

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

January 30, 2023 Volume 27 Number 2

Our government  
plans to buy 88  
F-35 fighter jets



“My peace I give you . . .  
not as the world gives. . . .” –John 14:27

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# Peace and popularity

WILL BRAUN

editor@canadianmennonite.org



Thank God for moments when people share their hearts. In the pages that follow, you may find such

moments: committed volunteers in a basement archive, an inspired welder, a new twist on quilting, a gathering that puts the cross in cross-cultural, and insight from King Hezekiah on mid-grade worship services.

In addition, Jonathan Neufeld speaks beautifully about stepping into a difficult and promising moment in our church's work with Indigenous people as many grieve the absence of Steve Heinrichs while building on the foundations he so ably helped form.

You'll also find a dozen responses to two weighty matters: progressivism and weaponization. The latter arose from another moment of heart-felt sharing.

In early January, a Mennonite elder left me a phone message. He firmly and politely expressed disappointment at the lack of Mennonite "peace witness." Were the leaders and organizations who might speak publicly just celebrating the Ukrainian military victories reported in the news, or did they have something different to say?

I took his words to heart. Then Canada announced the purchase of fighter jets for our air force and a missile defense system for Ukraine. National Defense minister Anita Anand quoted F-35 maker Lockheed Martin, calling the F-35 "the most lethal . . . fighter aircraft in the world." She said she was "thrilled" to announce the purchase of 88 such planes.

The acquisition of planes and the

defense system taint the soul of humanity. Before they drop a bomb or shoot a missile, these weapons wound the people who design them, build them, touch them, boast about them and pay for them—Canadian taxpayers. Their existence corrodes our spirits. It distances us from God. Let us lament their existence and witness to a bolder belief.

Of course, we decry Russian aggression, lament Ukrainian suffering and offer practical aid. Beyond that, against the tide of black-and-white public discourse, let us decry *all* violence, lament *all* loss and speak gently of love.

On page 20, we profile the F-35 jets and provide seven people's responses to militarization. Among them, retired farmer Ernie Wiens writes about dark powers, the armour of God and Jesus' call to love our enemies.

Peace is not popular, but elders bring us back to the peace Christ offers.

In another challenging piece, Ryan Dueck writes about a version of church that focuses on politics and identity at the expense of that which might "set a soul aflame" (page 16). This version of faith—which echoes many secular progressives—is ever-more popular in pockets of our denomination. Dueck says it is a "recipe for failure." That's a stark claim.

The progressive shift in our church has made room for people who would have otherwise left. That matters. Conversely, many others left. But aside from the numbers—which do not count for everything—and just looking at the current moment, is the progressive shift

attracting people now?

The United Church—arguably the most progressive denomination in Canada—posted a 40-percent decline in attendance in the past decade, the largest drop among churches. The progressive congregation I'm closest to has almost no second-generation members past high-school age. Our denomination is also in decline.

Will renewal be found in the discourse on inclusion and diversity? Will it set our souls ablaze with love, forgiveness, sacrifice, repentance and personal encounter with transcendence? It feels risky to ask.

To be clear, Dueck believes "robust . . . social engagement" is vital to the Gospel; it just needs to partake of transcendence not supplant it.

As someone deeply invested in justice matters for decades, I feel strange questioning progressives. That was my camp. I know there is much of God in their concerns, but their typical tone and posture disturb me, in contrast to the forceful yet gracious elder on the phone.

Also of note, the new progressivism did not lead to an outcry over F-35s.

Among the five people we asked to write responses to Dueck is Cynthia Wallace (page 18) who brings together the differing forces with uncommon gentleness and heart.

Finally, for details of an online event to discuss this topic, see page 26.

On behalf of the *CM* team, thanks for reading. ☘



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PHOTO: LOCKHEED MARTIN



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## FEATURE

# Guardians of the past

Historical society volunteers take on challenges

Story and photos by Emily Summach  
Saskatchewan Correspondent

**T**hrough an easily overlooked side door and down two flights of stairs at Bethany Manor Senior Living Complex in Saskatoon one will find the archival rooms of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan (MHSS). The cozy basement space holds thousands of Mennonite historical materials including Bibles, maps, newspaper, school

yearbooks, Mennonite song books, vinyl records and even a collection of client files from a law office.

Working among the towers of boxes and narrow shelves are some of the faithful volunteers—Victor Wiebe, Lorene Nickel, Kathy Boldt, Hilda Voth and Elva Braun.

“We have about 12 different people who regularly volunteer here in the archival room,” explained Wiebe, “and





**Victor Wiebe and Lorene Nickel with a “Deed of Gift” form.**

there’s probably another 20 or so volunteers who help out with MHSS special events [as well as] the volunteer board members.” The society has no paid staff. It’s funding comes from memberships, donations, grants and book sales.

In the early 1970s, as Frank H. Epp was doing research for his landmark book *Mennonites in Canada*, he reached out to people across Canada who were knowledgeable about Mennonite history. Epp’s project prompted historical enthusiasts in

Alberta and Saskatchewan to form a Mennonite Historical Society together in 1975. In 1993, the society separated, creating one for Saskatchewan and another for Alberta. “The Alberta folks just got tired of driving out to Saskatchewan,” joked Wiebe.

In the basement archival room, donations are collected and donors are issued a Deed of Gift. This record ensures a

listing of what was donated and legally transfers the materials. Volunteers then spend days (often months) sifting through material, keeping what is relevant, setting aside duplicates, and cataloguing all the items in both a digital and print file. Finally, the materials are filed and shelved in the correct section, according to the Canadian Archival Standards.

Having an extensive historical archive is common in many Mennonite regions and Wiebe mused that this record-keeping and the abundance of written materials is deeply rooted in the Mennonite identity.

“There was a sense in the earlier Mennonite communities that if you want to become a Christian then you must read the Bible, and really learn your Christian faith from the original document. In the book *Martyrs Mirror*, there are all sorts of stories of early laypeople defending the Bible and



**This vinyl record is one of the more unique items in the MHSS collection.**

knowing the scriptures thoroughly. There was a huge encouragement to learn and study the word yourself, so there was then high value placed on literacy, with people dragging their books along as they migrated, and they would write their own books too.”

Despite this strong cultural connection to the past, the volunteers worry about who they will pass on their work to. Many of the volunteers are in their 80s and they say there’s too much work to keep up with.

“We were about 10 years behind before COVID happened,” said Kathy Braun, “now it’s more like 15 years.” MHSS say they need more volunteers, particularly younger people who are more adept at digital work.

Complicating matters further, some of the rooms used for the archives are

no longer available, so volunteers have been hard at work moving materials, downsizing and finding new homes for many of their items. The lack of new, younger volunteers also raises concerns about whether future generations will value these archives in the same way, especially as church attendance shrinks and understanding of what it means to be Mennonite changes.

How to pass these memories and stories along for the future is a big worry for Lorene Nickel:

“I’m really concerned about losing all that knowledge . . . of all these memories and history that I know being lost when I die. My son is just asking questions now at 60. I suppose if you read and read and read, you could get that back. I’ll write my family story...starting tomorrow!” she exclaimed.

Still, the volunteers are hopefully imagining the future of the archives. “We’d love to have the funds to hire an archivist to manage and grow the collection, and it would be great to have a research space for people who come in and want to have a quiet, private space to



**Books in the collection of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan archives.**

look through the materials,” said Nickel.

Ultimately, it is the preservation of memory that inspires the work of MHSS and keeps the volunteers going.

“To some people it’s not important at all, just live in the present and the future will be whatever it will be,” said Wiebe. “But we’ll have a record. We can connect them to other people of their faith. So much of being Mennonite is about the community aspect. We can give future people a sense of what was important for them and valuable for them. We do this so that in the future they will not be forgotten.” ❧

## Mennonite historical societies near you

- Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia
- Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta
- Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan
- Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society
- Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario
- Société d’histoire mennonite du Québec

Not all of the groups maintain archives. Other activities include event planning and publication of written materials. The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada ([www.mhsc.ca](http://www.mhsc.ca)) serves as a sort of umbrella organization for these and other Mennonite organizations.

*The Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg serves as the official repository for numerous conferences and organizations based in Manitoba.*

## For discussion

1. Does your family have a collection of old photos and written records? How far back does it go? How organized is it? Where is it stored? Who has access to the collection?
2. Vic Wiebe believes that record-keeping and having lots of written materials is “rooted in the Mennonite identity.” Do you agree?
3. The volunteers of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan “worry about who they will pass on their work to.” Do you think interest in Mennonite history is waning?
4. The Mennonite church has become more complex over the years, including a greater variety of cultures. How does this change the collection of and interest in Mennonite history?
5. What do you think is the future of Mennonite archives in Canada?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources at  
[www.commonword.ca/go/3266](http://www.commonword.ca/go/3266)

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Bookstore and Resource Centre

## /// Readers write

### ✉ Tell your story of faith

The article “Eyes to see” (Nov. 28, 2022) discussed, “how to help members talk about faith and God’s work in their own lives.”

Many of us would rather talk about Mennonites in the past or present, thus evading talking about God in our lives. As followers of Jesus, we are urged to talk and walk the life we have in our Lord. I believe each of us has one story or several stories of God in our lives.

I think we are hesitant and lax in such conversations for several reasons. First, we do not wish to intrude or offend anyone. We know people have been turned away from Christianity by aggressive and forceful voices. These encounters are deeply seated in our minds and hearts.

Second, we are not convinced that God has indeed significantly touched our own lives. We simply may have been lucky or fortunate, events simply happened as they appear among others. We feel it would be too brazen to say that God told me this or God directed me in this decision, or God, dare I say, “saved” me in specific circumstance. This reduces any Jesus story I might have to tell.

Following Jesus is a revolutionary and radical journey. We are a new creation. We are children of God, created in God’s image. God longs for others to know of God’s love through our voice at appropriate times.

JOHN F. PETERS attends Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont.

