

When the rains came down

Massive flooding in B.C.
affects Mennonite community, pgs. 16-18

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EDITORIAL

December patchwork

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



As the year 2021 winds down, this slightly distracted editor is trying to wrangle disparate ideas into a cohesive whole. What I offer here instead is a sort of patchwork quilt of thoughts, resembling the traditional coverlets created from fabric of varied colours, sizes and textures.

Claiming the story

Of all the symbols of Christmas, the one I connect with most is the Nativity scene. As a lover of Bible stories, I will gladly skip Santa Claus, the Christmas tree, the lights—and even the presents—to focus on the people and events of that special Birth Day.

As a child, I would climb on the piano bench to play with the plaster figures of my family's Nativity set arranged on the top of the piano. I would touch the angel atop the wooden stable, help the shepherds and the magi march up from a distance, and carefully place Baby Jesus into the manger.

In my adult years, I have accumulated a modest collection of nativity sets: wooden, felt, glass and plastic. The one with elongated black wooden characters, from the country formerly called Zaire, reminds me of today's Christians living out their faith on the African continent. The one with puzzle pieces that fit into a stable-shaped frame reminds me of the unemployed man who made it many years ago, in another place, and I pray for all jobless people today, far away and in my own city. The set carved out of olivewood from

Bethlehem reminds me of the followers of Jesus in the Bible lands—their devotion and their love of family Christmas celebrations. The tiny round Jesus, Mary and Joseph, crafted of painted marbles, come from Brazil, the place of my childhood and where I first embraced the Christian story as my own.

It is amazing that people of many ethnicities and different life circumstances, all around the world, can claim the story of Jesus as their inspiration. Even though we know that the Jesus of history lived in the context of first-century Palestine, each of us sees him today with eyes of faith, through our own cultural eyeglasses. Across the years and the geography, the meaning of Jesus' birth takes on new relevance in ever new contexts. (Have you seen a depiction of the Covid Holy Family created out of blue surgical masks?!)

As part of your Christmas celebration this year, may I suggest that you find a depiction of the Nativity story and spend quiet moments meditating on that story's significance, in history and in your own life? Once again we celebrate the love that the Nativity story reveals to each of us, wherever we might find ourselves. Merry Christmas!

Food and community

Food often plays a role in holiday celebrations, helping to build community and create memories. Over the past six years, in CM's occasional column, Gathering Around the Table, readers have shared their stories and recipes of food that have meaning for

them. Associate editor Barb Draper heard the stories, collected the recipes, prepared each one and photographed the final product. We thank her for that. And we thank those contributors for their tasty contributions to this community of readers.

Gathering Around the Table is ending in this issue, with the story, "Longtime cook nurtured young staff at House of Friendship" on page 25. But you can hop onto our website anytime, search for "Gathering Around the Table," and you will find all those stories and the recipes behind them. Happy eating!

New correspondent for Saskatchewan

We're pleased to introduce Emily Summach, who has joined the CM team as the new Saskatchewan correspondent. Emily serves as pastor of Langham Mennonite Fellowship on a part-time basis and has experience in communications in academic and arts settings.

Emily writes, "I became a part of the Mennonite Church family in 2016 when we moved to Saskatchewan. I'm continually surprised and delighted by the things I learn about Mennonite faith and culture. (I'd put the discovery of peppernut cookies high on that list.)"



Upcoming: Digital-only issue

The final issue of the year, dated Dec. 20, will come out as digital-only, with stories on the website. That issue will go only to CM's digital subscribers, via email. (Print subscribers can add digital delivery at no extra cost. Go to canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/manage.)

The first issue in the new year will be mailed on January 10, 2022. ☘



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In this front-and-back-cover photo, the Sumas Prairie is pictured in the beginning stages of the refilling of Sumas Lake. At this point in time, the worst flooding was further to the west but, after the dike was breached, this area filled up with more water. See story and more photos on pages 16 to 18.

PHOTO BY ELAINE BINNEMA

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FEATURE

What if we stayed together?

Lessons from one congregation

By Carol Penner

What do we do when we disagree with people in our church? There are lots of reasons to disagree. We can disagree about how we talk about salvation, about who we should include or not include, about political views, or even about vaccination. Across North America, we see issues dividing congregations and conferences.

When people in the church disagree, we have choices on which biblical passages guide our actions. The story of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30) is not often one we consider. How might our history in the Mennonite church be different if we took this parable to heart?

A farmer plants a crop with good wheat seed, but an enemy comes and plants other seeds in the ground. The Greek word that we translate into English as tares or thistles is *zizania*, which is a type of weed that looks very much like wheat, except that its seeds are black and inedible. So, as the wheat and *zizania* plants grow, you would not notice that the difference until they start to bear seed. By that time the roots are all intertwined.

Farm workers who try to root out the *zizania* are going to pull up the wheat too. They can get rid of the *zizania*, but they won't get any harvest at all. That's why the farmer instructs the workers to leave the tares to grow until the harvest time, when the harvesters will separate the grain from the tares.

Waiting is central to this parable. But when conflict surfaces in churches, often people do not want to wait.

The First Mennonite Church in Vineland, Ont., where I attend, was the first Mennonite church in Canada, established in the early 1800s. Given its long history, that church

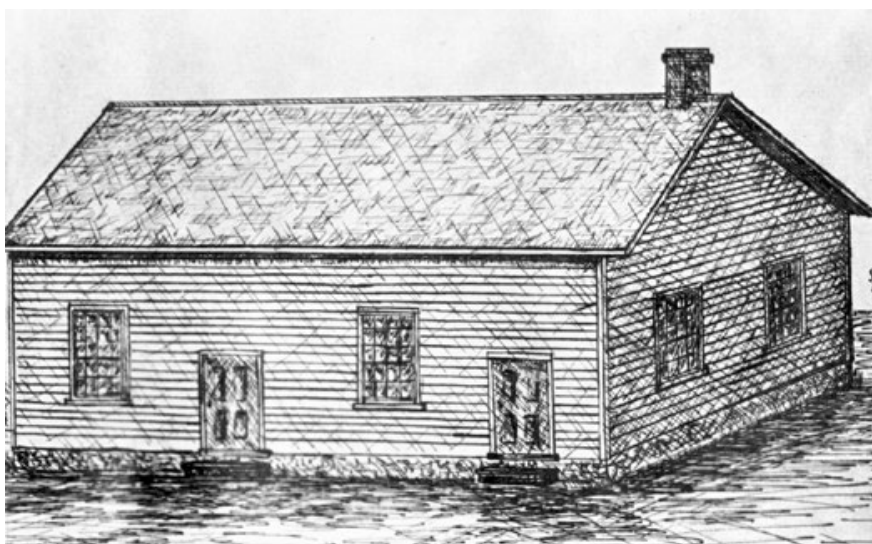


PHOTO: L.J.BURKHOLDER COLLECTION, MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

A sketch of the meetinghouse used by the Moyer Mennonite congregation, in Vineland, Ont., before 1897. The church was later renamed The First Mennonite Church.

has gone through more conflict than most congregations. What can we learn from its story? Here are three examples of when people gave up waiting and, instead, pull up the wheat and the tares, tearing apart the congregation.

Reforming the church in the 1840s

In the late 1700s, Mennonite farmers from Pennsylvania settled on an Indian trail close to Twenty Mile Creek in the Niagara Peninsula. They worshipped in what was then called the Meyer meeting house (later anglicized to Moyer). Within 40 years of its beginning, the congregation faced a crisis.

An evangelical reform movement had been sweeping through North America. It blew into the Niagara Peninsula in the 1840s with Mennonite preachers from the United States. These reformers were called, not surprisingly, the "Reformed Mennonites" (unrelated to the group called Reformed Mennonites today).

Reformers taught about the importance of individual salvation, and a more Spirit-filled life. Preaching was often accompanied by dramatic conversions of people from Mennonite congregations. Some members of the Moyer church were converted to this new way of thinking about their faith. These newly inspired Mennonites wanted to hold prayer meetings during the week in their homes.

By 1848, people in the congregation were bitterly divided. There seemed to be two different ways of talking about faith, and leaders had to decide whether these new evangelical ideas, with their more emotional tone, should be tolerated, or whether the old pattern of faith was better.

A minister at the Moyer meeting house, Daniel Hoch, had become part of this new way of talking about faith, but not everyone in the church agreed with him. Bishop Benjamin Eby was brought in to try to reconcile the opposing factions, but he was unsuccessful. By 1850, the divisions were finalized. Those who left the Moyer church joined with other likeminded Mennonites and formed a new



PHOTO: MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

The cemetery beside the meetinghouse of The First Mennonite Church in Vineland, Ontario.

this in the 1840s? Did they tolerate each other and wait patiently to let the angels decide at the last harvest who was right? Definitely not!

Leaders wanted everyone to think the same way. Both sides of the conflict

prayer meetings, Sunday school and singing in four-part harmony. Leaders were also starting to preach in English, as opposed to Pennsylvania Dutch.

Some at Moyer Mennonite had had enough. They could not tolerate these innovations; they liked the old ways better. People from various Mennonite churches gathered to resist, forming their own churches that followed the old order of congregational life. They called themselves, not surprisingly, the Old Order Mennonites.

For the Moyer church, that meant that the people who wanted the old order of doing things left the meeting house and built their own building on the other side of the church property. These churches were within singing distance of each other.

Once again, the community was torn apart, with families and friends separated and divided by animosity. Once again, the parable of the wheat and the tares, with its counsel for waiting for God to judge, was the last thing on people's minds.

Listening to the Spirit

Almost a century later, in the 1970s, the charismatic movement was sweeping through churches in North America. At the Moyer church (renamed The First Mennonite Church), some people got caught up in new ways of thinking about God. There was an emphasis on the Holy Spirit and on spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues and prophesy.

Once again, people were critical of each other for either following this new way of thinking and wanting these spiritual gifts, or for rejecting them.

A charismatic minister that the congregation called was the focus of some of the tension. Part of the congregation liked the minister, while another part thought he was misguided. Some people joined the church during this renewal movement, but many people left. This conflict in the 1970s left the congregation with such a

Waiting is central to this parable [of the wheat and tares]. But when conflict surfaces in churches, often people do not want to wait.

conference called, not surprisingly, the New Mennonite Conference.

