

CANADIAN MENNONITE

July 20, 2020 Volume 24 Number 15

Following Jesus into the climate crisis

Global Mennonite enviro task force established, pg. 20

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EDITORIAL

A COVID-19 commandment

By Virginia A. Hostetler
Executive Editor



It is now month five for Canadian communities struggling with the COVID-19 crisis. In this time, we've heard many pronouncements by health authorities on what members of the public should and should not do to protect themselves against the novel coronavirus. As it spreads, health experts continue to research and learn, experiment and make recommendations. As the weeks stretch on, some instructions have changed; some of them have been downright confusing.

Recently, Waterloo Region, where I live, instituted a community-wide order requiring residents to wear face coverings in all indoor public places and in all public transportation areas. For some of us, this will mean continuing with our usual practice. But, for others, this is a new and constricting order.

Here's how health experts explain the benefit of wearing masks. Person A and Person B both wear simple protective masks over their noses and mouths. Outcome: both are shielded from droplets that spread the coronavirus. If only Person A wears a mask, Person B still has some protection. Health professionals tell us that—contrary to what one might think—the mask offers the highest protection for the person nearby, not for its wearer. By covering her face, Person A is primarily shielding her neighbour.

This kind of mask doesn't appear in the Bible, and yet this concept seems so biblical. Consider what Jesus calls the second greatest commandment: "You

shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31, NRSV). He was harking back, of course, to an ancient teaching by the highest authority, "I am the Lord, and I command you to love others as much as you love yourself" (Leviticus 19:18, Common English Version).

Here's a straightforward health order: You and I are commanded to love our neighbour. In this time of contagion, practices such as washing one's hands, keeping physically distant and wearing a mask are ways people of conscience express caring to those around them.

I am grateful for those in my life who heeded this commandment—for my daughter, daughter-in-law and work

'Love your neighbour as yourself.' In other words, wear a mask.

colleague who all showed love by giving me cloth masks. When I don one of those masks, that act of caring spreads to everyone else nearby, neighbour and stranger alike.

There are reasons why the wearing of masks might be problematic. For some people, pre-existing breathing difficulties make mask-wearing impossible. For those with hearing loss, communication through an opaque mask is difficult. Cognitive and mental health challenges present an obstacle for some. But for the majority of Jesus' followers today, wearing a mask is an order we can follow.

Some of us balk at following orders. A cloth over one's nose and mouth can get uncomfortable. Plus, it our right, we

believe, to choose what we wear.

You have heard it said, "It's my life and I will choose how I live it." But, during this global health crisis, focusing on one's own rights misses the point. Jesus' command is simple: "Love your neighbour as yourself." In other words, wear a mask.

Looking ahead

The next issue of *Canadian Mennonite* will be digital only and will be dated Aug. 3. Digital subscribers can expect it in their email inbox five days before that date. If you are receiving only the print magazine but want to receive that issue and two more digital-only issues in 2020, you can sign up at canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital or send an email to office@canadianmennonite.org. There is no extra cost to current subscribers.



Corrections

- Gettysburg is located in Pennsylvania. Incorrect information appeared in "Disillusionment and hope," June 22, page 11.
- A sentence in Timothy D. Epp's column, "A Black/Menno inventory," June 22, page 13, should have read, "Black Canadians were among the recipients of Anabaptist mission work at Sunnidale, Ont., and Winnipeg . . ." Also, the Vacation Bible School photo accompanying the story was taken in Shiloh, Sask., north of the community of Maidstone, and not in Manitoba.

Canadian Mennonite regrets the errors. ❧



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ABOUT THE COVER:

This plastic container of water was left in the forest at MCC partner Sembrandopaz's experimental farm just outside of Sincelejo, Colombia, to provide the birds and animals that call the forest home something to drink. To learn more about the new global Mennonite environmental task force, see story on page 20.

PHOTO: BY ANNALEE GIESBRECHT / MCC

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'As communities moved into the era of physical distancing, I had begun to reread the Book of Job. As protests erupted on top of everything else, I was struck by how relevant its basic dynamic remains,' writes **Derek Suderman** in the introduction to his feature.



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FEATURE

In a perfect storm

By Derek Suderman

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*



'Job's Comforters,' left, turn into his accusers in 'Job Rebuked by his Friends,' right. Both watercolour paintings were created by William Blake in 1805-06 for a series on the Book of Job commissioned by Thomas Butts. (Public Domain)

Years ago, I saw a movie about a fishing crew caught at sea when two storms and a hurricane converged to create a “perfect storm.” I have been reminded of this as widespread protest after the death of yet another African-American man in the custody of white police officers crashed into an already devastating novel-coronavirus pandemic and economic crisis. While the medical and economic crises seem unprecedented, racial injustice has brewed for centuries, and the combination has been devastating.

The pandemic has raised age-old questions:

- **Did humans bring COVID-19 on ourselves?**
- **Where is God** in all of it?