### ✉ More info on new moderator please

**I am disappointed in the interview with the new Mennonite Church Canada moderator (“Meet Geraldine Balzer,” Dec. 12, 2022). There was no mention of her educational or work background, which are surely more important than some of the things that are mentioned.**

EDWARD WIEBE (ONLINE COMMENT)

*Editor’s note:* Balzer is currently associate professor of curriculum studies at the University of Saskatchewan. Prior to that she worked in Nunavut and Northwest Territories for 14 years, teaching every grade except 1, and serving as principal. She has a PhD in curriculum studies and English from the University of Saskatchewan, a B.Ed. from the same university, an MA in English from the University of Waterloo, and a BA in theatre arts and English from UBC.

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Enns**—Cora Charlotte (b. Nov. 15, 2022), to Jared and Tonya Enns, First Mennonite, Edmonton, Alta., in Winnipeg.

**Schultz**—Hallie Jaylene (b. Dec. 8, 2022), to Caitlin and Nick Schultz, Poole Mennonite, Ont.

**Srigley**—Milo Elliot (b. Jan. 13, 2023), to Debbie and Ken Srigley, North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Stoesz**—Arlo Bergen (b. Nov. 19, 2022), to Justin and Kathleen Stoesz, First Mennonite, Edmonton, Alta.

**Van Alstyne**—Abigail Rose (b. Jan. 2, 2023), to Alyssa and Jayce Van Alstyne, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

### Weddings

**Kierstead/Wilson**—Matthew Kierstead and Heather Wilson (First Mennonite, Edmonton, Alta.), Jan. 5, 2023, in Edmonton.

**Regier/Roorda**—Hannah Regier and Cody Roorda, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Dec. 3, 2022.

### Deaths

**Bergen**—Art, 74 (b. Feb. 7, 1948; d. Dec. 18, 2022), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Dahl**—Ralph George, 91 (b. July 18, 1931; d. Jan. 9, 2023), First Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

**Epp**—Irene (nee Fast), 84 (b. June 12, 1938; d. Dec. 27, 2022), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Klassen**—Elsie (nee Martens), 92 (b. May 20, 1930; d. Dec. 22, 2022), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Klassen**—Irene (nee Epp), 98 (b. Aug. 12, 1924; d. Jan. 2, 2023), First Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

**Krahn**—Ruth Katie (nee Schroeder), 76 (b. April 26, 1946; d. Nov. 23, 2022), First Mennonite, Edmonton, Alta.

**Lehn**—Irmgard (nee Schroeder), 82 (b. July 8, 1940; d. Nov. 22, 2022), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Loewen**—Peter, 86 (b. Dec. 13, 1936; d. Dec. 27, 2022), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Lohrenz**—Dolores, 85 (b. Oct. 7, 1937; d. Dec. 26, 2022) Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Neufeld**—Alfred (Fred) Peter, 78 (b. March 21, 1944; Dec. 26, 2022), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

**Thiessen**—Elizabeth (Betty), 79 (b. July 27, 1943; d. Dec. 15, 2022), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Tiessen**—Eric, 72 (b. Dec. 7, 1950; d. Dec. 14, 2022), North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Warkentin**—Elsie (nee Klassen), 96 (b. Aug. 22, 1926; d. Jan. 5, 2023), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Winter**—Cornelius, 96 (b. Oct. 27, 1926; d. Nov. 21, 2022), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Yordy**—Ruth (nee Miller), 99 (b. Dec. 29, 1922; d. Nov. 29, 2022), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

### Be in Touch

• Send letters to [letters@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org). Our mailing address is on page 3.

## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Embracing diversity

Marilyn Rudy-Froese

One of the identified priorities for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) is embracing diversity. With this priority, we articulate our intention to:

“Invite and challenge the church to explore the variety and richness of God’s people. This will require transformation of our hearts, minds, policies and structures as we live out our calling to be a diverse, inclusive and intercultural church body.”

We want the ways in which we embody our mission to be a reflection of the diversity we find within MCEC, because we believe that diversity is at the core of who God is. Ephesians 3:10 says it is God’s plan that, *“through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known.”* The wisdom of God is “rich” in “variety” according to the NRSV; or “manifold” according to the NIV. Synonyms for “manifold” include: numerous, many, multiple, multifarious, multitudinous. There is a spaciousness to God’s wisdom that far surpasses anything we could ever ask or imagine!

In light of the multitudinous riches of God’s wisdom, why is it so hard for us to embrace diversity?

So many of our conflicts and disagreements grow out of the diverse ways in which we see faith, hold our beliefs or interpret the Bible. They grow out of our diverse experiences of life, culture, language and ethnicity. Sometimes our conflicts even grow out of the diversity that lies within each of us; the competing values and beliefs from childhood that no longer hold for us, or the dissonance between what we value and how we live.

It is easy to point to the other as the source of challenge when navigating the many kinds of diversity we encounter. However, it is valuable to first examine what is going on within, and allow God’s wisdom to speak to us. This has been, for me, the longest and hardest journey toward understanding diversity.

While it is helpful to understand the “rich variety” not just of God’s wisdom, but of diversity itself, in MCEC we do not want to only understand diversity, but to embrace it. Another quick word study provides synonyms that give some images with which to play: hug, hold, welcome, accept, take to one’s heart.

I am grateful that in my role as Church Leadership Minister, I have the

opportunity to practice humility and experience joy in welcoming, accepting, taking to heart and embracing diversity. I also have the privilege of witnessing diversity being welcomed, accepted, taken to heart, held and embraced. Hearing stories of pain and struggle in the journey of embracing diversity has signalled that it is easier to embrace some spaces of diversity than other spaces of diversity.

Worshipping with congregations that are at the beginning of a journey toward becoming intercultural and experiencing the power of music to cross cultures and enter hearts has been powerful. Walking with pastors as we work to understand each other across language and practice has been humbling and rewarding.

We journey with God, whose grace and wisdom are multitudinous! Friends, that is good news! ✎



*Marilyn Rudy-Froese serves as church leadership minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.*

## A moment from yesterday

Fifty years ago, in June 1973, Queen Elizabeth II visited the Waterloo region. What gift could she be given to represent the area? These two bronze figures of an Old Order couple by Waterloo artist Renie Ellis were chosen. At the time, Mennonites constituted about 10 percent of the area’s population.

Text: Lauren Harder-Gissing

Photo: David L. Hunsberger/Mennonite Archives of Ontario





## IN THE IMAGE

## Welding a Mennonite reality

Ed Olfert

In January I was tasked with providing a meditation on Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday at a local church. As I peck out this column, that day has not yet arrived and I'm spending my time welding up a sermon.

I'm not an historian, nor a learned interpreter of our faith heritage, so I am grounded in nothing . . . but reality.

Perhaps reality is a great place to start in understanding Anabaptism, and ultimately, an equally great place to end up. Reality reminds me that God was discovered in the storied history of our faith heritage, and is equally uncovered in every day, every conversation, every relationship. The early leaders chose a direction that differed from churches that had become ornate and closely aligned with political might of the day. The robes were grand and the steeples tall with the largesse that resulted from serving as the spiritual legitimizing of power.

I do some metal crafting under the moniker "Blind Guy Welding," and some of my thoughts on Anabaptist world fellowship have taken shape on my workbench.

Some time ago, I built a pair of bookends that depicted Dirk Willems, an early Anabaptist, bending to rescue his pursuer who had fallen through thin ice. That image remains an important reminder of the passion and the conviction of following a path based on an understanding of "enemy love" that probably wasn't often encouraged by the royal robes of the high church.

For me, crafting those hands reaching



Unfinished, food bank-inspired bookends on Ed Olfert's workbench.

PHOTO BY ED OLFERT

out to save was an emotional thing. To risk a life (and to lose it) is to grasp that strange concept of love at a level that present-day Anabaptists can scarcely imagine. I need such a depiction before me as a reminder.

More recently, my hands led me back to the welding table, and another set of bookends. This time, the scrap iron took the form of a person behind bars, incarcerated, on one side, while on the other, a person standing beside a table adorned with cups of coffee. Again, hands are reaching out, inviting, encouraging, welcoming. This prison visitation reality has been part of my life for 35 years, and it became vibrantly obvious decades ago that the power of the relationships built in these settings are in reciprocal care and compassion. Christ

enters through the barred gates, Christ is discovered waiting behind those same gates. The intrigue of that reciprocity has created the energy to immerse myself in that reality.

I also volunteer at a local food bank, as I have mentioned before. There, a pastoral role is combined with delivering hampers to people at their vehicles or to their homes. I searched for a related theme that could be welded up on bookends—perhaps folks on opposite sides of a table, boxes of food pushed across and received. But that didn't capture the essence of what happens, the reality of the communities that intersect. I didn't want to depict something so...colonial.

Last week, a tiny old grandma appeared. Her face was deeply lined, and I

recalled my wife Holly reminding me that there is great beauty in such a face, there are stories in the lines. I stepped up to her, welcomed her, and commented on the beauty of the trees, which that day wore a perfect layer of thick hoarfrost. Her face lit up, and she talked about how good it felt to step outside into the bright sunlight and observe the sparkling clothes on the trees. We stood at the window, gazing in delight. Instantly, I visualized my next project. It's almost finished. It represents, again, reality. Again, hands reach out. ❧



Ed Olfert ([p2peho@gmail.com](mailto:p2peho@gmail.com)) gives thanks for the great teacher of reality.

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 TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY
 

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# When inadequate is enough

Joshua Penfold

Scripture credits King Hezekiah for reestablishing Passover. Apparently, the temple had been shut down and it had been a while since any regular worship routines had been practiced. So, good king Hezekiah decided to turn things around and get Passover back on the menu.

Except there was a bit of a problem: because it had been so long, everyone was rusty. There weren't enough consecrated priests, so they had to delay the celebration until the priests were ready. In addition, many of the people weren't ceremonially clean and hadn't properly purified themselves. This was a group of people who were interested and willing and eager to worship, they wanted to celebrate Passover, but they weren't doing everything right. The whole event was clumsy and wasn't quite done by the book.

For any organized rule-loving person, this would have been painful to watch, even more painful to participate in. It reminds me of various church services that I have quietly struggled through over the years. Always well-meaning people, but the execution was a bit painful to witness, especially if you've known polished, professional and well-planned times of worship and have a degree in worship leadership.

