

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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EDITORIAL

Structure and identity

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



After Gathering 2019 last summer, Doug Klassen, then newly hired as executive minister of Mennonite Church

Canada, sat down with me for a chat in the Abbotsford, B.C., airport. Amid the chatter of travellers and loudspeaker announcements, we considered the work ahead for our church. We talked about structure and identity.

Since the denominational restructuring that happened in October 2017, there has been a lot of sorting through priorities, functions and roles. Part of the re-organizing meant a new decision-making body called the Joint Council. Representatives from each of the five regional churches serve on this board, working on behalf of the nationwide body. They have met, both virtually and in person, and made decisions around priorities and policies in the new reality. (*You can see the members of that group and get links to the meeting minutes through the MC Canada website at mennonitechurch.ca.*)

The Joint Council last met on Jan. 25 and 26 in Waterloo, Ont. Their time together included conversations and decisions on a variety of topics. They appointed representatives to the Mennonite World Conference Global Youth Summit, to be held in Indonesia in 2021, and approved a new human resources policy, “On Speaking Publicly and On Individual Acts of Conscientious Civil Disobedience.”

In terms of finances, the nationwide and regional churches have seen a decline in donations and they are

responding with careful spending and thinking around “a more comprehensive engagement approach,” in the words of Calvin Quan, who serves as moderator. Conversations are happening about how to fund the work of International Witness, given that the previously proposed model of “support teams” has not yielded the necessary funds. Also at the meeting, the Executive Staff Group, comprising the regional church executive ministers, brought a proposal for a study on the ongoing sustainability of the denomination.

They discussed a nationwide communication strategy for the larger church, which includes a continuing partnership with *Canadian Mennonite* and the creation of a new website hub. In mid-February, the hub was launched for the five regional churches and MC Canada, with plans to help congregations create their individual—though connected—websites.

Joint Council is also looking beyond denominational borders and considering how it works with outside partners and ecumenical organizations. How does MC Canada build and maintain relationships with Mennonites in other parts of the world? Presently there is exploration around projects in Burkina Faso and Congo with the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission.

In the Future Directions process leading up to the new shape of our denomination, nationwide conversations included a lot of talk around form and structure—which feels like a familiar Mennonite go-to. But in last year’s airport conversation, and again

recently, Doug honed in on what he calls “the identity piece” for the church. “Our big task now is to talk about substance. What’s filling that form?” he asked. Who are we as a church? What is the church’s vocation and how are we living into that?

That is the topic for a study conference planned for Oct. 22 to 24 in Ontario. Sara Wenger Shenk, who formerly served as president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., will help participants reflect on the identity of the church, with the topic “Rethinking dinner: The essence of church.” Put it on your calendar.

Grieving and prayer

As we live in the season of Lent, there is much to ponder and grieve.

The Covid-19 virus continues to spread, causing fear and death in new places around the world. It has brought out stories of both heroism and bigotry. We do not know what is ahead.

Canadians have seen several weeks of protests in connection with the proposed liquid natural gas pipeline on Wet’suwet’en land in British Columbia. The story gets more and more complex as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people take sides amid calls for justice and concern for the environment. What does the way to reconciliation look like for the country and for us as individuals?

Many people were shocked to learn that sexual abuse allegations have been brought against beloved humanitarian Jean Vanier, best known for his founding of the international L’Arche communities. How do we respond when our heroes fail?

You and I are invited to bring these struggles and pains before our Creator, who listens and is present in difficult times. As we walk in this season that leads to the cross, pray with me: “Lord, have mercy. Your kingdom come, your will be done.” ☩

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Christian pilgrims wave palm branches as they enter the Lions' Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem in the annual Palm Sunday procession, March 24, 2013. Our Palm Sunday feature begins on page 4.

PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/RRODRICKBELLER

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Please send all material to be considered for publication to

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO: Canadian Mennonite,
490 Dutton Drive, Unit C5, Waterloo, ON, N2L 6H7

Mission statement: To educate, inspire, inform, and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada as it shares the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. We do this through an independent publication and other media, working with our church partners.

Published by Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service. Regional churches and MC Canada appoint directors to the board and support 38 percent of Canadian Mennonite's budget.

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One-Year Subscription Rates

Canada: \$46 + tax (depends on province where subscriber lives)

U.S.: \$68 International (outside U.S.): \$91.10

Subscriptions/address changes

(e-mail) office@canadianmennonite.org

(phone) 1-800-378-2524 ext. 221

PALM SUNDAY FEATURE

‘Marvellous . . . yet so repulsive’

Either way, ‘the only visible sign of God in the world is the cross’

By Anita Fast



PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/RRODRICKBELLER

A Palestinian flag waves among palm branches held by Christian pilgrims entering the Lions' Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem in the annual Palm Sunday procession, March 24, 2013.

Soren Kierkegaard once famously said, “Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”

So often it's only after we've lived through something that we can look back and articulate what was going on; then we see the choices we made

more clearly and understand better the way things unfolded. We could hear this quote as an affirmation that it seems we're often destined to go through life without a road map. Now “through a glass darkly,” but only in some unforeseeable future “face-to-face.”

I'm quite certain that Kierkegaard, being the

philosopher that he was, wrote volumes of commentary behind that simple quote. And because he was a Christian theologian, I also suspect that he knew very well that God doesn't actually work in straight lines—from past to present, or present to past, from here to there, from point A to point B.

The time from Palm Sunday to Easter is a week full of future infiltrations and past reverberations—a rather topsy-turvy timeline—which is what happens to time when God gets a hold of it. We can't help but enter Holy Week knowing what's coming.

Marvellous

Even the first hearers of Luke's Gospel, listening to the story of Jesus' procession on a colt into Jerusalem, only heard it post-Easter. Harry Maier, a professor of New Testament at the Vancouver School of Theology, teaches that the gospel is always about Easter, and the historical Jesus in the gospels is only there because of Easter.

As are we.

But let's not rush ahead just yet. We are here, in this "today" fraught with

unannounced.

Passages from Psalm 118, Zechariah 9, Habakkuk 2 and others all linger in the air as Luke tells the story. Every allusion to the larger arc of God's movement in the world layers meaning upon meaning.

Luke, quite intentionally, narrates the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion, pulling on threads known to his listeners from their own sacred scripture. Drawing from the past to help interpret the present, the early community of Jewish Jesus-followers couldn't miss what was being proclaimed: this Jesus of Nazareth isn't just any ordinary Jew, but is the One anticipated since the psalmist sang and the prophets prophesied.

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord! God's steadfast love endures forever!

As Jesus enters Jerusalem on a colt, Zechariah's depiction of the same scene brings to mind a vision of a pre-monarchical time, when kingship is God's alone, and leadership comes from the people. Jesus, too, proclaimed the kingdom of God, an offence to every earthly empire, a declaration that gave

expectation of the crowds? Why provoke the anger of those in control who know that hope can be the most dangerous of all powers?

Jesus flatly rejects this plea, saying: *"If these were silent, the stones would shout out!"* His retort echoes Habakkuk, the seventh-century prophet, who similarly invokes the voices of stones. *"Woe to those who build a city with bloodshed and establish a town by injustice!"* Habakkuk warned. *"The stones of the wall will cry out"* (Habakkuk 2:11-12).

We've heard it said that you can get neither blood nor water from a stone, yet here we find that, if push comes to shove, you will hear the cry for justice ring from their hard yet opened lips.

This was no ordinary Jew, and no ordinary entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. Rather, it was a glimmer of past hope and a promise of coming salvation from injustice. Eternity pressed into one moment—this moment, here and now—as we, too, wave our branches and shout our praises, all the more confident knowing that there are talking stones at our feet!

Yet so repulsive

Stones took on new significance for me during the years I spent in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories while serving with Christian Peacemaker Teams. Daily, I saw young boys with stones in hand facing off against Israeli soldiers who were holding guns, sound grenades and tear gas. Far too often, I scrambled over the piles of rubble left after Palestinian homes were demolished by the Israeli military because the family had dared to build on their own land without a permit—a permit granted only by the Israeli military, and almost impossible to get. More than once, I took stones in my own hands to clear the land for rebuilding.

It was there that I saw how hearts so easily harden into stone out of fear and despair, and how stones do cry out against silence in the face of injustice. I saw how precious hope and faith are when one is standing at cliff's edge, and how the *"stone that the builders rejected"*

On the day after his palm-strewn procession, when Jesus quotes this second stony verse from Psalm 118, he is, of course, referring to his own rejection and vindication.

whatever today brings for each of us, with a confession on our lips similar to the confession made by the crowd in Luke's story. That cry echoes from even further back in time, when Psalm 118 gave word to the song of praise and expectation: *"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!"* We wave our palm branches for this victory parade, knowing that it is actually a funeral procession. Or is it the other way around?

But even Kierkegaard can't pull one over on the Creator of the universe. In God's time, the future doesn't only defragment the present, but the past also has a way of breaking out of the prison of bygones and showing up

the Romans every excuse they needed to execute him.

"Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!" the people cry with unbridled hope and expectation (with the implicit side whisper: "rather than in the name of Caesar!").

And so, perhaps afraid that this clear show of counter-imperial praise might raise the ire of the Roman military, who are all over the city on this Jewish festival, some fearful yet realistic Pharisees in the crowd say to Jesus, *"Order your disciples to be silent!"*

Like many of us, they know that expectant joy can be risky. Who can guarantee that things will turn out the way we have planned? Why raise the

becomes the “chief cornerstone” in the creation of any livable future. That is another image from Psalm 118 finding its voice anew in Luke’s passion narrative.

On the day after his palm-strewn procession, when Jesus quotes this second stony verse from Psalm 118, he is, of course, referring to his own rejection and vindication. It appears that Jesus is the stone that the builders rejected. But the psalm itself is more ambiguous. The stone could be either an individual person, or it could be the collective people—a distinction often ambiguous in ancient writing. Indeed, even Jesus collectivizes himself when he declares that what we do to the least of those around us, we do to him.

The more the modern Israeli state ignores the plight of the Palestinian people it displaces and destroys, the more their cries shatter the silence and the justice of their pleas demands response. We see it time and again: Indigenous people in Canada, African-Americans in the United States, marginalized populations in civil and religious communities. These are stones that the builders of these institutions and nations reject or marginalize. They will become a chief cornerstone in whatever future will unfold, however the future unfolds.

This is God’s doing, the psalmist sings; it is marvellous in our eyes!

It is a strange and wondrous thing how, through rejection, God establishes salvation. Isn’t that precisely what we proclaim this week as we slow down our pace and move step by step towards the cross? Isn’t that precisely what allows us to name the week between Palm Sunday and Easter, a week fraught with every possible betrayal, violence and murder, as “holy”?

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one of the few Christian leaders who stood up against Hitler’s regime in Nazi Germany, wrote in his reflections on Lent and Easter: “That, indeed, is the marvellous—and yet for many people so repulsive—theme of the Bible, that the only visible sign of God in the world is the cross. Christ is not gloriously

transported from earth into heaven. He must instead go to the cross. And precisely there, where the cross stands, the resurrection is near. Precisely here, where all lose faith in God, where all despair about the power of God, God is fully there, and Christ is alive and near.”