And in the case of racism and policing, we now face dueling perspectives: Appeals to “law and order” seek to maintain the status quo, with some tinkering at the edges, while voices of protest scream that profound change is needed.

As communities moved into the era of physical distancing, I had begun to reread the Book of Job. As protests erupted on top of everything else, I was struck by how relevant its basic dynamic remains.

Job's protest

Job begins as a wealthy, well-respected, diligently religious man. In wave after wave of suffering, he loses possessions to marauders (economic collapse), all of his children die (trauma), and finally he becomes sick (disease). Job sits in anguish, and friends come in order to “comfort” him.

Although this story is often depicted as a theodicy that puzzles over God's link with suffering, the narrator and all of the characters, including Job himself, see some form of connection between God and suffering. The central question here does not appear to be, “Is God related to suffering?” but rather, “How should Job respond?”

From the beginning, speech is central. Even after enormous suffering, Job “*does not charge God with wrongdoing*” (1:22) and “*does not sin with his lips*” (2:10). Finally, Job emerges with a heart-wrenching speech, wishing he had never been born—or even conceived! Startled, the friends go on the attack to defend God, citing traditional theology to explain his plight. Since God is just, you must have done something wrong. Perhaps God is teaching you a lesson.

But Job will have none of it. He voices his exasperation—with his situation, his friends and his God—becoming increasingly frustrated and angry. He

even calls on God to show up and explain what's going on. This debate rages for more than 30 chapters—traditional theology meets existential crisis.

In our present moment, this debate sounds quite familiar. Is COVID-19 a form of divine punishment for sin? If not, why would a loving God allow it? Does this pandemic prove that God is not in control?

After the killing of Floyd, what is an appropriate way to get people's attention? Are protest and anger disruptive, even sinful, especially during a pandemic? Or are they okay, perhaps necessary? If Floyd's killing is the spark that lit the flame, it's clear there's a lot of accumulated tinder all around.

In this moment, whose voices—and lives—matter? Can lived experience legitimately challenge inherited tradition?

Experiencing Job

A while back, I taught a course on Job. I had a number of bright, young engineering and computer science students who were clear, structured thinkers. They read Job as an intellectual puzzle to be solved. What doctrine answers this dilemma? How do we square God's omnipotence and goodness with the presence of evil and suffering in the world?

In the same class, there was a mature student who had been a high-flying executive in a prestigious national company. He was living the high life, complete with horses in an equestrian stable and a yacht in Florida, before he suffered a severe car accident resulting in a brain injury. Having fallen off the social ladder, he was reinventing himself, training to become a social-support worker to help those in need. Eager and engaged, he still had trouble articulating himself and would often lose his train of thought.

As the course proceeded, it was like living in a parable, with the class mirroring the dynamic of the book. I saw Job's friends draw on traditional views to explain his suffering, insisting on logical coherence and predictable consequences, largely oblivious to the



'The Lord Answering Job Out of the Whirlwind,' part of a series of paintings on the Book of Job by William Blake, 1805-06, commissioned by Thomas Butts. (Public Domain)

existential angst embodied beside them. I spent a whole term encouraging students focused on correct, universal doctrine to also attend to lived experience—and their classmate!—but with little success.

Job and the 'perfect storm' of COVID-19

Remarkably, God actually does respond to Job (chapters 38-41), although without giving Job an answer. While Job thinks that the universe should be fair and he demands an explanation for why all of this happened to him, God responds by moving from Job's microscopic focus to a broad-angle lens describing God's care for all of creation. Perhaps most intriguing—and disturbing—the Behemoth appears as the "first of the great acts of God" (40:19).

Biblical creation is often described as God bringing order out of chaos, but this symbol of power reflects a wildness bordering on chaos and destruction that forms part of God's creation, instead of

being separate from it.

For me, this has provided a helpful way to think about a hurricane or virus. While insurance companies still speak of "acts of God," natural disasters are not signs of a punishment that God micro-manages, on the one hand, or evils that God fails to control, on the other, but rather they reflect the wildness built into creation.

Job 38-41 provides a helpful antidote to a runaway human-centred perspective in which Christians have justified environmental destruction by appealing to God's command to "have dominion" (Genesis 1:26). Beyond the current crises, this reorientation holds significant potential for re-thinking our role in the ongoing climate emergency, placing ourselves within creation rather than above it.

Did Job sin?

In our time, we should also reconsider how we understand the climax of Job's response to God: "Therefore I despise

myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). In the King James Version, "despise" appears in italics, and the word "myself" is added in translation, although it is not present in the original text. While many versions clarify this ambiguity, the original phrase does not actually specify what Job despises or rejects: Himself? His "case" against God? His former perspective?

Even more significant, the English word "repent" suggests that Job admits wrongdoing. In a common reading, Job admits that he sinned by speaking up, repents and then receives double what he lost—a nice tidy perspective that keeps intact the doctrine of retribution, with God as Santa Claus doling out rewards and punishments.

