June 15, 2021), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Froese—Nadejda ("Netty"), 96 (b. Oct. 4, 1924; d. July 9, 2021), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Gossen—Jacob, 71 (b. March 12, 1950; d. July 8, 2021), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Hallman—Ken, 73 (b. Oct. 4, 1947; d. May 29, 2021), Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

Janzen—Henry, 93 (b. Aug. 28, 1927; d. July 6, 2021), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Janzen—Jacob, 98 (b. May 12, 1923; d. June 29, 2021), Level Ground Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Metzger—Tillman, 76 (b. March 4, 1945; d. June 5, 2021), Hawkesville Mennonite, Ont.

Neumann—Carl Franz, 95 (b. Aug. 3, 1925; d. June 17, 2021), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Olfert—Margaret (Wiens), 91 (b. Nov. 17, 1929; d. July 14, 2021), Level Ground Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Pauls—Peter M., 87 (b. Dec. 14, 1933; d. June 9, 2021), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Peters—Greti (Margaret), 85 (b. Nov. 10, 1935; d. July 18, 2021), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Tiessen—George, 82 (b. July 3, 1938; d. July 1, 2021), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Voth—Willie, 94 (b. Feb. 6, 1927; d. May 21, 2021), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Zehr—Robert ("Bob") Harley, 64 (b. Jan. 6, 1957; d. June 15, 2021), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

Why don't we talk about evangelism?

Doug Klassen

He discretely looked to the left, then to the right and said quietly, “Why don't we talk about evangelism in this denomination?”

I grinned and replied, “Ever seen the movie *A Thief in the Night*?”

“No”, he said.

I briefly described the 1970s era Christian film depicting a rapture, tribulation and the second coming of Christ.

Puzzled, he looked at me and said, “So we don't talk about evangelism because of a movie made 40 years ago?”

This conversation with a new Canadian pastor happened a while ago, but it has stuck with me. I told him about how many older people in our constituency were traumatized by fear-based, fundamentalist portrayals of the “end times” via movies or tent meetings that were designed to coerce a profession of faith.

Combine this with Mennonites' historic “quiet in the land” disposition; a way of discipleship modelled primarily in deeds rather than words; and, currently, a growing level of guilt and shame over how the gospel was used to dominate, conquer and assimilate

Indigenous people.

It might also be that we are so comfortable with our lives as they are now that we are out of practice when it comes to true biblical hospitality.

It could be any or all of these things that, as Sara Wenger Shenk puts it in her new book, *Tongue Tied*, point to a need for us to recover “the lost art of talking about faith.”

Is the gospel still good news? Has the good news become bad news in western culture? Shouldn't the good news be good news for everyone at all times, if it is good news, if it is life-changing news? If it is hope for the world, why are we not sharing it?

When I have asked these questions in various settings across Mennonite Church Canada, responses come swiftly and passionately: “How dare we impose our beliefs on another person!” “I owe my life to the person who invited me to faith in Jesus.” “I can hardly say the word ‘evangelism,’ knowing the techniques used to manipulate people.” “I would love to be able to talk about my faith in ways that invite others . . . but I just don't have the words.”

We need to have a nationwide

conversation about evangelism—or witnessing, testifying or faith sharing—however it is we view communicating the good news. This is why I'm pleased that, from July 29 to Aug. 1, 2022, our next nationwide gathering, to be held in Edmonton, will examine this theme.

“We declare,” our title for Gathering 2022, comes from I John 1:1-4: “We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us . . .”

Not only do we declare the wonders we have seen and heard, but we also bear witness to the gospel of peace in tumultuous places and times. My prayer is that Gathering 2022 will embolden us to tell our stories as Christ followers, seeking justice and mercy from the One whom we love. ☞



Doug Klassen is executive minister of MC Canada.

For more information on Gathering 2022, visit www.mennonitechurch.ca.



A moment from yesterday



The German-language periodical *Der Bote* was begun in Rosthern, Sask., in 1924, to connect Mennonites in Russia, Canada, the United States and Latin America. It had generations of faithful readers, like Mrs. Lepp, pictured. *Der Bote* recorded the pain and loss of home and loved ones. It provided advice on how to improve farming practices in times of drought. It counselled men during the Second World War and, after the war, it helped reunite families. In the 1970s and '80s, it again helped reunite families, as some were able to move out of the Soviet Union to Germany. The paper also carried devotionals, congregational reports, history lessons, letters to the editor, and sections for youth, to name a few. By 2006, readership was a respectable 2,350, but down from 9,000 in the '70s. The paper closed in 2008.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Mennonite Heritage Archives / Henry T. Klassen



archives.mhsc.ca

 THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

What will church look like?

Arli Klassen

Church is not the building. We've heard that often over the last 18 months.

But now that some congregations are back in their building, with the rest trying to figure it out, I wonder who will come back? And what will we come back to?

I have heard a variety of opinions around me, which may be a microcosm of many of our congregations.

My husband Keith is feeling like his spiritual life has dried up without opportunity to pray and participate in communion on a regular basis, in a beautiful building, using the Anglican liturgy that he loves. He yearns to return.

My parents love watching as many online church services on a weekend as possible, exposing themselves to sermon ideas and worship styles that they would never have encountered before. But they don't feel they belong to any of them. Now they are looking to create their own faith community in their retirement home.

One of our adult children is involved with committee work that keeps her involved in her church community.

I have heard others name their pre-pandemic concerns about church become reason enough not to return to church now.

For me, much of my faith experience comes through song. I sing my faith into

being. But I'm not good enough to sing by myself. I love the new hymnal, but I have hardly been singing for months now. When I finally do get to sing with others, I'll dissolve into tears and be unable to actually sing. I can hardly wait to sing together.

And our pastors and worship leaders? Many are exhausted, having adjusted and created new ways of doing things over and over, like health-care workers and teachers. And now they worry about what they can do to engage "their people" and bring them back.

The bloggers, theologians and pastors who pontificate about what church will look like post-pandemic have opinions. The general agreement in Canada and the United States is that fewer people will return to Sunday morning worship than pre-pandemic.

The pre-pandemic trends will continue. White majority congregations will continue to get older and smaller. Congregations with primarily people of colour, often newer Canadians, will continue to struggle with how to adapt as the next generation grows up in Canada. What will the future look like?

I think that programs, buildings, Sunday services and doctrine/theology will continue to decrease in value for

many people. Instead, there will be increased interest in relationships in community, connecting in a distributed, micro-church way during the week, sharing authentically of our experience of God with each other. What will the future look like?

Church is not the building. Nor is church the Sunday morning worship service. We know that. We also know that one can never go "back," whether it is to an event or a community, because we are different and the community has been changed. We know all this, but do we really know this as we think about our expectations?

Church is the community of Jesus-followers, together building the Kingdom of God. Different aspects of church might include worshipful activities such as song and prayer, discipling activities such as teaching/study and mutual accountability, and public witness activities. As we "return to church," let us acknowledge the varying needs among us. Some of us can hardly wait to sing or pray when we gather together again. Some of us are not sure we'll ever make it back to Sunday morning worship, but that does not need to mean withdrawing from church. Let us be open to re-imagining church, as the Spirit leads. ☿



Arli Klassen is a member of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., and serves on the executive councils of Mennonite Church Canada and MC Eastern Canada.

 Et cetera

Christian organizations urge G20 to fix a broken global tax system

The World Council of Churches, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Lutheran World Federation, World Methodist Council, and the Council for World Mission urged strong social protection measures in all countries to ensure that the poor and vulnerable are able to weather COVID-19's unprecedented health and economic consequences. "The pandemic has revealed once again the importance of people's access to essential health care and basic income security throughout their lives," their letter states. "To date, rich countries have spent 35.6 percent of their GDPs (gross domestic products) on responding to the health emergency and supporting employment and businesses." In contrast, low-income countries were only able to expend a meagre 6 percent of their GDPs on fighting the pandemic and are even now struggling to meet the demands of protecting their citizens, the letter says.