You might think that people just cordially decided to disagree and go their own way, but that's not what happened in this conflict. Bishop Eby had officially silenced Daniel Hoch and others like him. Hoch stated that the praying and the non-praying parts of the church divided. He called on people in the Moyer church to confess their sins, repent and be saved. Reformers thought that the people who did not join them were not even Christian.

How would a parable like the wheat and the tares have spoken into a situation like

wanted to root out "heretical" Mennonites. Perhaps they were inspired by words from Jesus in Matthew 5:30: *"And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell."*

Looking for order in the 1880s

In the late 1880s, conflict again tore apart Moyer Mennonite Church. The innovations that had been so rigidly resisted in the 1840s had become mainstream. Congregational life at Moyer Mennonite now included evangelical practices like



PHOTO: MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO
Members of The First Mennonite Church, Vineland, Ont., worshipped in a new building, dedicated in the 1960s. This was the congregation's fourth building.

low membership that its future was in doubt. Leaders wondered whether it was time to close the doors of this congregation permanently.

Learning from hindsight

With the benefit of hindsight, it's easy for Christians today to look back at all the divisions in this congregation's history and say, "It would have been better for people to tolerate each other. Probably all those people were following God in their own way!"

But in the midst of conflict, it's surprisingly hard to discern tares and wheat. Who is sowing evil seeds? Were the people who wanted prayer meetings and Sunday schools sowing evil seed? Was the evil seed singing in harmony, preaching in English, or speaking in tongues?

Maybe the evil seed is the judgmental attitude and pride that makes us think that we know better than our neighbour about what pleases God. Maybe the evil seed is the attitude that everyone must think exactly the same way, that we must have a "pure" church. These seeds bear fruit that prompts us to push people out, or we leave and start our own new, better church, that we will probably call "Better Mennonite Church."

How easy it is to look at someone else in the church and think, "They are wrong." Then it's only a hop, skip and a jump to think, "They aren't Christian," and there we are in the garden with our trowel, digging up those nasty tares, disregarding the fact that we are uprooting the wheat that was so carefully planted.

It is sometimes complicated to read

With the benefit of hindsight, it's easy for Christians today to look back at all the divisions in this congregation's history and say, 'It would have been better for people to tolerate each other. Probably all those people were following God in their own way!'

the Bible and figure out a way forward. Which stories do we read and which do we disregard? How can we hear what the Spirit is telling our church if we decide that God can't possibly be speaking to those with whom we disagree?

The First Mennonite Church in Vineland has survived for 200 years, and remembering our history is important to those of us in the church. We can anticipate that the Spirit will bring changes, and that there will be conflict. How will we react the next time this happens? ❧



Carol Penner teaches practical theology at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.

This is an adaptation of a sermon she preached at The First Mennonite Church on Aug. 8, 2021. For those who want to read more about this history, she recommends: A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario, by L. J. Burkholder, and In Search of Promised Lands: A Religious History of Mennonites in Ontario, by Samuel Steiner.

❧ For discussion

1. Have you ever experienced so much conflict in a church that a group of people chose to leave? How much of the disagreement was due to theological differences? How did emotions play a part? Do you think that time and patience could have resolved the conflict?
2. Carol Penner points to Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13. Does this parable mean that false doctrine should not be challenged in the church? In church life, what does it mean to wait for the harvest before separating the wheat from the tares? Are there situations when it is important not to wait?
3. Penner describes three divisions in her church where ardent spirituality was part of the disagreement, even to the point of questioning the other side's Christianity. Why would fervent religiosity be such a point of conflict? Why might it be harder to be patient when we are feeling zealous? Are church splits always harmful?
4. Since the early church, Christianity has divided into many denominations. In what ways has this diversity been beneficial and how has it been destructive? Do you see greater cooperation than in the past?
5. When you find yourself in conflict with others in your congregation, what should you remember?

—By Barb Draper

See related Managing Congregational Conflict resources at www.commonword.ca/go/2582

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/// Readers write

✉ A very big community of not-very-close friends

Re: “Weak ties matter,” Sept. 27, page 11.

It’s been a long time since I have been impacted by a column like Arli Klassen’s. I don’t think I have ever heard someone draw out the value of the church being a very big community of not-very-close friends.

To note that some people find this community in sports, book clubs, pubs, coffeeshops and lunch-rooms—and we Jesus-followers find it in church—and to say that our local congregation is full of “weak ties,” relationships with people who provide the faith grounding we need, while belonging to a nearby world outside of ourselves, is brilliant!

I have all of these relationships: from my condo community and my drop-in hockey friends, to my congregation. I just think that to affirm the goodness of these relationships for the well-being of our world is one of the most refreshing things I have heard in a long time.

GARRY JANZEN (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ ‘Real-life needs’ should be a regional church priority

“God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God’s healing and hope flow through us to the world.”

This is a great vision held by us as members of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

While it does not explicitly express some of the suggestions offered at MC Eastern Canada’s Courageous Imagination gathering on Oct. 27, I find that most of those suggestions are implied in this statement.

I caution against making major changes to a statement that is finding a home in other parts of the globe, and with which we need to identify more fully.

We spent an hour-and-a-half at the gathering word-crafting various options, but barely any time talking about how to implement our existing mission statement, along with those added ideals.

I wish that addressing real-life needs would have been a priority in these meetings. We always require each other’s help in living like Jesus.

One current need relates to how the COVID-19 pandemic is straining relationships within our congregations, as sincere Christians are holding conflicting views. I am concerned about the unkind

remarks being made about those with whom we disagree.

Is the wording of our pandemic protocol harshly exclusionary? What is the appropriateness of church leaders acting as spokespersons for government policies that have been changing, and are sometimes inconsistent with other existing policies? The information offered is often incomplete.

We must heed the mistakes of church leaders who were/are being flattered or misled under authoritarian and democratic governments.

Jesus prayed that our mutual love would be recognized by observers as coming from God.

IVAN UNGER, CAMBRIDGE, ONT.

The writer attends Wanner Mennonite Church, Cambridge.

✉ ‘Never too late to love your neighbour’

Re: “No religious exemptions from COVID-19 vaccine: MC Canada” letter, Oct. 25, page 7.

Heartfelt thanks to the executive ministers of Mennonite Church Canada and its five regional churches for their clear stance in support of COVID-19 vaccines.

Many Mennonites in my circles have been vaccinated. They have not followed or promoted misinformation. They have not tried to pressure their doctors to give them medical or religious exemptions. As encouraged by our MC Canada executive ministers, they have followed the commandment to love their neighbour.

My guess is that by now there are some protesters who are having second thoughts about getting vaccinated. It would be hard not to if you are reading or watching the news.

To them I say: “Don’t let your pride get in the way of changing your mind. It is never too late to love your neighbour.”

DEBERAH DUECKMAN SHEARS, VANCOUVER

The writer attends Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship in Vancouver.

✉ Jesus: ‘What the Jews were waiting and longing for’

Re: “Advent and idolatry” feature, Nov. 8, page 4.

Perhaps author Chris K. Huebner could consider the perspectives of the first Christmas by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan before making some speculations on the meaning of Advent. In *The*

First Christmas, these two top Jesus scholars join forces to show how history has biased our reading of the nativity story as it appears in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. They say it is important to pay attention to the matrix of the first-century-AD empire thinking and the clash it produced with Torah-observant Jews in Palestine at that time.

At the time of Jesus, there was a human being, Caesar the Augustus (the one to be worshipped), on the scene. The imperial theology was inscribed in their architecture and coins. The Roman Empire's theology of "good tidings" of peace was proclaimed throughout the empire in support of Caesar. The imperial vision was "peace through conquest and domination."

The vision of Jesus, however, is religion with nonviolence because God is nonviolent. David wrote, in Psalm 20, not to trust in horse and chariot. The Jews of the Old Testament certainly didn't always get it right, but there are passages that clearly state challenging versions of the peaceable kingdom through distributive justice, restorative justice and self-emptying love that results in peace, not peace through conquest or domination.

A new vision is actually presented by Isaiah (chapters 40-50) and Zechariah (chapters 9-14). Bible scholars show that within the old epic, a new dimension of thought with very different values was emerging and this had universal appeal. The sacred story of the Jews now saw love as the primary nature of God, saw social justice as the goal of God.

The birth stories of Jesus declare the "good tidings of peace" of the nonviolent, revolutionary Jesus. That is what the Jews were waiting and longing for.

PETER H. PETERS, WINNIPEG

✉ **'We might learn something'**

Re: "Two calls to vaccination" letters, Nov. 8, page 7.

I respectfully disagree with the ideas expressed in the first letter.

I want to be perfectly clear here, I am not an anti-vaxxer. My wife and I have been fully vaccinated and have tried to adhere to the guidelines and safety protocols put out by our government in Alberta. I must admit, we have "broken" a few of the rules along the way but were extremely careful when doing so. We have not had COVID-19, nor have any of our close contacts or cohorts.

I believe the comparison of the unvaccinated to carrying a lethal weapon is unfair. I have had a number of conversations with unvaccinated people and have actually learned a great deal from what they have to say.

The people I spoke with are intelligent, conscientious and often more informed than those who are vaccinated. The statement that "by being unvaccinated, we are in danger of infecting others and potentially causing them to die," is true; however, even vaccinated people can get COVID-19, and although the result of getting it is often less severe, there is no evidence to suggest that vaccinated people cannot carry and transmit the disease.

The Government of Alberta website states: "Evidence is clear: Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, your loved ones and your community by making it more difficult for the virus to spread from person to person."

Nowhere does it explicitly state that vaccinated people do not transmit the virus to others. They are mainly protecting themselves and our health-care system by being vaccinated.

I believe that a better Mennonite/Christian response to the unvaccinated would be: "Let's talk about this, agree to disagree, and try to understand and respect the other person's point of view and reasons for not being vaccinated."

We might learn something.

HENRY BERGEN, CALGARY

✉ **Retiring correspondent thanked by regional church**

Re: "Seeing God in the lives of others," Nov. 8, page 17.

On behalf of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, thank you to Donna Schulz for her eight years of service as "our" correspondent for *Canadian Mennonite*. We've appreciated the ways she shared the Saskatchewan Mennonite story to the broader CM audience and how she pointed to the work of God in our midst. We have appreciated her presence at our events and are grateful that she accepted this call in her life. May Christ's peace be with Donna, and her family, in her next endeavour.