However, the Hebrew word translated as "repent" here has multiple meanings. Remember how the friends came in order to "comfort" Job (Job 2:11)? This is the same term. The same phrase as in Job 42:6 also appears in Exodus 32:14, when God concedes to Moses lobbying for the Israelites, and in Jonah 3:10, when God responds to the repentance of the Ninevites. In both cases God "relents" or "changes his mind" about punishing them.

So Job could be saying "I am comforted" or "I change my mind." In fact, since this term is never used in the sense of "repent" elsewhere in the book, this seems the least likely translation.

Far from condemning Job's words, God chastises the friends: "*For you have not spoken of me rightly as my servant Job has*" (42:7-8). In the end, it wasn't the systematic theologians trying to defend God who were in the right, but the one who got frustrated and angry. While Job's friends collapsed God into their conception of the divine, only Job spoke to, and sought a relationship with, God. The sin did not lie in Job's lament after all, but in his friends' certainty about their erroneous positions!

Among the friends

At present, I feel like one of Job's friends. A Bible scholar passionate about the church, I am deeply invested in the received tradition. But as

protesters clamour for change, I need to check an instinct to be defensive in order to listen to experiences far removed from my own.

In doing so, I should also recognize that systemic racism has long been justified with the Bible I hold dear. Far from aberrations, slavery, the Doctrine of Discovery, and Indian Residential Schools reflect our tradition's historic complicity in structural sin. Rather than defending Christianity, on one hand, or jettisoning it, on the other, to participate in this living tradition means critiquing where it has gone astray and then seeking new understandings for moving forward.

Unlike Job, who enjoyed a privileged social and economic status, in our day systemic marginalization has produced disproportionate negative effects on those of lower economic means. While COVID-19 is not a judgment for sin, the structural sin of racism has amplified its tragic effects.

So let's not get turned off by anger, as

Job's friends did, or focus on others' individual sins while ignoring our own complicity in structural ones. This is a moment for our perspectives to be challenged and our minds changed.

It is not easy making sense of experiences that defy prevailing logic. But as the Bible repeatedly demonstrates, at times the explanatory power of a former perspective just doesn't cut it in different circumstances. We can recall the words of Jesus, who also suffered under systemic oppression: "*Every scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old*" (Matthew 13:52).

There is treasure to be found, but it does take some digging . . . ❧



Derek Suderman is associate professor of religious studies and theological studies at Conrad Grebel University College and the University of Waterloo, Ont.

❧ For discussion

1. During this coronavirus pandemic and economic crisis, what suffering have you seen in others and in yourself? Is this suffering catastrophic enough to be compared to Job's? Why have concerns about racism and policing, which have been brewing for many years, erupted at this time? What fundamental changes is our society experiencing?
2. Derek Suderman says that the pandemic has raised age-old questions. Do you sometimes wonder whether God has a purpose in bringing COVID-19? Does it make you question God's omnipotence or goodness? How does God respond to Job's questions in the end?
3. Natural disasters "are not signs of punishment," writes Suderman. They are not "evils that God fails to control," rather, "they reflect the wildness built into creation." Do you agree? What other questions arise from this explanation?
4. Suderman concludes that "[t]he sin did not lie in Job's lament after all, but in his friends' certainty about their erroneous positions!" What are the limits of systematic theology? Why does uncertainty make us feel uneasy?
5. What injustices has the pandemic exposed in Canada? What are some steps we can take to expand justice for all?

—By Barb Draper

See related God and Suffering resources at www.commonword.ca/go/1569

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/// Readers write

✉ Today's society is a progression of Canada's colonial past

Re: "Decolonize' and 'settler' meaningless terms" letter, June 8, 2020, page 8.

It is a nice idea that "our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers . . . through industry and innovation, built our advanced, civil, 21st-century society with its advanced parliamentary government, social system and compassionate health-care system."

By listening to the voices of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC), I am learning that the history of Canada is much messier and more painful than that. This supposedly upstanding and clear-eyed "industry and innovation" was only made possible by the horrible use of the bodies of non-white people, resulting in their cultures being decimated, to say the least. A quick look into the history and labour behind the Canadian Pacific Railway is just one place to find terrible mistreatment in the name of "industry and innovation."

Why do we have to be aware of this today, when this kind of extreme mistreatment is in the past? Why do we have to understand the words "settler" and "decolonize"? It's because the way our society is organized today is a progression of the past, as it was intended to be. It is strongly centred on whiteness. Think of our historical heroes, names of streets, representation in movies. Just try to find a bandage to match your skin colour if you are not white.

Decolonizing means becoming aware of how strongly our current "civil society" revolves around the experience of white people and marginalizes everyone else. It means listening to the BIPOC voices when they say they are not thriving, and then actually believing what they say.

SERENA ERB, STRATFORD, ONT.

✉ Silence those who are problematic

Re: "What lingers in the air," June 8, 2020, page 2.

As the executive editor of *Canadian Mennonite*, Virginia A. Hostetler has the opportunity to actually affect change and yet she does not. Part of the dominant white culture oppressing people of colour is the idea that we all have the right to express our opinion—or freedom of speech—even if it reinforces white supremacy.