Well, King Hezekiah isn't naïve to these

realities. I think he knows that there's more at stake here than just getting bad reviews for a poorly run time of worship. The rules for consecrating oneself is serious business not taken lightly by God. So Hezekiah prays, *May the LORD, who is good, pardon everyone who sets his heart on seeking God—the LORD, the God of his fathers—even if he is not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary* (2 Chronicles 30:18-19). It turns out that was sufficient for God, for God hears and heals the people. Done. It's all good.

I love this. The people weren't doing it right. . . but they were trying. They were out of practice and things weren't established enough for them to follow quite properly, but in the end those things were secondary. What was more important were the people's hearts, their intent, their desire to worship. The details were just that, details. They could practice and get better and reestablish as they went along, but that didn't stop them from worshiping that first day.

This inadequate but right-hearted yearning toward God reminds me of Thomas Merton's most wonderful and reassuring "Prayer of Unknowing." I return to it often and am so glad to have found a scripture passage that feels akin to it.

*My Lord God,  
I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will  
end.  
Nor do I really know myself,  
and the fact that I think I am following  
your will  
does not mean that I am actually doing so.  
But I believe that the desire to please you  
does in fact please you.  
And I hope I have that desire in all that I  
am doing.  
I hope that I will never do anything apart  
from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this you will lead  
me by the right road,  
though I may know nothing about it.  
Therefore will I trust you always though  
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow  
of death.  
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,  
and you will never leave me to face my  
perils alone.*

*"The Prayer of Unknowing" from  
Thoughts in Solitude by Thomas Merton,  
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Joshua Penfold ([penfold\\_joshua@gmail.com](mailto:penfold_joshua@gmail.com)) finds such fumbling faithfulness fantastically freeing.

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## Et cetera

### CPT supports homeless in Toronto

The Turtle Island Solidarity Network of Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) has been supporting unhoused people in Toronto. In December, the city began closing shelter hotels that had been leased during the pandemic. Also in December, an informal encampment at the Church of St. Stephen-in-the-Fields was served with an eviction notice. Among the community advocacy that caused this eviction to be delayed was a cage set up around the Panhandler Jesus statue at the church to symbolize how homelessness has been criminalized.

Source: Community Peacemaker Teams  
CPT website photo



## MIND AND SOUL

## Say no to moralistic therapeutic deism

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

A major sociological study of American youth concluded that their understanding of faith could be called “moralistic therapeutic deism.” On page 16, Ryan Dueck makes a related observation about “therapeutic church” and says it’s a problem.

From their study of youth, Christian Smith and Melinda Lindquist identified a constellation of common beliefs: God exists; God is politely involved in a believer’s life when there’s a problem; God wants people to be nice; the main goal of life is to be happy. These views are probably prevalent in most Canadian churches today.

In other words, contemporary Christianity is a genteel (and gentle) morality. Smith and Denton write: “[God is] something like a combination Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist: he’s always on call, takes care of any problems that arise, professionally helps his people to feel better about themselves, and does not become too personally involved in the process.”

Dueck’s discussion of therapeutic church looks specifically at the progressive Christian circles he finds himself in. In his view, the church should not be a social justice club with a little bit of Jesus sprinkled on top (my words), or “the

NDP at prayer,” as another denomination is sometimes called.

I circulate in similar circles and have similar concerns. On one overseas delegation with a Christian human rights agency, I was astonished at how much I craved collective prayer. My commitment to human rights, ecological justice and the like are rooted in Christian commitments and practices, including an ineffable sense of a mystical encountering of Jesus in the people living in difficult conditions.

As I asked in my October column, what is the role of faith in a theory of social change? What about the action of the divine mystery in personal change (conversion)?

Neither a nice, pleasant spirituality (God-as-therapist) or secularized justice-as-faith (God as activist-in-chief) are the robust, multi-faceted deity represented in the Bible and Christian history. More importantly, do these narrowed versions compel people to a discipleship that embodies the call to imitate Jesus?

I have been affiliated with more than one Christian social justice organization that became a social justice organization only. I worry about the consequences of this for the body of Christ.

Last month, the U.S. celebrated Martin

Luther King Jr Day. Note that about three-quarters of Americans “disapproved of Martin when he was shot,” Cornell West said in the *Boston Review*.

King’s words on racism and civil rights were not nice, feel-good words. His speeches on war and capitalism were even more disturbing. King’s vision of God was not remote, anemic or therapeutic. For King, only a deeply engaged and actively practiced faith could lead others to overcome police dogs and social derision:

*“When our days become dreary with low-hoivering clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe, working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.”*

This is neither therapeutic faith nor secular progressivism. It is a God who sets hearts aflame. May we so preach such a God, our Lord and Brother Jesus. ❧



*Randolph Haluza-DeLay considers MLK one of his heroes of faith.*

## Et cetera

## Kindred announces winners of Church Builder Contest

Last November, Kindred Credit Union, based in Kitchener, gave five Ontario churches \$5,000 each for work in food security and affordable housing. Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener—part of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada—was one of the recipients. They currently house 39 people in five houses, and want to increase capacity in those houses.

See Stirling’s award application video at <https://bit.ly/3HncNjc>.



Source: Kindred Credit Union

Photo: Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church



Screenshot of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church’s entry video.

## NEWS

# Quilting across continents

## Great winter warm-up

By Nikki Hamm Gwala  
Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba

**F**or Judy Hildebrand of Crystal City, Man., brightly coloured comforters add cheer to long prairie winters.

Hildebrand is a seasoned Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) comforter maker and member of the Crystal City Ladies Aid which began making comforters for MCC in the basement of the Crystal City Mennonite Church more than 50 years ago.

“For me, it’s just total enjoyment, and knowing that [they] will go where they’re

needed,” she says.

Over the years, the group—which now includes Holdeman women and a range of other community members—has donated thousands of comforters to provide relief and comfort to families experiencing disaster and conflict around the world.

This year the group hopes to contribute 200 comforters to MCC’s overall goal of making and distributing 45,000 comforters to people in need around the world in 2023.

In response to the story of quilting in Zimbabwe (opposite page), Hildebrand says it’s “a new twist” to think of people in other parts of the world also quilting,

not just receiving comforters from here. “I will think about the woman in Zimbabwe when I quilt,” she says.

That makes quilting “more like doing it together with them instead of doing it for them, which is pretty neat,” Hildebrand says.

As part of its “Great Winter Warm-up” this February, MCC is encouraging people to gather friends and make comforters. For a booklet of creative and colourful design inspiration see [mcccanada.ca/great-winter-warm-up](http://mcccanada.ca/great-winter-warm-up). ☞



– With files from CM



PHOTO COURTESY OF JUDY HILDEBRAND.

L to R: Gayle Zacharias, Kathryn Derksen, Michelle Hildebrand, Susanna Derksen, Judy Hildebrand and Jake Plett.

## From cow manure to comforters

By Linda Epsenshade  
Mennonite Central Committee

“It takes a long time because I don’t use a machine; I’m just using my own hands, putting these things together to make a meaningful thing,” says Addlight Mudombo of Joseph Village, Zimbabwe.

Mudombo makes and sells colourful, pieced comforters to earn extra income for her family.

She learned to piece comforters from her sister, and her husband Elnathan Mboweni consults the internet to get ideas for designs. He makes the templates for the fabric pieces, which they cut from used, colourful clothing. Mudombo then stitches fabric triangles, squares and diamonds together in the evenings.

Mudombo, who has three school-aged children, also helps other women learn to sew comforters.

She has time to sew because her

household workload has been reduced by a biodigester that turns manure into gas for cooking. Mudombo used to spend many hours each week collecting wood that she needed to cook her family’s dinner over an open fire. Dead wood is increasingly hard to find because of deforestation, so she and her friends walked long distances into remote and sometimes dangerous areas of the forest to find fuel.

Now, each day, she or her husband mixes cow manure with water and pours the mixture into the underground digester, which captures the resulting odor-free gas and supplies it to a hotplate in Mudombo’s kitchen.

Mennonite Central Committee partner Score Against Poverty helped Mudombo and Mboweni get the digester in 2022. ♪



MCC PHOTOS BY MEGHAN MAST

*Addlight Mudombo of Joseph Village, Zimbabwe with comforters she sewed by hand from used clothing.*

# Meet MC Canada's new Indigenous relations coordinator

Aaron Epp  
Senior Writer

If there are places where the church is centring the voices of people on the margins, Jonathan Neufeld wants to be there.

"Theologically, that's my home," says Neufeld, Mennonite Church Canada's Indigenous relations coordinator.

Neufeld began his work at MC Canada, based in Winnipeg, in November. He also works half-time as pastor at Charleswood Mennonite in Winnipeg.

In the new role with MC Canada, Neufeld is tasked with coordinating and resourcing the regional churches in their relationship-building with Indigenous communities. It's a half-time role that replaces the full-time Indigenous-Settler relations position held by Steve Heinrichs until April 2022.

"It is a different role and we all have different feelings about this transition, but the work is central to who we are

and [on] some level needs to continue," Neufeld says, mentioning the history of MC Canada's relationship with Indigenous communities and the MC Canada staff who have helped maintain those relationships over the years. "This is a long relationship that I will embody for a period of time and hopefully contribute something [to] so that whoever follows will have more to build on—just like I have so much to build on."

One of Neufeld's biggest hopes for his work is that he can, along with the regional churches, engage congregants who aren't already involved in the work of Indigenous relations. "We want to be invitational and we want to have venues of exploration and we want to be comfortable with resistance and we want to see conflict as an opportunity for partnership-building," he says.

Neufeld, who grew up in Landmark, Man. and Abbotsford, B.C., has long been interested in the church's relationship to Indigenous peoples. In the '90s, he and his wife, Melanie, worked with MC Canada Native Ministries in two Manitoba communities: Matheson Island and Pine Dock. They led Sunday services and vacation Bible school programs, and were mentored by Neill and Edith von Gunten, MC Canada's Native Ministries workers at the time.

"We got married and then went [straight] to Matheson Island. That was our first home," Neufeld recalls of the community, which is located 235 kilometres north of Winnipeg.

After earning degrees in theology from Canadian Mennonite Bible College and religious studies from the University of Winnipeg, Neufeld served as pastor of youth and young adults at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg from 1995 to 2002.