It is this that makes something holy. Not, as we often imagine, the purity or morality or goodness of it. It is this future that rewrites the present, injecting its refracted light backwards into whatever funeral procession or victory parade we may be travelling on right now. Holiness comes with no guarantees or return policy. There is no assurance that things will turn out the way we long for. There is just the promise—sometimes only a nearly forgotten whisper coming from the horizon into which we fix our gaze—that nothing is lost forever. God’s steadfast love endures.

This horizon doesn’t make all things putrid smell sweet. It doesn’t make all the wrongs, right. It doesn’t take the sting out of betrayal, the heartache out

of loss, the tragedy out of the incomprehensible.

But if the stones have anything to say about it, silence will never be the last word, because in the brokenness there isn’t just the hope of wholeness, but holiness. As a wise rabbi once said, “There is no heart as whole as a broken heart.”

Or as Canadian songwriter Leonard Cohen intoned: “If it be your will / That a voice be true / From this broken hill / I will sing to you. / From this broken hill / All your praises they shall ring / If it be your will / To let me sing.”

“Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!” ❧



Anita Fast attends Langley (B.C.) Mennonite Fellowship and works at the Vancouver School of Theology. Adapted from a sermon she preached at Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship on April 14, 2019.

❧ For discussion

1. What does it mean to understand life backwards? What experiences have you lived through that seemed confusing at the time but now can be better understood? If you had been cheering at Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, how would you have interpreted the event?
2. In what ways do Palm Sunday and Holy Week celebrate both hope and despair? How does this combination of hope and despair make Easter a complicated celebration? Is Easter a more important celebration than Christmas?
3. The Pharisees were worried about the expectant joy of the crowds at the time of Jesus’ triumphal entry and they tried to suppress it. Are there times when waving palm branches and shouting praise can be risky for us? Do struggles against injustice also have moments of expectant joy?
4. Anita Fast declares that something is holy not because it is pure, moral or good, but because God is there in the midst of despair. Do you agree? Can you think of examples of finding holiness in brokenness? How can we express the hope of the resurrection in the midst of life’s brokenness?

—By Barb Draper

See related Palm Sunday resources at www.commonword.ca/go/1463

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/// Readers write

✉ Reader pans new Trumpian Middle East peace plan, favours 'one state' solution

Having worked in the private agriculture sector with various Middle East countries, including Israel, for 45 years, I submit that one should be pessimistic about the newly proposed American peace plan for the region. It's high on patronizing cosmetics and low in reality. It's also quite one-sided.

Conflict has been with us ever since life began on this planet. As humans evolve, we think that we can figure ways to make the violence unnecessary, but that doesn't seem to be the case so far. It also seems sometimes that we in the West have no clue about the history of this region, and if we do, we show no respect.

Any "two-state" solution will only continue the festering bickering and fighting that has characterized this region since the modern State of Israel was formed in 1948. The surrounding Arab countries and the Palestinians need to accept that the Israelis won the war to possess these lands and they (the Arabs) lost. But the Israelis and Americans need to realize that they can't call themselves democracies and continue to ignore the dignity and basic needs of a large portion of their population.

It seems abundantly clear to me, though, that "one state"—made up of Israel plus the Golan Heights, the West Bank and Gaza—is the only realistic solution. This would increase the Arab population of Israel from 1.84 million to 5.8 million, or about 50 percent of the total.

Now the task is to make it a truly democratic one, with real equal rights to all its citizens. And citizenship should be granted to all residents. All Jews, Christians and Muslims should have free access to their respective religious sites, as in any other civilized country.

RICHARD PENNER, SASKATOON

✉ "'Inclusivity' will always 'silence' some voices'

Re: "Listening to those who have left," Jan. 20, page 15.

A common refrain in public conversations is how viewpoints are becoming more polarized. So conversations about sexuality in the church, conversations about politics at family gatherings, and conversations about the environment and economics on social media all end with each side more deeply

entrenching their positions.

I was reminded of this reality when I read Will Braun's article, where he refers to "John Reimer," who left Mennonite Church Canada because he felt that his voice had not been respected or considered in church conversations, particularly in a church that prided itself on being inclusive.

Reimer felt that "these tendencies have grown worse over time," which may be true in the very short term of social media, maybe. But this view neglects the reality that the respect given in previous church conversations were at the cost of completely silencing numerous voices. What did we expect when previously rejected individuals and groups began claiming and receiving space in congregations and church leadership?

Viewpoints have rightly come into conflict, and we are not through with this phase yet. I would argue that a healthy approach to "inclusivity" will always "silence" some voices in some contexts. At its best, inclusivity always privileges the most vulnerable and appropriately restrains those who presently and historically have had the most power.

I feel shut out of conversations sometimes; at other times I feel pressure to think a certain way. This has not become worse. There are just more voices in the church.

I can understand that some don't feel able or interested to stay in the church in light of this, but I would suggest that such conflict is presently a sign of success, and not failure, although the work is certainly not done.

DAVID DRIEDGER, WINNIPEG

The writer is a minister at First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

✉ 'What does the Earth require of you?'

Some may know the call of Micah, the Old Testament prophet: "What does the Lord require of you? Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God."

Today there is another call: "What does the Earth require of you?"

One answer might be in these words by Nikos Kazantzakis, from *The Saviors of God* (1923): "Let us unite, let us hold each other tightly, let us merge our hearts, let us create—so long as the warmth of this Earth endures, so long as no earthquakes, cataclysms, icebergs or comets come to destroy us—let us create for Earth a brain and a heart, let us give a human meaning to the superhuman struggle."

RAY HAMM, NEUBERGTHAL, MAN.

✉ Lack of frankness—and teaching—on baptism criticized

Re: “Re-learning to swim in baptismal waters,” Jan. 6, page 24.

I suggest that neither the students nor the pastors are being entirely frank about reasons young people are not being baptized.

It has been a very long time since I have heard any minister mention the devil, hell or eternal punishment. Heaven also comes up quite rarely. That being so, we may no longer be concerned with salvation in the traditional sense, and so the symbolism of baptism ceases to be relevant.

However, no one is willing to say this directly.

The young still like the socialization, the moral teachings and discussions, so they want to remain

part of the church.

EDWARD J. WIEBE (ONLINE COMMENT)

I’m pretty shocked at how this article—and seemingly this denomination—is concerned about baptism without the why. The ritual is simply an outward sign of an inward cleansing. Have we proved conversion? Have we truly sought Jesus? Does this bear witness in our lives?

That is the precursor to baptism. It marks the ones who have chosen to put off the old man and become a new creature. May we ever seek the one who saves. If we are truly cleansed, we can’t help but joyfully join the church of God.

Let’s pray we choose rightly in that regard.

BILLY HOLDEMAN-BASS (ONLINE COMMENT)

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Charles—Xavier Alvin Ray (b. Feb. 2, 2020), to Alvin Charles and Sue Schwartzentruber, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Marriages

Aparicio/Redekopp—Rafael Aparicio and Danielle Redekopp, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Jan. 4, 2020.

Blacklock/Rahier—Michael Blacklock and Lauren Rahier (Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.), in Saskatoon, Jan. 4, 2020.

Deaths

Bingeman—Dora (nee Duff), 90 (b. Oct. 20, 1929; d. Jan. 9, 2020), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Blair—James (Jim), 70 (b. Aug. 24, 1949; d. Sept. 8, 2019), Rockway Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Braun—George, 84 (b. June 28, 1935; d. Jan. 19, 2020), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

De Vehr—George, 82 (b. Dec. 3, 1937; d. Feb. 2, 2020), Springstein Mennonite, Man.

Dyck—Heinz, 68 (b. April 7, 1951; d. Jan. 25, 2020), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Dyck—Peter, 88 (b. Oct. 31, 1931; d. Jan. 20, 2020), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Enns—Menno, 87 (b. April 29, 1932; d. Jan. 16, 2020), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Goerzen—Katharina (Woelk), 104 (b. Jan. 4, 1916; d. Feb. 10, 2020), Leamington United Mennonite Church, Ont.

Gosselink—Mary Karen (nee Smith), 81 (b. April 22, 1938; d. Oct. 17, 2019), Rockway Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Hamm—Katie, 90 (b. June 14, 1929; d. Jan. 23, 2020), Berghaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

Heppner—Art, 94 (b. Feb. 28, 1925; d. Jan. 22, 2020), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Leis—Lydiann (nee Zehr), 83 (b. March 29, 1936; d. Jan. 28, 2020), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Rempel—Victor Jacob, 86 (b. Sept. 5, 1933; d. Jan. 31, 2020), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Riley—Bruce, 93 (b. Sept. 3, 1926; d. Feb. 12, 2020), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Schlорff—Gertrude (Trudy) (nee Stevens), 84 (b. June 25, 1935; d. Jan. 23, 2020), Arnaud Mennonite, Man.

Steiner—Susan (nee Clemmer), 72 (b. April 22, 1947; d. Aug. 26, 2019), Rockway Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Wiebe—Jacob, 91 (b. Sept. 15, 1928; d. Dec. 12, 2019), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

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

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

'God is inclusive, not exclusive!

Donna Entz

There are many changes in Canadian society today that compel us to be trained in "diversity and inclusion." As Christians, what direction do we find in our own biblical texts?

When Jesus first returned to his hometown, he read a passage from Isaiah: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.*" The whole synagogue was impressed, as he claimed to fulfil that vision.

But, by telling two stories, he cut through the assumptions he knew they had about the scope of his work. The first was: "*There were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, . . . and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon,*" which is not part of Israel. Then he said: "*There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian,*" a non-Israelite.

"*All in the synagogue were filled with rage,*" and they tried to stone him. They were upset that God would do good to a non-Jewish person. That is being

exclusive, over-the-top exclusive! Jesus had shown that God is inclusive, not exclusive.

During Epiphany, we often read Isaiah 60: "*Arise shine, for your light has come.*" Nations are coming to God's light. Camels are bringing gifts of gold and frankincense, and magi will proclaim the praise of the Lord. These gifts are coming from places all outside of Israel. People want to worship the God of Israel.

Here is the usual ending to the Epiphany reading. But in the next words, we hear of flocks and rams that are also accepted as sacrifices on the temple altar. These belong to the sons of Abraham's first-born son, Ishmael, namely Kedar and Nebaioth, and these sacrifices make the temple more glorious. This is the Ishmael who modern-day Muslims claim as their ancestor. God is accepting the worship, prayer and animal sacrifices of foreigners. God is inclusive, not exclusive.

In Isaiah 56, the eunuchs and foreigners who hold fast God's covenant will be blessed. The eunuchs will be given an

everlasting name that shall not be cut off. The foreigners will be made joyful in God's house of prayer and their sacrifices will be accepted, for God's house is a house of prayer for all people. The final verses say: "*Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them, besides those already gathered.*"

Gathering means to bring an individual into the company of others so they can be joined to God. This gathering is God's work, but how do we partner with him in the gathering? Inviting? Calling? Even proclaiming?

Mohammad Ali Shomali, an Iranian Muslim scholar, says that all people of faith are meant to join hands in calling people of no faith into an experience with God. These are helpful words on how to "gather" with our inclusive God.

✎



Donna Kampen Entz works with North Edmonton Ministry for Mennonite Church Alberta.

A moment from yesterday



In this scene from *Twilight Auction* by John L. Ruth, young Harvard-educated Sam confronts his traditional Mennonite family's willingness to sell treasured family heirlooms. Doug Millar, left, is the father, and Dale Shantz, holding the vase, plays Sam in this 1969 Conrad Grebel College production. The play explores themes of family and spiritual estrangement, and the tensions between traditional and modern ways of life. How might such themes resonate if the play was performed today?