There was a letter published in print (June 8, page 8) from an online comment that is still prominently featured in the online Readers Write section called "Decolonize' and 'settler' meaningless, pejorative

terms." This letter reinforces the underlying racism and disdain for Indigenous people in our society. Instead of propping up those who are part of the problem, how about silencing them? How about not giving them a platform or giving their ideas passive approval?

If *CM* wishes to positively contribute to tearing down the idea of white supremacy, perhaps a good place to look first is within *CM* itself. You actually have the power to take away the voices of those who contribute to the oppression of people. Why are you not using it?

BEV HUNSBERGER (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ Mennonites should actively support good cops

Bad cops and racism are important topics, but we must also take a positive approach. I think most policing in Canada is good.

We should join the efforts to maintain it and make it better. Dismantling police forces certainly isn't a realistic option. What we're really looking for are improvements, such as better screening of people who apply to become cops, quicker firings of those who prove bad at it, and the elimination of poor techniques that might include neck-holds.

Mennonites should be involved, not simply joining the critics and working for alternatives to policing. We must also express our support for quality policing. We want and need it as much as everyone else. However, many Mennonites are shy about such things. We admire good policing, but it's never been worked into our theology. Overall, we're much too silent.

In addition, we should be encouraging and praising those among us who want to be in this profession. Peaceful people make good cops, and we should strive as a people to do our fair share of the world's dirty work. But Menno cops may face social ostracism. How backward. We love that the world is made safer by police and that 911 will bring them to our aid, yet some people seem to think it's a sin for a Mennonite to be one. How contradictory. If there aren't enough good cops, part of the blame lies at our own feet.

I suggest that we have many deep discussions about crime issues, and not avoid them. I suggest we become very honest about our desires for good policing and a stable society. It's very good to side with victims of racism and police abuses, and to be voices for change in such things, but we must also be active and vocal about good police forces.

HOWARD BOLDT, OSLER, SASK.

✉ What does Atonement have to do with homelessness?

Re: “Pastor praised, criticized for open letter to governments” letters, May 25, page 8.

I did not understand that David Driedger was advocating “an imposed, enforced governmental action,” as Walter Bergen wrote. Driedger was supporting a petition that asks the government to consider legislation that would provide a fair living wage for everyone.

The parable in Matthew 20:1-16 is about labourers in a vineyard who were hired at different hours of the day, but it starts with: *“For the kingdom of heaven is like the landowner who went out early . . .”* The workers all received a fair living wage, but the ones who were hired in the morning, did not like it. Why?

Bergen also writes, “If the Christ of the gospels is to be believed, then the levelling comes not through an imposed, enforced governmental action, but by the Atonement of Jesus Christ.” In whatever way Atonement might be understood, does it materially change the condition of a jobless, homeless person?

PETER H. PETERS, WINNIPEG

✉ ‘By virtue of the absurd’

Re: “Embrace the paradox,” May 25, page 13.

I actually had a very similar experience with Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard as Troy Watson had. Kierkegaard’s work also helped to make sense of Christianity for me. His depiction of the Christian paradox is obviously central to this making sense, “by virtue of the absurd.” I’ve also been inspired by his explanation of sin as despair. It helps to clarify that, while there are many kinds of sins we may or may not agree on as sins, we can all agree that, one way or another, the state of sin originates in a lack of faith, and take it from there.

PAUL REDEKOP, WINNIPEG

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

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Andres—Morgan Hostetler (b. May 30, 2020), to Angie Hostetler and Ryan Andres, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

Bartel—Twins Georgia Grey and Rusty Walter (b. April 30, 2020), to Calvin and Leah Bartel, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Graham—Dominic Ian Benjamin (b. May 26, 2020), to David Graham and Lise McMillan, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Kim—Loa (b. June 17, 2020), to Jinah Im and Pablo Kim, Toronto United Mennonite Church.

Morasch—Audrey Maeve (b. June 18, 2020), to Maegen and Paul Morasch, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

Schellenberg—Arlo Everett Friesen (b. April 14, 2020), to Terry Schellenberg and Lenore Friesen, Sterling Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Baptisms

Jessica Vikse—Rosthern Mennonite, Sask., at the church, June 14, 2020.

Kate Hanson, Tianna Bartsch—Rosthern Mennonite, Sask., at Christopher Lake, June 14, 2020.

Marriages

Epp/Podaima—Rebecca Epp (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Evan Podaima, at Douglas Mennonite, June 6, 2020.

Deaths

Bartel—Leonhard, 86 (b. Sept. 10, 1933; d. May 22, 2020), Greendale River of Life, Chilliwack, B.C.

Harder—Hella, 93 (b. Oct. 6, 1926; d. May 31, 2020), First Mennonite, Edmonton.

Klassen—Johanna (nee Friesen), 100 (b. April 29, 1919; d. March 30, 2020), Wildwood Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Mathies—Helen, 100 (b. March 6, 1920; d. June 11, 2020), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Rosenberger—Velma, 86 (b. Aug. 23, 1933; d. June 26, 2020), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask. (formerly of Sharon Mennonite, Guernsey, Sask.).