RYAN SIEMENS, SASKATOON

The writer is executive minister of MC Saskatchewan.

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FROM OUR LEADERS

Inspired by 'this ground'

Dorothy Fontaine

In 2015, some of the summer staff at Mennonite Church Manitoba's Camps with Meaning wrote a song called "This Ground." The song makes the simple observation that nature inspires us to pray. It encourages us to notice the beauty of creation all around us, hinting that there's much to learn about God in the natural world.

It's interesting to reflect on where "this ground" ultimately led the songwriters but equally compelling is the question of where it might lead us and the children of this generation.

A few years ago, we started making plans for a meditation trail in the forest at Camp Assiniboia. We were surprised, however, at how difficult it was to come up with content for the meditations. Ultimately, we invited others to help, only to discover that they found it difficult as well. This was puzzling because the river-bottom forest here is a never-ending source of inspiration.

It is nestled along the Assiniboine River and, as you walk along the trails, you get peekaboo views of the water. The forest is home to all manner of trees: cottonwood, aspen, linden and diamond willow. Fern groves provide

ground coverage in the summer, as do leaves in the fall and snow in the winter. (You might have noticed that I didn't mention spring. This is because the ground is covered in mud then. It is a river-bottom forest after all!)

The forest is also home to many animals. Regardless of the season, you are almost certain to see some deer. If you're lucky, you might spot an owl, or hear the tapping of a woodpecker or the slither of a garter snake. If you scan the banks of the forest, you might also find narrow mudslides made by beavers carrying sticks and branches from the forest to their homes.

This ground is so full of wondrous things that one of the people whom we asked to help with the meditations finally declared: "Maybe we're having trouble finding the right words because God is wild like the forest is wild, and you simply can't contain God."

Sometimes it's easy to forget that Scripture is born out of experiences of flesh and bone, things people touched, felt and saw: Word become flesh.

Maybe one of the reasons why our Mennonite camps have such a profound impact on generations of young people

is because Christ is experienced in spaces lovingly created by God, spaces where God meets us, surprises us, disarms us and instils a sense of wonder, be it around a campfire, on a forest trail or at a river bend.

For the songwriters of "This Ground," the experience in nature led them to the prayer Christ taught us all to pray. The Lord's Prayer acknowledges the holiness of God in both heaven and earth, and our commitment to God's will for us: To love God and each other.

As we envision moving out of a pandemic that has confined and constrained us, may we be encouraged to rediscover our camps. These are holy spaces where heaven touches earth, where we meet with God in new and surprising ways. ✎



Dorothy Fontaine is the director of mission for Mennonite Church Manitoba.

A moment from yesterday



Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Mennonite Heritage Archives / John P. Dyck Photo Collection

Alternative service camps during the Second World War brought young men from various traditions and regions together. Pictured, Reverend David P. Reimer of Manitoba, centre, is posing with conscientious objectors in Seebe, Alta. Reimer was secretary of the elders committee that advocated for exemption from military service but, after alternative service was mandated, the committee sought to support the young men. The committee met often and a high workload topped already high expectations for the church leaders. The minutes in "Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War 1939-1945" show multiple occasions when committee members wanted to resign because of the workload but, because of the importance of their work, their resignations were not accepted.



IN THE IMAGE

'Bring what you have'

Ed Olfert

I was driving the night shift that week, hauling wood chips to the pulp mill in The Pas, Man.

I pulled into the Esso C-Store in Nipawin, Sask., a little after 11 p.m., closing time. As I filled my mug, I apologized for keeping the clerk around so late.

"Oh, no," he assured me. "The fair closes tonight, so we're staying open till midnight to catch the traffic going home."

Great, I thought. Heavy traffic. Sixty-thousand-plus kilograms neither accelerates nor decelerates with enthusiasm. Heavy traffic means burning up energy on concentration, energy that could otherwise be conserved and doled out as needed throughout the night.

East of Nipawin, No. 55 soon straightens and becomes tabletop flat. Ahead I could see a long line of double-red pinpricks of tail-lights. Traffic began to sort itself out, slower vehicles being passed, smoothly, orderly. There was no oncoming traffic.

Except there was. Some distance ahead, headlights came towards me. Then suddenly they disappeared, and I was briefly aware of a smear of light towards the right ditch, both headlights and tail-lights. "This can't be good."

There was obviously a collision.

As I ground to a stop, questions started appearing in my brain: "Do I take my phone? My flashlight?" "Do I run back, walk back?" "How could I be useful?" I needed time to figure out who I would be. I walked. I smelled hot brakes as I passed my trailers.

It was a minivan. Five kids, two adult women and a man that I could make out in the darkness. The women and children were struggling with the shock of the impact, screaming, crying, hugging each other. I could see no blood. I stepped over to the man, still leaning on the van in the ditch, noting that he held a toddler.

"Were you driving?" I asked.

He nodded, said something more softly, but I couldn't make it out.

I checked to see if anyone remained in the vehicle, then turned back to the driver. "Are you okay?"

He pointed down and said something about his foot. That same soft voice said, "Can you take her?" I did. He slumped down into the open side door, struggling to remove his shoe. I could see the beginning of ugly swelling.

We were quickly joined by other homeward-bound fair-goers. Several spoke energetically into phones. Some seemed acquainted with this family and

spoke to them by name. I still held the toddler.

Then a young girl from this family approached, I'm guessing she was 8 or 9. She held out her arms. As I passed the little one over, I asked, "Can you manage?"

It didn't matter. As the chunky little one began to slide through her arms, she turned and thrust her towards one of the women. Seems this big stranger had held onto her little sister long enough.

I recall feeling awe for her feisty determination. At that point, another little girl stepped up and told me that she had bumped her head, and it hurt. I knelt, we talked quietly.

The roadway was now crowded with support. I assumed the same was the case at the other vehicle, some distance down the ditch. It was time for me to go. I walked into the blackness to my rig.

I have extended family members who have volunteered as first responders for years. I'm not that guy. Making important care-giving decisions in crisis situations is not my gift.

That night, on the highway near Carrot River, I was reminded that God equips us all, and all differently. It becomes the vibrancy that makes life good.

Bring what you have. It'll be enough. Trust others to fill the gaps. ❧



Ed Olfert
(p2peho@gmail.com)
gives thanks for difficult times.

Et cetera

Vermette wins \$60,000 award

Winnipeg writer Katherena Vermette's latest novel, *The Strangers*, is receiving major recognition. At the beginning of November, Vermette—who has Métis and Mennonite roots—received the \$60,000 Atwood Gibson Writers' Trust Fiction Prize at the 2021 Writers' Trust of Canada Awards. The Writers' Trust is a non-profit organization that supports Canadian writers through literary awards, fellowships, financial grants, mentorships and more. Additionally, *The Strangers* was one of 12 books longlisted at the beginning of September for the 2021 Scotiabank Giller Prize, worth \$100,000. Published at the end of August by Hamish Hamilton, *The Strangers* tells the story of the women of the Stranger family as they grapple with alienation, disconnection and racism in Winnipeg. It's the followup to Vermette's acclaimed debut novel, 2016's *The Break*.



Katherena Vermette

MIND AND SOUL

It's about flourishing

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

A reader who comes from outside the religious community asked what I meant by the term “flourishing” when I used it last month. I had written that God desires the flourishing of all peoples, especially the marginalized of our global world.

In my view, flourishing means to be able to live the divinely desired fullness of life. Flourishing means that people's bodily health is fully nourished (food security, clean water) and supported (health care); their minds reach full development (education); their spirits are able to blossom (religious liberty); their families prosper (economic well-being); and males and females both thrive, and are able to pursue the full use of their God-given gifts in an environment characterized by ecological stability, citizen participation, and fair electoral and bureaucratic systems. In sum, they live life abundantly (John 10:10).

Perhaps you recognize those characteristics as restatements of some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are designated by the United Nations as objectives for every single country—Canada as well as China or Cambodia. They are a sort of a secular version of “shalom on earth.” The intent is to describe what makes for a good society.

Since the beginning of the pandemic we've heard messages about “reopening the economy” or pleas to avoid “hurting the economy.” No!

Simply put, the “economy” is a social system by which a particular society exchanges various items it values for other items, to satisfy needs and wants, individually and collectively. In other words, the economy does not exist on its own. The socio-economic system serves the needs of people, not the other way around.

This column is too short to do full justice to all the nuances. The point is that the economy does not exist independently.

Flourishing requires economic resources. We refer to a “poverty line” in Canada, although we rarely discuss a “greed line.” One of the SDGs is “responsible consumption,” but there is too little consideration of how consumption in Canada affects the flourishing of others.

In a globalized world, “our” economy competes with other economies; if our monetary accumulation declines, we do less well. Doing less well affects both personal buying power and the ability of governments and corporations to provide for citizens in areas such as health care. Canada's economy enables Canadians to begin receiving third shots

of COVID-19 vaccines when much of the world does not even have shot No. 1.

Or we could choose to distribute vaccines elsewhere in the world.

In other words, the “economy” is a series of value choices. If real people are not getting what they need to flourish, the structures we call the economy do violence and should be reformed.

The same goes with our personal economics this Christmas. Do we choose to help others accumulate more things (euphemistically called “goods”)? When is that okay? Local, usually small, businesses create more jobs and have a larger beneficial impact on the local economy. They are usually owned by local people who are more committed to the community.

So buying from Amazon and buying from a local business are value judgments about the type of economy—and community—we will have. The individual good is to go for the cheapest option, but the collective good is something else. Amazon isn't in danger of going out of business, but Queen Street Books, Ye Old Bookshoppe and other small businesses are at more risk. Of course, another choice is sharing; ergo the public library!

As followers of Jesus, our lives and work are best lived for the flourishing of all peoples. ❧



Randolph Haluza-DeLay lives in Toronto, where he thinks about our economic choices.

Et cetera

MCC Canada and Foodgrains Bank have ‘impact’

Mennonite Central Committee Canada and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank have both been rated among the Top 10 International Impact Charities in Canada in 2021 by Charity Intelligence. The list includes 10 Canadian charities operating overseas that demonstrate high impact per dollar donated. Charity Intelligence does independent research on charities in Canada to inform donors so they can give intelligently. Charities are rated on how well they report on results of their work, financial transparency, the need for funding, administrative and fundraising costs, and demonstrated impact per dollar spent. More information is available at www.charityintelligence.ca.