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing
Photo: David L. Hunsberger/
Mennonite Archives of Ontario



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THIRD WAY FAMILY

Making things right

Christina Bartel Barkman

I read the note from my son's teacher and my heart sank. As the kids unpacked their backpacks and had a snack, I stood still in the kitchen feeling disappointed, sad and perplexed. My sweet seven-year-old boy, raised in a home where peacebuilding, non-violence and Jesus' love for all are completely familiar and practised concepts, had been mean on the playground, encouraging a boy to kick another. Now I had to figure out how to handle it and how we would make things right.

When my kids walk off to school every morning, a piece of me goes too. They represent our family, our faith and our identity. They go out and are who they want to be, yet who they are is forever linked to where they come from and who their people are. So much of who I am walks down the street when my little people head to school and yet I have no control. They choose their way and make their own decisions, despite my teaching, my love and my best effort. There are so many moments when I beam from my kids' efforts, gestures and sweetness. And there are times I cringe and feel so disappointed.

This particular incident made me feel pretty embarrassed. I had just seen this

boy's mom after school and had overheard her telling her son that it's never okay to kick someone. It definitely never crossed my mind that my son had anything to do with it! And now here I was, trying to make sense of this incident, feeling super frustrated with my son, but knowing that I had to keep my cool and figure out a way to support him through it.

After much inquiry and my own failures at keeping calm, my son teared up and told me that an older boy had kicked him the day before. And I could see that he felt really, really bad about what he had done. He doesn't want to be a mean kid—he's sweet at heart, for sure—but kids are impulsive (especially ones with ADHD) and don't always make good decisions.

I told my boy that he would need to apologize and make things right. We all make mistakes and hurt others, but what we do after has a huge impact. My son could be seen as a bully by this family, or he could be seen as a boy who made a mistake and was brave enough to apologize, reconcile and choose a better path in the future.

My son spent much of that evening writing an apology note. He went above and beyond the simple note we asked

him to write; he made it into a card, drew a nice picture and wrote so carefully and neatly. He then made a special paper airplane for his friend and we put it all in an envelope. He was actually excited to give it to him.

I saw the boy's mom a couple days later, and she told me her son was thrilled to get the note from my son. We had made things right and healed what could have been a downhill moment. I could see the confidence my son regained, and the shame that was lifted when he was able to mend the brokenness.

I know I have years ahead of watching my kids make bad choices—and many very good ones too, I'm sure—but I hope they know and feel the importance of making things right and they will always be brave enough to apologize and reconcile. ✎



Christina Bartel Barkman, with her four little ones and her pastor husband, seeks to live out Jesus' creative and loving "third way" options.

Et cetera



MCC begins U.S. meat canning in 1946

The first mobile cannery is set up for business near Harrisonburg, Va., circa 1946. The cannery was built in Virginia at the request of the Mennonite church in 1945. The cannery was donated to MCC in 1952.

Source: MCC / Photo courtesy of Dean-Kaylor Studio



THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

Partners in the body of Christ

Arli Klassen

Strange, I know, but I like to read financial statements. I remember, in my early 20s, listening to the treasurer in our Toronto congregation explain how to understand financial statements when they were meaningless to me. Since then, I have learned that financial statements show us how we think about our priorities and relationships. Numbers and their labels tell lots of stories.

One thing that intrigues me about church financial statements is the word “partner.”

César García, the general secretary of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), and my boss, squirms uncomfortably every time he sees MWC listed as a “partner” in the financial report of a national church, a regional church, or even a congregation, alongside an amount that is being given to MWC from that church.

Is this perceived as a grant to an external arms-length organization? Is this a generous donation? Is it like a membership fee?

For example, MWC encourages all of its member congregations to contribute a “One Lunch” offering once a year—the value in your own community of one lunch per person—which is something

everyone around the world can do.

Some congregations do this through their budget, some do it through a special offering and some don’t do it at all. When congregations do include it, I like to see how this is described in their financial statements, which tells a whole story about how MWC is perceived by that church. Is it under the category of “partners”?

Sometimes “partners” is used on financial statements to describe our church-related agencies, the schools, camps, and mission and service agencies that we call the arms and feet of our church. Sometimes “partners” references the layers of church above our own congregation, whether that be your regional church, Mennonite Church Canada or MWC.

What does it mean to be a “partner”? Does the word convey that you and your congregation belong to MC Canada and MWC as members? Does it convey that you are brothers and sisters with all the people across MC Canada and in 106 other national member Anabaptist churches around the world? Does it show that we belong to each other as members together in the body of Christ?

I know “partner” can have very strong meaning, as in a partner in a business

venture, or referring to your marriage partner, both of which are relationships that include commitment, mutuality, transparency and finances. I still think “partner” is an inadequate word on financial statements for these churchly relationships where we are members of one another. Somehow when we read it on financial statements, we see it as a grant, and we forget that partnership means commitment, mutuality, transparency and finances.

I’m not sure that the word “membership” captures it entirely either. Many of us don’t know what church membership means any more—locally, regionally, nationally or globally. It seems to be more of an ideal than something that we can touch or feel. It seems to require too much responsibility.

One suggestion I have is that partners/members pray for each other. This means knowing enough about each other to pray. This means naming and holding the people and places in the light of God (to use a Quaker expression). This means paying attention beyond our local congregation, so that we pray with commitment, mutuality, transparency and our finances. ☺



Arli Klassen is a member of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.; moderator of MC Eastern Canada; a member of the

MC Canada Joint Council; and on staff at MWC. In this column Arli speaks only for herself.

Et cetera

Mennonite names

Based on births and adoptions reported in *Canadian Mennonite’s* Milestones section, the following names were most popular in 2019: Mae, Elizabeth, Rowan, Henry and David. But it was really diversity that topped the list. Three-quarters of the names on the list appeared only once. On *narcity.com’s* Top 10 List of female and male names in Canada last year, only five appeared in *Canadian Mennonite’s* Milestones: Lucas, Benjamin, Sophia, Amelia and Ava. *CM’s* picks for coolest names of 2019: Everly Ann Nafziger and Calex Jethro Loewen.

Source: Will Braun

NARCITY Top 10 baby names of 2019

- | | |
|--------------|----------|
| 1. Sophia | Jackson |
| 2. Olivia | Noah |
| 3. Emma | Liam |
| 4. Amelia | Lucas |
| 5. Aria | Benjamin |
| 6. Charlotte | Oliver |
| 7. Ava | Ethan |
| 8. Mia | Jacob |
| 9. Mila | Leo |
| 10. Chloe | Logan |

BOOK REVIEW

Christianity's ideas about God

Speaking of God: An Essential Guide to Christian Thought.
Anthony G. Siegrist. Herald Press, 2019, 250 pages.

Reviewed by Barb Draper
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

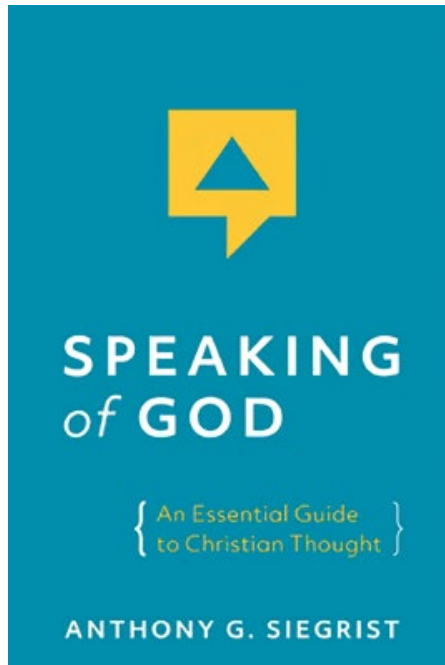
Because we live in a time of change and upheaval in our culture, Anthony Siegrist argues that the church needs to improve its biblical and theological literacy. He writes, "It's important that Christian communities nurture their ability to speak about God, about Scripture, and about our lives with care and attention."

He offers *Speaking of God* as an overview of how the Christian church has approached Scripture and humanity's relationship to God over the past two thousand years.

Siegrist, the pastor of Ottawa Mennonite Church, explores some profound questions:

- **He wonders why** we assume that positive messages from the Prophet Jeremiah apply to us today, but not the negative ones.
- **He asks what** makes one interpretation of the Bible right and another wrong.
- **He outlines various** theological points of view on age-old questions such as whether God can have regret and whether the future is fixed and determined by God.
- **He doesn't provide** answers so much as explore the mysteries of God and he writes that "truth and mystery are swirled together" like the colours on a seashell.

The chapters of *Speaking of God* generally follow the outline of the Bible as the story of God's people. The chapter titles refer to major themes of the Old Testament, following the basic storyline of creation, fall, patriarchs, slavery, deliverance, a desire for a king, and prophets; and New Testament



themes of incarnation, Jesus' teachings, atonement and experiences of the early church. Within this framework, Siegrist explores and summarizes some of the major topics of Christian systematic theology, introducing prominent theologians and debates in the Christian church over the past two millennia.

Common theological terms such as "Christocentrism," "Calvinism" or "eschatology" are in bold print, which helps the reader identify these doctrines or sets of ideas. In each case, Siegrist provides a simple explanation of the term, making it accessible for readers without a background in theology.

As indicated by the subtitle, Siegrist is trying to explore the entirety of Christian thought and he covers a wide variety of theologians and ideas. This can be very helpful for readers who are looking for an introduction and a place

to find simple explanations of terms, but the vast array of theological terms could be somewhat overwhelming for a person who doesn't have a theological background.

In her blurb recommending the book, Carol Penner says, "When you finish this book, your mind will be dancing with new words and ideas about faith and God."

While I found that to be true, it felt as though there were a few too many ideas dancing about in my mind. The way the book is structured did not seem to help organize the many theological terms.

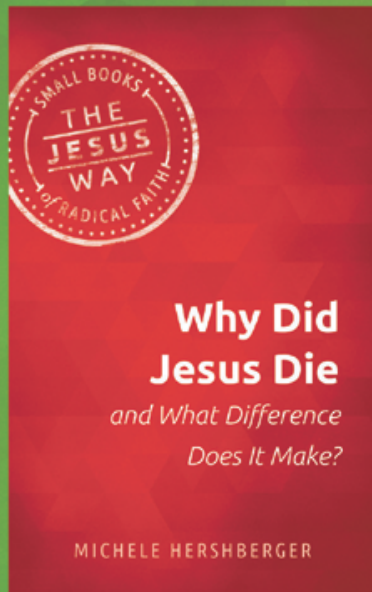
At the same time, *Speaking of God* provides a good source for the basics of theology. As I look back on my student days, this book would have been a helpful tool to avoid some embarrassing moments when my ignorance was laid bare.

Lay readers should concentrate on what they can understand and try not to get overwhelmed by the details. The personal anecdotes about Siegrist's experiences in studying theology provide interesting interludes.

Siegrist sees the Bible as foundational to Christianity and he approaches it with great respect. At the same time, he believes it needs to be understood with some fluidity and imagination, arguing that it is wrong to see faith and reason as opposed to each other: "Faith is living into a view of the world tinted by Paul's darkened glass."