Source: World Council of Churches / Photo by Marcelo Schneider



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

It's about to get weird

Troy Watson

I was about to take a shower, and for some reason, I looked at myself in the mirror. Rookie mistake. You see, I've gained 5.5 kilograms in the last year and, without access to my local gym and trainer for the past 13 months, I've lost some muscle mass.

As I gazed upon my reflection, I felt a surge of disappointment and shame. I exhaled a long sigh, slumped my shoulders and shook my head in despair at the discouraging image before me.

Then something surprising happened. I started dancing. I busted out moves I didn't even know I had. I was really getting into it and suddenly I was smiling, confident and free, and enjoying myself.

It didn't take long for my rational brain to try to shut this party down: "What on earth are you doing? This is weird. Why are you doing this?"

You may find the comparison of me dancing in response to seeing my body's reflection in the mirror with David dancing in response to the return of the Ark of the Covenant as sacrilegious.

Then another part of me confronted my rational brain: "First of all, smarty pants, that's a dumb question. What does it look like I'm doing? I'm dancing. It's called having fun. You should try it sometime. You claim this is weird. Really? According to whom?"

"In the broader context of human history dancing is very normal. It's a timeless and universal human activity. Sure, some of my dance moves are unusual, but who cares? What's so amazing about 'usual'?"

"Jesus was unusual. Winning an Olympic gold medal is unusual. The most delicious meal I ever tasted was

unusual. 'Usual' is overrated. And you ask why I'm doing this? Because it's fun. I'm enjoying myself. I went from feeling depressed about what I saw in the mirror to being delightfully amused. How is this a problem?"

Now I can only imagine what you might be thinking. You might be concerned about the extended conversation I had with myself. Truth be told, I enjoy dialoguing with myself. I find it helpful.

And I'm not the only one. In fact, it puts me in pretty good company. In a study printed in the *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, Daniel Swingley and Gary Lupyán concluded that talking to yourself is beneficial and a sign of being a genius. Apparently Einstein talked to himself all the time.

Maybe you're concerned with the undignified image of me dancing. For

those of you offended or repulsed by such an image, I wish you a speedy recovery. However, I would also reference what King David said to his wife Michal, who was offended by him disrobing and dancing mightily before the Lord: *"I was dancing before the Lord . . . and I will become even more undignified than this."*

You may find the comparison of me dancing in response to seeing my body's reflection in the mirror with David dancing in response to the return of the Ark of the Covenant as sacrilegious. The truth is, our bodies are sacred. They are the Holy of Holies. They are the

dwelling place of God Almighty. Why wouldn't we dance upon recognizing divine presence with and within our bodies?

I realize this is a weird story, but that's kind of the point. You see, after this experience I realized I would never dance so freely in public. Why? Because I worry about what others—like you—might think. I tend to keep a tight leash on my "weirdness." I try to "be normal." But, as the prophet Bruce Cockburn reminds us, "The trouble with normal is it only gets worse."

I'm starting to see the tyranny of "normal" for what it is. I'm beginning to accept that I'm "weirder" than I let on.

As I approach 50 I'm feeling an urgency to let my true unique light shine before I lose touch with my inner child altogether. It's time to start dancing and let my weird self out and be seen. Because that is the Troy who God created. Who am I to second guess God?

My guess is that you're weirder than you let on as well. Most of us are. I want to encourage you to dance and be your "weird" true self. Don't be afraid. Yes, "haters gonna hate," "mockers gonna mock," "critics gonna criticize," and "naysayers gonna naysay," but you don't have to let them control you or grind you down. Dance. Yodel. Whatever.

Be your "weird" true self. I think that is a significant part of what authentic worship is about: letting God liberate you to be who you really are. ☘



Troy Watson will become even more undignified than this.

VIEWPOINT

Is church online for good?

Gerald Hildebrand

“We’re all going through the same storm, but we’re not all in the same boat. Context is everything.”

These words, spoken by a North American pastor, address the divergent responses to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Many congregations in Canada and the United States continue to experience restrictions on in-person meetings, while others have had the freedom to safely gather again.

There is also general recognition that North Americans have received a disproportionate percentage of the global vaccine supply, leaving many to question the injustice of our privilege and affluence, and resulting freedoms.

Ever-evolving communication

In March 2020, Canada and the U.S. went into lockdown. Public gatherings—including church—paused. Congregations scrambled to move services online. Pastors worked from home, many struggling with ever-evolving communication tools.

National church leaders and their staff worked hard to support local congregations with resources for video and social media. Local congregations became creative in relating to people by phone, through online networking and with porch visits—all socially distanced connections. We also became more connected with the global communion of churches through more frequent news releases and online connections.

“Typically, we lead out of our experience, but none of us have been here before, so we’re all making it up as we go,” says one pastor. “We have become deeply dependent on the Holy Spirit to know how to lead and teach the church community.”

Online necessity

Online presence has become more than



PHOTO BY ALFRED LOZANO ARAN

In its third live-streamed pandemic church service, Comunidad Evangélica Menonita of Barcelona, Spain, celebrates Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday in 2021. Joshua Garber records Estrella Norales, left, and Aideis Martín Mallol as they observe social-distancing guidelines while reading the liturgy.

a convenience. Some have described it as a social and spiritual necessity for connection, particularly for those who are socially isolated, physically disabled, emotionally depleted and financially impoverished.

In addition to providing a form of fellowship, online connections are addressing the issue of accessibility, particularly as it relates to age, health and mobility. Many who have been relegated to the margins of social life can now participate when they previously had been shut out.

In response, some churches have provided congregants with internet access and devices to enable connection with families and the broader community.

Pastors are reporting that the majority of online church (some are calling it “zoorch”) participants are older adults. Church leaders are also discovering that many younger audiences are “zoomed out.” They are

not participating in online gatherings as had been anticipated.

When we gather again

When the pandemic began, people longed for the time when we could gather again. More than a year later, there is hesitancy, fear, caution and restraint. Congregants are slow to rejoin group settings.

The season of the pandemic has been long enough for people to establish new life patterns and create new habits:

- **Is this hybrid** model of online and in-person gatherings here to stay?
- **Will young families** and emerging adults return—with or without online options?
- **Most importantly, how** will people practise their Christian faith in post-pandemic times?

Perhaps hybrid models will be the way of the future. Online options provide opportunity to involve those who are otherwise physically isolated from the community. One way to connect with the global church is to invite a Mennonite World Conference (MWC) speaker to be virtually present with your congregation.

Global connections provide us with news from our global sisters and brothers, so that we may offer informed prayers of intercession and respond to the needs of others in a timely way. MWC has responded to the pandemic with online events such as prayer gatherings, webinars and videos on our YouTube channel (<https://bit.ly/3764fDg>).

“Zoorch’ is not enough,” another pastor says. “We need incarnational presence. We need to publicly live out the gospel of Jesus Christ with our global sisters and brothers.”

Together, we remain the church of Jesus Christ gathered and scattered. ❧

Gerald Hildebrand is the MWC regional representative for North America. He lives in Winnipeg, where he is a member of River East Church, a Mennonite Brethren congregation.

Fires, COVID-19 affect Kelowna residents

By Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent

Between fires and a COVID-19 outbreak, residents of Kelowna, B.C., including members of First Mennonite Church, have been doubly hit this summer.