Zehr—Elaine (Bender), 87 (b. March 28, 1933; d. May 22, 2020), Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

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

I'm thinking about sparrows

Rick Neufeld

"So do not be afraid. You are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31).

I am thinking about sparrows today, about how many of them there are, and yet how little I notice them until they stop for a quick perch on the railing of my deck and I find myself wishing that they were some other variety of backyard bird, perhaps something with just a little more colour—like a wren or a goldfinch or an oriole. Even a chickadee or a nuthatch will do. Dull in colour, yes, and lighter than air itself, these sparrows seem to be.

I am thinking about sparrows and how I have learned that, if you look closely, they really don't all look alike, although the differences are subtle and even invisible to one who has never taken the time to actually pay attention.

I am thinking about sparrows today and I am hearing Jesus' promise that those who follow him into the struggle of life are of more value than many of them and that all the while God has God's eye on the sparrow, even as God has God's eye on all of us.

I am thinking of sparrows today and I

am wondering who the "you" is of whom Jesus speaks in this passage. Is it you? Is it me? I have always thought so, or at least I have always rested in this powerful promise that God's eye is on us, as God loves us with an amazing love that knows us so well that God has the very hairs on our heads numbered.

Today I am taken also to the many others. All those others I too often do not pause to notice. Not unlike sparrows, in a way.

We have called them "essential workers" of late and, yes, those include doctors and nurses and health-care workers, of course. I cannot help but believe that in an especially powerful and particular way God's heart is with:

- **The young woman** who, behind a plexiglass screen, checked me out at the grocery store the other day.
- **The health-care aide** who has no choice but to go to work to feed her family.
- **The middle-aged woman** with a heavy accent who handed me my order

at the drive-through last week.

- **All the nameless**, faceless ones who harvest and butcher and pack the food that lines my shelves and fills my freezer.

I also think of so very many people of colour whose stories have been overlooked or downright ignored—to their very peril—by those of us in the dominant culture. Today, I think about these "sparrows," at least in terms of how much more God loves them. Indeed, all so deeply loved by God in spite of the fact that we who walk alongside often do not see or really hear them at all.

Especially today, I am wondering what God's call is for me and for us in all of this. ☿



Rick Neufeld is Mennonite Church Manitoba's director of leadership ministries, and interim executive minister until the end of this year.

A moment from yesterday



Public school teachers Samuel B. Nafziger, Dick Neufeld, Sara (Lehn) Harder, Martin Goerzen, Grace Harder, John C. Harder and C. Boldt, are pictured in the most northerly Mennonite farm community in the world, at Fort Vermilion, Alta., in 1958. Their presence was controversial, as some Old Colony Mennonite settlers resisted the development of public schools, fearing their "worldly" effect on children. To build trust, the superintendent recruited Mennonite teachers from the more modern Mennonite Church. Young teacher Sara Lehn won over the bishop's wife by conversing with her in Low German; the wife then introduced Sara to her husband as "one of our kind." The schools also included Indigenous and Métis students.

Text: Lauren Harder-Gissing, with reference to Dawn S. Boden's "Resistance, acquiescence and accommodation," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 2010.

Photo: *The Canadian Mennonite* / Mennonite Archives of Ontario



IN THE IMAGE

‘Lining things up’

By Ed Olfert

A recent article in *Canadian Mennonite* included a story of the closing of Superb Mennonite Church (“Superb helped me continue to have faith,” June 22, page 20). Superb was my home. I was dedicated, married, baptized and raised a family there.

It is the late 1980s, and the Holly and Ed Olfert family are in their bench, fully engaged in Sunday morning worship.

They sit five strong, filling a pew. At the aisle end is Jeb, the youngest, tall, long-legged. He is leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, looking totally bored, looking like his mind is miles away. However, history has shown that Jeb is fully aware of the community that surrounds him, aware of things said, sensitive to feelings, at peace with it all.

Beside Jeb sits his mother, Holly. Holly is a little stressed today. Some weeks ago Jeb went shopping with his dad and came home proudly sporting a pair of canvas sneakers from Zellers for only \$4, perfect canoe shoes for that upcoming school excursion. But this morning Jeb appeared from his bedroom dressed in those sneakers. Holly offered a comment regarding their beauty, and Jeb spontaneously decided that they would become his full-time Sunday shoes and also perfect footwear

for that wedding he is to usher. Today, Holly frets as she looks down at the ugly sneakers from Zellers.

Next to Holly sits Jen. Jen is wearing a little sun dress. It doesn’t matter if it’s 40 below or 40 above, Jen is wearing a dress that is only “this” long. Now, Jen is cold. She is slipping her hands between her dad’s, moaning, “I’m so cold.”

Wearing this dress has little to do with it, 40 below or 40 above has little to do with it. There is simply no blood in Jen’s body; if she was wearing a snow-mobile suit, Jen would be slipping icy fingers into Dad’s hands and moaning, “I’m so cold.”