CHARITY INTELLIGENCE 2021

TOP 10 INTERNATIONAL
IMPACT CHARITIES

 TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

The waiting place . . .

Joshua Penfold

In Dr. Seuss's book *Oh the Places You'll Go* there is a section about "the waiting place." It is depicted as an undesirable and useless place to be. I wonder if our Advent waiting sometimes feels like that kind of waiting. I wrote a little poem in the style of Dr. Seuss about Advent waiting:

Advent is waiting for Christmas to arrive.
Is it super exciting or do you barely survive?

Are you waiting for reindeer or presents from Santa,
or waiting for weather resembling Atlanta?
Are you waiting forever for a website to load,
or waiting for Christmassy cheer to explode?
Are you waiting to drop a Christmas-wish hint,
or waiting to drink your hot chocolate with mint?
Are you waiting for Christmas to hurry on up?
To see if you'll get what you wanted: a pup!
Are you waiting to sing your favourite carol,
Or waiting to wear that new Christmas apparel?
Are you waiting with worry or anxious despair?

Could Christmas be waiting for someone out there,
to wait with a different focus and see
that Christmas is more than gifts under a tree?

Advent requires unavoidable waiting,
but will waiting be great or will it be grating?

*"They told everyone they met what the angels had said
about this child. All who heard the sheep herders were
impressed. Mary kept all these things to herself, holding
them dear, deep within herself. The sheep herders returned*

*and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they
had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd
been told!"* (Luke 2:17-20).

Can we wait like dear Mary with feet and heart tired,
or like shepherds befuzzled by all that's transpired?
Like noblest Joseph can you walk a strange course,
or like far-off magicians seek the bright star's source?
Can we wait with the angels just waiting to sing
their glorious glorias announcing the king?

Waitfulness looks like all colour of things.
It can chain you to stagnance or grow you some wings.
Eyes that can see and ears that can hear
could turn upside-down all that downside-up fear.
The choice is mysteriously wondrously yours
to open and wait through one of the doors.

Let's wait with a great expectational joy
For our darkness to drown in the light of a boy.
Let's wait for the truest, most wonderful fable:
God came as a babe to be born in a stable.
Let's patiently eagerly actively wait.
It's surely not easy, but it's gloriously great! ♫



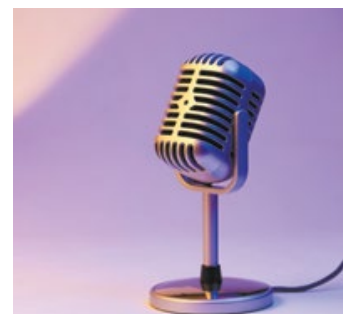
Joshua Penfold (penfoldjoshua@gmail.com)
*can't be sold or cajoled to fit the mould, but be
bold when it's cold, for his gold—he's been told—
is rolled in a promise from old.*

Et cetera

EFC launches *Faith Trends* podcast

The *Faith Trends* podcast launched in November as an initiative of the research department of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), to better connect research with its ministry implications for the church in Canada. "*Faith Trends* will highlight Canadian Christian researchers, both established and emerging, and provide a platform for their work," says Rick Hiemstra, EFC's director of research and co-host of *Faith Trends*, along with researcher Lindsay Callaway. "We want to help build a bridge connecting researchers to ministry practitioners who might benefit from their work." Listeners can anticipate monthly releases about topics like Alpha Canada's new research on the state of evangelism in Canada, a deep dive into research on clergy wellness and how that impacts the church, and insights on how Canadian religious people are numbered by the government. Listeners can find the podcast on the normal podcast platforms and at TheEFC.ca/podcasts.

Source: The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada



PERSONAL REFLECTION

The third side of church splits

Grace Bruinooge
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

They can be necessary, but they are usually devastating. Church splits, in my experience, are not often talked about in Christian circles, yet they are not uncommon.

Church splits are necessary for many different reasons, including:

- **Splitting to put** an end to hostile environments of differing opinions;
- **When a church** grows to be too big and must split in order to grow further;
- **When a congregation** deems the pastor, or a group of church leaders, as detrimental to the functioning of the church and must split off from those leaders.

There are also many biblical reasons to leave a church, such as if the church's leadership is preaching bad theology, sharing false teachings or misusing church funds.

In 2019, the church that my family and I have attended for almost 10 years divided. The split left me confused and angry.

While my family did not leave the church, almost half of the congregation did. It was painful to watch families leave one by one, Sunday after Sunday. Friendships and relationships I'd had for years were essentially broken. I felt betrayed.

Church no longer felt like the safe and loving home that I had once known. The people who made it home weren't there anymore, and that was difficult to get used to.

When there is an issue in a church that is tumbling towards a split, people usually see two sides—but there is also a third side. In my case, on each opposing side, there were people whom I trusted, loved and respected. But who was correct? Who should my family and I trust and stand beside?



When you are not on either side of a problem, you have nothing to fuel your stance, so you feel lost and confused. I was on that third side.

After the initial split happened, it left me to look inwards and ask myself this question: “Do I only go to church because of the people and friendships I have there?”

Fellowship and community are important aspects of the Christian church, but should they have been the only reasons I got up and went to church? The answer, I concluded, was no.

After reaching this conclusion, I realized that I needed to rethink how I view church. Church should not be seen as a social gathering, but a place where friends grow together in the Holy Spirit, worship together, feel convicted together, and create a space of trust and love through Christ.

Sometimes, for reasons that are different for everyone, the church that someone attends doesn't fulfil these aspects, and that is okay. Who am I to question the motives and reasons for church members wanting to leave? Who am I to question how God moves and speaks to them?

Whatever the reason a church divides, the division still affects everybody involved. These divisions can ruin life-long friendships, break trust and cause betrayal.

I have since come to terms with this event in my life, but I still mark it as a difficult and confusing experience that I wouldn't wish on anyone.

It's difficult to talk about things that have hurt us or caused us to feel betrayed, but if we were to talk more about our experiences with church splits together, I believe it wouldn't always feel like such an isolated experience. It could give us the sense of community and fellowship that we may feel we have lost.✂



Grace Bruinooge is a third-year student at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, majoring in communications and media. She was Canadian Mennonite's social-media intern this past summer.

NEWS

Victim to victorious

Aurora House provides family and support for human-trafficking survivors

Story and Photos by Christen Kong
Special to Canadian Mennonite
TORONTO

Recent news about human trafficking in Canada continues to alarm many social service agencies and providers working with immigrants and refugees.

According to the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, 90 percent of victims or survivors are women and girls. In this manner, it is reported that sex trafficking is a gender-based crime. Given this ever-growing concern, women and girls are needing an array of support, including shelter, legal and essential services, to navigate the structural inequities they have endured and continue to experience.

In Toronto, this gap is addressed by Aurora House, a Toronto-based organization. As a project initiated by Toronto United Mennonite Church in 2016, Aurora House was born from the intention of serving people who are displaced and vulnerable.

Today, Aurora House is connected to a variety of partners, who bring together expertise in meeting the complex needs of victims and survivors of human trafficking. A key partner is the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto, which has committed to the vision of supporting long-term transitional housing at Aurora House. The centre is a settlement agency serving newcomers by supporting their integration into Toronto by offering counselling, trauma support and case-management services. These services are made accessible to Aurora House residents.

The success of Aurora House is also made possible by Kindred Credit Union. As one of Aurora House's major donors, Kindred's contributions have supported



AURORAHOUSE.CA PHOTO

Since opening in 2016, Aurora House has provided housing for trafficked women and their children, even through the COVID-19 pandemic.

the healing and recovery of this vulnerable population by mitigating costs of everyday needs, such as groceries, counselling, transportation and rent.

Shankari Balendra, Aurora House's program coordinator, has been bringing her experiences as an immigrant to Canada in 2003 to her work with newcomers for the last 13 years. For the past two years, she has been working with survivors of human trafficking.

She says that clients arriving at Aurora House are often in second-stage housing, which often means they have experienced the emergency-shelter system and are now presently ready to bring their life together. She frames Aurora House as a "stepping stone" for women and their children. She emphasizes that there is much healing even in the aftermath of escaping trafficking due to persistent traumas.

Close personal networks, friends and family are among the most effective allies when combatting human trafficking. However, Balendra notes that family members can also be the perpetrators of human trafficking, which results in the severance of family ties.

A former resident describes her family's betrayal as "abandonment, rejection, and emotional and physical abuse."

"Girls who are trafficked often miss out on educational opportunities," Balendra says, so Aurora House navigates this situation by providing skills workshops that invite them to share their personal goals and to reimagine a future they thought was impossible. "Young girls and women are given the opportunity to learn and develop

skills," she says.

A former resident says that the housing-support workers and case managers at Aurora House are both incredibly brave and loving women. "To a girl who feels hopeless, to have a bunch of strangers take me in and show me unconditional love, is the most incredible feeling in the world," she says.

Currently, COVID-19 has complicated the landscape of supporting this population.

Balendra says that in a recent report by the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, approximately one in five service providers indicated they were no longer able to offer any or all of their services during the pandemic from April to May of last year. This grossly limited the options and opportunities for trafficking victims to escape their abusive situation, and many were left captive. Yet, Aurora House kept its doors open by offering housing, and legal and mental-health support. However, the closing of emergency shelters meant that Aurora House received limited referrals.

In the face of adversity, Balendra recalls

the growth of three residents who arrived during the pandemic and were reluctant to connect with her due to their trauma. Following months of support, all three women have found permanent housing; two are no longer on social assistance and the other is enrolled in administrative training. “That’s the shift. Those are memorable moments,” she says.

A former resident sums up the power of Aurora House’s community care: “I am not a victim, but I am victorious.” ❧

News brief

MEDA president dines with Niagara hub



PHOTO BY CHRIS BRNJAS

Dorothy Nyambi, MEDA’s president and CEO, centre with her back to the camera, spoke to the Niagara hub of the organization on Oct. 13 at an outdoor dinner.