Rising cases of COVID-19 in the Central Okanagan region of B.C. have forced the provincial government to declare mandatory masking in indoor public spaces and recommended in crowded outdoor spaces, especially for the unvaccinated or partially vaccinated population.

While numbers of visitors to the region are greatest at this time of year, travel to and from the region is being strongly discouraged unless individuals are fully vaccinated.

Three wildfires this summer in Grays-tokes Provincial Park, east of Kelowna, also affected Kelowna residents.

Reports Frances Siemens, chair of First Mennonite Church, “We are living with a great deal of smoke from the surrounding fires and praying for rain to not only clear the air but douse the flames.

“The Kelowna Mennonite Church has acquired the assistance of a virtual pastor [Lisa Martens Bartel, who lives in Saskatchewan] following the retirement of our previous pastor at the end of last year. Her thoughtful messages are presented simultaneously to the congregants in our sanctuary and to those in their homes via Zoom.

“Our church is currently entering its 75th year serving spiritual messages to those living in the Kelowna area. Visitors are welcome to join us at all times when



KELOWNA FIRST MENNONITE
FACEBOOK PAGE PHOTO

Members of First Mennonite Church, Kelowna, B.C., are coping with the dual challenges of health restrictions and forest fires this summer.

they arrive for holidays in this community. However, due to the recently increased cases of COVID-19 in the area, travellers have been encouraged to remain at home, and we are required to wear masks while we are indoors again.

“We are very thankful to everyone currently working to subdue the wildfires in the surrounding area. The smoke from the fires has increased dramatically, leaving the valley with very poor visibility in recent weeks.” ❧



PHOTO BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

The Metanoia Farmers Worker Cooperative is in its 11th season of practising sustainable agriculture. The collective stewards just under 0.5 hectares of land on the Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) campus in Winnipeg, and 0.25-hectares across Morden, Man. and Camp Assiniboia, near Headingley, Man. The Metanoia farmers grow vegetables for their Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) participants, feeding more than 70 households weekly. Drought has challenged the farmers this summer but, despite parched earth and smoky skies, they continue to offer bundles of kale, beets, zucchini and more. Pictured from left to right are farmers Bryn Friesen Epp of Home Street Mennonite Church, and Kayla Drudge and Megan Klassen-Wiebe of Charleswood Mennonite Church. Both churches are in Winnipeg.

Grieving injustice

Congregation holds memorial service for graves found at residential school sites

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
OSLER, SASK.

Osler Mennonite Church congregants gathered on Canada Day, July 1, in the local cemetery next door, to sing some hymns, share their sorrow and pray together. But it wasn't one of their own they were grieving. The congregation met instead to grieve in solidarity with its Indigenous neighbours on the finding of unmarked graves at Indian Residential School sites.

Katherine Penner, a student at Canadian Mennonite University in the area of peace and conflict transformation, came up with the idea for the service in conversation with her family. Pastor Patty Friesen responded enthusiastically, and the two women planned the simple ceremony.

"When we welcomed everyone, we acknowledged that we had the privilege to be able to honour those who have gone before," said Penner. "We have marked and cared for their graves." She told them that this was something Indigenous people were denied when their children died

while attending residential schools in Saskatchewan and beyond.

One of the congregants attending the memorial service was Tree Bird, a Cree music educator and single mother of four boys. When Penner invited participants to share their thoughts and feelings, Bird spoke out.

"When I first walked up and saw the headstones," Bird told the congregants, "I had to turn my face away and let some of the tears go." She explained to them that, in Indigenous culture, if one cries at a funeral, the tears act as a barrier, preventing the spirit of the departed from leaving.

"I myself am a survivor," Bird said. "My mother and my grandparents on both sides are survivors of the Indian Residential School system."

Penner appreciated Bird's presence as well as her sharing. She said the service had a greater impact for the congregation because Bird was able to speak from her own experience as an Indigenous person.

For her part, Bird said she felt "extreme gratefulness and thankfulness that the people of Osler Mennonite are that in tune and in touch with their faith and with how Mennonites are taught to live reconciliation and peace."

Friesen and Penner both admit to feeling hesitant about holding the service, but for different reasons. Friesen worried about possible pushback from the community, while Penner was concerned that their actions might do more harm than good. However, both women's worries proved unfounded.

People who attended were mostly from Osler Mennonite, but, said Friesen, "those [who attended] from the town wished we had advertised more broadly. . . . It's nice to know others would have liked to participate."

Penner likewise heard affirmation from participants. "So many people from church have thanked me," she said, "which affirmed to me that it was a useful act."

Penner isn't sure what the congregation's next steps will be but she said, "We want our faith to serve others and not cause more injustice." She said the church needs to acknowledge the harm it has done, but also needs to work toward justice: "I wanted [the memorial service] to be a starting point, not an end point. Having taken that step, we will be more confident to take the next step." ❧



PHOTO BY SUSAN BRAUN

Osler Mennonite Church gathers in the cemetery on Canada Day for a memorial service in honour of children who died at residential schools.

'Don't be afraid to ask questions'

An Indigenous woman's journey and advice to Mennonites

By Donna Schulz

Saskatchewan Correspondent
OSLER, SASK.



PHOTO BY SUSAN BRAUN

Tree Bird stands with her youngest son, Morrison, at the memorial service held by Osler Mennonite Church in response to the findings of unmarked graves at Indian Residential School sites.

She was born Danielle Dubois and placed in foster care at age three. She stayed in five different foster homes until, shortly before her fifth birthday, the Loewen family adopted her and gave her a new name.

Now known as Theresa Loewen, she grew up on a farm west of Saskatoon and says she “was immersed in the Mennonite world.”

During her senior year at Bethany Bible Institute in Hepburn, Sask., her birth mother came to visit her.

“Social Services had told my adoptive parents I had no family,” she says. “Seeing my birth mother and meeting her was amazingly insane.” Although it took her a while to warm up to this new relationship, both her adoptive parents and her birth mother were present at her graduation.

She then studied music at Wilfrid Laurier University, living on campus at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont. During those years, her adoptive mother was diagnosed with cancer. She made trips home to visit her mother and also to connect with her birth mother.

Trained as a classical musician, she travelled and performed for 10 years with symphonies and choirs while working retail jobs to make ends meet. Eventually she enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan to study music education.

As a single mother of four pre-teen sons, she now lives in Osler and is known as Tree Bird. She also has a Cree name, Kwyask Kapimoteht Ispimihk Kihew, which means “Good Walking Eagle

Woman Walks Above.”

Her sister, who had married into the community, invited her to church, and Bird says that’s where “I met some amazing, wonderful people.”

“I believe my mom planted me here,” she says. “There’s a faith there that was instilled in me.” As she has reconnected with her Indigenous roots, Bird has come to value her Indigenous spirituality, which she sees as being in balance with her Anabaptist faith.

Bird appreciates Osler Mennonite’s efforts at reconciliation, including the Canada Day memorial service in response to the findings of unmarked graves at Indian Residential School sites. She recalls the conversation she had with several church members as they walked home together after the service. She values the fact that they were asking questions.

“What we, as Indigenous people, are asking of the church is that you educate yourselves,” she says. “Get to know how the government made laws to support these horrific crimes.” She adds, “The quality of life [in Indigenous communities] is directly linked to treaties not being honoured.”

Bird encourages non-Indigenous Mennonites to step out of their Mennonite world and into the broader community. “Go and volunteer,” she says. “Let the universe guide you to a place where you can be of service. You will meet wounded yet resilient and amazingly strong Indigenous people.”