Speaking of God is written with honesty and it never shies away from tough questions. ❧

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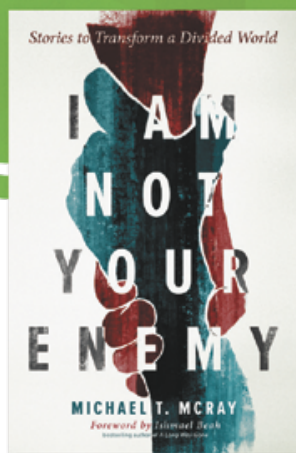
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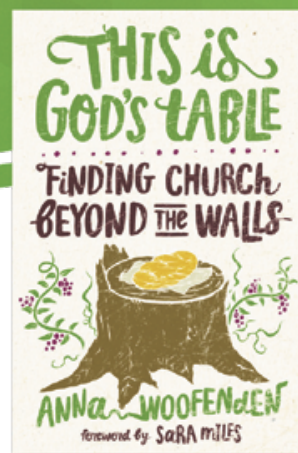
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LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

The snowball effect

Troy Watson

The snowball effect refers to a situation in which something starts off small or insignificant and increases in size or importance at an accelerating rate. Like when you roll a small snowball through wet snow and it accumulates more and more snow until it becomes so large and heavy that you can't move it anymore.

Here's another example: Say your co-worker Jim isn't pulling his weight on a joint project. What begins as a small annoyance builds to a simmering frustration over the next few days. You decide to confront Jim. He blows you off. Your frustration turns into anger. As the project deadline approaches, you become increasingly agitated with him. You speak to your manager about the situation, only to discover that Jim already spoke to her. Your manager tells you to stop bickering about Jim and focus on finishing the project.

The next day Jim intentionally antagonizes you. You become so preoccupied with his behaviour that you forget about an important meeting with a client. By now you're so stressed and angry you're not sleeping well.

The morning of the project deadline you are exhausted and get into a fender bender. You arrive to work late. Your boss calls you into her office and reams you out for missing the meeting a few days ago and for showing up late on the day of the project deadline. She tells you to apologize to Jim, who arrived early, unlike you, to make sure the project is finished on time.

You explode.

Your boss discerns that you're not in the right frame of mind to finish the project and reassigns you to another task. Jim will now get all the credit for finishing this important project that you've done most of the work on. You lose all hope of getting the promotion you were counting on by doing a good

job on this project.

By the time you get home, you're furious. You blow up over something insignificant, misdirecting your anger and stress at your family. During your outburst you cross a line. Your partner takes the children and spends the week-end with your in-laws.

This is the snowball effect. A little thing like an annoyance with a co-worker escalates into a huge mess with big consequences. Of course, the anger and stress-management issues that led to marital conflict and a career crisis

in this example didn't start that week. Snowballs tend to develop gradually over months, years or decades. They pick up speed over time until they suddenly seem to accelerate uncontrollably and explode in our faces.

We're all moving through life pushing snowballs. One day our snowball might become too big to push. We can no longer move forward. We're stuck. If we had asked for help, or taken the time and intention to deal with the growing snowball earlier, we wouldn't be in this situation. But now it's too big. Immovable. Insurmountable. Only a meltdown will produce enough heat to melt this gargantuan snowball now. Meltdowns are essentially "rock bottom" experiences. Nobody wants to hit "rock bottom," but sometimes it's the only way forward.

Organizations like churches have snowballs, too. Not just individuals. Some churches have been pushing the same snowball around for a very long time. Then one day they're surprised that they can't move forward. They're stuck. Unfortunately, the only solution

at that point is a meltdown. A collective "rock bottom" experience. I sense a lot of churches are going to find themselves in this situation over the next decade. For now, they'll just keep pushing that snowball.

The snowball effect is about momentum. Once we find ourselves on a certain trajectory, it takes a considerable amount of energy to stop or change that trajectory. The snowball effect is also about going in circles. That is how the snowball gains mass. Every cycle, the snowball gets bigger. Once we're caught

We're all moving through life pushing snowballs. One day our snowball might become too big to push. We can no longer move forward. We're stuck.

in a vicious cycle, it's tough to get out.

However, the snowball effect can be positive. We can create virtuous cycles in our lives in which we develop positive momentum by reinforcing healthy patterns. For example, say you've been practising a virtuous cycle of forgiveness for years.

When your co-worker Jim isn't pulling his weight on a joint project, the momentum of forgiveness will flow through you naturally. Almost effortlessly. In fact, it would take more effort to stop the momentum of forgiveness than it takes to forgive. That is the power of momentum. That is the gift the snowball effect offers. ❧



Troy Watson is a pastor at Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont.

Nigerian pastor executed

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

On Jan. 20, Lawan Andimi, a pastoral leader in the Nigerian Church of the Brethren, was executed by Boko Haram, an extremist jihadist group. He had been reported missing on Jan. 3, the day after a Boko Haram attack in his area.

Reports indicate that Boko Haram initially demanded a ransom payment, but in the end it beheaded Andimi because he refused to convert to Islam. Prior to the killing, Boko Haram released a video in which Andimi steadfastly affirmed his faith.

The Church of the Brethren in north-eastern Nigeria has suffered displacement, death, abductions and destruction of church buildings and schools at the hands of Boko Haram. Reports vary, but thousands of church members have been killed since the Boko Haram uprising in 2009.

In addition to his work in the Church of the Brethren, Andimi was a district leader in the ecumenical Christian Association of Nigeria.

His execution drew some international attention, including in *The New York Times*. Then, on Feb. 3, *Christianity Today* magazine published a guest column by President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, in which he eulogizes Andimi and condemns Boko Haram.

Buhari notes that Andimi's ministry was based only 100 kilometres from Chibok, where 267 school girls were abducted by Boko Haram in 2014. The majority of those girls were from Church of the Brethren families. Buhari noted that 107 of the 267 have been freed, with efforts continuing to free the rest.

While some commentators and church officials in Nigeria and abroad frame Boko Haram's efforts as a war on Christians, Buhari says that 90 percent of Boko Haram victims are Muslims. "We cannot allow [Boko Haram] to divide good Christians and good Muslims from those things that bind us all in the sight of God: faith, family, forgiveness, fidelity and friendship to each other," he wrote.

According to Buhari, who once



Screen grab of Lawan Andimi's testimony as recorded by Boko Haram.

supported Sharia law, 45 percent of Nigerians are Christian.

He also wrote: "We might all learn from the faith and works of Pastor Andimi. There seems little doubt he acted selflessly in so many regards—giving alms and prayers to both Christians and Muslims who suffered at the hands of the terrorists. And he passed from us, rightly refusing to renounce his faith that was not for his captors to take, any more than his life."

In a statement prior to Buhari's column, Samson Ayokunle, head of the Christian Association of Nigeria, insists that Boko Haram and other terrorist groups target primarily Christians and the government is complicit.

Referring to a "prevailing upsurge of attacks against the church," Ayokunle states, "it will be difficult for us to believe that the federal government under the present administration is not colluding with the insurgents to exterminate Christians in Nigeria."

While the Church of the Brethren has Anabaptist roots and is one of the historic peace churches, including Mennonites and Quakers, no Church of the Brethren conferences are currently members of Mennonite World Conference.

The Nigerian High Commission in Ottawa did not respond to a request for comment. ❧

To watch a video of Lawan Andimi's testimony as recorded by Boko Haram, visit bit.ly/2tUOUFD.



News brief

MennoHomes is building A Place to Call Home



PHOTO COURTESY OF MENNOHOMES

KITCHENER, ONT.—Being on a waitlist for affordable housing is like hanging on to a log out on the ocean when you can't see the land, according to a woman named Rebecca. Dan Driedger, executive director of MennoHomes, a non-profit, affordable housing provider in Waterloo Region, is using this metaphor to motivate the organization's development of a \$12.7-million affordable-housing project, A Place to Call Home, in north-east Kitchener. To tackle urgent housing needs, MennoHomes finds partners to share work and costs, and foster creative problem solving. In this latest project, announced at its annual general meeting on Jan. 30, MennoHomes is working with Parents for Community Living (PCL), which creates supportive housing for developmentally challenged adults, and St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, to redevelop the church property into a barrier-free "community hub" with 48 affordable rental units. The plans for Phase 1 include a worship space for the church, a community room and kitchen for PCL, some units available to the Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support, and shared spaces for community groups. Carl Zehr, former mayor of Kitchener, and the capital campaign chair, says the "beauty of the project is the collaboration of partners," which "maximizes the impact," and creates "so much payback for the community."

—BY JANET BAUMAN

Rockway celebrates 75 years

'Chain of memory' links past, present and future of 'pioneering' school

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

There was cake, balloons, confetti and a photo booth with goofy props. There was singing in harmony, and prayers of gratitude and blessing—all of it to celebrate the 75th birthday of a “small school for a big world.”

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener marked the milestone with a Founders' Day Chapel designed to celebrate its legacy and look to the future with hope, on Feb. 9.

From its humble beginnings in a renovated farmhouse and barn in 1945, Rockway grew and changed, while staying true to its founding tradition, according to Ann L. Schultz, current principal, former teacher and 1984 graduate. In the shadow of the Second World War, Mennonite leaders wanted to create “an alternative

to mainstream education,” emphasizing peace and the life and teachings of Jesus, while creating a space where academics, community and friendships could thrive,” she said.

The Founders' Day Chapel centred on the themes of celebration, connection and community found in Colossians 3:12-17.

Sarah Kathleen Johnson (class of 2003), was the guest speaker. Johnson is a current doctoral candidate at the University of Notre Dame and serves on the editorial team for *Voices Together*, the new Mennonite hymnal and worship book.

Johnson invited the audience to consider what it means for Rockway to be a Mennonite school in 2020 and beyond. She named two ways Mennonite identity is usually understood—through ethnicity, and through lists of theological distinctives—neither of which is adequate for 2020.

She argued that, while ethnic identity “is a heritage to celebrate . . . the Mennonite church has changed” and now worships in 25 languages across North America. She challenged Mennonites to move beyond “superficial multiculturalism” to become deeply “intercultural,” by practising “genuine engagement.”

She also said that creating lists of distinctive core values can be inspiring, “but it is dangerous to define who is and is not Mennonite this way.” Because religion and values are always contextual, “these lists do not describe the breadth of who we are as Mennonites today.”



PHOTO BY JANET BAUMAN

Current faculty and staff pose at the photo booth as part of the festivities celebrating the 75th birthday of Rockway Mennonite Collegiate.



PHOTO BY NEVEEN ANTOUN

Sarah Kathleen Johnson, class of 2003, speaks at the Founders' Day Chapel on Feb. 9, celebrating the 75th birthday of Rockway Mennonite Collegiate.

Instead, she asked, “What if being Mennonite is about belonging to a chain of memory—about claiming connections to a past, a present and a future that we share.” Tradition, in this sense, is dynamic, always changing and adapting, she said.

She described how the story of Rockway stretches back through centuries of Mennonite and church history, and will stretch forward as each new generation adds to the chain of memory and is changed by it.

She recalled being a student at Rockway on 9/11, noting that, at that difficult time, it was good to be part of a place “connected to a chain of memory that says, ‘Do not respond to violence with more violence . . . there is hope even when it seems like everything is falling apart.’” She said, “I don’t know what your 9/11’s have been or will be,” but “this is a good chain of memory to be part of when they happen.”

Johnson acknowledged that Rockway’s

legacy is messy and far from perfect, but by living with gratitude, compassion and love, people can create a chain of memory that sends Rockway into the future with hope.