After not meeting as a group for two years, partially due to the pandemic, the Niagara hub of Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) hosted an outdoor dinner on Oct. 13 to meet MEDA’s president and chief executive officer, Dorothy Nyambi. Nearly 40 people dined outside under a tent at the Grand Oak Culinary Market in Vineland, Ont. Dean Shoemaker, senior development officer, shared updates of MEDA’s Ukrainian project. Nyambi introduced herself and shared MEDA’s next steps, including a new strategic plan, “Towards an equal world,” with an overall goal to create or sustain “decent” work for 500,000 people. Nyambi expressed her gratitude for all the work of the Niagara hub’s committee, and the ongoing dedication of supporters.

—BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

‘All members bring something’

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM), an evangelical Anabaptist network of conferences, congregations, groups and individuals in Africa, Europe and North America, works together to carry out the missional task Jesus entrusted to the church.

After long-time leader Rod Hollinger-Janzen retired in January 2021, the AIMM search committee proposed a shift to a leadership structure that has co-executive coordinators, one from Africa and one currently from North America.

They are John Fumana of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Bruce Yoder, an American now living in Canada. Yoder spent many years in West Africa and served at the Benin Bible Institute with his spouse, Nancy Frey, who is now a pastor at Listowel (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

AIMM is led by an international central council and it aims to have “full and equal participation” of all its partners. Tany Warkentin, a member of Mennonite Church Alberta, is the nationwide church’s representative on the council, and she served on the search committee that chose Fumana and Yoder.

Having co-executive coordinators, one from Africa and one from North America, “is one way to express the partnership paradigm that AIMM seeks to embody,” according to Yoder.

Back in 2004-05, AIMM “changed from an agency that sends missionaries to one that seeks to embody collaborative mission engagement in Africa,” Yoder explained. The council is made up of representatives from partner churches and agencies from Africa and North America. “The African partners are primarily churches that were started by North American missionaries in the 20th century. The North American partners are primarily churches and agencies whose former missionaries started those churches.”



PHOTO BY ROD HOLLINGER-JANZEN

Bruce Yoder, left, and John Fumana, right, participate in AIMM meetings in Kikwit, Democratic Republic of Congo, in October.

AIMM is shaped by Anabaptist values, and grounded in a biblical and theological vision. “This is God’s mission. We participate with God,” Yoder says in an introductory video. Mission from this perspective is described as having a divine initiative alongside human responsibility. Mission means to be sent across and beyond borders and boundaries in order to continue the ministry Jesus started. It moves toward the vision described in Revelation 7:9-10 of all nations worshipping God together. It is not so much about starting something new, as it is seeing what God is already doing in the churches.

Fumana says that earlier in the history of AIMM there was a “mindset of dependency” on foreign aid, and an assumption among African churches that they “have nothing and need help.”

Instead, he encourages churches to take an inventory of their potential, “use their assets,” and tap into their local resources and potential. “Nobody has nothing,” he says. “In a partnership, all members bring something.”

AIMM works at increasing empathy and trust, and strengthening spiritual vitality. It is involved in leadership training, conflict transformation, mutual aid, church growth and intercultural dialogue. ❧

When the rains came down

Massive flooding in B.C. affects Mennonite community

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

As catastrophic rains pummelled the Lower Mainland of British Columbia in mid-November, causing massive flooding and mudslides that deposited debris over local highways, Mennonites in the community experienced both uncertainty and loss, and they responded with compassion and a willingness to help others.

Spillover from the Nooksack River in Washington State flowing north had caused flooding on the Sumas Prairie east of Abbotsford, then combined with rising waters on the Sumas River, inundating the Sumas Prairie—an area of rich farmland east of Abbotsford that was created when Sumas Lake was drained in the 1920s. Two sections of a reclamation dike in Abbotsford failed, forcing many farmers to flee their properties and abandon their livestock.

Floodwaters breached the Trans-Canada Highway east of Whatcom Road on Nov. 15. The Clarion Hotel, site of Mennonite Church Canada's 2019 Assembly, evacuated and relocated its guests when waters flooded the street, nearly submerging vehicles in the parking lot.

When the Barrowtown Pump Station—critical to keeping Sumas Lake from reforming—was in danger of failing on Nov. 17, Sean Regehr, a member of Yarrow United Mennonite Church, was among those helping to deliver and fill sandbags to help save the station. The next day, the Yarrow congregation began organizing volunteers to help sandbag homes and farms in the community and provided coffee and baked



PHOTO BY ELAINE BINNEMA

The submerged interchange of Highway 1 and Whatcom Road in Abbotsford.

goods in the church basement for them.

Yarrow residents Barbara Nickel and Bevan Voth, members of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, came home on the evening of Nov. 14 to the threat of water filling their crawl space.



PHOTO BY AARON ROORDA

Eden Mennonite Church in Chilliwack had its basement flooded in mid-November. Pictured squeegeeing up is Calvin Patterson. More than 90 percent of the basement was covered in a few inches of water. Since the basement has been the site of two local food-based ministries to seniors and students during the pandemic, there was a lot of food to quickly move to safety after the flood.

“I stayed up all night taking about two to three gallons of water out of the sump-pump hole every 15 minutes,” Nickel said. “People down the street had

crawl spaces and garages flooded. We're thankful our house wasn't damaged."

The family thought all was well by Nov. 16, when the lake on their street had dried up, but then they received an evacuation order from the City of Chilliwack, due to the threat of the Barrowtown Pump Station failing, and they moved out temporarily to stay with friends on Chilliwack Mountain.

Nickel noted that many people have reached out to inquire about the welfare of B.C. residents and say they are praying for those affected. "We're so grateful for that, and for our friends who took us in when we were evacuated, and for the amazing efforts by all the volunteers and engineers working 'round the clock to get things back to normal," she added.

Many Abbotsford residents did not directly feel the effects of the flood, other than experiencing long lines in grocery stores and shortages of some supplies due to panic buying and the closure of grocery stores on the east end of town. Due to fuel shortages, the B.C. government was limiting motorists to 30 litres of gas per customer by the Nov. 20-21 weekend.

Meanwhile, volunteers from Columbia Bible College's Trek program volunteered their services to help clean out lockers from a storage facility on Highway 11 between Abbotsford and Mission. According to a post on Facebook by Kathy Peters, the students emptied the contents of her locker, swept out the lockers, put down pallets, returned undamaged items to the lockers and helped sort through damaged items that were either repackaged or dumped.

"Without wanting to sound too dramatic, they were quite literally angels from heaven sent in answer to prayer," wrote Peters.

As well as individuals, institutions were also responding to the crisis.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C. executive director Wayne Bremner issued a statement that said in part: "Our hearts go out to communities that are underwater, facing evacuation orders, or cut off by landslides and washed-out roads. At MCC we have reached out to Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) to coordinate and to offer our support as

they discern next steps. As sister organizations, we have complementary mandates. MCC leads during international disasters and MDS during local disasters.

"So far, our locations in 10 different communities are not directly affected by flooding and our staff and volunteers who have come in for work are safe. On the other hand, a number of our staff, volunteers and supporters are cut off by washed-out roads and flooding, and some face evacuation orders and serious challenges."

A news release from MDS said: "Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) is monitoring the situation in B.C., where torrential rains have caused flooding and mudslides that have affected many communities and residents. With the water still yet to recede, and some communities still cut off from access due to damaged or destroyed roads and bridges, it's too early to be doing any kind of assessment on what we can do," said Ross Penner, who directs Canadian operations.

Daily rain in the Abbotsford area was predicted to continue for the week of Nov. 21 to 27, but the pump station had opened the floodgates fully, allowing the Sumas Prairie to drain. As of Nov. 22, Highway 1 between Abbotsford and Chilliwack remained closed, as did a section of Highway 11 between Abbotsford and Mission. ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF DARNELL BARKMAN

A member of Yarrow United Mennonite Church was among those working through the night sandbagging to help save the Barrowtown Pump Station.

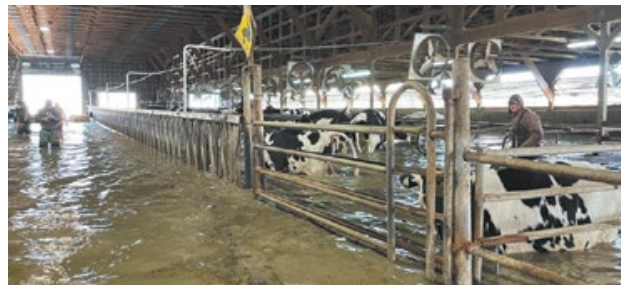


PHOTO BY MARY BARG

The Barg farm just east of Chilliwack was spared from flooding, and was able to take in the cows from this flooded barn. The Bargs attend Eden Mennonite Church in Chilliwack. Mary reports, 'We are holding up okay, finding a rhythm with our new herd, working hard to coordinate with and support the efforts to evacuate cows that are stranded.' She says the farmer was 'pretty thankful to be able to save all of his animals, including the chickens, and he even was able to leave some food for the barn cats in the hayloft.'

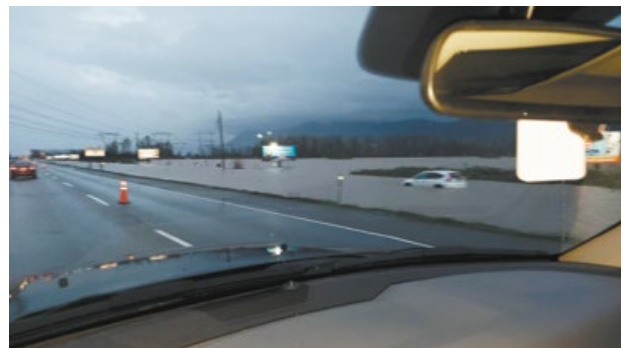


PHOTO BY AARON ROORDA

Aaron Roorda, pastor of Eden Mennonite Church in Chilliwack, took this photograph on his commute home from Abbotsford along Highway 1 on the evening of Nov. 15. The highway was closed 15 minutes later. The river of water to the right of his truck was the centre of the roadway between the east- and west-bound lanes.

Hope and a place of refuge

Church camp comes to the rescue in wake of flooding, mudslides

By Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent

Camp Squeah lived up to its Salish name as a “place of refuge” during the week of Nov. 15, when mudslides cut off the town of Hope and the camp found itself sheltering more than a hundred marooned motorists. Torrential rains Nov. 14 and 15 cut off all roads and bridges in to and out of Hope, leaving thousands stranded.

On Nov. 18, camp director Rob Tiessen reported: “We at Squeah are good. Our driveway was close to eroding, but good efforts at diverting water flow helped mitigate that.”