She urges Mennonite leaders to prioritize education by offering classes in Indigenous history. “Find people to come into your congregation,” she says, adding, “Don’t be afraid to ask questions. You’re going to open up someone’s heart to share.” ❧

Gutter cleaning fundraiser for Wi-Fi boosters

Two Mennonite youth serve their Edmonton community

Story and Photos by Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Two Mennonite high school students from African countries were interviewed and accepted into the Civic Engagement by Newcomer Youth program last fall through the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers. One of the requirements for the participants is to identify a problem or issue in the community they care about and come up with a plan to address that issue in some way.

Due to COVID-19, students were organized around their topic of interest before they began meeting online to make a plan. Helena Chokpelleh, a Liberian who attends Holyrood Mennonite Church, and Goanar Tut, who attends South Sudanese Mennonite Church, discovered they were both concerned about the effectiveness of online schooling and were especially worried about newcomer youths who were falling through the cracks.

They discussed the challenges: crowded apartments make it hard to find dedicated space; tablets need to be shared among family members; video cameras are usually turned off, decreasing accountability and increasing cheating; difficulty hearing the teacher on the device; and finally, weak Wi-Fi signals, making streaming unreliable, especially if the tenants in the apartment building are sharing the network.

“The only positive thing,” joked Chokpelleh, “is that your classroom is

next to the fridge!”

Tut and Chokpelleh worked with four other students from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo,

list prioritizing need based on how many years families had been in Canada, and how many school-aged children and youth were in each family.

Tut and Chokpelleh researched which boosters would make the most difference by going to Best Buy to talk to a specialist.

They tried identifying companies willing to donate or give a discount for Wi-Fi boosters, but hit a wall.

The group then decided to offer gutter cleaning in the community to raise money for the boosters. Tut had worked as a gutter cleaner the previous summer and he said he would look for clients. Unfortunately, they struggled to find clients. Even with delivering flyers on two occasions, and by word of mouth, they were only able to book two clients, which was enough to buy two boosters. They even tried to add other services, such as power raking and lawn mowing but still with no results.

Tut said, “It was hard, but we finished the project. I wondered if people didn’t think we were professional enough.”

Chokpelleh wondered if people were nervous due to COVID-19. Even though it wasn’t the result they hoped for, she still felt positive. “I really enjoyed hearing people’s ideas

and trying to fix a problem,” she said.

In addition to completing a community project, participants were required to



Helena Chokpelleh of Holyrood Mennonite Church, left, and Goanar Tut of South Sudanese Mennonite Church, hold up the certificates they received in July 2021 after completing the Civic Engagement by Newcomer Youth program at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers. Tut’s dog is named “Scottie.”

and Burundi. After determining that stronger Wi-Fi connections were needed by newcomer families, they then made a



Florence Irasubiza of the Democratic Republic of Congo, left, and Helena Chokpelleh, a Liberian who attends Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton, clean gutters as a fundraiser to buy Wi-Fi boosters for low-income newcomer families. Community connector Emmanuel Mbonimpa is in front of the ladder.

volunteer in the community monthly. Chokpelleh said that her favourite volunteer experience was at the Edmonton Food Bank because “I love getting to know new people.”

Tut enjoyed volunteering at the Edmonton Emergency Relief Services Society, where he rolled blankets and bed sheets for the homeless. “There’s always something to do in the community,” he said.

Other volunteer activities included teaching English to newcomer seniors online, cleaning up the city on Earth Day and working in community gardens.

Certificates were given in July to 24 refugee and immigrant youth who completed 120 hours of community engagement over nine months. The program’s goal was to empower newcomer youth to become leaders through civic engagement. ❧

News brief

Cambodian pastor’s credentials revoked by MC B.C.

After a lengthy process of discernment, and with great regret, Mennonite Church British Columbia has terminated the ordination credential of Pastor Tran Dinh Khanh of the Mennonite Cambodia Church. In 2014, Khanh was ordained by MC B.C. as an affirmation of the work of the North American Vietnamese Mennonite Fellowship in planting this Vietnamese-language church and calling Khanh to pastor this church with its two locations in Cambodia. In February of this year, the MC B.C. Church Health and Development Committee became aware of allegations of sexual misconduct against Khanh. An investigation took place over the ensuing months, with the evidence of these allegations found to be convincing for the regional church’s Calling and Credentialing Task Group. On June 27, notification was sent to Khanh of the termination of his ordination credential with MC B.C. This notification was also sent to members of the Mennonite Cambodia Church and to the complainants.

—Mennonite Church B.C.



News brief

‘Rocky Railway’ makes stop at church station

ST. CATHARINES, ONT.—It was with great joy that St. Catharines United Mennonite Church was able to host Vacation Bible Camp for 32 children in Senior Kindergarten to Grade 6 during the third week of July. The theme this summer was “Rocky Railway,” emphasizing God’s power to get people through life’s ups and downs. Each day featured a story about a Bible hero going through a difficult time; Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection was part of the series. Taya Himes, a camp coordinator, said, “Each day’s lesson fit so well with what the children had gone through this past year.” The day camp was not broadly advertised in the community since enrolment was limited (down from 120 in previous years). Volunteers were trained in strict provincial day-camp protocols, which included screening, physical distancing, hand washing/sanitizing, and wearing masks for various activities. Children were dropped off at the door, had their temperature checked, and participated in active screening for COVID-19 symptoms. At pick-up time, parents waited in their cars spaced out in the parking lot. Another co-ordinator, Marian Reimer Friesen, said, “The children were so thrilled to be together again. The parents were grateful for the social opportunity after many months at home, and the inspirational messages.”



PHOTO BY JEFF FRIESEN

St. Catharines United Mennonite Church's sanctuary played host to ‘Rocky Railway,’ a Vacation Bible Camp for 32 children in late July.

Staying strong

Congregation finds ways to pray and connect

By Maria H. Klassen
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

At a time when many churches are dealing with declining numbers in their pews, Hamilton (Ont.) Mennonite Church has grown. Membership in 1965 was 28; before the pandemic attendances averaged about 70 each Sunday; then, in 2020, attendance more than doubled.

Pastor Alissa Bender said that, within the first week of COVID-19 closures in March of last year, the church started online prayer events. The group read through the Anabaptist prayer book, *Take Our Moments and Our Days*, whose four-week cycle of morning and evening prayers focus on the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, Jesus' parables and his miracles. Meetings were held twice a week on Zoom, with each session lasting between 20 to 25 minutes.

This year, the group is praying through *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*, which includes a tapestry of prayers that celebrate the best of different traditions and denominations. Sessions are again being held on Zoom at midday on Wednesdays. There are nine regular participants and others watch the recorded session later.

Bill Fledderus, a regular participant, finds these online prayer sessions to be an encouragement and a blessing. "Scheduling [prayers] at midday is a reminder of God's presence," he says. "That is helpful, as otherwise I can tend to focus so tightly on my work that I don't think about God's presence with me during long stretches of my workday. Praying for others and sharing prayer requests with others help me raise my eyes beyond my own work or situation to see a bigger picture of my local church community, the wider community and of God at work in our world."

Participants pray for each other and the larger community, and music videos of new songs from the *Voices Together* hymn book



PHOTO BY ALISSA BENDER

Dear to the hearts of congregants at Hamilton (Ont.) Mennonite Church over the past year of the pandemic are two prayer books used for the weekly midday prayers, the children's prayer boxes and a bookshelf quilt.

are often included.

A regular Sunday morning feature has been Zoom coffee time after the livestream church service. Other special events held throughout the year have included:

- A scavenger hunt via Zoom, with participants taking pictures of their findings.
- A bike ride through the city by Bender, who delivered tags and stickers to put on laptops, to students attending online classes. This replaced the regular backpack blessing held each year.
- A butter-tart demonstration by Barry Reesor via Zoom.
- Prayer boxes for children and youth, with weekly prayers being sent by different members of the congregation. Examples included: "I pray that you feel God's peace," and "I pray that no matter where you are, you will trust that God is with you."