Congregational hymns for the celebration were chosen from the soon-to-be-completed *Voices Together* collection. There was also an Alumni and Friends Choir, conducted by Shultz, that opened with an anthem of praise and closed with a call to be faithful.

A model of an art installation for the school's courtyard was unveiled. The collaborative work, called "Serenity," will feature some found objects reflecting Rockway's roots on a farm property, as well as large rocks, water and indigenous plantings. The vision is to create "a serene outdoor meditation space" where students can connect to the natural world.

The event also featured stories from alumni, including Mary Groh (class of 1949), whose father, Harold Groh, was the

first principal of the school. She described Rockway as "a pioneering school" with a "humble opening" in two renovated bedrooms in the old farmhouse on the property."

Groh recently made a donation to the school so more students can experience a Rockway education. Her gift inspired a matching Diversity Award from the congregations of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada to support students from the regional church's first-generation Canadian congregations. A highlight of the 75th birthday celebration was an announcement by David Martin, MC Eastern Canada's executive minister, of a further \$250,000 grant to provide financial support for these students to complete their high-school education at Rockway. This, in turn, sparked a year-long fundraising campaign at Rockway to raise an additional \$270,000. (See sidebar below.)

As the service of celebration ended,



PHOTO BY JANET BAUMAN

Jane Schultz-Janzen, left, Patty Klassen and Marcia Shantz, all from the class of 1981, joined the Alumni and Friends Choir that sang at the Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's Founders' Day Chapel on Feb. 9, celebrating the school's 75th birthday.

there was time for birthday cake, a stop at the photo booth to make new memories, and an opportunity to look through old yearbooks in the long chain of memories. ❧

75 Candles for 75 Years

School with a 'strong history of pitching in' launches fundraising campaign for tuition assistance

BY JANET BAUMAN

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Citing a "strong history of pitching in" at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, David Martin, executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, announced a \$250,000 grant to Rockway, with the vision of making the school more accessible for students from the regional church's first-generation Canadian congregations.

Inspired by the grant, Rockway launched a year-long fundraising campaign of its own, called 75 Candles for 75 Years, to raise an additional \$270,000 in tuition assistance for students from MC Eastern Canada congregations.

Christine Rier, Rockway's director of advancement, announced the school's Founders' Day Online—Day of Giving on Feb. 14 to kick off the campaign. As

donations were received toward the goal of 75 donations for 75 years, "vintage gems" from the Rockway vault were "unlocked" and shared through the school website and social media.

The first gem was a "musical treat" from a boy's quartet called the Rockway Four from 1960. Others included footage from the 1987 Christmas concert and the 1996 musical production of *The Sound of Music*.

Rockway will continue to unlock remaining videos from the vault, and the campaign will continue through the year.

"Just as in 1945, our community is coming together to share the gift of Mennonite high-school education, which is as relevant today as it was then," said Ann L. Shultz, principal, in a news release from the school. ❧



PHOTO BY YUANPEI (ROBIN) XIANG

David Martin, right, executive minister of MC Eastern Canada, announced a \$250,000 grant from the regional church for tuition assistance for students from the regional church's first-generation Canadian congregations, at the Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's Founders' Day Chapel, celebrating the 75th birthday of the school. The grant was gratefully received by Ann L. Schultz, left, Rockway's current principal, on behalf of the school.

Workshop explores land, community, reparation

By Johann Funk
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
VANCOUVER

An interfaith workshop drew more than 80 registered participants to Peace Church on 52nd on Feb. 7 and 8 to learn about “The cost of colonialism: The joy of jubilee.”

Steve Heinrichs, director of Mennonite Church Canada’s Indigenous-Settler Relations, was the facilitator for the event and its main speaker. Heinrichs is passionate about the church’s call to solidarity and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

During the two-day event, he addressed questions of settler identity: “How do you come to be here?” “How do you claim to be here?” “How can we belong in a way that does not reproduce the colonialism of the past?”



PHOTO BY HENRY KRAUSE

At ‘The cost of colonialism: Joy of jubilee’ workshop in Vancouver last month, breakout groups discuss what jubilee might look like in relation to Indigenous-Settler relations.

Participants were challenged to take ownership of their identities and responsibilities as settlers.

On Feb. 8, Audrey Segel from Musqueam unceded land emphasized how the elders and ancestors gave her direction and strength to work for justice and reconciliation while reflecting on the cost of colonialism on Indigenous people.

Heinrichs then introduced a group exercise in which participants used words and illustrations on large sheets of newsprint to

describe their ideal community. Concepts included housing for all, inclusiveness, food security, worship space, nature and clean water, among others. Each group then stood on its “creation” as Heinrichs read out a scenario of a mining corporation using several tactics to appropriate parts of each community in the interests of mining for coltan, a mineral used in the production of smart phones and consumer electronics.

Heinrichs’s morning lecture, entitled “Facing our shadows: Settler colonialism in the Bible,” dealt with its “colonial” passages: the land covenant with Abraham, laws of Israelite exceptionalism by Moses, and Joshua’s fulfilment of the laws and promises through genocide and assimilation.

He defined “settler colonialism” as colonialism that has settlers coming to stay and dominate the Indigenous Peoples. He summarized the process of “settler colonialism” as mapping land for settlement, renaming the geographical features, creating alternate narratives to legitimize settlement, and dehumanizing the Indigenous population.

In his final lecture, Heinrichs explored “The joy of jubilee: Reconciliation in reparation,” asking, “How can we leverage the Bible to decolonize settler colonialism?” with the central issue being power focused on land in the Bible and in settler colonialism.

The sharing circle that followed indicated that the weekend had raised the participants’ awareness and energized them to action. A group had left earlier to join a blockade of a Vancouver port, to draw attention to the arrest of Wet’suwet’en people and their supporters,

☞ Briefly noted

Sermon group meets weekly



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEBBIE BAERGEN

The Edmonton Mennonite Sermon Group meets at the Square One Café to discuss their upcoming sermons. Participating in this December 2019 meeting are Werner De Jong, left, Elizabeth Wall, Debbie Baergen and Craig Neufeld.

EDMONTON—When Pastor Craig Neufeld arrived in Edmonton to serve as pastor of First Mennonite Church early last year, he asked if there was a sermon group to help pastors or lay preachers prepare their sermons. He had enjoyed that support when he served at Rosthern (Sask.) Mennonite Church. When he discovered there was no such Edmonton group, he invited all the Mennonite pastors in Edmonton, lay preachers, or anyone willing to provide feedback on upcoming sermons, to meet weekly in different coffee shops around the city. Those who are preaching read their texts out loud, and everyone participating in the group shares their observations and gives suggestions.

—BY JOANNE DE JONG

including Christian Peacemaker Team members that were on site as observers. The participants also raised funds for the local Musqueam hosts and the Unist’ot’en defence fund.

The event was co-sponsored by the Vancouver Monthly Meeting (Quaker) Reconciliation Committee and Mennonite Church British Columbia’s Indigenous Relations Working Group. ☞

Coming together over Deuteronomy

Saskatchewan congregations join to offer a 'Portable CMU'

Story and Photo by Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

Five Mennonite Church Saskatchewan congregations collaborated recently to provide a weekend of learning for their members.

Aberdeen, Eigenheim, Rosthern, Tiefengrund and Zoar Mennonite churches invited Gerald Gerbrandt, president emeritus and professor emeritus at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg, to present a short course, "Deuteronomy as a sermon for the church today."

His course is offered as part of the Portable CMU program, which involves university instructors bringing three- or four-session seminars on various topics to congregations across the country.

The sessions, presented at Rosthern Mennonite from Feb. 7 to 9, were well attended.

"We were expecting 25 to 30 people," said Claire Ewert Fisher, Rosthern Mennonite's interim pastor. Instead, she counted upwards of 70 participants on the evening of Feb. 7, and the next morning's showing was equally strong.

It is, perhaps, surprising that a course on Deuteronomy should draw such a crowd. The book "suffers from a bad reputation" and is often considered "boring and irrelevant," said Gerbrandt, adding that this reputation is undeserved. Rather, Deuteronomy is "the most influential book of the Old Testament," he said.

Gerbrandt, who wrote the 2015 Believers Church Bible Commentary on Deuteronomy, believes the book is unpopular because readers think of it as law, and they think of law as it's understood today.

"Unfortunately, we read parts of the Bible that we associate with law in the way we approach law, [as if they were] telling us how to live our lives," he said.

"We have [observed] many of those laws very strictly and made huge battles over them, and others we have ignored entirely."

He invited participants to view the Bible differently. Rather than reading it as a rule-book, he said, they should think of it as a large painting, with each part adding to the whole. "On a macro level, the Bible tells us that God created and loved the world, and that we messed up," he said. "[It also tells us that] God doesn't give up on us."

The message of Deuteronomy is simple, according to Gerbrandt. "God is giving Israel a gift, and Israel is invited to live responsibly with that gift," he said.

One of Deuteronomy's central themes is Israel's election as God's chosen people, but the book makes clear that they were chosen not because of their size or their righteousness, but because God loved them. "It's absolutely foundational that . . . God chose Israel and . . . Israel didn't deserve it," he said.

"If we're uncomfortable with the idea that Israel was elected," he said, "how do we explain our own privilege?"

In response, Kathy Luitjens cited Jesus' words from Luke 12:48: "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded."

Gerbrandt agreed, saying, "The Old Testament doesn't see Israel's election as a privilege but as a responsibility."

Although the Promised Land was given to the Israelites as a gift, they were expected to respond to that gift by loving God and obeying God's commands. The *Shema*, found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, instructs Israel to love God with heart, soul and might, or, as Gerbrandt said, "with everything you've got."

"The starting point is to love God back," he said. "The way we're expected to act



Table discussion gave participants in Gerald Gerbrandt's short course on Deuteronomy an opportunity to dig a little deeper.

Pictured, from left to right: Curtis Wiens, Claire Ewert Fisher, Eldon Funk and Denise Epp.

should be modelled on God's love."

Throughout Deuteronomy, he said, the people of Israel are called to be separate from the nations around them. They are to worship differently and they are to live differently.

Ewert Fisher challenged Gerbrandt's idea that Deuteronomy is relevant today.

"I'm not sure that Deuteronomy speaks to our time," she said, arguing that it spoke better to earlier times, when Mennonites were developing their identity as a people separate from the world around them.

Gerbrandt countered: "In 1950 I would have preached that the point of Deuteronomy is not to create a people but to break out of that and preach the mission in Genesis 12 [where God calls Abram to leave his home and promises to bless all the peoples of the Earth through him]," said Gerbrandt. "[But Deuteronomy] may be more of a book for today than it was in 1950. One of the messages from Deuteronomy is that we really need to be a people in the 2020 world in which we're living."

As if to prove Gerbrandt's point, the five congregations met together for worship on Feb. 9. A mass choir, formed for the occasion, performed several pieces, and Andrea Enns Gooding, pastor of Zoar Mennonite, led in communion.

The weekend ended with a potluck noon meal and more than one voice exclaiming, "I think we should do this again next year." ❧

To view more photos of the Portable CMU course, visit canadianmennonite.org/deuteronomy.



'Who will answer the call?'

South Sudanese Mennonites in Ethiopia request discipleship training

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
EDMONTON

Leaders from Edmonton's South Sudanese Mennonite Church are serving as connectors between refugees in Ethiopia and other Mennonites in Alberta.