The Neufelds then studied at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in



PHOTO COURTESY OF JONATHAN NEUFELD

*Melanie and Jonathan Neufeld*

Elkhart, Ind. In 2006 they were hired as community ministry pastors at Seattle Mennonite Church. Jonathan coordinated services for people experiencing homelessness, including victims of chronic and persistent trauma resulting from the intergenerational effects of colonialism. Melanie worked to build relationships with businesses and faith communities to improve services for people experiencing homelessness.

Along the way, the Neufelds got involved with the work Seattle Mennonite Church was doing supporting Indigenous campaigns on environmental protection, land return and fundraising in support of local tribal services. Over the past

decade, Jonathan has been involved in forming the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery, a group emerging from the Anabaptist faith tradition that seeks to support Indigenous self-determination and efforts to protect the earth from ongoing colonization. He currently chairs the coalition's steering committee.

"I think those of us who identify of settler descent, deep down, [whether we know] it or not, have a healing that we need, because we know . . . the privileges that have allowed our social uplift and establishment here on these lands is rooted in injustice. We know that. You can attend to that and face it or you can ignore it, but that doesn't change that baseline brokenness that is in all of us that needs healing."

As he goes about his work with MC Canada, Neufeld brings with him

something coalition members continually remind themselves: resist the temptation to let information-gathering get in the way of taking action. Although necessary, information-gathering can lead to paralysis.

"You have to do your homework—you just can't avoid that—but you also can't let a fear of not doing it perfect prevent you from moving in concrete ways."

In his first weeks in his new role, Neufeld has appreciated the welcome he's received as he's made connections with various groups that MC Canada has historically worked with.

"When I'm reaching out and saying, 'Hey, I'm from Mennonite Church Canada,' and there's an immediate, 'Hey, so excited to meet you'—that says volumes about the work of people that have been in this role," he says. "And that is a gift to me to steward." ❧

## Pop culture picks

**Canadian Mennonite:** *What have you been reading recently?*

**Jonathan Neufeld:** I am reading Randy Woodley's *Becoming Rooted: One Hundred Days of Reconnecting with Sacred Earth* and I'm re-reading *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. I'm also reading Cheryl Bear's book, *Introduction to First Nations Ministry*.

**CM:** *Do you have a favourite movie?*

**JN:** *Avatar*. I'm so looking forward to the [sequel]. Another favourite that is so Pacific Northwest and brilliant is *Pig* with Nicolas Cage.

**CM:** *What are you listening to these days?*

**JN:** I've been just learning and trying to pick up on as many Indigenous musicians as I can. I am learning about the Jerry Cans and the Halluci Nation.

**CM:** *What do you like to do in your free time?*

**JN:** Gardening and baking.

## Staff changes

### Pastoral transitions in Manitoba



**Tobia Veith** joined the pastoral team at Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Man. on Jan. 1, 2023 as the half-time children's ministry leader. She previously did church ministry work in Macau and China for 30 years, first through the General Conference Mennonite Church's Commission on Overseas Missions and then as a Mennonite Church Canada

Witness worker. This included preaching, counselling, community service, children's ministry, teaching English and more. Veith and her husband George returned to Canada in September 2021 and finished their term in January 2022. She holds a bachelor of elementary education from the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.



**Ellis Hamm** became interim associate pastor at Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Man. on Nov. 7, 2022. They will be serving in the part-time position until spring, with the anticipated hire of a new pastor. Hamm spent the last several years working in communications at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), completing a bachelor of education at

the University of Winnipeg, and small-scale farming. They also hold a bachelor of arts degree in communications and media and biblical and theological studies from CMU.



**Lisa Martens** concluded her time as associate pastor at Hope Mennonite on Nov. 1, 2022, just before Hamm was installed. She served in the half-time position for four years. Prior to pastoring at Hope, Martens worked in childcare and with community organizations in Winnipeg.

She recently graduated with her master of marriage and family therapy from the University of Winnipeg and is leaving her ministry role to be a counsellor at the University of Manitoba. Martens also holds a bachelor of theology from CMU.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

## VIEWPOINT

# To set a soul aflame

*Has progressivism smothered the Spirit?*

Ryan Dueck

Pastor, Lethbridge Mennonite Church

One of my abiding critiques of the progressive church circles I inhabit is that they often lack what I call existential urgency. God is, we think, very interested in our positions on social issues and is very eager to affirm our journey through various constellations of identities, but God is not so much interested in sin or salvation or judgment or deliverance or the kind of love that breaks down in order to mend.

This God is not so much about anything that could set a soul aflame.

Aside from this blend of faith being flat-out boring, I also believe it is a recipe for failure.

I frequently come across articles that enumerate this point, but a recent piece called “A therapeutic church is an atheist church” caught my eye. It is written by Brad East, a noted young American writer and professor of theology at Abilene Christian University in Texas.

By “therapeutic church,” East means a church that speaks not of “sin, judgment, guilt . . . repentance, punishment, suffering, crucifixion, deliverance, salvation . . .” but focuses rather on matters such as “wellness, health, toxicity, self-care, harm, safety, balance, affirmation, holding space and being well-adjusted.” In short, East’s therapeutic church is a progressive church.

His article ends, ominously, thus:

“The more . . . a congregation becomes therapeutic, in its language, its liturgy, its morals, its common life, the more God recedes from the picture. God becomes secondary, then tertiary, then ornamental, then metaphorical, then finally superfluous.

“The old-timers keep God on, mostly out of muscle memory, but the younger generations know the score. They don’t

quit church and stop believing in God because of a lack of catechesis [religious instruction], as if they weren’t listening on Sundays. They were listening all right. The catechesis didn’t fail; it worked, only too well. The twenty- and thirty-somethings were preached right out of the gospel—albeit with the best of intentions and a smile on every minister and usher’s face. They smiled right back and headed for the exit sign.”

## A back door God

About a decade ago, I moved slightly leftward in my church affiliation. I was excited to have more theological breathing space. I was ready for a more socially engaged gospel. At about that time, I had a conversation with a seasoned veteran of the Mennonite social justice-y parachurch world. He said something that struck me: “Yeah, we’ve got more room theologically, we’re more socially engaged. . . . But I sometimes wonder where the life is.”

I puzzled about this comment at the time but filed it away. A decade later, it makes more sense.

The catechesis is too often, as East says, working only too well. You don’t necessarily need God for inclusivity training or political engagement or to affirm your uniqueness. So God is either left out or, alternatively, pressed awkwardly into the service of these ends. God can always be dragged in the back door and reduced to the smallness of our ambitions.

To be clear, a gospel that does not include a robust vision of social engagement is no gospel at all. But God is so much more than this. And, to put it bluntly, the God-as-therapist or God-as-activist-in-chief isn’t

particularly working. There are blessed exceptions (thanks be to God!), but in general terms, our demographics with Mennonite Church Canada tend to be trending along the same lines as many other mainline denominations. We are a church of mostly aging white liberals, at least in many parts of the country.

## God ablaze among the lost

Alongside the piece by Brad East, I read a reflection on Matthew Perry’s recent memoir, *Friends, Lovers and the Big Terrible Thing*. It provides an interesting contrast. I was never a huge fan of *Friends*—the sitcom in which Perry starred—but Perry’s harrowing story of addiction has been popping up with some regularity over the last while. I wasn’t surprised to read that when he reached rock bottom, Perry found God waiting for him there. God is where the lost things are.

I started above by noting a lack of existential urgency—that which might set the soul ablaze—in progressive faith circles; Perry provides a dramatic example of just that. He began to pray “with the desperation of a drowning man,” he writes. “God, please help me,” he whispered. “Show me that you are here. God, please help me.” He describes what happened as he prayed:

“[T]he little wave in the air transformed into a small, golden light. As I kneeled, the light slowly began to get bigger, and bigger, until it was so big that it encompassed the entire room. It was like I was standing on the sun. I had stepped on the surface of the sun. What was happening? And why was I starting to feel better? And why was I not terrified?”



## Spiritual pursuit

The resulting feeling was, in Perry's words: "more perfect than the most perfect quantity of drugs I had ever taken. . . . It was way way bigger than me. My only choice was to surrender to it..."

Perry does not describe his soul as aflame per se, but something profound had happened: "My blood hadn't been replaced with warm honey. I was warm honey. And for the first time in my life, I was in the presence of love and acceptance and filled with an overwhelming feeling that everything was going to be okay. I knew now that my prayer had been answered. . . ."

Perry goes on to explain how for the

first time in his life he felt okay, decades of struggling and pain washed away. "I had been in the presence of God," he writes. "I was certain of it. And this time I had prayed for the right thing: help"

The question of faith—the question that has animated anything worthy of the name "spiritual pursuit" in my own life—is whether or not this is indeed the God with which we have to deal.

Is God the one who overwhelms us when we reach rock bottom, warm like honey, thick like grace? The one who washes over us, consigning rivers of pain into oblivion? The one who is mighty to save and strong to heal? Or is God the equivalent of a kindly bureaucrat giving a diversity seminar or shepherding us

toward the right political rally?

Maybe I've created a false dichotomy here. Probably. But God, how I hope Perry's soulful version is the truer depiction. Actually, scratch that. I don't "hope" it's the truer; I would bet my life on it. ✎



*Ryan Dueck grew up on a farm in southern Alberta, not too far from Lethbridge Mennonite Church where he has served as pastor since 2011. You*

*can find more of his writings at [ryandueck.com](http://ryandueck.com) where a version of the above article first appeared.*



## Response to Ryan Dueck

**W**e showed five people Dueck's article and asked for their response. Below are excerpts of those responses. To see the full versions visit [canadianmennonite.org/aflame](http://canadianmennonite.org/aflame).

### Means to an end

I think a conversation about the relationship between our idea of God and current social justice issues is one the Mennonite church should have. The more I grapple with what it means to be a Christian today, the more I realize the incredible danger in confusing our human goals with God's. We certainly are called by God to work for justice and peace in our world, and we must also be careful and intentional in our understanding and proclamation of God's will in our work for peace and justice. After all, God is not a means to an end, but the end itself.

– *Emma Siemens, Canadian Mennonite intern, CMU student*



### Woke

The church is undergoing an identity crisis as it is being incorporated into contemporary woke culture and, in doing so, churches have turned inward

and surrendered to a false idol of self-care.