Not all activities continued. Sunday school was cancelled last spring. In the fall, adult Sunday school picked up on Zoom, and Shine resources were sent to children to use at home.

The quilting group has not been meeting at the church since the pandemic started. This group formed in 2017, meeting weekly during the fall and winter. Participants ranged in age from eight years old to some in their 80s, including new and experienced quilters. Two quilts were donated to the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale. Other quilts were given to a young quilter as a farewell gift, and to the child of the newcomer family.

A new event was the Silver Lake Mennonite Camp Adventure Day Camp that Hamilton Mennonite hosted during the second and fourth weeks of July. ☼

News brief

Gardening project provides tasty 'notes of love'



PHOTO BY JAN STEVEN

Laur and Jasper Steven work in Grace Mennonite Church's community garden in St. Catharines, Ont.

ST. CATHARINES, ONT.—Since 2016, Grace Mennonite Church has run an outreach program to provide garden space for church members, newcomers to Canada and church neighbours who didn't have any room for a garden of their own. This year, Jan and Laur Steven, with the help of their grandson Jasper, manage three of the 12 garden boxes, one for themselves and two for the residents of the Grace-Linwell Retirement Community. Seeds and plants were donated this spring, including beans, tomatoes, lettuce and cauliflower. When the vegetables are ripe, the Stevens harvest them and deliver them to the seniors building, where anyone can help themselves to the produce at no charge. Jan calls the produce given away "notes of love."

—BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

'Everyone wanted Mennonite girls'

Plaque honours Mennonite maids who worked in Vancouver

By Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent

A new plaque honours the young Mennonite women who worked as domestic help in Vancouver in the mid-20th century.

An initiative of The Places That Matter, this is No. 89 of 125 commemorations erected by the Vancouver Heritage Foundation plaque project, launched in 2011 with a grant from the Government of Canada's Celebrate Vancouver 125.

The plaque, located on the streetlight at the corner of 49th Avenue East and St. George Street in Vancouver, reads in part: "From 1931 to 1961, young Mennonite women were sent to Vancouver seeking work as domestic servants by their families, many of whom were indebted to the Canadian Pacific Railway for their passage. Most had come to Canada as refugees from Stalinist Russia.

"These young, single women were pioneers in their ethnic and religious community who broke through the barriers

of the 'evil city,' finding their independence through learning the English language and experiencing a new culture. They shaped settlement patterns of not only Vancouver but also of western Canada."

On June 17, a virtual presentation introduced the plaque, sponsored by the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford, B.C. Speakers included Deputy Mayor Melissa De Genova; Richard Thiessen of the Mennonite Heritage Museum; and Ruth Derksen Siemens, author of *Daughters in the City: Mennonite Maids in Vancouver 1931-61*, published by Fernwood Press in 2013.

Thiessen gave a brief history of Mennonites and how they came to the Fraser Valley.

Derksen Siemens told the stories of young Mennonite women, some as young as 14, who came to work in Vancouver beginning in 1929, and again after the Second World War, when more refugee



MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF B.C.

PHOTO

Wearing stiff, uncomfortable uniforms was expected of the Mennonite girls and women who worked as house maids in Vancouver from the 1930s to the '60s.

families arrived.

With their families indebted to the railroad for paying their travel costs, the young women worked to help their families repay the debt. They bravely left their families to find work in Vancouver, at first sleeping in places such as the railroad station because they had no money.

Eventually, two residences were purchased—one for the Mennonite Brethren and one for the General Conference Mennonites—to be a home away from home for the young women who struggled with the English language and homesickness. The homes, said Derksen Siemens, were places for help with "safety, shelter, language skills and employment." Matrons provided a motherly presence and helped the young women find work.

Prominent upper-class Vancouver families, including mayors, doctors, business owners and professors, employed the young women.

"The demand was so great—everyone wanted Mennonite girls . . . because they worked hard and they were so honest," said Derksen Siemens. ☸



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUTH DERKSEN SIEMENS

Young Mennonite women served as domestics to help their families repay debt.

Renewing life on the stage

Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre celebrates 50th anniversary

Story and Photos by Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Mennonites are sometimes associated with their four-part harmony rather than their acting, but one group has been making a name for Mennonites in the theatre for decades. Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre, a not-for-profit amateur community theatre company, is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2022.

Created from a love of theatre and value for community service, the company has produced plays every year since it began, including one-act plays, big theatrical works, musicals and dinner

theatre—comedic, tragic, Mennonite and otherwise.

“Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre has enriched my life in so many ways,” says Catherine Enns, the company’s president, who joined the troupe in 1974, at age 19. “I’ve learned things about myself, I’ve learned things about the world, I’ve learned things about Mennonites.”

To celebrate its golden anniversary, in conjunction with the upcoming centenary of the Russian Mennonites’ arrival in Canada, the company is hosting a



Henry Schroeder, chair of the Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre board, began acting with the troupe in 1974. ‘Our productions these days are much more modest efforts, but the creative energy and the love of theatre are still there,’ says Henry Schroeder, chair of the Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre board.



Catherine Enns, right, acts in Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre’s production of Hamlet, presented in 1984 at the Pantages Playhouse Theatre. It was a full-length production, performed all in German.

playwriting competition, inviting aspiring and experienced playwrights to submit original one-act plays on a Mennonite theme by June 2022. A panel of writers, actors and arts administrators will judge submissions and the winners will receive prize money and the potential to have their play performed by the theatre company.

Three men from First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg established this small Mennonite theatre company on the Prairies back in 1972. But its roots stretch back even further. The young people of First Mennonite (*die Jugendverein*) were already putting on shows in the 1930s and '40s. In a step to make the operation more official, John Enns, Paul Neustaedter and Gerd Neuendorf pooled their money and launched the Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre.

Its casts have performed a long list of works throughout the following years:



*The Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre cast on the set of *Der Zigeunerbaron* (The Gypsy Baron) presented in 1979 at the Pantages Playhouse Theatre, which, at that time, seated more than 1,600 people. On opening night, the box office had to put up the SRO (sold right out) sign.*

The Magic Flute, Life of Galileo, The Glass Menagerie, The Trial of Jesus, Hamlet and more—all in German—as well as plays in English.

Produced by a cast and crew of volunteers, these were not simple productions. Dozens of participants in finely detailed costumes acted on a stage decorated with a multitude of elaborate sets, accompanied by a pit orchestra. Audiences of more than 2,500 people would fill the seats of the Pantages Playhouse Theatre in Winnipeg, over the span of two or three nights.

“There were years when our shows were just as good as anything out there,” says Enns, a member of First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

It all worked because of visionary leadership—David Riesen, an English teacher and member of First Mennonite, directed the company for several years—and the passion and energy of everyone involved.

“You can just see how something like that would energize a Mennonite community,” says board chair Henry Schroeder.

Everything came together perfectly, like lightning in a bottle—but moments like those don’t last forever, Enns says. “It’s not like it used to be. Fifty years is a long time and a lot of things change in that time.”

The company’s core audience grew older, family sizes shrank, commitment to church and related activities decreased. Financial and human resources waned and the energy that came with the fervour of the past decades faded. Enns says it can be disheartening to compare those bustling years to a currently emptier calendar. But the troupe presses on, “one foot ahead of the other,” still meeting once a month to “keep each other excited and energized.”

Although German productions have fallen to the wayside, English plays continue, often supporting the work of local playwrights. The company has participated in almost all of the 20-plus years that the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre has held its Master Playwright Festival.