In November 2018, people from the South Sudanese community, now living as refugees in Ethiopia, made an official request for help to their compatriots in Edmonton, who belong to Mennonite Church Alberta. They put a list together of all their needs, which included church repairs and roofs, Bibles, songbooks, and training and teaching for pastors.

Recently, the refugees in Ethiopia wondered if it was possible to get a hand pump so they could have clean drinking water. But, when asked, "If you could pick only one need to fill, what would it be?" they replied, "Discipleship training."

Simon Hoth serves as the sole pastor for nine South Sudanese churches in Ethiopia. He explained, "The Mennonites brought us to Christ, so we see ourselves as Mennonites. Now we need to know how to live."

The congregation in Edmonton has a 10-year history. In 2010, five South Sudanese families living in Edmonton were sitting at home every Sunday morning, not sure where they could worship and belong. Finally, after two years, the families got together and decided to approach MC Alberta for help. After researching different options, they felt Mennonites were the best fit for them, because the Mennonite church has a strong peace stance and cares about social justice.

"Where we come from, we need to



PHOTO BY JOANNE DE JONG

Pictured from left to right are the leaders from the South Sudanese Mennonite Church in Edmonton: Gatroup Mut, William Tut and Pastor Reuben Tut.

live in peace. That's what we want," said Reuben Tut, the current pastor of the South Sudanese Mennonite Church in Edmonton.

He fled Sudan in 1995 during the second Sudanese war. His options were to join the rebels or leave, so he escaped to a refugee camp in Kenya. That civil war lasted 22 years and caused famine, disease and violence, along with more than two million deaths and the displacement of four million people. Although South Sudan gained its independence in 2011, war broke out again in 2013 and it continues today.

First Mennonite Church in Edmonton took the refugee families under its wing, including them in its church services for almost a year while helping them find a place to worship and supporting them while the group applied to be incorporated. Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, pastor of First Mennonite at the time, also offered them a series of classes on what it means to be a Mennonite, which was highly appreciated by the members.

On Jan. 27, 2013, the South Sudanese Mennonite Church held its first church service in new rental space at Emmanuel Community Church.

Today the church has approximately 40



PHOTO BY WILLIAM TUT

Mennonite children from South Sudanese refugee camps in Ethiopia smile for the camera after a church service.



PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY WILLIAM TUT

South Sudanese Mennonite Church women lead worship in the Gambela region in Ethiopia in January.

congregants. Its leadership team includes the pastor, an evangelist, a deacon, a secretary, a treasurer, a minister of children and a missions leader. Women also serve as deacons and wear blue dresses to signify their authority in the church. Every year the church sends a group of women to the MC Alberta women's retreat.

Due to continued violence and famine, church members are often in prayer for their home country of South Sudan. They are in regular contact with family members, and they are afraid for their relatives' safety. Many relatives are now part of Mennonite churches in refugee camps in Ethiopia, near the border of South Sudan, in the Gambela region. There is also one Mennonite church plant actually within the borders of South Sudan, in the community of Fangak.

Churches in Ethiopia were started by a Meserete Kristos Church (Mennonite) missionary named John Both, who has since died. Each of the nine churches has an evangelist who serves the congregation but receives no salary. According to William (Riek) Tut, a leader in Edmonton's South Sudanese Mennonite congregation,

"The evangelists must go to the forest to collect wood to chop and to find food for their families."

In response to the request of South Sudanese Mennonites in Ethiopia, leaders of the church in Edmonton submitted a proposal to the MC Alberta Missions and Service Committee, suggesting that one person from MC Alberta should go to Gambela in 2020, to provide 10 days of discipleship training for 30 leaders on three main topics: discipleship, being Mennonite, and leadership training. The leaders also suggested that a member of

the Sudanese church should be chosen to go along to assist with translation and cultural bridging. That request is now being considered by MC Alberta.

William Tut just returned from Gambela in January 2020. While there, he preached many times and told his people, "Mennonite churches are peace churches, so all of you need to be about peace. We hope our people will be able to come next year and teach you what it means to be a Mennonite."

He also brought a message back from Hoth: "I am only one pastor. It's too hard. We want to spread the Word of God in South Sudan and we can do it if you can partner with us. . . . We want to learn and grow." ☞



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Planting seeds in their community

Congregation celebrates 20th anniversary by looking forward

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
ALTONA MAN.

Seeds Church celebrated its 20th anniversary on the first Sunday of 2020. But instead of throwing on party hats and revelling in the past two decades, the congregation faced forward and asked the question, “What about the next 20 years?”

Seeds is a grassroots community church in Altona that was born at the turn of the millennium. Started by co-lead pastors Ted and Darlene Enns-Dyck and a group of 13 others, the church has since grown to 250 people, with about half that number worshipping regularly on Sunday mornings.

On the church’s 10th anniversary, the pastors put a big emphasis on celebration. They held a church retreat, which 140 people attended instead of the usual 80. They made videos and photo collages. They ordered a huge cake. They wanted to recognize the important milestone of their new community making it to 10 years.

The Enns-Dycks had begun planning festivities for this year too, including a weekend conference and concert. But they were also passionate about dreaming for the future and involving more



PHOTOS BY TED ENNS-DYCK

Seeds Church celebrates its 20th anniversary in a low-key way, with birthday cake.

people in the process, and they began to realize they wouldn’t have enough energy and resources for both.

“Right now it feels like we want to put the energy into thinking about how we can engage our community. That’s been a big part of the conversation . . . more thinking outside of ourselves rather than thinking about ourselves,” says Ted.

So they dove right in. Ted and Darlene met with the police chief, the town council, the mayor, the chief administrative officer

of Altona, and several local non-profit organizations, asking them all three questions: “What do you see as being the major needs of our community? What isn’t happening? Who’s falling through the cracks?”

“We just made a laundry list of what people were saying about our community and we started to see certain bubbles of issues that pop up,” says Ted, of the conversations that have been going on for about a year now. “So we started trying to see where the needs of our community maybe fit the resources that we have . . . or where we have skills.”

That’s not to say that the Seeds congregants didn’t celebrate at all. On their anniversary Sunday, they had a potluck breakfast, ate birthday cake and sang together. The pastors asked a few people to share reflections, and then opened up the mic to everyone. More and more people kept coming to the front, eager to share memories.

“It was quite low on hype or bells and whistles, but it was really a beautiful relational sharing time,” Ted says.



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Congregants walk a labyrinth set up in the church, a rich tradition at Seeds.

Raven Nickel was one of those asked to share. Her parents were part of the group that started Seeds, so she was one of the church's first children, being only about 7 when it began. Several years ago she got married in the church and now she is part of the visioning leadership team, which helps the pastors discern what direction the church should go in.

"It's kind of been my most consistent home throughout my life, like I remember just always feeling like Seeds was the place that I found most of my identity and felt

the most safe at," says Nickel. "I think that was very grounding for me, to have that kind of community. I would give quite a bit of credit to that community in shaping me into the person that I have become."

Seeds is involved in its immediate and broader communities. It has sponsored newcomer families and helped them adjust to life in rural Manitoba. It has held fundraisers for people in the community who aren't connected to the church. It is figuring out how to revamp the building and some additional land the church owns

so it can be used for community needs, such as programming or transitional housing.

Nickel says the people at Seeds "have a desire to be involved and a desire to do good work in the community, and not remain a stand-alone church. . . . It's so much more than a place for people to come on Sunday morning." She adds that many other churches are probably like Seeds, but it is exciting to see it happen firsthand.

"The fact that . . . in a church context wanting to move forward with their ministry, one of the first things they do is talk to other leaders in the community. That just excites me," she says, "because it's like we're actually doing something that's relevant and that could make a difference for lots of people."

Ted says that Seeds still wants to meet with several other groups, and the church is hoping that by summer it can start putting some more concrete plans in place. ☼

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'Jesus Christ: Our hope'

Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday celebrated in Niagara Region

By Maria H. Klassen
ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

César García, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), preached the Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday sermon at Scott Street Mennonite Brethren Church in St. Catharines to a diverse group of Anabaptist worshippers. Entitling his sermon, "Jesus Christ: Our Hope," he said, "On this Sunday [Jan. 26], even in the midst of deep troubles, we come together from around the world to follow Jesus, who gives us hope. . . . The church is hopeless, but [Jesus] is the only hope we have."

García, who grew up attending a Roman Catholic private school in Bogotá, Colombia, decided at the age of 11 to worship in a Mennonite Brethren church. As he travels the world to visit the different MWC churches, he said he is discouraged in three areas:

- **The bad leadership practices** he sees outside of Canada, where leaders compete for power.
- **Church divisions.** Anabaptist churches have a history of being fragmented, he said. Mentioning an article he had read recently, he said the author was leaving the church, sacrificing unity to cling to purity of doctrine.
- **The lack of transcendence**—that there is nothing beyond the church door.

But he finds hope in Ephesians 1:18-19, where Paul is praying for hope for the believers. There are three characteristics of hope in this passage, he said:

- **It is an invitation** that people can either receive or reject.
- **It is a gift revealed** to believers through the Holy Spirit.
- **Hope can only be enjoyed** in community, not individually.

García continued with the theme of



PHOTO BY ROB PATTERSON

Local participants in the Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday service in St. Catharines, Ont., gather for a photograph.

bringing all things together under one head, which is Christ. The hope is that believers will all experience unity in the body of Christ. According to the Gospel of John, García said, the world will believe when they see Christians are one. He concluded with the idea that this unity can only be achieved by overcoming nationalistic ideas, differences of race, language boundaries, and theological and ethical boundaries. The church doesn't achieve this unity with the right doctrines or ethics, he said, but only in Christ.

People from various local MB, MC Eastern Canada and Be in Christ churches participated in the evening program, including pastors and congregants from Vineland United Mennonite, Grace Mennonite, Bethany Mennonite and Lao Christian Fellowship. The poem "Fireweed," written by Pastor Wendy Janzen of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, was read by Sarah Patterson of Scott Street.

Following the message, a service of communion was led by three pastors, including Bounnho Phommaseng of Lao Christian Fellowship.

John Rempel of Grace Mennonite commented that "such an evening drew us beyond the stereotypes we have of each other. It reminded us that each conference has unique gifts that God has given each for the good of the whole church." Fellowship Sunday, he said, reminded him that Christians need one another in order to be faithful to the whole gospel. ❧

❧ Briefly noted

MDS, MCC collaborate in aid after Puerto Rico earthquakes

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) are collaborating in response to the recent earthquakes in Puerto Rico. MCC provided a 12-metre container shipment that included 480 cartons of canned pork and turkey, 1,600 hygiene kits, 800 towels and 900 comforters, as well as three tents supplied by MDS. The shipment departed on Jan. 28 from the MCC East Coast Material Resources

Center in Ephrata, Pa. Rolando Flores-Rentas, Puerto Rico response coordinator, who is associated with both Mennonite organizations and initially requested the shipment, will be coordinating distribution in Puerto Rico. MDS volunteers on the ground in Puerto Rico will assist with unloading and distributing the shipment in MDS vehicles. MDS plans to continue responding to the Puerto Rico earthquake with volunteers and supplies, support for their partners and the Mennonite churches on the island, as well as funding for building materials and documentation of the earthquake damage and the repair process. MDS is also assisting with food and supply distribution, firming up house supports and securing local people to help train and provide emotional support to the community. MDS and MCC have been working together in Puerto Rico since Hurricane Maria hit the island in September 2017.