Perry's story is a reminder that God is a God who cares about our souls. Throughout the Bible, Jesus heals by first attending to the needs of our souls. This is missing in our churches today.

Nowadays, churches are obsessed with being attractive and digestible, however Jesus was counter-cultural. For sure, Jesus cares about our physical and mental wellbeing, however he also cares deeply about our souls.

If there is no distinction between mainstream beliefs, political agendas, and the church, then we might as well spend our Sunday mornings at rallies and self-help seminars.

– *Christen Kong, health promoter and podcaster in Toronto*



### Refiner's fire

I get why Ryan presents his categorizations as literal church types. I also get his discouragement, but I don't entirely share his views. Rather, I see these two types he describes as dimensions that exist in most every congregation and denomination. What if we were to see both types of churches as confronting

sin and seeking healing, redemption and salvation?

To do so we'd have to recognize that not everyone is using the same words for many well-known theological terms. In fact, we'd see that some people and churches are using other terms precisely because they're reckoning with sinful effects. For that reason, the *First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament* uses "bad hearts," "wrongdoings" and "broken ways" for what most translations call "sin."

In his book, *The Christian Imagination*, Willie James Jennings speaks of, "perverted forms of time and communion drawn on Christian logics," noting the enormous scale of disruption and rerouting of Christian ways of being required along the path to redemption. Perhaps if we would see more of the convergence and clash of many names and expressions of sin that people are confronting and convicted of at present, we might also feel more of God's justice washing over us.

– *Cheryl Pauls, president, Canadian Mennonite University*



## Soul Aflame

... I remember  
The phone rang  
And a Thursday morning, wide open  
with promise,  
Became instead another graveyard for  
another queer child.  
Death by *love-the-sinner-hate-the-sin* . . .  
My soul aflame with rage,  
O crucified One. . . .

— *Alissa Bender, pastor,  
Hamilton Mennonite Church*



## Gentleness

Most of us in North American Christianity have been formed in the binary tensions between faith and works, judgment and love, salvation as everlasting life and salvation as justice, Jesus as Lion and Jesus as Lamb. We pendulum-swing between them as individuals and as generations, although often we continue to be deeply affected even by the side we reject. So those of us who grew up in legalistic fundamentalisms may find ourselves taking the same legalism into progressive activist spaces, and still politely sidestepping the radical disruptions of grace.

But the most vibrant faith I have encountered rejects the dichotomies. It holds them together in a provocative both/and. This faith is unabashedly delighted by God's mercy, and it is passionately committed to justice, which it recognizes as love writ large. It is earthy and practical and at the same time rooted in spiritual disciplines like contemplative prayer. It is honest about human failings—sin, both personal and structural—because it usually emerges from a familiarity with hardship. It is gracious and non-defensive and the opposite of coercive, but it also says: Listen, I have known the depths, and I have met Jesus on the road, and my heart burned within me. This is my story.

Why do we find it so hard to follow in this way beyond dichotomies? In the twenty-first-century Global North, we are so often bundled up in comforts—digital and otherwise—that lull us out of contact with our own inner lives and the

world's desperation.

We also live in what philosopher Charles Taylor calls the “immanent frame,” where most people assume this material world to be all there is. To claim contact with transcendence is to go against the prevailing norm, and so we are often embarrassed to admit to believing in something more. We're also embarrassed because many who claim transcendence most loudly in our day are noisily supremacist and exclusionary. Given the violence of imperial Christianity, we are right to worry about triumphalism.

But if we swing away from these risks so fully that we abandon the possibility of the Spirit of Jesus acting among us, surprising us, comforting and convicting and transforming us, what are we left with?

Dueck cites Matthew Perry's story as a vivid example of the kind of divine meeting that disrupts our tidy expectations and dichotomies, and I'm not the least bit surprised because so many of the most impassioned stories of transcendence in contemporary North American contexts emerge out of moments of deepest need.

When my awakening to the violence of Christianity decimated my faith nearly two decades ago, these were the stories that redeemed it: liberationist literatures and theologies that were unabashedly critical of the damages Christian institutions have wrought yet also emboldened by Christianity's mystical power and spiritual subversion of the powers.

In the years since, my own most profound encounters with Jesus have been in times of immense sorrow, uncertainty or pain. Six years ago, we handed over a tiny baby, Pilgram, for major emergency eye surgery. In my grief and fear, as I wept in the Edmonton hospital hallway, I felt the abiding presence of the Spirit of God, like a pool of water at the base of my worried soul, and I knew in that moment we were being upheld by prayers around the world.

We meet God in our need, in our limits, in the admission that the world

hurts us and we hurt each other and we hurt ourselves. In all of these failings we desperately need both good-faith human effort to repair and supernatural grace. There's nothing polite about this need. I know it, deep down, as I look at the world's enormous injustices, and I know it when I make the time to be still and take a look inside myself.

This is the faith I dearly want us to see as possible: a faith that seeks to worship our Creator in the Way of Jesus, who in the mystery of the Incarnation shows us the both/and of immanence and transcendence, matter and spirit, grace and works, lament and laughter, humility and power, sacrifice and comfort.

I want to share this faith with my children. I want to share it with the little church that meets weekly in my house as the sweetness of the bread and juice signal to us the goodness of a God who is at once with us, within us and beyond us. I want us to hold this faith with a certain gentleness because we have inherited a chastened tradition whose harms we must repent of even as we learn from its mercies. And I want us to remember that when we believe in the existence of more-than-just-matter, we break with the immanent frame that most immediately surrounds us but are in communion with the vast majority of the world, whose inhabitants still sense in their deep-down knowing that this world isn't all there is.

I want us to know we are made of dirt and filled with divine breath. This is a profound mystery that we carry with wonder: God is love. We are loved. We were made to love.

It sounds pretty, even naïve, but in truth it changes everything. This love is the realest Real there is. Sometimes it breaks in and catches us unawares, but always it's there moving and acting, just beyond the frame.

— *Cynthia Wallace,  
associate professor, St.  
Thomas More College,  
University of Saskatchewan* ❧



# Cross culture: three languages, one church

By Amy Rinner Waddell  
B.C. Correspondent

Six Vancouver Mennonite congregations launched the new year by singing, praying and worshipping together in three languages.

The service, held at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church on January 8, brought together 210 members from Point Grey Inter-Mennonite, Peace on 52<sup>nd</sup>, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Chinatown Peace, First United Spanish Mennonite and Vancouver Vietnamese Mennonite churches. About 40 more people joined online. Simultaneous translation from English into Spanish and Vietnamese was provided.

Sherbrooke pastor.

The speaker for the morning was Tim Kuepfer, pastor at Chinatown Peace Church, whose message, entitled “I have a dream,” was based on Luke 6:27-36. He encouraged listeners to live out their Anabaptist peace witness by tackling issues of affordable housing for young people, newcomers, Indigenous people and low income residents.

The Lucerna Community Choir, consisting of members from Point Grey and Chinatown Peace, provided special music, and Point Grey organized and led

Jorge Hoajaca is pastor at both Sherbrooke and First United Spanish Mennonite. He explains: “We strongly believe that if the community around the church is multicultural, multilingual and diverse, the church needs to become like that without losing the essence of our faith.”

Last fall the Sherbrooke group decided to invite the other English churches in Vancouver to join for worship in January. This was the first time all six congregations had met together. Organizers provided translation for all songs in three languages, as well as having lyrics for the languages on screen so no one would be left out.

“On January 8, the joy of all who attended was unmeasurable,” says Hoajaca. “We will continue pursuing the vision of one day to be one congregation with Sherbrooke Mennonite, FUSMC and the Vietnamese as the core of the new church.”

Janice Kreider, a member of Point Grey, commented, “Seeing people from the various congregations take part in the worship helps us to get to know each other. But the best way of getting to know each other across the Vancouver congregations is by joint endeavors, like the choir and the food bank. We are six small congregations, so if this vision is to move forward, we will need to get to know and trust each other and work together.”

Plans are for FUSMC, Sherbrooke and the Vietnamese congregations to continue to meet together at New Years, Easter, Pentecost, in September, Thanksgiving and Advent. There will be another MC B.C. multi-congregation worship service at Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond on Feb. 26, the day after the MC B.C. annual meeting, with Doug Klassen and Jeanette Hanson of Mennonite Church Canada speaking. ☸



PHOTO BY WALTER TOEWS:

*The Lucerna Community Choir, with singers from Point Grey and Chinatown Peace congregations, sings at the “Cross Culture” service in Vancouver.*

“We named the worship service ‘Cross Culture’ because we want to be a culture of the cross: surrender, humility, victory, freedom with Jesus at the centre; and we want to be a culture that is curious, respectful and celebrant of the various cultures we come from,” says Kevin Barkowsky,

communion. The event concluded with a pizza lunch.

Combining worship is nothing new for Vancouver churches. “We started having services six times a year and called them ‘Cross Culture: 3 languages = 1 church,’” says Barkowsky.

COVER STORY

# Conscientious

CM Staff

Photo released by Lockheed Martin

**F-35A Lightning II**

Length: 51.4 ft/15.7 m

Wingspan: 35 ft/10.7 m

Internal Fuel Capacity: 18,250 lbs/8,278 kg

Weapons Payload: 18,000 lbs/8,160 kg

Speed (Full Internal Weapons Load): Mach 1.6 (~1,200 mph)

Range: 2,200km

Source: [F35.com](http://F35.com)



- **\$27 billion:** Canada's planned National Defense spending for the current fiscal year
- **\$1 billion:** Military aid committed to Ukraine by Canada since February 2022

Source: Government of Canada

**F**rom Dirk Willems loving his enemy in 1569 to Colombian Mennonites building peace today, Anabaptists have offered a bold peace witness. But being a peace church is complicated.

Anabaptists got violent in Münster in the 1500s, they mounted armed self-defence units (*Selbstschutz*) in Ukraine in the early 1900s, many enlisted in World War II and some Mennonites are signing up to fight in Myanmar today. Our track record is mixed.

Today, in Canada, more and more of our tax dollars are spent on weapons. Mennonite response to our government's recent lethal spending spree—\$19 billion on fighter jets and \$406-million on a missile defense system for Ukraine—has been pallid. Among the social media accounts of numerous Mennonite and ecumenical organizations and leaders we searched, we found but one tweet about the announced purchase of F-35 jets in January (from the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada Peace and Justice Office).