“Our productions these days are much more modest efforts, but the creative energy and the love of theatre are still there. We still have our moments of magic,” says Schroeder, who also attends First Mennonite and joined the company in 1974.

There are a few young adults on the company’s board and roster of actors, but Schroeder is eager for more of the next generation to join this theatre community and learn across generations. He is quick to assert that actors or crew members

don’t have to be Mennonite to join either—numerous members aren’t—although he and Enns try not to let that original “Mennonite flavour” completely slip away.

Enns doesn’t know what the next ten years will look like. What keeps me up at night is: “What’s going to happen in the future?” she says.

Despite the obstacles, the company is adapting. One radio play is slated to air this fall on the theatre’s website. Rehearsals with over a dozen actors are already underway for one: *The Death of Pollyanna* by Veralyn Warkentin, a drama about medically assisted dying. The troupe is also hoping to do a full comedy production with an in-person audience next spring, if COVID-19 restrictions allow.

“I want [Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre] to evolve to something special. The 50th anniversary celebration . . . I’m hoping that it can be part of a renewal and a refocus,” Schroeder says. ❧

For details on the playwriting competition, visit winnipegmennonitetheatre.ca



Bricks. Mortar. Spirit.

Three churches navigate the loss of meeting space

Story and Photo by Will Braun
Senior Writer

Church is not made of bricks and mortar, but for most congregations—not all—a building is integral. Congregations that lose their building face big questions about identity and the essentials of church life. I spoke with two congregations that have gone through the process recently and one that is in the thick of it.

British Columbia

Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship shared its origins with the Menno Simons Centre, a student residence near the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Starting in 1986, the two entities shared a renovated convent, although the building was owned by the Pacific Centre for Discipleship Association (PCDA), which ran the residence.

In 2015, PCDA informed Point Grey that it intended to sell the building. Point Grey struck a transition committee and surveyed its members about location, about meeting in the afternoon or evening, and other issues. But the building didn't sell.

In 2019, an offer finally came in, and Point Grey revived the transition committee and the soul searching. By May 2020, the congregation was out.

Point Grey moderator Veronica Dyck pauses for some time when asked what was hardest about the transition? She says that leaving a beautiful chapel with much history was difficult, adding, "The trauma is so intertwined with the pandemic."

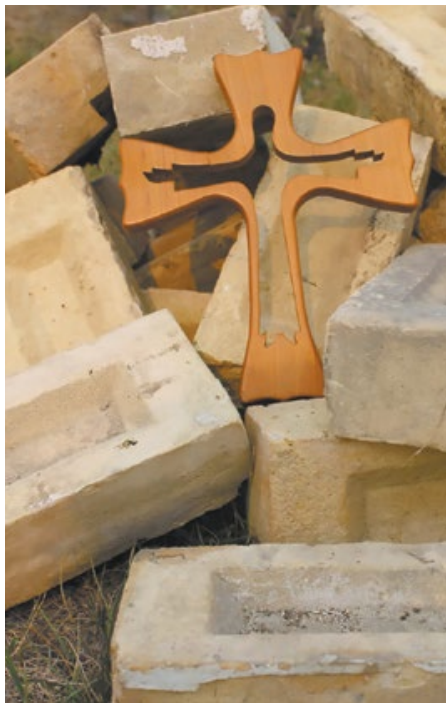
She says that eventually the congregation had trial services at two sites, settling on the basement of a community centre. Then the lockdown hit, just a week before the planned farewell service at the old site.

During the lockdown, the congregation realized the community centre would not be a good fit.

Through the connections of one church member, St. Phillips Anglican offered

space, and Point Grey is set to meet there in person on Sunday afternoons at 1 p.m. starting in September. Dyck says the space is "lovely" and there are no fixed pews, so chairs can be arranged as needed, an important factor for Point Grey.

She says that St. Phillips has strong outreach programs in the community and Point Grey may be able to plug into those



ministries, while also sharing Mennonite ministries with the Anglicans.

A possible downside to the new arrangement is the early afternoon start time, which some fear may reduce attendance.

She says that re-evaluating the church's identity during the process led naturally to discussion of what makes Point Grey different or unique. In that, Dyck recognized a "temptation to pride," and a temptation to see "different" as better.

Dyck says the whole difficult process resulted in an affirmation of the

congregation and a sense of reassurance that God will continue to bless it.

"We'll find our feet," she says.

Manitoba

Three provinces over, and a couple years earlier, Hope Mennonite also found itself without a place to meet. Since 1993, Hope had shared a building with Young United Church and several community organizations in a gritty part of Winnipeg.

By 2018, it became unworkable for Hope, which was growing, to split Sunday mornings with Young United. That led to questions of practicality (meeting times) and identity.

Pastor Lynell Bergen says Hope realized that not having its own building was an identity marker for the church. The group had met in various buildings over its history but had never owned one. The congregation did not want to change that.

After a difficult process, Hope ended up at the funeral home just across the street. The cost is reasonable and there is more space for kids to be kids. Plus, during much of the pandemic, it only paid a bit of rent for storage. The downside is less connection with Young United.

While not owning your own building comes with a sense of "vulnerability"—you don't know when you'll get the boot—Bergen says "it is a gift" for a congregation not to own a building. It frees up money, time and headspace for other things.

Ontario

One more province over, Avon Mennonite Church was also part of a shared building arrangement. Since 1994, Avon shared space with a retirement and long-term-care facility operated by Tri-County Mennonite Homes in Stratford, Ont. The two entities put a lot of energy into forging a partnership and jointly building a shared facility. The pandemic stretched

the arrangement.

As COVID-19 hit, the care home was not in a position to have 150 outside people coming onto its grounds regularly. And there was no way to physically separate the church and the care home, since the doors into the church were fire exits for the home.

Avon invoked the buy-sell clause in the original agreement and Tri-County Homes bought out the church, leaving Avon adrift.

According to Greg Wideman, chair of the Avon board, the decision to leave the facility has been “challenging,” especially for people who worked so hard to form the partnership years ago and may have envisioned themselves moving into the home. He emphasizes the need to honour the intentions of the founders.

He also says the question of where to meet is linked to the question of who to partner with. Avon doesn’t want to just build a facility for itself.

The church is actively reaching out, in the hope of partnering with a worshipping community, community organization or a housing initiative. It has also spoken to city officials. “We want a space that meets community needs,” says Wideman, adding that he process will “probably take a few years.”

In the meantime, Avon is meeting outdoors at 6 p.m. on Sundays, with indoor space lined up at a Lutheran church for the fall. Avon is also maintaining ties with its members who live in the care home.

Like Veronica Dyck, Wideman talks about how the stresses of COVID-19 and the general uncertainty about post-pandemic church are layered on top of Avon’s process of transition. Without a building to call its own, “the level of uncertainty goes up,” he says. “There’s no key that unlocks your door; no driveway to pull into.”

Still, Wideman gives a positive assessment of the group’s situation. The church has solid leadership—they just hired a full-time youth pastor—and the sale of their facility means it has money in the bank. “There’s not an overwhelming feeling or fear or trepidation,” he says. “What better way to grow than to navigate through a crisis.”