—MDS / MCC



MCC PHOTO

BY LAURA

PAULS-THOMAS

Rudi Niessen, warehouse coordinator at the MCC East Coast Material Resources Center in Ephrata, Pa., shrink wraps toothpaste that was sent as part of the hygiene kits.

TESTIMONY

Portrait of a strong woman

Story and Photo by Rod Hollinger-Janzen
Mennonite World Conference

From mid-2016 to mid-2017, the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of Congo was devastated by an armed conflict. Rebel militias gathered around a traditional chief, Kamuina Nsapu, to fight against the central government. They attacked posts where security forces were located and sometimes attacked schools, churches and hospitals.

An estimated five thousand people were killed and 1.5 million more were displaced by the violence.

In this context, the church in general—and Mennonite churches in particular—are present and sought after. They play an essential role in the survival of the population, with the support of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

Here is a portrait of one sister in Christ who is very engaged in helping her compatriots.

Adolphine Tshiana is a strong woman. Her strength comes from within. At first

sight, she is friendly and in no hurry, taking time to greet people. But a closer look will reveal her eyes sparkling like diamonds and show the degree of her perseverance and determination.

Tshiana is currently the principal of an elementary school with 1,400 students and a staff of 22 under her direction.

Between 2004 and 2007, her church went through an intense conflict, and she became a leader. She regularly organized informal prayer groups so that the women of the church could pray for an end to the conflict.

This is a woman with a profound faith, and she doesn't hesitate to say that prayer is the most important activity for a believer.

Tshiana has also been touched by grief. She lost her husband in 2011 after 33 years of marriage. In May 2017, in the context of the violence, she learned that her brother and wife, along with their son, his wife and

their children, had all been massacred by a rival ethnic group. Completely distraught, she sent word to her friends, asking them to pray for her.

Welcoming displaced persons

The following month, MCC asked that the church in Tshikapa evaluate the needs of the large number of displaced persons that had inundated the city in an effort to escape the violence. Tshiana, who was suffering deeply from her own loss, was called to serve others.

She found the strength to do the impossible. She sat and cried with many displaced persons, listening to their stories of horror and unbelievable suffering. She was able to say to them: "Yes, I know. I believe you. I understand your pain. . . . I am also suffering, because that has happened to me."

The evaluation gave rise to the project of recovery of the Kasai, with emergency funding providing food and school supplies, as well as start-up money for income projects for numerous displaced families.

One day, Tshiana received a phone call that turned her life upside down. The wife of her brother and the wife of her nephew, along with their two children, had been found alive in a town a few hundred kilometres to the east of the place where her brother and nephew had been assassinated. For Tshiana, this was like a resurrection. She was filled with joy.

Making the love of God shine

Somehow, Tshiana had eyes to see one young boy among five thousand people. Kanku Ngalumulume saw his parents and siblings beheaded by rebels before he fled to Tshikapa, following other groups of people. Temporarily housed with a family, he kept losing weight.

It was then that Tshiana proposed, "I will take him into my home."

Kanku is now going to school, he is eating well and smiling, all because the Lord gave him a new mother, a new family.

Tshiana is serving her church by fighting against the deep darkness of evil, by taking care of the victims. The love of God shines through her, because she shares hope with vulnerable and displaced persons. ❧



PHOTO BY ROD HOLLINGER-JANZEN

Adolphine Tshiana, left, is pictured with Kanku Ngalumulume, and Joseph Nkongolo, coordinator of the Department of Service and Development of the Mennonite Church in the Congo.

'I'm going to be a doctor'

A profile of Paul Thiessen, M.D.

By Henry Neufeld

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
VANCOUVER



Paul Thiessen

When Paul Thiessen was 11 years old, his mother explained to him that, as an 18-month-old, he stumbled into a laundry tub of hot water, scalding about 30 percent of his body. He was rushed from their farm home to the nearest hospital in Tabor, Alta. Doctors told his parents he would likely die within two days. Prayers for this infant by their family, church and community were invoked.

That information from his mother helped Thiessen understand the reasons for his skin grafts. She also told him about the kindness of the medical staff who treated him, prompting him to write on a piece of paper, "I am Paul Thiessen and I'm going to be a doctor."

Now semi-retired, the Vancouver pediatrician reflects on his career and some changes he's seen in pediatric practice:

- **Newborn infants** used to be separated from their mothers; now babies are usually kept in the same room with their mother.
- **Newborns used** to be suctioned routinely; that is no longer the case.
- **Allowing fathers** to be present at the birth of their child became common in the 1980s.
- **New drugs** markedly reduce the incidence of childhood meningitis and other diseases.
- **Pediatric services** today include more organic-based problems, including autism, attention-deficit disorder and learning problems.

Thiessen and a colleague pioneered the establishment of a special ward for mothers with substance-abuse problems and their newborns, a first in Canada, in 2001. Addicted mothers often pass their addiction on to their infants, requiring decreasing doses of morphine to wean them from their inherited dependence.

This program's positive results include major behavioural changes in the mothers. Faced with the opportunity and responsibility of caring for their infant, one mother said, "Finally someone believes in me."

Thiessen is a frequent speaker at medical conferences about this unique program.

For 20 years, Thiessen was director of the spinal cord clinic at the Women's Hospital in Vancouver. Focusing on spina bifida, he valued the long-term relationships he established with children and their families.

Thiessen has provided his services internationally in developing countries and taught pediatrics in Ukraine through a University of Alberta program.

In retirement, he remains active at Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship in Vancouver, mentors some medical students, speaks at medical conferences and is considering more international work.

A national pediatric journal asked him to reflect on his 40 years of medical practice in a piece called "Reflections for my junior colleagues":

1. **Make every** attempt not to practise alone. "The benefits in collegiality and peace of mind regarding holidays and time off is abundantly worth any sacrifice of independence, and you always have colleagues readily at hand to whom you can pose questions and discuss difficult cases."

2. **Never stop** reading. "Sir William Osler observed, 'It is astonishing with how little reading a doctor can practise medicine, but it is not astonishing how badly he may do it.' Not only is it deeply satisfying to stay abreast of emerging knowledge but it makes one a better doctor and will gain you respect in the eyes of your patients."

3. **Be constantly** vigilant that what you are doing and teaching withstands the scrutiny of evidence. "I love the quote attributed variously to several authors, but most probably originating from Mark Twain: 'It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble, but what you know for sure that just ain't so.' I recall that we confidently employed croup tents and suctioned the trachea of every newborn delivered with utter conviction that we were doing the right thing—until emerging evidence disproved it."

4. **Find activities** outside of your medical world that challenge you and keep your mind engaged. "Preferably includ[e] friends who are outside your medical circle. Plato said, 'The mind ought sometimes to be diverted, that it may return the better to thinking.' Your diversion may be sports, crafts, music, dance, theatre, art, reading, writing, restoring cars—but you need diversions. My favourites include reading, music and, in particular, foreign films. I've belonged to a men's book club for over 20 years; a highly valued source of stimulation and companionship."

5. **Consider** a period of voluntary service abroad. "Mutual exchanges with colleagues in other countries—Honduras, Ecuador, India, Ukraine and Uganda—have greatly expanded my awareness of the immense challenges they face, and the great privilege afforded me of practising medicine in our economically advantaged society." ❧

Two Grebel grads now pastoring in Mennonite churches

By Elizabeth Robertson
Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO

Two recent graduates of Conrad Grebel University College's master of theological studies (MTS) program—who entered their studies with no previous knowledge of Anabaptism—are now pastoring Mennonite Church Canada congregations in Saskatchewan and Ontario.

• **Rachel Wallace** graduated last April. Although she grew up in a Baptist church, she now works as a pastor at Eigenheim Mennonite Church in Saskatchewan.

She says that her experience in the MTS program—studying the Bible, Christian theology, church history and the practice of ministry—gave her the tools she needed for ministry.

Also, the interactions she had with her diverse peer group were a vital part of her learning experience. Students may come from a variety of Christian traditions, but during their time at Grebel many have been drawn to Mennonite beliefs and culture, and some, like her, even go on to become pastors in Mennonite churches.

Wallace didn't come to the program with Mennonite roots, but as she learned about Anabaptist and Mennonite history at Grebel she found that the Mennonite church and community resonated with her. "I discovered that they lined up well with my own theology and that I appreciated the ways Mennonites do church and life together," she says.

After completing her degree, she found her faith now fit best within the Mennonite church context.

"Pastoring is rewarding in so many ways. It is an incredible privilege to be invited into people's lives and bear witness to the ways they are struggling or celebrating," she says.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GREBEL

Grebel MTS grad Rachel Wallace pastors at Eigenheim (Sask.) Mennonite Church.



Zach Charbonneau is now youth and outreach pastor at Leamington (Ont.) United Mennonite Church. He is also Canadian Mennonite's Leamington stringer.

• **Zach Charbonneau**, a 2018 graduate, has also found a place in the Mennonite church after completing his MTS degree. Like Wallace, he also entered the program without a previous Mennonite background.

Charbonneau has been working as a youth and outreach pastor at Leamington (Ont.) United Mennonite Church since the fall of 2018. However, pastoral ministry was not always in his plans. "I did not think I was going to be a pastor," he says. "I planned on rolling MTS into a step toward psychotherapy."

But conversations with professors and members of the community drew him to pastoral ministry. "Robert Suderman

[former Mennonite Church Canada general secretary] and Allan Rudy-Froese [an Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary professor] talked about the call of the church in the world. This reinvigorated my hope for the church."

Charbonneau says that his studies were a positive experience due in part to the diversity of theological thought he was introduced to. "The MTS program definitely helped me to grow as a theological thinker and helped me to develop as a teacher of the Bible," he says.

He says he also discovered that "the spectrum of theological thought we were exposed to in the program meant that I walked away with a much broader lens through which to see Christianity."

Professor Carol Penner, who teaches in the area of practical theology at Grebel, says she has seen many instances of students from different denominations finding themselves working with Mennonite churches after graduation.

"Students often resonate with issues of peace, social justice, the community nature of the Mennonite churches and its emphasis on biblical teaching," she says. "Sometimes people come here not knowing anything about Mennonites. As they learn more, they may realize we aren't as different as they thought. We become more accessible, and they begin to think they might even fit into this denomination."

"I think there is a Mennonite ethos here that is very hospitable to a wide range of perspectives," says Jeremy Bergen, director of the MTS program. "Some students come from Pentecostal, Reformed or Catholic traditions, and then serve those communities. Small class settings and conversations over lunch allow us to build bridges in many directions. Together we discover ways to engage deeply with the Bible and with theology for the sake of ministry in a rapidly changing church landscape."

"We are grateful for the role Grebel plays in developing and training pastors for the Mennonite church," says Marilyn Rudy-Froese, church leadership minister at MC Eastern Canada. "Grebel is a valued partner in working to meet the pastoral needs of MC Eastern Canada congregations." ❧

/// **Staff changes**

Pastoral transition in Manitoba

Josh Janzen began his associate pastor for youth ministry role at Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church on Feb. 1 and he was installed a couple weeks later, on Feb. 16. Before this, Janzen volunteered as the program director for the Youth Stewards at Belmont Neighbourhood Fellowship in Elkhart, Ind. He holds bachelor of arts degrees in Bible and religion, and biology from Bethel College in North Newton, Kan. He is currently working towards a master of divinity degree, concentrating on Christian faith formation, at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart.