Then there is Ed, struggling with weighty spiritual matters. “How will the farm chemical bill get paid?” “Why do those pistons in the free air Skidoo keep melting?” Ed, with the attention span of a gnat, keeps closing one eye while the other lines up the second pew with the first, the top of the pulpit with the window shade, the hymn book with the Duo-Tang behind it. Ed is getting the elbow and being accused of “lining things up.”

By the wall sits Kira, the eldest of the three. The dark cloud on her forehead announces that she doesn’t want to be here; she is too tired, too bored. That

would be quite believable if one hadn’t observed her earlier confrontation with a younger cousin regarding his most recent hockey hero, her laughter as she turns to hear big Mike’s latest outrageous quote, her passion as she leans her confident alto into a favourite hymn.

The pastoral prayer begins. The Olferts sit quietly, heads bowed. Jeb has the advantage; his slouch passes reasonably well as a prayer posture.

The prayer goes on. And on. Somewhere, a child is born and learns to walk. Somewhere, a war starts, UN negotiators arrive and truce is bargained. The economies of small countries grow, then ebb away, while the prayer continues.

Jeb has not moved, but will later make a mild observation about watching the entire lifecycle of an insect on the floor between his Zellers sneakers.

Holly still frets, but now how to clear her house of smoke from a burnt roast.

Ed remains enveloped in his spiritual moment until lips brush against one ear and he hears, “Dad, that’s not a prayer, that’s another sermon!”

Then, from the other side, more gently, into his deaf ear, but he knows, “Dad, you’re lining things up again!” ❧



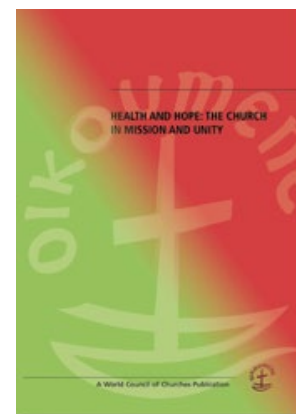
Ed Olfert (*p2ptheo@sasktel.net*) is grateful for the Superb community that loved his family.

Et cetera

WCC releases online COVID-19 pandemic publication

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has released an online publication, “Health and hope: The church in mission and unity,” a collection of previously published articles that resonate with the worldwide struggle amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The collection, published by Wiley, is a combined edition of *The Ecumenical Review* and *International Review of Mission*, and marks only the second time in history that such a combined edition has been produced. The historical perspective also lends a new air of appreciation to current efforts to care for each other, efforts that have erased the boundaries between faith groups and nations. The publication is available at bit.ly/wcc-health-hope.

Source: World Council of Churches



MIND AND SOUL

Why I'm not a Canadian

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

I am an immigrant. After serving with Mennonite Central Committee in Canada, I chose to stay in this amazing country. The Canadian way was closer to the “thousand points of light” to which one of the leaders of my left-behind country called his own people. (I’ll leave you to guess what country.)

Canada Day has just passed as I write this. Normally my neighbourhood is a gigantic party with a rich tapestry of the many cultures that have chosen to come to Canada. The joy is more than just food and fireworks. But 29 years here and I am still not a Canadian citizen.

The obstacle for me is to be exclusively committed to the one Lord that transcends national boundaries. To be a citizen means to declare (avow, accept) allegiance to a nation-state. The nation is an entity that seeks to capture our loyalties and identities. As a Christian, I do not think anything should replace allegiance to the Alpha and Omega.

Let me be clear. I strongly identify as a Canadian. I am very committed to this country, involved in all areas of advocacy and politics (except for voting). I pay my taxes in full and gladly receive the services. Nevertheless, since the earliest days of my Christian journey, I have carried a postcard that presents

“A modest proposal for peace”: That the Christians of the world agree not to take up arms against one another.

Ponder history: Irish Catholic vs. Irish Protestant. German Lutheran against American Lutheran. Rwandan Catholic vs. Rwandan Catholic. What would be different if Christians did not take up arms against each other or, in defence of the nation, against fellow brothers and sisters?

Clearly in that last example not only national loyalties can take the place of the lordship of Christ. Tribal allegiances claimed first place in Rwanda. Therein is the issue—anything that tries to seize first place in our devotion should be anathema (which by definition is a formal denunciation or vehement dislike).

Support for the military is rarely a question for Christians in my former country. Every leader must announce that God blesses the country. When my kids were little, a relative sent a CD of “patriotic songs” to them. A stunning number of these songs were explicitly religious. It is a very fond memory to recall those kids singing along—and replacing the actual country in the song with any other country they could remember: “God bless . . . and Canada

and Ireland and Iraq and El Salvador and . . .” on they went.

Our religious faith gives us visions for society. This is the definition of “political theology”: “explicit ideas that religious communities hold about authority and justice, and how to enact those ideas.” Our faith is automatically political. It demands we think about Indigenous peoples; about poverty, the poor and what causes poverty; about caring for the creation and the effects of fossil-fuel use; and whether policing is the best vehicle for social health and safety.