So we asked for comment. How should we, as people of peace, respond to the purchase of F-35s and the missile system?

### Encouragement

We continue to encourage the Canadian government to invest more money in supporting peacebuilding and address the root causes of conflict, rather than increase military spending. Through our work, we see the vital and lifegiving examples of conflict prevention, community mediation . . . spaces of alternative justice that all contribute to a more peaceful world.

—**Anna Vogt**, *co-director, MCC Canada's Peace and Justice Office*

### Spending

I object to us spending billions of dollars on fighter jets when we have a housing crisis in Canada. . . . We have a health crisis, we have an education crisis. . . . [And] what is our responsibility outside our own country with creating equity?

—**Geraldine Balzer**, *moderator, Mennonite Church Canada*

### Jesus

First, we need to be vocal about the injustice of prioritizing national defense over the much greater and more present

needs of so many people, both within Canada and around the world.

Second, we need to seek out ways to back up our vocal resistance with active demonstrations of a different way of being.

What is the government hoping that these fighter jets will accomplish? What does financial support of Ukraine's struggle against Russian invasion hope to change? And how might we, as Christians, accomplish similar goals, but in ways that embody the teaching of Jesus?

—**Jesse Nickel**, *professor, Columbia Bible College*

### Killing

I think people who are committed to peace need to rise up, protest and do their best to stop this mass spending [on] war. The F-35s are an assault weapon. Their main goal is to get away with killing people in other countries.

But we also need to look at how they kill Canadians. Why is the government choosing to spend billions of dollars on an assault plane when our healthcare system is literally crumbling? Our education system is crumbling and record numbers of people across Canada are using foodbanks."

—**Rachelle Friesen**, *Canada coordinator, Community Peacemaker Teams*

### Rationality

I suspect numerous Mennonites think fighter jets and a missile system for Ukraine are grossly expensive yet rational investments, particularly as the spectre of an irrational Putin looms large. There is also a sense of attachment to communities where Mennonites once lived in Ukraine now experiencing war. This will influence some to look at military purchases more favourably.

The question you pose, however, suggests some Mennonites feel a nagging sense that our pacifist beliefs might have something to ask of us. We can begin by asking: Why does it seem like war is so rational, and even the right thing to do in Ukraine? Why might we not be questioning Canada's military build-up?

I'd like to draw our attention to three powerful ideas that shape how we think about these things. First, in public commentary and everyday conversations, the war

in Ukraine is often discussed in terms of being a war against an irrational leader. The threat of a megalomaniac Vladimir Putin is often invoked.

When we justify Canada's support for war by focusing on a single, irrational leader, we follow a long-standing practice—also common in Europe's colonial wars—that anyone who stands against our way of seeing things is irrational. This keeps our attention on someone—whom we think we know, but don't actually—and their supposed psychological state, rather than looking at deeper causes of the war and its full costs on human life, the environment, etc.

A second common framing, which occurs in relation to war more generally today, is that war is necessary to provide humanitarian support. So-called "humanitarian war" offers a new take on just war.

In these cases, war is considered undesirable but necessary to achieve a greater good. Here our thinking is narrowed, and we forget there might be other ways to achieve good outcomes.

Finally, I think Mennonites in Canada might also have lingering ideas that Canada is a benign state and its military is primarily used for peacekeeping. When I returned to Canada in 2012 after living in the U.S. for numerous years I was quite surprised to find that students in my peace and conflict studies class were unfamiliar with the term counter-insurgency and unaware that Canada was engaged in counter-insurgency efforts in Afghanistan. I looked further into media coverage and found the framing suggested Canada was engaged in peacekeeping, which was clearly not the case.

Peacekeeping perceptions may mean Mennonites have not grappled with the idea that Canada's military might fight messy, terrible wars with problems and costs far beyond the financial numbers.

—Reina Neufeldt, *peace and conflict studies professor, Conrad Grebel University College*

## Enemies

Our starting point in this conversation should be the words of Jesus, who calls us to "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. . . ." Fighter jets and

missiles do not show love to the enemy, nor do they provide real, long-term security.

We respond by putting on the "full armor of God" (Ephesians 6), recognizing that the human struggle we see is driven by powers of darkness and spiritual forces of evil. We respond by praying with the understanding that the battle is spiritual and must be fought in God's strength.

We can respond in practical ways with humanitarian and spiritual aid as many agencies, including those from our Mennonite churches, are doing in Ukraine. We can respond by appealing to our political leaders, reminding them that planes and missiles destroy lives, infrastructure and the environment, that spending billions preparing for war could be better spent on diplomacy, health care, peace education, green energy, reconciliation, infrastructure and other life-giving projects.

**"We are thrilled to announce today that Canada has selected the F-35. . . ."**

**"Lockheed Martin describes the F-35 as 'the most lethal . . . fighter aircraft in the world.'"**

—Hon. Anita Anand, Minister of National Defence

We can protest and join peace groups and alliances such as the No Fighter Jets campaign, Conscience Canada and World Beyond War.

From a human perspective it might appear to make sense to defend ourselves with fighter jets and defend the Ukrainian people with a missile system, but as people of peace who take their cues from the One who has initiated a different Kingdom we are called to respond differently to the dominant narrative.

We need to recognize we are not in Ukraine, and thus our objection to missiles for their army may sound callous and indifferent. But we also know that violence tends to create more violence. Loving our enemies means we sympathize not only with Ukrainian parents, spouses and

children who lose loved ones but equally with Russians who suffer loss.

We respond rooted in the understanding that all peoples are created in God's image, that God loves all of his creation and that life is sacred.

Will our responses and actions stop fighter jet purchases or keep missiles out of Ukraine? Not likely. But with prayer, persistence, truth telling and concrete actions, attitudes supporting dominant war narratives can shift and future wars may be prevented. So too can the dominant war narrative change if civil society demands it in large numbers. With God's help this can be accomplished. God wants his kingdom and his will to be done on earth. He continues to look to his church, his people of peace, to show the world what this looks like.

—Ernie Wiens, *retired farmer and war tax resister, La Salle, Man.*

## Peace tax

- 5.7 percent of the net federal income tax that Canadians pay goes to military spending (Conscience Canada, 2022)

In the face of societal pressure to see militarism as the only possible response to the actions of "enemies," Conscience Canada has provided a place for some of us to know that nonviolence is a power we can learn to access.

In a world where conscience can seem like a notion whose time is past, we know its power, and we intend to keep tapping into it.

While we decided to close the Peace Tax Trust Fund [which provided a mechanism for people to redirect the portion of their federal income tax dedicated to military expenditures], conscientious objectors are finding various ways to redirect the military portion of their taxes, including keeping their income below taxable levels and/or making donations to peace organizations.

Let your MP and other politicians know there are better ways than war and militarism by using our online Peace Tax Return, available on our website: [consciencecanada.ca](http://consciencecanada.ca). [This return does not include a financial component.]

—Jan Slakov, *Conscience Canada* ❧

# Steinbach writer explores ‘Mennotoba’

By Aaron Epp  
Senior Writer

**E**rin Koop Unger has travelled the world, but these days it’s Manitoba and the Mennonites who live there that have captured her imagination.

Koop Unger is the creator of Mennotoba.com, a website where she writes about Mennonite history and culture in the keystone province.

The 44-year-old Steinbach resident started the website in 2017 with her husband, Andrew Unger, as a companion to his satirical website, *The Daily Bonnet*. While *The Daily Bonnet* exists to poke fun at Mennonites, Mennotoba aims to tell true stories.

“We were both getting very interested in what it even means to be a Mennonite here,” Koop Unger says. “I know that’s a hotly-contested subject, but [we were] just sort of pushing at it and exploring it.”

A copywriter by profession, Koop Unger reflects on a variety of topics on the website. Some articles recap visits to historical sites and archives, while others reflect on lectures at academic conferences or books she’s reading.

“[It’s] a place to process and have a conversation about what I’m learning on this journey,” she says.

Additionally, Koop Unger has published more than 30 interviews with Mennonite writers. The website includes a list of resources for people interested in Mennonite history, a travel guide identifying significant historical sites, and a restaurant guide listing eateries that serve traditional Russian Mennonite fare.

Koop Unger previously wrote a travel blog called *Misadventurer* in which she reflected on the travels that have taken her and her husband to every continent except Antarctica. *Misadventurer* provided further inspiration for Mennotoba.

“We were travelling and learning things about other cultures [by] spending time elsewhere, and it always made me curious about my own story,” she says. “I didn’t really understand Steinbach and Mennonites, and I really should—I’m a Mennonite from here.”

Although she is descended from Russian Mennonite immigrants, Koop Unger’s family didn’t talk about that history when she was growing up. She was raised on a dairy farm situated between the predominantly Mennonite communities of Kleefeld and Grunthal, and her family attended an evangelical church.

When she married Andrew 20 years ago, the couple attended an Evangelical Mennonite Conference church where Andrew’s father was the pastor. In recent years, they’ve transferred their membership to Grace Mennonite Church, a Mennonite Church Manitoba congregation in Steinbach. They had no problem with the church they attended previously, but were inspired to attend Grace by the things they were discovering while

exploring their history.

“We were learning about Mennonites so much and the peace [stance] really spoke to us,” Koop Unger says. “It felt like a natural move and an honest move to sort of reclaim [being] Mennonite for ourselves. Grace Mennonite really aligned with that.”

Mennotoba receives anywhere from 3,000 to 10,000 unique visitors each month, depending on how often Koop Unger posts. She doesn’t pay too much attention to the numbers, preferring instead to keep her head down and write. She does appreciate hearing from readers, though.

“I like having a place where I can bring these thoughts and ideas and present stuff and get either affirmed or corrected,” she says. “The people that connect with me because they read the blog are quite intelligent and it’s just a pleasure to have my thoughts read and responded to by people who are really thinking about it and exploring different facets of [being Mennonite].”



PHOTO BY ANDREW UNGER

*Erin Koop Unger, pictured last year at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach.*

One of those readers is Sharon Neufeld, a 67-year-old retiree who has followed the website for the past few years. The Winnipeg resident has Russian Mennonite ancestry, was raised in Steinbach and grew up speaking Low German, so many of her interests dovetail with Koop Unger's.