News brief

B.C. bikers continue annual tradition

A long-standing tradition continued on July 17 with the 14th annual Mennonite Church B.C. motorcycle ride, organized by executive minister Garry Janzen. Participants began with coffee in Chilliwack, then rode to Manning Park for lunch at Manning Park Resort, followed by a ride to the Cascade Lookout and Lightning Lake on either side of the resort. Riders returned to their own communities via Hope. This year, 10 riders on eight bikes took part, coming from Ladner, Port Coquitlam, Aldergrove, Mission and Chilliwack. “It was a great time of relational connecting and fun, on a beautiful day,” says Janzen. This was the second year that Belinda Luxton participated, together with her husband, Lars Schwanebeck. “Riding in a group takes some skill, a good leader and communication in the group as a whole,” says Luxton. “The culture around riding is very friendly, and I see a camaraderie among all riders when we’re on the road. We have an amazing province, and seeing it on the bike with other people that feel the same way is truly wonderful.”

—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL



PHOTO COURTESY OF GARRY JANZEN

Riders on the 14th annual MC B.C. motorcycle ride pose at Lightning Lake on July 17.

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PEOPLE

MC Manitoba ordains first spiritual director for service

Helping us live more deeply into our Christian calling

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Laura Funk is the first person to be ordained for the ministry of spiritual direction by Mennonite Church Manitoba. She is also the regional church's first spiritual director in residence.

"I'm excited this ordination happened, to help people become more aware of the vocation of spiritual direction," Funk says. She was ordained at Camp Assiniboia on June 27, enveloped by a robe covered in the handprints of her community, since they couldn't all be present due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Funk discovered her love of spiritual direction when she was a leader in an ecumenical church, and a woman asked to meet regularly to talk about her faith journey, questions and doubts. "I didn't realize how great it would be, and it turned out to be one of my favourite things in the whole world," Funk says. "I realized what an amazing gift it is to walk alongside people in their faith journeys."



PHOTO BY GILBERT DETILLIEUX

Laura Funk wore a blessing cloak made of more than 100 handprints at her ordination service, since COVID-19 prevented her community from gathering in-person for the laying on of hands. She received handprints from people aged six months to 93 years old, across three countries and at least five denominations and two faiths.

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When the time came to renew her ministry credentials, she proposed ordination towards the ministry of spiritual direction to MC Manitoba, together with Hope Mennonite Church, her home congregation in Winnipeg.

Funk says Christians should give more attention to their spiritual health just like they do their physical and mental health. “Maybe sharing [our experiences] with a trusted, confidential spiritual director can help us live more deeply into our calling as Christians,” she says.

“We’re excited because I think it really gives us another new and different way of ministry within the larger church that we really haven’t had before,” says Rick Neufeld, director of MC Manitoba’s leadership ministries.

Funk started her part-time position, which is currently set for one year, at the MC Manitoba office on May 1. She has already been busy, speaking in churches and connecting with pastors to hear how she can support them and their congregations. She also led a spiritual retreat,

ran online gratitude groups, and offers introductory spiritual-direction sessions.

“I think what we’re finding, especially through the pandemic the past year, is so much tiredness and fatigue, not only on pastors but on congregations too,” Neufeld says. “We think [Funk’s gifts] can be a real benefit and a real way to nurture our congregations in areas of spiritual growth, spiritual disciplines, as well as our pastors who really are crying out for this kind of a resource.”

Funk earned bachelor of theology and master of arts in Christian ministry degrees from Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. She was trained in spiritual direction at St. Benedict’s Retreat Centre in West St. Paul, Man., and has been working as a spiritual director through her private practice, Butterfly Journeys, since 2012. She has worked as a chaplain and ecumenical church leader and recently published a book of guided meditations. ☸

☸ Staff change

Pastoral transition in British Columbia



Rachel Navarro is the new family pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C. She is a graduate of Columbia Bible College with a bachelor’s degree in youth work and has a diploma in business administration from the University of the Fraser Valley. She previously served at North Langley Community Church as a youth intern, youth ministries assistant and as youth director. She began her position at Emmanuel on July 26.

—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL



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Goshen College alumni contribute to vaccine

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Beirut explosion: One year later

Meet some of the people whose homes and businesses were restored with the help of Mennonite Central Committee's partner.

canadianmennonite.org/beirutupdate



New book explores God's kingdom

Mennonite World Conference general secretary César García talks about his new book, *What is God's Kingdom and What Does Citizenship Look Like?*

canadianmennonite.org/garciabook



A consistent, everyday joy

On the blog, Ottawa pastor Anthony G. Siegrist reflects on the connection between humans and the natural world.

canadianmennonite.org/blog/everyday

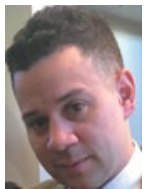
Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Manitoba

• **Kathy Koop** concluded 19 years of ministry at First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg on July 31. She started in the role of associate minister with a focus on families and worship, and she became the congregation's lead minister in 2010. Koop is retiring from a decades-long career in pastoral ministry, previously working in Ontario as a youth minister at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church and as a chaplain at Vineland United Mennonite Home for the Aged, and in Goshen, Ind., as a teacher at Bethany Christian High School. She and her husband also served with Mennonite Central Committee in Germany, where they started a small congregation in Niedergörsdorf. She earned a master of arts degree in theology and ethics from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.



• **Justin Majeau** began as lead pastor of Morden Mennonite Church on July 1. This is his first pastoral position within Mennonite Church Manitoba, but he comes to the role with 12 years of ministry experience. He previously served as lead pastor of Selkirk Community Church in St. Andrews, Man., and of Lendrum Mennonite Church, a Mennonite Brethren congregation in Edmonton; and as youth pastor of Life Church, also in Edmonton. He earned a master of arts degree in Christian ministry from Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg.



—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

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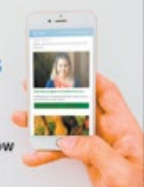


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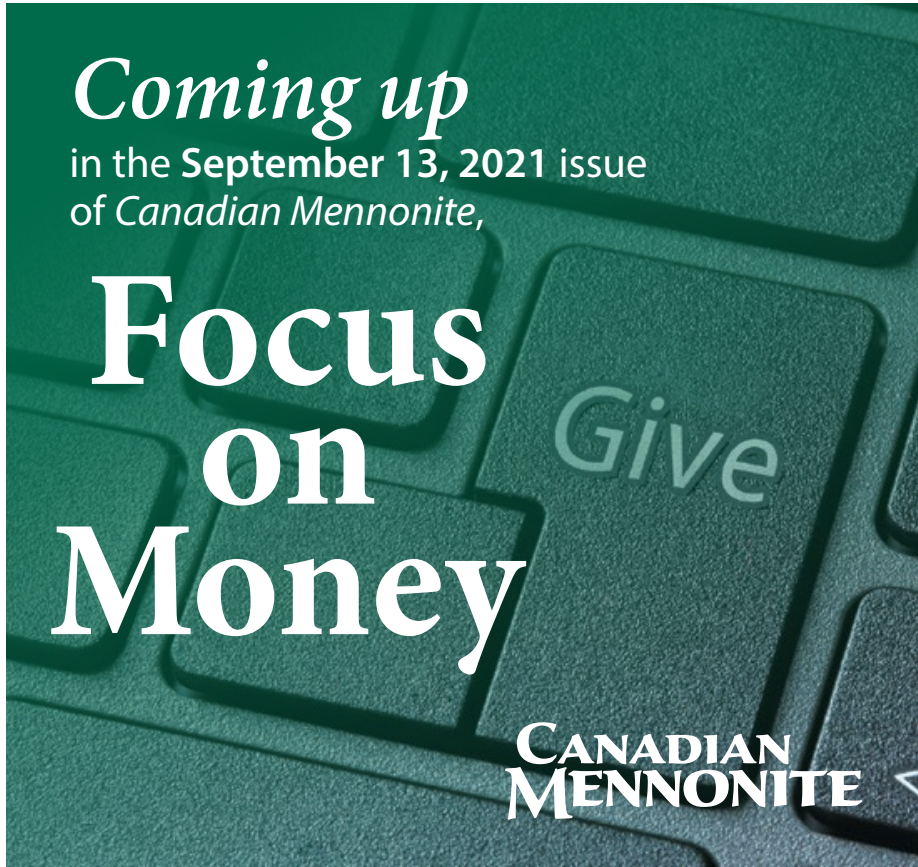
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OBITUARY

A planter of seeds of good news

Mennonite Church Canada



Erwin Rempel

Three months after a cancer diagnosis, Erwin H. Rempel, 76, died June 25, at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community in Harrisonburg, Va. Erwin and Angela, his wife of 55 years, served with Mennonite Mission Network and a predecessor agency, the Commission on Overseas Mission (COM), on four continents, from 1975 to 2009.