Hosting a growing number of travellers kept camp staff busy all week.

“It started out as providing space to a few families who are familiar with Squeah who let us know they were stranded,” Tiessen said. “While we were still without power, we said ‘Sure, come on over.’ Then we had a few minor hockey teams join us, and slowly our community of new friends grew. The group grew to 100 and was on the verge of swelling to 180 when one lane of Highway 7 was opening up on Nov. 17 and people scrambled to get out of the area.

“We anticipate receiving new guests as those stuck in town who need to find their way back to the interior realize that they’re here for a considerably longer time,” he added.

The community of Hope rallied to find spaces to accommodate people, some of whom had to sleep on the floors of the high school gymnasium and a local church. The most vulnerable, such as families with young children or elderly with medical conditions, were sent to the camp.

Laura and Ryan Merrett, members of Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, were returning to Abbotsford from Williams Lake when they ended up in Hope, realizing they wouldn’t make it home. When they learned that their pastor’s wife, Marie Haak, was still at Camp

Squeah following a retreat, they contacted her, and Haak found them lodging. The couple helped in the following days with such tasks as washing dishes, wiping the tables and sweeping the floor, especially when others, including the youth hockey players, showed up.

“The kitchen crew were making food for everyone the whole time,” said Laura

cooked meals, the families have had access to all that the camp has to offer,” parent Cheryl Giesbrecht said. “Camp Squeah has been a ray of hope in this appropriately named town. They have lived out their faith in a tangible way to both [Chilliwack Minor Hockey League] families, and the many other stranded individuals that have walked through their doors.”



CAMP SQUEAH FACEBOOK PHOTO

Camp Squeah opened its doors to stranded people after intense flash flooding in mid-November.

Merrett. “Marie Haak really led the charge with getting people organized and interacting with the different groups as they came in. Everyone was very grateful to be there, especially those who had spent any nights in town. The kids there were all having the time of their lives, new best friends everywhere.”

Groceries and fuel in Hope were in short supply until one lane westbound on Highway 7 opened up midweek and some travellers were able to leave.

Members of a Chilliwack hockey team were grateful for a place to stay.

“Not only have they been graciously provided with shelter, heat and amazing

While Columbia Bible College registrar Erv Klassen of Hope was unable to get to the Abbotsford campus all week, he and wife LaVern hosted five guests in their home for several days.

“Even though we have been fine and perfectly safe throughout this ordeal, it has been pretty nerve-wracking at times, so I can’t even imagine what others have had to go through who have been stranded and/or their homes or towns have been or may be threatened or lost,” wrote LaVern on Facebook. “People have stepped up and pulled together. I hope that this makes us all more grateful, kind, generous and compassionate people.” ☞

500-year-old book a prospective draw to Bethel archives

Bethel College
NORTH NEWTON, KAN.

The Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA) at Bethel College is inviting the public to come view the oldest book in its collection, which celebrates its 500th birthday in 2022.

The 1522 edition of the New Testament in Greek and Latin, edited by Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), is currently displayed prominently upon entering the MLA's front door.

It is currently open to John 1, where students traditionally start when learning New Testament Greek. The New Testament will be on display for the 2021-22 school year, and archivist John Thiesen plans to turn the pages periodically to different locations in the book so viewers can see more of its features.

Cornelius Krahn (1902-90), a Mennonite historian, scholar and Bethel faculty member, largely responsible for developing the MLA into an important history resource, acquired the Erasmus New Testament in 1967. That probably means Krahn bought it in Amsterdam when he was attending the Mennonite World Conference assembly there earlier that year. But little else is known about its provenance.

"It has an annotation of '\$20' in Krahn's handwriting, which would be \$163 today," says Thiesen. "The price was relatively low, probably because the title page is missing."

"The signature 'O. Kramer' is inside the front cover, but we have not been able to identify who that was."

Another feature of this volume is that, as Erasmus's third edition of the New Testament (the 1516 first edition was the first-ever published Greek translation),

it includes the initial appearance of the "Johannine Comma."

This is a set of trinitarian phrases inserted into I John 5:7-8. Erasmus left them out of earlier editions because he did not find them in early Greek manuscripts.

With the Johannine Comma, the passage reads, in the New Revised Standard Version: "For there are three that bear record [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (8) And there are three that bear witness in earth,] the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

Thiesen speculates that by the third edition, Erasmus was feeling pressure from church officials to include a reference to "the Trinity" (God the Father, Christ the Son or "Word," and the Holy Spirit).

William Tyndale used the third edition for the first published English translation of the New Testament, in 1526, as did the translators of the King James Version of the Bible.

The MLA's book is bound with calfskin, which Thiesen calls "a middle-of-the-road choice, not the cheapest but not especially fancy."

In the 16th century, books were sold unbound, as stacks of pages. The purchaser would then have the book bound.

"The owner [of our book] may have chosen this type of binding so they could write titles and other notes on the spine, which this copy does have," says Thiesen. "Also, the original purchaser wrote a good number of marginal notes before the book was bound—or at least before the current binding—since one can find marginal



PHOTO BY MELANIE ZUERCHER

The Erasmus New Testament in a display case at the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan.



PHOTO BY TAYLOR BROWN

John Thiesen, left, archivist at the Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA) at Bethel College, and Dale Schrag look at Schrag's favourite book in the MLA collection, the third edition of Erasmus's Greek and Latin translation of the New Testament, which turns 500 years old in 2022. The photo was taken in early March of 2020, when Schrag, working as a volunteer fundraiser, had successfully completed a US\$1 million endowment campaign for the MLA.

notes cut off around the edges when the pages were trimmed for binding."

Thiesen hopes the 500-year-old book will bring a few more members of the public into the MLA to see it and get better acquainted with the library.

From 2017-20, Dale Schrag, a volunteer fundraiser, with support from Bethel's advancement office, worked successfully to raise a US\$1 million endowment for the archives.

Now the hope is for the success of an unofficial campaign to raise the next million, to assure that the MLA's historical resources stay protected and accessible for generations to come. ☘

'Life Upstairs'

Digital exhibit tells the story of resident hosts at Brubacher House

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

Imagine what it would be like to live in a museum. Past and present live-in hosts at the Brubacher House in Waterloo, Ont. are sharing what it is like to live in the upstairs apartment of this historical landmark in a new digital exhibit.

"Life Upstairs" was launched with an online event on Nov. 18, facilitated by Laura and Joshua Enns, who live at Brubacher House rent free in exchange for their host duties. They provide information and pre-arranged group tours of the restored 1850's stone house that was once home to John E. and Magdalena Brubacher and their 14 children.

The digital history project was proposed by the Ennses as a way to collect and preserve the personal stories and reflections of live-in hosts of the Brubacher House. The website has several tabs, including:

- **"People":** to learn about all the live-in hosts.
- **"Artifacts":** To take a virtual tour of the house, which has been restored to reflect a Pennsylvania German Mennonite home between 1850 and 1890's.
- **"Stories":** to read about "four decades of collective memories," including "all the challenges that come with living in an 1850's house."
- **Feedback":** For people have more stories or memories to share.

Having live-in hosts is described as "a unique feature of the museum and a significant aspect of its 42-year history." Built in

1850, the house was fully restored in 1969 after it was gutted by a fire, leaving only the stone walls. Simeon Martin, a Mennonite master craftsman, led the restoration



PHOTO BY JACQUIE REIMER

The living room of the upstairs apartment in the Brubacher House.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TED AND NANCY MAITLAND
Nancy Maitland and her dog are pictured in front of the Brubacher House. Nancy and husband Ted were the first live-in hosts from 1980 to 1982. Prior to their marriage, Nancy lived there beginning in 1977 as a live-in custodian and consultant/curator.

work, aided by other Mennonite farmers. Many of the furnishings were provided by Mennonite families.

The Brubacher House is situated on the north campus of the University of

Waterloo, overlooking the sports fields and Columbia Lake. The 405 hectares, now owned by the university, once belonged to Mennonite farmers. Preserving

the house was a way to acknowledge that era of the land's history.

Since 1977, 22 people have served as live-in custodians and hosts. At first, the Brubacher House Committee looked for retired couples with an interest in the museum, but it later began hiring younger people. Even some children were born there to host couples.

The online event was a time of storytelling and conversation with past and current hosts, providing a glimpse into their "life upstairs." They shared anecdotes and common experiences of critters in the attic, flooding in the basement and other quirks of an historic house. They also described gardening, enjoying the large porch and deep window sills, hosting parties in front of an open-hearth fire, and living through construction work on the surrounding property.

They shared about their most memorable visitors, including Justin Trudeau, and Ron Sexsmith, who headlined the annual Canada Day concert on the nearby university grounds. And they recounted the unusual questions posed to them by curious visitors, such as, "Where can we go to find a Mennonite?" and "Does the University of Waterloo president live here?"

Along with the Ennses, the other people who developed "Life Upstairs" all served as live-in hosts at some point:

- **Bethany Leis**, who lived upstairs with husband Brandon from 2006 to 2009 and was the 2021 Brubacher House digital historian-in-residence, gathered and curated the materials.
- **Chris Steingart**, who lived in the house from 2004 to 2006 with Jillian Burkhardt after their wedding, designed the website.
- **Jacque Reimer** and husband Karl lived in the house from 2013 to 2017. She served as principal photographer for this digital exhibit, after getting her start in photography while living in the historic building.

In a time of swapping Brubacher House stories after the formal part of the launch ended, Brandon Leis described an incident when there was a crack in the firebox of the furnace. An oily soot got everywhere and all their clothing and the artifacts had to be taken out to be professionally cleaned.

Judith Friesen Epp recounted how their first child, Allegra, was born in the house during a wild thunderstorm, causing the midwives to declare it a most “romantic birth.”

Laura Enns noted that people using the surrounding property were not always aware of the live-in hosts. She described trying to get to church one Sunday morning only to find the road into Brubacher House blocked off by police for a race. They finally allowed her to get through when there was a gap in the runners!

The digital project was supported by the J. Winfield Fretz Publication Fund of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario and Conrad Grebel University College. The house is owned by the university and operated by Grebel and the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. The property can also be used for wedding,

family and event photos with permission in advance. ☘

To view the “Life Upstairs” digital project, visit <http://lifeupstairs.ca>.