"I love Erin's [website] so much because she writes about Mennonite history but also her daily life, and I can relate to so many things that she writes about," Neufeld says. "I really respect her as a woman for putting her voice out there and doing what she does. It takes a lot of courage. And she's funny. She's so humorous."

Ralph Friesen, a retired marriage and family therapist who lives in Victoria, B.C., appreciates Mennotoba because Koop Unger's informal and personal writing style makes for an accessible way to explore Mennonite history.

"She writes as someone who is still trying to understand," says Friesen, 77, an amateur historian who has published three books. "She doesn't simply declare, 'I'm Mennonite and I know all about it.' She says, 'I'm Mennonite and I'm inquiring.' I love that attitude and it's interesting to read."

While talking about Mennotoba and the historical sites she's visited, Koop Unger recalls something her husband recommends: before travelling somewhere, you should read a book about your destination so that you can better appreciate your surroundings once you arrive.

The same thing applies when visiting historical sites in Manitoba, Koop Unger says. And if you don't have time to read a book, there just might be an article on Mennotoba.com that discusses the history of where you want to go.

"If you bring your knowledge of what happened in that place," she says, "the meaning kind of blooms out from there and it becomes even more exciting." ❧

# Soup to change the world

By Maria H. Klassen  
St. Catharines, Ont.

Thrift stores sell a remarkably wide range of items, and now the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) thrift store in St. Catharines sells one more. In November 2022, the MCC Christian Benefit Shop started selling a range of frozen soups produced by Raw Carrot, an innovative social enterprise.

The Raw Carrot Soup Enterprise started in Paris, Ont. in 2014 when Rebecca Sherbino and Colleen Graham responded to a need they saw to provide meaningful employment for people with disabilities who were reliant on social assistance. Employment opportunities for disabled people weren't always welcoming, and often didn't last long.

As Sherbino and Graham explain on the Raw Carrot website, their model is simple: "We use existing church kitchens, hire people on social assistance and create tasty gourmet soup."

They started at the Paris Presbyterian Church, where they are still headquartered. Individuals from the Ontario Disability Support Program were hired to peel, prepare, cook and package handcrafted gourmet soups. Fresh ingredients were sourced as locally as possible and were free of added preservatives. The soup is made in small batches and sold frozen, packed full of vegetables, lentils and other legumes. Sales from the soups fund the salaries of those working in the kitchens.

Raw Carrot has expanded to four church kitchens including the one at Stirling Avenue Mennonite in Kitchener, which has been used since 2018. This was part of a partnership between Raw Carrot and MCC. In addition to use of the Stirling kitchen, Raw Carrot soups are sold at all six MCC thrift stores in Ontario (St. Catharines, Leamington, Kitchener, New Hamburg, Elmira and Stouffville).

Raw Carrot has provided employment for 32 people with disabilities and mental illness. Total sales in the 2021 fiscal year were over \$160,000. These sales account

for 80 percent of the organization's income.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM ALBRECHT

**Trudy Enns and Tim Albrecht of the Christian Benefit Shop in St. Catharines highlight Raw Carrot soup packages in the store.**



Currently, Raw Carrot soup choices include: Signature Carrot, Flying Noodle (chunky chicken noodle), Veggie Mania, Loaded Potato and Bacon, Hearty Lentil and Barley, Mulligatawny, and Spicy-ish Sausage and Cabbage. These soups are mindful of dietary considerations such as gluten free, vegetarian/vegan and keto-friendly.

To buy these soups is to help people find meaningful employment in a welcoming atmosphere. ❧



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# Unexpected placement equips young woman for future service

Mennonite World Conference

**S**tephanie Setiawan from Sidoarjo, Indonesia, had no plan to go to Latin America. She applied for the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) International Volunteer Exchange Program in 2013-14, but the slot for her synod was already taken. The coordinators offered her a Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN) program placement in Colombia instead. As a result, she discovered a love for Latin culture and training for future service.

“I am so grateful to have served in Colombia,” she says. “There, God prepared me for serving at the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly in Indonesia,” this past summer, she says.

YAMEN is a joint program of MWC and MCC that places an emphasis on expanding the fellowship between churches in the Anabaptist tradition and developing young leaders.

“When I arrived [in Colombia], I didn’t speak any Spanish, and my host family could not speak English,” she says. “They were so committed to teaching me the language,” she says. “They explained Spanish words; if there were things, they showed them; if there’s an action, they acted it out for me. Every time we had free time, they gave it to conversation with me.”

Part of her YAMEN work took her to the neighbourhood Barrio Tokio in Pereira, Risaralda, which has a difficult reputation. “Never once did I feel afraid,” she says. “My interaction with children and parents is still fresh in my memory. I felt the peace of God in that place and the warmth of those people.”

After several months, Setiawan was able to speak and understand Spanish, but says, “They explained Spanish words . . . Every time we had free time, they gave it to conversation with me.”

“It would be great to meet more people from other cultures,” she says,



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPHANIE SETIAWAN

***Farewell party for Stephanie Setiawan, back row fifth from the right, after her YAMEN placement.***

as the YAMEN program introduced her to friends from around the world. She began to anticipate the MWC assembly in Indonesia, which her host mom told her about.

When Assembly 2022 arrived, Ary Rusdianto, the Indonesian language coordinator, turned to Setiawan, who now works as a web communications assistant for MWC. Spanish and Indonesian language interpreters were scarce, but she knew both languages.

“I’ve never been a translator,” she says. “I rarely talk in a big group. This is the biggest stage in my life. If I had an option, I would say no.” But friends encouraged her and helped her prepare.

“It was an honour to serve in this way,” she says of the opportunity to interpret the Assembly 2022 sermon of Spanish pastor José Rutilio Rivas into Indonesian. “I feel it is really important to have connections to people from around the world. When you embrace the differences and diversity you can grow, and your soul can be rich. There is always something good in another culture just waiting to learn.

“When you know someone from far away is praying for you, it will touch your heart,” she says. “It’s important for us to pray for our brother and sister around the world especially when you know they are facing difficulty.” ❧



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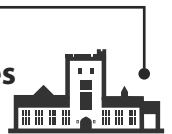
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Schools Directory featuring Canadian Mennonite University

# Two CMU alumni prove the value of creative veterinary care

By Myles Tiessen

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) graduates Jana Klassen ('20) and Esther Derksen ('16) are two biology majors who now work in the veterinary care field, though each have distinctive experiences and perspectives from their time at CMU.

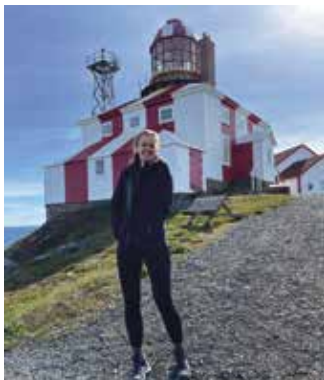
Klassen, third year student at Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon, came to CMU after a few years attending the University of Winnipeg. She says the smaller class sizes and close relationships with professors at CMU helped her excel academically.

Klassen cites her practicum placement at Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park Zoo as the most impactful aspect of attending CMU. The behind-the-scenes experience truly cemented her desire to become a veterinarian. "It's interesting to see the creativity that comes with providing veterinary care," she says.

Derksen, a veterinarian for the Province of Newfoundland, says her time at CMU gave her a perspective on veterinary care that she never expected. Because of CMU's interdisciplinary focus, she found as much value in philosophy and environmental studies as she did in her biology courses.

"As I'm fixing a cow, I think about what it means to the dairy and what that means for the dairy production in this province; then... about sustainable food systems," says Derksen.

Biology professor Dr. John Brubacher says that way of thinking is fundamental to scientific application. "People working in scientific careers (as in any other career) need to be able to explain what they're doing and why it matters—to other scientists, to the people they're serving, and the broader public," says Brubacher.



PHOTOS FROM CMU  
On the left is Esther Derksen and Jana Klassen is pictured on the right.



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# A real live piggy bank

By Linda Espenshade  
Mennonite Central Committee

In a small rural village in Uganda, a pig came to live on the farm of Mary Ilero and her husband Julius Egadu.

Ilero, the pig's primary caregiver, named her Friend.

Ilero and Egadu needed a friend. The couple argued a lot about not having enough money to feed and educate their three children. Egadu worked in construction, but there wasn't enough work.

They hoped Friend would help them, but they had no idea how much.

Friend gave birth to nine piglets in 2017. Ilero knew how to keep Friend and her piglets healthy because trainers from MCC partner Action for Peace and Development (APED) taught her and Egadu how

to feed them and medicate them before APED gave them the pig.

Ilero sold each of the piglets for about \$21, using the proceeds to buy a cow that she named Patience, who had a calf in 2018. Patience began producing milk that Ilero's children can drink, and that she used to make yogurt, cheese and butter. She kept the calf so that it, too, could eventually produce, but she could sell it for about \$160 as a yearling or about \$266 as an adult, if needed.

With Friend's second litter of nine piglets, Ilero bought a sewing machine. And with the productive sow's third litter of 10, she took sewing lessons.

Now she can sew clothing for her family,

including a fourth child born in 2019, and she can make clothing to sell. Once or twice a week, she makes clothing for customers.

With more income, she can buy some beef and fish to feed her children, aged 3 to 14, in addition to greens, grains and beans, and she can help pay for their school fees. She's unwilling to eat her own pigs though.

"I love them," she says.

The gains kept growing. With funds from Friend's fourth litter of piglets, she bought a grinder to make nut butter from the groundnuts (peanuts) she was already growing. In town, she can sell 2.5 kilograms of groundnut butter for about \$2.15.



*These piglets were ready for Mary Ilero to sell in February 2022.*

MCC PHOTOS BY MATTHEW LESTER



*Mary Ilero holds dresses that she has sewn as part of her seamstress business outside her house near Soroti City, Uganda. She was able to buy the sewing machine and take sewing lessons through the proceeds she earned from one pig and its litters.*



*Mary Ilero was able to turn one pig and its litters of piglets into ongoing opportunities to make more money through selling her sewing, making nut butter and raising cows.*

With Friend's third and fourth litter, and even more piglets from Peace, one of Friend's offspring, Ilero and Egadu began to build a cement block house to replace their thatch-roofed clay house. It even has a room for her sewing and record-keeping.