There are a few things a nation-state does and needs to do. It serves a coordinating function. It navigates the system of other nation-states. The pandemic response is a clear example of the roles of different levels of government, especially the national.

And we all have to travel on some nation’s passport. Crossing borders with my former country’s documents gets increasingly troublesome. I may someday become a Canadian citizen after all. ❧



Randolph Haluza-DeLay attends First Mennonite Church in Edmonton.

Et cetera



MCC distributes school kits in Cambodia

Nearly 48,000 Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) school kits arrived in May 1983 and were stored for distribution during the 1983-84 school year. Along with the kits, some 170,000 notebooks were supplied, plus a small amount of corrugated roofing for village schools.

Source (text and photo): MCC



TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

A living metaphor

Joshua Penfold

It's outlandish really, what God asks Hosea to do. To think that someone known for his holiness and intimate relationship with the divine would take up residence with a woman everyone knew was promiscuous.

It would have been one thing if God had sent Hosea to Gomer to pass on a message, although even that would have looked bad, someone like him meeting with someone like her. But no, what God requested of Hosea was far more unthinkable and humiliating: a call designed to fail. Hosea, the prophet of God, was to marry Gomer, the harlot, just so she could cheat on him and be a living metaphor of Israel's unfaithfulness.

I am a personal-support worker for someone who is so far from my lifestyle and circles of contact that our lives would never have intersected in regular life. Andrea (a pseudonym) struggles with various diagnoses and addictions, and is an incredibly challenging person to support. She is not someone I would normally want to be associated with.

We have had multiple occasions in different public settings where Andrea will become enraged when she pushes the established boundaries and I won't bend to her wishes. She will unleash a

full-blown tantrum, with a barrage of booming expletives for all to hear.

I'm realizing just how humbling this experience is for me, especially my ego. This is not how I roll in my life, and in these situations I find myself worrying about how we are being perceived, specifically how I am being perceived. No one knows the context of why Andrea and I are together, and I wonder if everyone is silently labelling us and judging us together.

If I'm honest, I realize that, if I was a bystander, I would likely think that way too. I am aware that my association with Andrea affects how the people who witness us perceive me, and it's rarely in a positive light.

Is this how Hosea felt? Did life with Gomer change his social status? Did Hosea worry that he would be wrongly perceived? Did he worry about his image? Did Gomer's lifestyle force him to interact with people and parts of town that he didn't know existed and didn't want to be caught dead in? Did Hosea worry that his entire calling as a prophet would be washed away in this union, and that his reputation would dissolve to nothing?

Then I think of someone else who intentionally associated with people

others would prefer not to relate to. Although having all power and prestige, Jesus decided to hang out with the lowest of the low. Emmanuel entered into a subjugated nation, a people living under the rule of almighty Rome.

Jesus lowered himself further by associating with those the leaders and rulers of that subjugated nation wouldn't dare be seen with. He descended the status ladder so far as to associate with shepherds, fishermen, lepers, and "sinners" of all kinds.

Amazingly, not only did Jesus not seem to mind it, he embraced it, invited it and turned the world upside down, telling everyone to look to these embarrassing riffraff as a living metaphor of the Kingdom of God.

Reading Hosea, thinking of Jesus and reflecting on my own work, I realize just how concerned I still am about my own image, my own ego, my own status, and what others think of me. Once again, I'm amazed by Jesus' love for all humanity, with no regard to himself. Oh that my life might be less concerned about my own image and, instead, become a living metaphor of God's outlandish and selfless love for all. ☺



Joshua Penfold
(penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) is a member of Tavistock (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

Et cetera

Discrepancies in COVID-19 death rates

Long-term care homes in Ontario that are owned by for-profit corporations have had a higher COVID-19 death rate than non-profit homes or those owned by a municipality, reported the Ontario Health Coalition on May 6. The study looked at 700 for-profit, 275 non-profit and 82 municipal homes. The rates of death of homes with COVID-19 outbreaks were:

- 9 percent in for-profit homes
- 5.25 percent in non-profit homes
- 3.62 percent in public (municipal) homes

Source: OntarioHealthCoalition.ca



VIEWPOINT

Receptive ecumenism

Becoming vulnerable to the other

Fernando Enns

There is a moment when everything changes among the students who take the Mission and Ecumenism course at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands, where I teach. The student composition of this compulsory course is quite diverse; the majority represent shades from the Reformed tradition: some (mostly young men) who consider themselves as “conservative” or biblicist; some (mostly women) are “liberals.” There are Baptists (“evangelical”), Mennonites (considered the most liberal), Pentecostals and students without a clear religious affiliation.

Most of the students are rather sceptical about ecumenism. Some do not believe there is any need to reflect on their relation to other Christians. Others believe that inter-Christian relations are irrelevant in the context of multi-religious encounters and extreme secularism.