Jack Suderman, a former general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada and a General Conference Mennonite Church COM worker in Colombia, remembers Rempel as a talented administrator. "He always had charts and numbers for any discussion on any subject," Suderman says. "He never lost sight of the human realities behind the numbers. Mission was not statistics, but statistics helped Erwin understand mission, and he conveyed that to the rest of us. He helped us all reach a new level of careful planning and accountability in mission."

Stanley Green, former executive director of Mission Network, agrees: "He brought diligence and a gracious collegiality to his work. Erwin greatly assisted the merger of Mission Network's three predecessor agencies. He was a bridge person who helped to advance a climate of trust between colleagues who came together from different organizational cultures."

Rempel also helped build the foundation for cooperation between MC Canada

International Witness and the Mennonite Mission Network.

The Rempels served in Brazil from 1975 to 1982. Following this assignment, Rempel assumed the role of COM's executive secretary in the Newton, Kan., office, from 1982 to 1994. Starting in June 1994, the Rempels worked as co-directors of Mennonite Ministries in Botswana for six years, in a joint assignment with the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM), COM and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

"The Rempels' service in Africa with COM, MCC and AIMM was seamless," says Kathy Fast, former MCC country director in Botswana. "They provided a great understanding of international partners and the cooperation between the different agencies."

The Rempels returned to Newton in 2000, where Erwin helped with the integration of the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church mission agencies. Until his retirement in 2008, he served with the new Mennonite Mission Network.

A few months after he retired, the Rempels had their most adventurous "unexpected invitation" to ministry. Their skills were requested for a two-month assignment in Afghanistan, where a mission worker had been taken hostage.

✦

With files from Mennonite Mission Network.

Calendar

British Columbia

Sept. 18: MCC B.C. Festival for World Relief. For more information, visit <http://www.mccbc.ca/>.

Oct. 15-17: MC B.C. women's retreat, at Camp Squeah, Hope. Theme: "Our God, our healer." Details to be announced.

Ongoing: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. is calling on local Anabaptists to participate in a collaborative storytelling project. Share your COVID-19 story/artwork/experiences for this first of its kind collaborative project at <http://aht.libraryhost.com/>. Take a look at the submissions! Still

shy about uploading? Send your submission via email to archives@mhsbc.com and it can be added to the project on your behalf.

Alberta

Sept. 25: MC Alberta heritage retreat, at Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury. Theme: "Living life lustily." Speaker: Ed Olfert.

Saskatchewan

Sept. 18: Shekinah Move-A-Thon. For more information, visit <http://www.shekinah.ca/>.

Oct. 15-16: Mennonite Church Saskatchewan "Songfest of Thanks," at Rosthern Mennonite Church, with Duff Warkentin as conductor and

Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

Employment opportunity

MCEC Operations Director

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada is seeking a strategic, analytical and collaborative senior leader with a passion for the Church to serve as Operations Director. Reporting to the Executive Minister, you will lead the development and implementation of operational systems and processes to strengthen MCEC's ministry supporting pastors and congregations to thrive.

You will play a key role in supporting the Courageous Imagination strategic planning process and putting in place the administrative and operational resources needed to support the new directions and priorities that emerge.

This is a full-time interim position, from approximately Sept. 30, 2021 to Aug. 31, 2023, with possibility of applying for the permanent role.

Visit www.mcec.ca to see the full position description and to apply.



Glenn Sawatzky as accompanist. All COVID-19 regulations will be followed. For updates and registration information, visit www.mcsask.ca in the fall.

Online

Sept. 19: Mennonite World Conference invites you and your congregation to observe Peace Sunday together with others in the global Anabaptist church

family. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3yYDMTY>. **Sept. 30-Oct. 2:** "MCC at 100: Mennonites, service, and the humanitarian impulse," a virtual Mennonite Studies conference at the University of Winnipeg. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2Ti5PPa>.

To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please

send **Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event by email to calendar@canadianmennonite.org. For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.**



New to Montreal & looking for a church community?

Join us at

Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal

located in the heart of the city

Contact - pastor@mfmntl.org

Announcements

ABNER MARTIN MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

This annual scholarship is awarded by Menno Singers to a student who is affiliated with a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation and is, or will be, in a full-time program of music study, graduate or undergraduate, during 2021-2022.

Applications must be mailed by **October 1, 2021**. For application documents or further information, contact Linda Janzen at lindajanzen@sympatico.ca



Mennonite Central Committee

Employment Opportunity Human Resources Director MCC British Columbia

This full-time salaried position will provide leadership and support to all aspects of the Human Resources functions, to help ensure that MCC BC has qualified staff and a healthy work environment, including compliance with legal requirements and MCC values and policies.

Qualifications: Bachelor's degree in related field or equivalent experience; 5 years of Christian non-profit Human Resource Management experience preferred; excellent interpersonal skills in a collaborative and diverse team environment; strong strategic and operational planning; strong analytical and problem solving; proficiency with Microsoft Office and HRIS systems; strong commitment to MCC's mission/values/beliefs and philosophy of service; good understanding and connection to the MCC Church constituency is preferred.

All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to personal Christian faith, active participation in a Christian church or Christian community, and non-violent peacemaking.

Applications close: Sept. 17, 2021

Anticipated start date: Nov. 1, 2021 (or until suitable candidate identified)

For full job description and to apply visit:
mccbc.ca/openings

Questions?
Contact MCC BC HR at
604-850-6639 or hrmanager@mccbc.ca.



Employment Opportunities Head of Maintenance and Food Service Coordinator Camp Assiniboia

Camps with Meaning invites applications for the full-time permanent positions of **Head of Maintenance** and **Food Service Coordinator** at Camp Assiniboia, just west of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The Head of Maintenance is responsible for keeping Camp Assiniboia's site and facilities in good working condition, planning small and large development projects, and supervising maintenance staff and volunteers. The Food Service Coordinator is responsible for the management and coordination of the kitchen, its staff and volunteers.

Visit www.campswithmeaning.org: News, for job description, salary range, etc.

Send inquiries to David Hogue, Resident Manager at **204-864-2159**. Applications will be accepted until positions are filled. Applicants should send a resume along with the names of three references, in confidence to: assiniboia@campswithmeaning.org.



PHOTO BY KEVIN STOESZ /

TEXT BY JOANNE DE JONG

Camp Valaqua supporters Kevin Stoesz, left, and Steven Retzlaff of Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary, hiked the King Creek Ridge in Kananaskis, Alta., as part of the annual hike-a-thon held on June 12. As of July 17, \$13,735 had been raised, with a final total expected in August.

Photo finish



PHOTO BY RUTH BERGEN BRAUN / TEXT BY JOANNE DE JONG

After a week of orientation, Camp Valaqua staff, including counsellors and counsellors-in-training, were commissioned to serve by Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, Mennonite Church Alberta's executive minister, standing right, on July 9, at Valaqua's old chapel.