—BY **NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE**

Pastoral transition in Saskatchewan

Russ Friesen resigned as pastor of Tiefengrund Mennonite Church, near Laird, Sask., effective Dec. 31, 2019. He had served the congregation since 2011. Following his resignation, he accepted a position in the trucking industry but says, “I continue to pray for God’s leading and am open to whatever role [God] calls me to in furthering his kingdom.”



—BY **DONNA SCHULZ**

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On the CM blog: What if Jesus asked you, “What do you want?” What if you replied honestly?
canadianmennonite.org/blog/dd-want



Watch: How did we become so polarized?

A radio host, a mediator, a journalist and a theology student explore polarization during this panel discussion.
canadianmennonite.org/video/polarized



MC Eastern Canada appoints first intercultural mission minister

Fanosie Legesse has been appointed as the first intercultural mission minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.
canadianmennonite.org/legesse



Edmonton-Calgary trivia rivalry continues

Check out the results from an annual trivia night in Alberta that raises funds for Camp Valaqua.
canadianmennonite.org/abtrivia

Schools Directory featuring Rosthern Junior College

Coming full circle

Karen stories at RJC

Rosthern (Sask.) Junior College

Rosthern Junior College (RJC) is a high school community that is home to a variety of cultural backgrounds. In addition to students connected to the Mennonite church and other traditions, RJC currently has students from 11 different countries. RJC's multicultural student body includes Karen students from Rosthern and Saskatoon, who have been attending RJC since 2011.

Conflict between the Burmese and Karen people in southeast Asia caused many to flee to refugee camps on the Thailand-Burma border. Families began to arrive in Rosthern when Rosthern Mennonite Church started a sponsorship. Thanks to a partnership with the Rosthern congregation, Karen students were supported in coming to RJC.

Currently RJC has five Karen students who arrived in Canada close to 10 years ago from the Mae La Oo Refugee Camp in Thailand. It is anticipated that four new Karen Grade 10 students living in Rosthern will begin at RJC this fall.

When asked about her experience at RJC, Htoo Bo Paw, Grade 12, considers how the sense of community and belonging helped her transition to Canada: "I also wanted to come



Htoo Bo Paw

[to RJC] because my brother had been here before, and it has sort of become a family tradition. My sister wants to come next year."

Zani Aye, Grade 10, reflects on his connection with the unique out-of-classroom curriculum at RJC: "When we go and work with MCC [Menonite Central Committee] we sometimes talk about the work they do with refugees, and I think, 'That was me,' and it helps me understand my experience."

Eh Ni Htoo, Grade 12, describes the way his time at RJC has inspired him to serve internationally: "The MCC SALT [Serving and Learning Together] Program looks interesting to me. I want to travel the world and serve other people." He plans to travel to Guatemala with RJC's Alternative Learning and Service Opportunities (ALSO) Program this May.

When RJC was founded in 1905, it was originally conceived as a place to prepare Mennonite students for a life in Canada. This included English language instruction, spiritual formation, and academic pathways for jobs off the farm. RJC remains committed to equipping Mennonite and newcomer students to pursue vocational pathways and live out their values. In this way, the growing relationship with Karen students reflects a full-circle story, educating new Canadians to live lives of faith, service and peacemaking.

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Calendar

British Columbia

Until March 21: "Mennonite Gals Can Paint," an exhibit of watercolour and acrylic paintings by Marilyn Vooy's and Irene Enns, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Abbotsford.

April 4: Walter Paetkau presents "It Takes Raindrops to Fill a Lake" book launch, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Abbotsford, at 2 p.m.

April 17: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. holds its annual general meeting, at Ricky's Country Restaurant, Abbotsford, at 1:30 p.m. For more information, visit mhsbc.com.

April 24: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. and the Canadian Musical Theatre Company present "Pier 21," a musical by Allen des Noyers, at the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium, Abbotsford, at 7 p.m. For ticket information, visit mhsbc.com. Held in conjunction with the Mennonite Heritage Museum Gallery

exhibit, "New footsteps in Canada."

Alberta

March 20-21: MC Alberta annual delegate sessions, at Edmonton First Mennonite Church. Theme: "Encountering, embracing, embodying Christ in life."

Saskatchewan

March 28: Coro Nova spring concert, at Knox United Church, Saskatoon, at 7 p.m.

March 31: 28th annual Youth Farm Bible Camp vereneki supper, at Rosthern Mennonite Church, from 5 to 7 p.m.

Manitoba

March 17: Finale of the Verna Mae Janzen music competition, at CMU's Laudamus Auditorium, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

March 28: Jazz at CMU, in the Great Hall, at 7 p.m.

March 29: Guitar and handbell ensembles, at CMU's Laudamus

Auditorium, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

March 30: Community Concert Band performance, at the CMU Chapel, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

March 30: "Religion and family violence: Understanding the challenges and working for change" forum, at CMU, from 1 to 3 p.m.

Speaker: Catherine Holtmann, director of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research. Hosted by Breaking the Silence on Domestic Violence.

March 31: Open house for prospective students, at CMU, Winnipeg, at 8:30 a.m.

April 3: "Spring at CMU," a fundraising event, at CMU, at 7 p.m. Presentation by Mary-Jane McCallum, the 2020 Pax Award winner.

Ontario

March 12: J. Winfield Fretz Visiting Scholar Lecture, "Where moth and rust destroy: Archives and the contest over Anabaptist information,"

at Conrad Grebel University College Chapel, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m. Speaker: David Y. Neufeld, who holds the 2019-20 J. Winfield Fretz Fellowship in Mennonite Studies. For more information, visit uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events.
March 13: "Technology and peacemaking," a Grebel church youth event, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, at 6 p.m. For more information, visit uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events. To register (by March 9), email rjdejong@uwaterloo.ca.
March 21: Elmira meat canning fundraising breakfast, at Calvary United Church, St. Jacobs, from 8 to 10 a.m. Tickets must be reserved in advance. To purchase tickets, call 519-745-8458.

March 21: March break open house at Conrad Grebel University College and the University of Waterloo, Ont., from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, visit uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events.

UpComing

Selah's Song puppet show coming to Western Canada

Theatre of the Beat is touring a new show this spring. *Selah's Song* is an original, heartwarming musical written by Theatre of the Beat (TotB) co-founder Johnny Wideman, with music by beloved Mennonite musician Bryan Moyer Suderman.

The musical tells the story of a young girl whose courage inspired a village, and whose song became an anthem for peace. *Selah's Song* was commissioned and produced by Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville, Ont., in partnership with Nineteen on the Park Theatre in January 2014, as a community outreach event. Originally conceived as a 40-person musical, TotB is now revisiting it as a four-person show with puppets. Wideman states that "puppets have a deep history in political protests and in sharing political messages that would otherwise not be allowed. We forgive puppets, because they're not people, but we also listen to puppets more than we would a teacher. That's why we've tasked friendly looking puppets with educating and entertaining our children for centuries: we seem to trust them, which inherently makes them accessible." *Selah's Song* will tour across Western Canada in April and May of this year. For more information, visit theatreofthebeat.ca.

—THEATRE OF THE BEAT



Plenary Speaker:
Arli Klassen



Arli Klassen serves as the Coordinator of Regional Representatives for Mennonite World Conference and is the moderator for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

MENNONITE CHURCH
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Annual Delegate Sessions

March 13 & 14, 2020

Sessions at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon SK
Co-hosted by Wildwood Mennonite & First Mennonite

www.mcsask.ca



March 27: Absent Friends Film Series presents "The Fault in our Stars," a film based on John Green's book of the same name, followed by a discussion afterwards, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. For more information, visit grebel.ca/events.

March 29: Menno Singers perform "Creation is a Song: Songs of Water, Wind and Earth," at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo,

at 3 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

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



Classifieds

Volunteers Wanted

The International Guest House in Washington, D.C., is a special place where Anabaptist Mennonite volunteers live and work together providing hospitality to travellers from all over the world. Openings for short-term volunteers of 1-3 months available beginning June 2020. Room and board, flexible work schedules, and opportunities to engage meaningfully with other people. Current need for a host couple interested in serving 6-12 months. (Hosts receive monthly stipends, health insurance and room with private bath). Connect at igh-dc.com, call 202-726-5808 or email sarafretzgoering@gmail.com.

Listeners Wanted

Friends, have you ever heard the literal, audible voice of God? We don't talk much of this sort of thing, but people say it happens. What was the message? How did it change you? This is for my personal interest and will not be shared with others. Please submit responses to: faithlistening@gmail.com

Employment Opportunities



Employment Opportunity Executive Minister

Mennonite Church Manitoba invites applications for an Executive Minister. The Executive Minister will inspire and lead congregations and pastors across MCM. Primary areas of responsibility include: promoting congregational vibrancy and spiritual health; strategic planning; leading the MCM staff team in implementing MCM's vision and mission; and relating to MC Canada.

Preferred qualifications: love for Christ and the church; strong team builder; excellent listener and communicator; spiritual leadership experience; demonstrated commitment to Anabaptist theology.

Preferred start date: Summer/Fall, 2020 (flexible). Resumés will be reviewed beginning April 15, 2020.

Applications, nominations or inquiries may be submitted to John P. Klassen, Search Chair:
pastorjohn@winkleremmanuel.com.

More information at:
www.mennochurch.mb.ca/



Employment Opportunity Lead Pastor

Blumenort Mennonite Church is a rural church located in Rosetown, Man. Our congregation consists of approximately 150 attending members of varying ages. We are searching for a pastor who will lead, nurture and help the members of our congregation build and grow their personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Lead Pastor's responsibilities include leadership, involvement in worship, pastoral care, administration as well as other duties related to being the Lead Pastor of our church. Our Youth Pastor and Secretary will also be seeking guidance and direction from you.

The Lead Pastor shall have the qualifications of spiritual leadership, be filled with the Spirit, worthy of respect, sincere, wise and maintain a Christian lifestyle.

The position is scheduled to begin in July 2020.

Applicants can seek further information and forward their resumés to Scott Fehr at 204-324-4107 or email sbfehr@sdnet.ca.



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**Employment opportunity
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Preston Mennonite and Wanner Mennonite churches are two Anabaptist congregations in Cambridge, Ont., ready to embark on a new venture in staff sharing. Located five kilometres apart, with 80-100 active members between them, Preston is situated in town beside a thriving seniors community and near three elementary schools, while Wanner is in a lovely rural setting next to a new housing development.

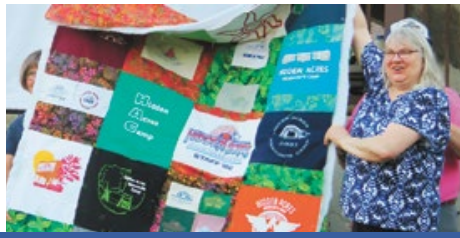
We desire to remain separate and distinct as congregations. Together we wish to extend God's love through outreach to the people of Cambridge who are in need, to nurture the well-being and spiritual growth of the people in our congregations, and to increase our numbers with new members and families.

We plan to hire two innovative pastors, one full- and one half-time, to work creatively as a pastoral team sharing duties as required. MLIs will be accepted until positions are filled.

Successful candidates will bring their unique combined skills in preaching, teaching, pastoral care and community outreach. For more information:

www.mcec.ca/ministry-opportunities
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Thank you for responding to our two fundraising campaigns last year. Together, you and other generous donors gave \$139,000 to help us tell the stories of Mennonites in Canada.

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We get the story started; you help us finish it.

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