PHOTO BY DOROTHY BEAN

The Brubacher House, as it looked from the outside in 1982, when Dorothy Bean moved in as host, along with Ida Habermehl. They took an active interest in preserving Mennonite history instead of retiring into rocking chairs.



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The art of preaching

Homiletics course challenges pastors in presenting the 'good news'

Story and Photos by Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

If art is the imitation of life, then the art of preaching is about the imagination of new life. At least that's the message Meghan Good preaches. "According to her, "Preaching is for transformation, not conveying information. We need to preach to that goal. Turning minds is different from turning hearts and lives."

Good, a scholar and author, shared her insights and practical tools in her graduate-level course, 21st Century Preaching, held in Saskatoon over four days in November.

The course covered all facets of homiletics: biblical exegesis, sermon construction, congregational engagement and preaching in a post-Christian culture, as well as

class. "As people's engagement in social media has increased, so has their expectation that they'll be able to participate in church and add their voices to the conversation," she said. "Good preachers attend to that expectation. And in a post-Christian world, where people recognize authority has changed, authority is found less in the role [of preacher] and more in the authenticity and integrity of the preacher."

Even though a preacher's sermons need to adapt and change with the particularity of culture, the function of preaching in today's world remains essential to the mission of the church.

"Every advertisement we see in the world is mini-sermon," she said. "Regardless of whether or not people realize it, they're being preached to about what is good, desirable and what they should want. That's what good sermons do—give people alternative narratives and worldviews. The question is: 'Is there an alternative worldview that is worth the work of counter formation?' . . . There's no one method to do this. Preaching is the proclamation of the alternative.

It's a vision of an alternative world, a vision that tells people who God is and what they can be in that alternative reality."

Ryan Siemens, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's executive minister, said he felt compelled to bring Good to teach a course on preaching after hearing her speak at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in 2017. "Because we have pastors being trained in ministry in our Saskatchewan churches, offering homiletics made



Meghan Good leads students in a brainstorming session on sermon presentation.



Sharon Shultz, pastor of Eyebrow (Sask.) Mennonite Church, reviews her notes during class.

preaching styles and techniques. Each student was given the opportunity to preach one of their own sermons to the class and to workshop the sermon together in an effort "to make the sermon sing."

While sermons may be a tale as old as time in the Mennonite tradition, they have not been immune to the pressures and needs of a changing culture. This is something that pastors and churches need to be attuned to, Good told her

sense," he said. "We thought Meghan would connect well with our pastoral community."

Eleven students enrolled in the course, which is part of a larger partnership between MC Saskatchewan and CMU.

"We're creating this partnership as we go," Siemens said. "This is the third course that we've offered, to bring the seminary to our pastors. In this course, we had two students from CMU who are not from Saskatchewan join us."

Good's call to preach this alternative resonated with students.

"To communicate the gospel clearly is still one of the most important roles of the church, said Garth Ewart Fisher, co-pastor of Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. "Meghan's own clarity and modelling shows that."

For others in the course, the tools and skills provided were a confirmation of what is required in their own ministry going forward.

Andrea Enns Gooding, pastor of Rosthern Mennonite Church, said: "This course reaffirmed for me other parts of my life and training within my calling. It was very affirmative of what I already know but haven't trusted before." ❧

'It's only limited by our imaginations'

Manitoba Mennonites ponder the meaning of the 150th anniversary of Treaty One signing

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

Manitoba Correspondent
TREATY ONE TERRITORY

The land where the Red and Assiniboine rivers meet the Prairies, including Winnipeg and most of southern Manitoba, is Treaty One territory. Treaties, which exist in many parts of Canada, are commitments by multiple parties to live in relationship and share the land. Aug. 3, 2021, marked 150 years since representatives of the Crown and Cree and Anishinaabe peoples signed Treaty One. Mennonites across the region took time this year to commemorate the anniversary by learning its history and trying to engage with its call.

A fall worship series at Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg focused on decolonizing the church; the people gathered wore "We are all Treaty People" pins.

Springstein Mennonite Church's worship series on Indigenous teachings included guest speakers and a blanket exercise.

Back in Winnipeg, First Mennonite Church connected with an Indigenous

camp on the legislative grounds to offer supplies and support, and Home Street Mennonite Church held a treaty service with a smudge and drumming song.

The congregational leadership at Bethel Mennonite Church, also in the city, mandated a continuing educational truth and reconciliation day on Sept. 30 and is establishing a truth and reconciliation steering committee.

Michael Pahl, Mennonite Church Manitoba's executive minister, was invited, along with other religious leaders, to participate in an event led by Indigenous elders, which included the traditional ceremonies that were part of the Treaty One signing in 1871: a pipe ceremony, a water ceremony, a gift exchange and a feast. The day also included a welcoming ceremony. To the sounds of drumming and singing, the elders welcomed the settlers from each of the four directions into their circle with the sacred fire.

"This is what was understood back at the signing of the treaties, that this was

a welcome of people to share in the land and to treat each other well," Pahl said. "It was very moving."

The fifth annual "We are all Treaty People" event for the public followed in the afternoon, featuring speakers and musicians online due to COVID-19. Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite individuals were represented in the organizing group.

Esther Epp-Tiessen, chair at Home Street Mennonite, researched the treaty's history for its June worship service on the theme. She explained that Treaty One was the first of the 11 Numbered Treaties in Canada. It came about because of the insistence of the First Nations, so that Indigenous rights to the land would be protected as increasing numbers of white newcomers settled on the land and agricultural development boomed.

The written treaty document allotted acres for each family and payment for each person under the agreement that the First Nations would surrender almost all of the



PHOTO BY MICHAEL PAHL

Religious and community leaders invited by Indigenous elders gather together at the Kapabamayak Achaak Healing Forest at St. John's Park in Winnipeg, on Sept. 19 to re-enact traditional ceremonies that were part of the signing of Treaty One in 1871.

remaining land to the Crown.

“But the treaty is much more than the written document,” Epp-Tiessen wrote. “The Canadian courts have ruled that the treaty includes not only the written words, but also the record of the negotiations and the oral history passed down.”

“The more I hear Indigenous people talk about it and the more I read Indigenous interpretations of treaty, the more I hear that, no, that’s not how they understood it,” she said. “They understood the treaty as the building of an ongoing relationship and a commitment to share the land, not to hand it over.”

Dorothy Fontaine, MC Manitoba’s director of missions, added that Indigenous people understood the concept of treaty as a relationship between people, land and Creator, whereas settlers saw it as a transaction of land ownership between two parties—settlers and Indigenous peoples. The Crown soon violated the treaty agreement with the creation of the Indian Act, reserves, residential schools and laws to ban Indigenous ceremonies.

“Canada considered the treaty as a legal

tool for gaining access to land for settlement rather than the symbol of a binding and reciprocal relationship,” Epp-Tiessen wrote.

Treaties have many connections with the biblical understanding of covenant, said Fontaine, who preached on the topic in several MC Manitoba congregations this year. They are both sacred agreements, with many similar principles at their foundations.

These various small actions are not enough for Will Braun, a member of Pembina Mennonite Fellowship in Morden, Man. who has been involved with the Truth and Action working group in southern Manitoba.

“In 1873, the government granted the East Reserve, and West Reserve [in 1876] to Mennonites . . . We’ve been living side by side here, Mennonites and Indigenous people, for just shy of 150 years, and I find it really sobering that, on the anniversary of the signing of Treaty One, it became obvious that we don’t have the kind of relationship with Indigenous people that would” initiate collaboration or invitations

to commemorative events, he said.

Fontaine said Mennonites have a job to continue to listen and learn, but also to support Indigenous-led initiatives that address the disparities between Indigenous and settler peoples. Whether it is access to education, health care, food security or clean water, she said that “there’s significant differences between Indigenous and settler peoples, and that shouldn’t be if we really truly honoured our relationships.”

An Indigenous solidarity working group was recently created within MC Manitoba, and numerous churches have projects in the works, but there is a lot more room for Mennonites to grow in this work, according to Fontaine.

“I think the tendency might be sometimes to only think of one or two ways [to engage], but if you look at something like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it’s breathtaking in its scope,” she said. “It’s only limited by our imaginations.”

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GATHERING AROUND THE TABLE

Long-time cook nurtured young staff at House of Friendship

By Ken Eby

Special to Canadian Mennonite

Mabel Steinman was a long-time cook at the House of Friendship in Kitchener, Ont., serving meals to the hostel residents for 26 years. She was the proverbial mother or grandmother, providing them with a touch of home, a warm meal and encouragement. She received many thanks for her home-cooked meals.

In many ways, Mabel Steinman was the matriarch of the organization, nurturing many young staffers who were starting out in social service work. In fact, I began my social-service career at House of Friendship in 1974 and often referred to Mabel as my “third mother.” In addition to my birth mother, I had the good fortune to have a close relationship with an aunt who lived with us on the farm.

Mabel also nurtured many of the men who stayed at the hostel for varying lengths of time. When difficult residents came along, Mabel would caution us not to wish the resident to leave too soon. “You never know who will arrive to take their place,” she would say.

From Mabel I learned to thank everyone who made a donation, whether the donation was big or small, useful or not. Several of us staff complained that a local church was donating leftover cold coffee from their social time after church services. At the time, microwaves did not exist and coffee reheated on the stove was unpalatable.

Mabel would tell us to thank the donor, take the coffee urn to the kitchen, pour the coffee down the drain and return the urn to the donor. Mabel reminded us that the same donor might bring something more useful in the future. Clearly, there was an attitude in the community that the men at the hostel would be thankful for anything, even if it wasn't good enough



MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO PHOTO

Mabel Steinman began cooking at the House of Friendship in Kitchener, Ont., in the 1950s.

for “regular” people.

This was also at a time when Public Health was not monitoring food donations as closely as they do today. Many of the food donations—in particular, leftover food—would not be permissible by today's Public Health standards.

Mabel was resourceful and would make tasty meals with whatever was at hand. One time when a lot of zucchini was donated, she decided to make a lunch of sliced zucchini and tomato sauce. Mabel apologized for that meal, as she found the mixture too watery. I thought the mixture tasted of tomato and little else.

For quite some time, the hostel received free bologna from Schneiders, a local meat processing plant. While this meat product was a regular staple added to food hampers, Mabel also made a periodic evening meal of fried bologna for the hostel residents.