"I was surprised that I now have an office from the proceeds of the piglets," Ilero says.

It's not only her earnings that have grown. In addition to learning about raising pigs, Ilero and Egadu benefited from APED training on resolving conflict. They now work together and plan together. "We join our hands together," Ilero says.

And where she once waited on her husband to provide, she now can earn enough herself to buy food, oil or other things she needs.

"I have changed," she says.

She delights in surprising her husband with a juice or a wrap, known locally as a rolex, during her trips to town. She can buy material and make clothes for her husband, saying, "I can even tell him, 'This Christmas, you will not buy anything. It is me.'" ❧

### News brief

#### Conference to offer Anabaptist training to growing Vietnamese church



Evangelical Mennonite Church Vietnam (EMCV) is experiencing tremendous growth. Many new churches have been established and there is an urgent need for Anabaptist training for new pastors. EMCV has invited 90 new pastors to an Anabaptist Training Conference in Ho Chi Minh City, Feb 8-11, 2023.

Mennonite Church Canada International Witness wants to raise \$6,000 to help these new Vietnamese pastors travel to the conference.

Garry Janzen, Kevin Barkowsky, Nhien Pham and Jeanette Hanson will be travelling from Canada for the event.

To contribute, contact [finance@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:finance@mennonitechurch.ca) or 1-866-888-6785 ext. 255.

—MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

### News brief

#### Winnipeg exhibit looks at moments of loss



"Minimum wage meals," pictured here, is the work of artist Barb Bottle and is part of "Grief and Grievance: Sites of Change," an exhibit currently on display at the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) Gallery in Winnipeg. The exhibit features the art of Bottle and Briony Haig. An MHC release says the works challenge visitors to "share in personal and public moments of loss and trauma; worry and concern." The exhibit runs until March 4.

—CM STAFF

### News brief

#### Anabaptism at 500 renames Bible project

HARRISONBURG, VA.—MennoMedia has given the name *Anabaptist Community Bible* to the commemorative Bible it is developing to celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of the Anabaptist movement coming up in 2025. The official logo for Anabaptism at 500 has also been released and will serve as the branding for the project.

The *Anabaptist Community Bible* will use the Common English Bible translation and will contain annotations to scripture passages submitted by biblical scholars, Anabaptist historians and five hundred study groups from a diverse group of Anabaptist faith communities. Study groups are forming, but more are needed. Anyone who is part of an Anabaptist group is encouraged to form a Bible study group and sign up at [AnabaptismAt500.com](http://AnabaptismAt500.com).



"The Anabaptist movement started with a group of earnest Christians reading scripture together," said John Roth, project director. "We hope that this invitation to read the Bible together, and the *Anabaptist Community Bible* that results from the process, will bring new life and vitality to the Anabaptist church today."

—MENNOMEDIA



## Calendar

### British Columbia

- Feb. 24:** LEAD conference at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond. Theme: "Centred-set church." Speaker: Mark Baker.
- Feb. 25:** MC B.C. annual general meeting, at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond.
- March 4-5:** Lenten Vespers with Abendmusik Choir at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, 7:30 p.m. (4) and St. Philip's Anglican Church, 7:30 p.m. (5). Donations to Menno Hall project at UBC.
- April 21-23:** MC B.C. youth impact retreat, at Camp Squeah, Hope.
- May 6:** MC B.C. women's day.
- May 21:** MC B.C. arts fundraiser, at Heritage Hall, Vancouver.
- Oct. 13-15:** MC B.C. women's retreat.

### Alberta

- March 17-18:** MC Alberta annual delegate sessions, at Springridge Mennonite Church, Pincher Creek.
- April 22:** MC Alberta all committee meeting, at Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury.

### Manitoba

- Until March 4:** Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery at CMU exhibit "Grief and Grievance: Sites of Change" featuring "Protest" by Briony Haig and "The Grief Project" by Barb Bottle.
- Feb. 19:** "New Blood," a play about reconciliation featuring poetry, music, and contemporary and traditional dancing, at Jubilee Place, Winnipeg. For more information, visit [mennochurch.mb.ca/newblood](http://mennochurch.mb.ca/newblood).
- Feb. 22:** CMU virtual open house, online at 6:00 p.m. Register at [cmu.ca/future/experience](http://cmu.ca/future/experience).
- March 3-4:** MC Manitoba annual gathering, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg. Theme: "Re-imagining Church Together." For more information visit [mennochurch.mb.ca/gathering](http://mennochurch.mb.ca/gathering).
- March 10:** CMU campus visit day, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Register at [cmu.ca/future/experience](http://cmu.ca/future/experience).
- March 28:** CMU open house at 10:00 a.m. with come-and-go

guided tours at the campus. Register at [cmu.ca/future/experience](http://cmu.ca/future/experience).

- March 29:** CMU virtual open house, online at 6:00 p.m. Register at [cmu.ca/future/experience](http://cmu.ca/future/experience).
- April 26:** CMU virtual open house, online at 6:00 p.m. Register at [cmu.ca/future/experience](http://cmu.ca/future/experience).
- July 14-15:** The Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies and the University of Manitoba present "The Ruslander Mennonites: War dislocation and new beginnings" centenary conference. The event will mark the centenary of the arrival Ruslander from the Soviet Union to Canada.
- July 15:** "Singing our Journey: Sangerfest 2023," at the Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall. Sign up to sing in the mass choir celebrating the centenary of the Russlaender immigration to Canada. For more information, visit [mhsc.ca/soj](http://mhsc.ca/soj).

### Ontario

- Until Feb. 28:** Brubacher House Poetry Project seeks German Mennonite poetry written in German or Pennsylvania Dutch. Email submissions and an author statement to [brubacherpoetryproject@gmail.com](mailto:brubacherpoetryproject@gmail.com). The project will culminate with a public reading in the spring.
- January to May:** MCC Ontario presents its "Applied peacebuilding skills certificate program" online, every other Wednesday from mid-January to May. For more information, visit [www.mcc.ca](http://www.mcc.ca).
- Feb. 2:** Conrad Grebel University College Sawatsky Lecture, "The Power of Misfitting: Disrupting Sinner, Saint, and Super Crip Controlling Images" with speaker Darla Schumm. In-person and livestreamed. Register at [grebel.ca/sawatsky](http://grebel.ca/sawatsky).
- Feb. 6-13:** MCC Ontario's Great Winter Warm-up encourages comforter making. To join volunteers at the material resource centre in New Hamburg, sign up at <https://bit.ly/3HYXVkk>.
- Feb. 7:** "Connected to God's Creation" online event 6:30-8:00 p.m. hosted by Wendy Janzen, MCEC Eco-Minister, to explore how yards can be sanctuaries for bees and other pollinators.
- Feb. 28:** MC Eastern Canada presents "Becoming a restorative church: Theology, leadership and

accountability, for pastors, chaplains and congregational leaders, in English and French, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Learn more at [mcec.ca/events](http://mcec.ca/events).

- March 9-11:** MCC Ontario presents "Rooted in right relationship: With one another and creation," a peace and justice student seminar, in Ottawa. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3Wzxcui>.
- March 18:** Conrad Grebel University College and the University of Waterloo March break open house for prospective students. Learn more at [grebel.ca/events](http://grebel.ca/events).
- April 1:** Menno Singers presents "Rachmaninov's Vespers," at Trillium Lutheran, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit [www.mennosingers.com](http://www.mennosingers.com).
- April 18:** MC Eastern Canada presents "Living the Gospel as a diverse group of believers," an online workshop on cultural integration, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Learn more at [mcec.ca/events](http://mcec.ca/events).
- April 28-29:** MC Eastern Canada annual church gathering, at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, in English and French. Learn more at [mcec.ca/events](http://mcec.ca/events).
- May 5:** Menno Singers presents its "Spring Concert," at St. Jacobs

Mennonite Church, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit [www.mennosingers.com](http://www.mennosingers.com).

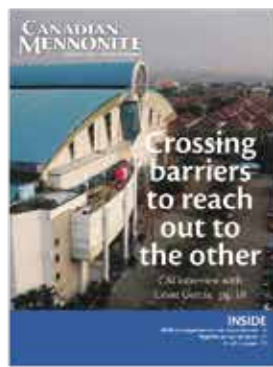
- May 11:** MC Eastern Canada presents "Becoming a restorative church: Embodying our safe church policy." A hybrid event, in English and French, at 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, and on Zoom, from 7 to 9 p.m. Learn more at [mcec.ca/events](http://mcec.ca/events).
- June 3:** MC Eastern Canada presents "Being a restorative church: Creating brave and accessible space." A hybrid event, at Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden, with French on Zoom, from 8:30 a.m. to noon. Learn more at [mcec.ca/events](http://mcec.ca/events).

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

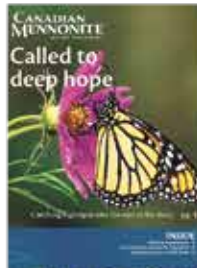


## Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
Feb. 13 <i>Focus on Education</i>	Jan. 30
Feb. 27 <i>Focus on Camps</i>	Feb. 13
March 13	Feb. 27
March 27 <i>Focus on the Arts</i>	March 13
April 10	March 27
April 24 <i>Focus on Books &amp; Resources</i>	April 10
May 8	April 24
May 22 <i>Focus on Mental Health</i>	May 8
June 5	May 18
June 14 <i>Digital Issue</i>	June 5
July 3	June 19
July 12 <i>Digital Issue</i>	July 3
July 31	July 17
Aug. 9 <i>Digital Issue</i>	July 31
Aug. 28	Aug. 14
Sept. 6 <i>Digital Issue</i>	Aug. 28
Sept. 25	Sept. 11



**T**hank you for your financial support in 2022. Together, you and other generous donors gave \$168,000 to equip us with the tools to move forward, stay relevant and build relationships across the church. Our priority is to connect with the passions and pains of readers, to ask lively questions and to find beautiful stories of faith within our pews and around the world.



We couldn't do it without you.  
Thank you!

**CANADIAN  
MENNONITE**