In the summer, she made pies with donated peaches or apples, as well as pumpkins in the fall. This delighted both the residents and the staff, since Mabel was responsible for preparing a lunch meal for

staff, in addition to preparing lunch and dinner for the residents.

Baked ham, beef or chicken were often used in combination with roasted or mashed potatoes and whatever vegetable had been donated. Mabel often prepared the plates in the kitchen, with a portion of meat, potatoes and vegetable on each, before staff handed the plates to the residents. It was well known that Mabel would evaluate the plates to ensure fairness, sometimes removing a small portion from a fuller plate in order to add to a plate with too small a portion. We would tease Mabel for this practice, but we understood that it was based on her need to keep things fair for all.

One dish that I associate with Mabel Steinman was a casserole made of leftover roast chicken or turkey, pre-cooked rice, chicken soup and gravy, with diced red and green peppers. That dinner item was offered almost weekly, often on the one day of the week when Mabel Brubacher was there helping out. I don't know if the two Mabels had a recipe, but it is comfort food that reminds me of my “third mother.” Mabel Steinman died in 2009. ❧

Ken Eby, a member at Mannheim Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., worked at House of Friendship from 1974 to 1986. He is now retired.

Find a recipe that approximates Mabel Steinman's chicken and rice casserole at canadianmennonite.org/chicken-rice-casserole.



This is the final installment of Gathering Around the Table. Barb Draper oversaw the collection of stories from the series' beginning in 2016.

Changing of the guard

New executive director at Mennonite Community Services

By Maria H. Klassen
Special to Canadian Mennonite

Eddy Rempel is the newly appointed executive director of Mennonite Community Services of Southern Ontario (MCS) based in Aylmer, Ont., replacing the retiring Abe Harms, who worked for the organization for 22 years.

Rempel, who has spent most of his life in Aylmer, has been a dedicated supporter of MCS, distinguishing himself as an avid networker and connector of individuals and groups. He has served as MCS's board chair, acted as a consultant, and spoke on behalf of the organization at various community events.

He obtained a bachelor of religious studies degree from Steinbach (Man.) Bible College, a bachelor of mathematics degree from the University of Waterloo, Ont., and a master of science degree in statistics from McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont. He is completing a master of sociology degree at Western University, London, Ont., focusing on immigration to rural Canada.

Rempel considers it a great privilege to join the work of inviting newcomers into the community.

For his part, Harms considers his time at MCS a rich and rewarding experience.

Over the years, he witnessed many changes. The clientele has changed but the needs are the same. From the 17 Low German-speaking families that came in 1977, there are now families from 10 different countries receiving help, although the majority are still Low German-speaking families from Latin America.

Harms says, "Attitudes have changed immensely over the years. Where once the husbands did not want their wives going to school, today that is not the case."



MCS FILE PHOTO BY STEFANI HEIDE

Pictured in 2019, Eddy Rempel, left, then MCS's board chair, and then executive director Abe Harms sign documents for the MCS plaza purchase that year. Harms recently retired as executive director, with Rempel stepping into his shoes.



STEFANI HEIDE/MENNONITE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Abe Harms receives a letter of commendation from the Town of Aylmer upon his retirement.

The opening of a Low German-speaking radio station in May 2003 was a milestone for Harms.

Another highlight was the combining of all services under one umbrella. Previously, the thrift store, Aylmer Mennonite Community Store, operated under its own local board, and all other programs operated under Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario at the MCC Aylmer Resource Centre. In 2008, both of these entities were merged and renamed MCS under one corporation and one local board.

One of many changes during the current pandemic was the cancellation of office and home visits, forcing families without computers or internet access to use cell phones and WhatsApp. The Thrift Store closed when the province issued lockdowns. Fundraisers were suspended for two seasons. The building was closed to the public during the stay-at-home order. Most staff worked from home, and the front desk staff answered and directed calls to the right service.

MCS settlement services continue to aid newcomers transitioning into life in Canada, providing family support, interpretation help, school involvement, and assistance with accessing legal help regarding their status in Canada. It also disseminates information for newcomers, covering topics such as how to apply for Social Insurance Numbers and health cards; the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and landlord and tenant issues. The Family Education Support Program Aylmer offers classes for women and children, family support for medical appointments, and prenatal and postnatal support. ☺

News brief

Speakers announced for Amplify! youth gathering

Christine Kampen Robinson and Christy Anderson, both on the staff of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, have been named as the keynote speakers for Amplify!, the nationwide youth gathering happening next summer at Camp Valaqua, near Water Valley, Alta., from July 31 to Aug. 4, 2022.

- Kampen Robinson is director of practicum and of the Centre for Career and Vocation at CMU. She is interested in the linguistics of storytelling and helps students transition into their careers.



- Anderson is CMU's Indigenous engagement advisor and is completing her PhD in Indigenous studies at the University of Saskatchewan. She is Anishinaabekwe and Mennonite, and she examines settler colonialism, racism and gender oppressions while affirming people's experiences through storytelling.



Regarding COVID-19, Amplify! will follow all Mennonite Church Canada policies regarding vaccination status, Alberta Health Service guidelines and Camp Valaqua's policy and procedures for this event. Information about Amplify! is available, and will be regularly updated, at mennonitechurch.ca/amplify. For information about Gathering 2022, the nationwide adult event in Edmonton running in tandem with Amplify!, visit mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022.

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/// Ordinations



PHOTO BY TAYLOR SUMMACH

Members of Langham (Sask.) Mennonite Fellowship lay hands on Emily Summach and pray for her during her ordination service, conducted by Ryan Siemens, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's executive minister, on Nov. 21. Summach has pastored at Langham since May 2019. This is her first pastoral position after joining the MC Saskatchewan network of congregations in 2016.



PHOTO COURTESY BY KEVIN FRIESEN

Andrea DeAvila, pictured centre, surrounded by family and congregational representatives, was ordained on Oct. 31 by Kathy Giesbrecht, Mennonite Church Manitoba's director of congregational ministries, at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. 'God is a bonfire,' Giesbrecht proclaimed, inviting DeAvila and the congregation to fan the flame of love, justice and peace that is present within everyone.

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- › **Bible Studies: Tom Yoder Neufeld**, ThD, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies and Theological Studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario
- › **Sending Sermon: Rolando Sosa Granados**, MDiv, Pastor at Piedra Viva Mennonite Church, Elkhart; therapist for children and adolescents



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How Radek Grundal described the help he and his wife, Geordie, received from MDS in Grand Forks, B.C. in 2019 following flooding that badly damaged their house.

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The transformative power of Advent

“What can happen when we activate [our] imaginations around the now-but-not-yet of Advent?” pastor Talashia Keim Yoder wonders. canadianmennonite.org/blog/adventritual



Reflecting on COP26

Environmental educator Kari Miller looks back at her experience as an observer at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow last month. canadianmennonite.org/millerreflects



The early days of Valaqua

George Heidebrecht reflects on the early days of Camp Valaqua, the Alberta summer camp that has become an important place for many. canadianmennonite.org/ghremembers



Watch: Steve Bell's Freedom Road update

In this video, the Winnipeg musician gives viewers an update on the all-season road that now links Shoal Lake 40 First Nation to the Trans-Canada. canadianmennonite.org/frupdate



!Explore: A Theological Program for Youth

In July 2022, participants (**grades 10 to 12**) can attend Mennonite World Conference in Indonesia with other Indonesian youth, explore theological questions and lived faith together, and visit parts of beautiful Java Island.

Sign up by Dec. 31!

Learn more: ambs.ca/explore

Canadian Mennonite's goal is not to tell you the answers but to help work through the questions.

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Calendar

Nationwide

July 29-Aug. 1, 2022: MC Canada Gathering 2022, in Edmonton. Theme: "We declare what we have seen and heard." Information about Gathering 2022 will be regularly updated at mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022.

July 31-Aug. 4, 2022: MC Canada National Youth Gathering at Camp Valaqua, Water Valley, Alta. Theme: "Amplify! Giving voice to what we have seen and heard." Information will be regularly updated at mennonitechurch.ca/amplify.

Saskatchewan

Jan. 22, 2022: Mega Menno one-day winter retreat, at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim, Sask. For more information, email youthminister@mcsask.ca.

Manitoba

Ongoing: Join an MC Manitoba gratitude group every second week for six weeks on Zoom, for 40 minutes of gathering with others in encouragement and sharing gratitude. Leader: Laura Funk, MC Manitoba's spiritual director-in-residence. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2YbxzRf>.

Ontario

April 19, 2022: "Diverse paths: An exploration of Low German Mennonite experiences," at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. The conference will bring together members of Low German-speaking communities and those who work within those communities, including service providers, educators and academics. To learn more, visit <https://bit.ly/3vvNaOx>.

May 13-15, 2022: "Indigenous-Mennonite encounters in time and place" academic conference and community education event, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. The event will include academic presentations, community storytelling, artistic offerings, and both Indigenous and Mennonite ceremonies.

Until March 7, 2022: "Not Traumatic Enough for a Shock Blanket" exhibit at the Grebel Gallery, Conrad Grebel University College. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3G4MBjD>.

International

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

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

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



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

Come work with MCC Manitoba!

As **Constituency Relations Coordinator**, you thrive on connecting with people and building meaningful relationships.

Your role is to deepen engagement and broaden awareness of MCC's relief, development and peace work with church communities, as well as groups connected to the food security work of MCC.

The position is half-time, salaried with benefits, offering a flexible home-office base within Manitoba.

Apply online at mccmb.ca/openings.



Mennonite Central Committee



Employment Opportunity Director of Mission Engagement

Mennonite Church Manitoba invites applications for the Director of Mission Engagement position. Please send cover letter and resumé to office@mennochurch.mb.ca. For more information, visit www.mennochurch.mb.ca/get-involved or contact Michael Pahl at mpahl@mennochurch.mb.ca. Review of applications will begin December 15. Position open until filled.



Employment opportunity **Lead Pastor** Calgary, Alberta

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

A Lead Pastor is sought to guide the congregation after an 18-month interim ministry following our Lead Pastor's 20 year pastorate. Meet us by going to www.foothillsmennonite.ca. Foothills MC is an Anabaptist faith community that desires to embody, share and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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

Please direct inquiries to: office@foothillsmennonite.ca, Attention of the Chair, Search Committee.