Laying the foundation

During the first sessions of the course, my Reformed colleague, Heleen Zorgdrager, and I lead the students to study biblical texts on the unity of the church, like John 17 or Ephesians 4.

As we reflect on ecclesiology (the nature of the church), we discover that “being one” is an essential mark of the church in every tradition.

We also learn about the history of the ecumenical movement.

Up to this point, most students prefer to stay in their comfort zone. They have learned to “tolerate” others, but I sense they hold stereotypes about each other (and their Mennonite professor).

None of them really question what they have believed so far. And I encourage them to present their own identity,



to cherish what they have learned from their belief systems and personal experiences with church.

Becoming receptive

Then comes a moment when everything changes.

This usually happens when I introduce the concept of “receptive ecumenism.” Instead of asking, “What do other traditions need to learn from mine?” the leading question is, “What are the weaknesses that I experience in my own community? and, Are there “gifts” in other traditions that could help me to overcome these weaknesses?”

Paul Murray, who has developed this approach at the Durham Centre for Catholic Studies, says the assumption is that “if all were asking this question seriously and acting upon it, then all would be moving in ways which would both deepen our authentic respective identities and draw us into more intimate relationships.”

Of course, there is some reluctance in the beginning. The students split up into groups of three or four, composed of different backgrounds. This provides a safe space to share problems, difficulties, challenges—even pain—they experience in their own community.

Sharing vulnerably

When they return to the larger group, everything feels different. Students now report, sometimes with tears in their eyes, the experiences they never thought they could share with anyone, let alone someone outside their own circles.

The other students listen in a very sensitive way. All the arrogance and ignorance from earlier sessions is gone.

Now they relate to each other, gradually building trust. It is no longer

tolerance in the sense of indifference, but a real interest in the other, and an honest, common search for biblical wisdom and theological reflection that meets the reported challenges.

Students start to ask each other: How do you do that in your community? On what grounds? Why can't I do that/ believe that in my own church? Or can I?

Now the classroom becomes a real ecumenical space, an image of the “one household of God” in all its diversity. We have become believers who seek to strengthen each other in faith by sharing doubts in the presence of the other. Can we receive together that which is of God?

Receiving the gifts

For me, it is always a miracle how the spirit changes, how gently the students behave toward each other, how cautious they are in pointing to the strengths of the other's tradition.

Having been involved in official ecumenical dialogues and institutions over decades, I realize that becoming receptive to the other is quite different from trying to convince others why my way is not only legitimate, but superior. Unless I make myself vulnerable to the other—trusting that they will not destroy my faith but become a companion in growing it—I will not be able to receive the gifts of a global church that celebrates its reconciled diversity as a blessing from God.

Besides, isn't this approach exactly the wisdom of the peace church, which teaches nonviolence as yet another essential mark of the Church of Christ? Being nonviolent to another opinion, culture, mentality, tradition makes my own faith vulnerable. As we know from our own history, this takes a lot of courage and deep trust in God's guiding Spirit.

I am proud of my students for their confidence! And I learn a lot from them.

✦

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PERSONAL REFLECTION

I am my brother's keeper

Art Sheil

Many years ago now—I'm getting a bit long in the tooth—I took what I thought would be a bird course in my second year at what was then known as Waterloo College. It turned out to be anything but, and I remember more from that course than from any other in my seven years of university education. It was a course on political philosophy.

The response to "shelter at home" brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic brings back one of the key insights we discussed in that course.

The response I refer to involves scenes of crowded beaches, the absence of masks, the rush to fill the bars minutes after they opened, and, most significantly, the protest marches demanding that the country be opened so we can get back to the "American way."

However, I do not want to be seen as simply an American basher. The "way" referred to is the same in every corner of the civilized world. It focuses squarely on individual rights and freedoms. It leads churches to defy directives from political and health professionals, and vast crowds to fill the streets demanding what they see as their right.

In the course I took in 1960, we were asked to read and discuss Walter Lippmann's book *The Public Philosophy*, published in 1955. The author analysed the writings of the leading journalists of the day and claimed that what drove their thinking was simply a reflection of the dominant philosophy in our society. He concluded that "there is a deep disorder in our society." That disorder, he claimed, was not the result of any outside pressure but was generated entirely from within ourselves.

He came to that conclusion after studying the rise and fall of civilizations as far back as recorded history and archaeological studies could take him. What he claimed to find was that every civilization rose when citizens bought in

to a fundamental social contract. That contract involved acknowledging what I would forgo for your benefit and what you would forgo for my benefit, in order for us to live together in community. He also claimed that every civilization began its decline when that social contract weakened in the face of the rise of individualism. The dominant philosophy is played out for us all over the world in the simple refusal to wear a mask, for the benefit of others, when you go shopping.

Maybe it's a preacher's liability, but I cannot keep from contrasting this "way" of managing our life with the words of Jesus: "*I am the way, the truth, and the Life*" (John 14:6). The way of Jesus sounds very much like embracing a social contract. He is called "the Man for others." Early Christians were known by how they loved one another. "*If meat will cause my brother to offend, I will eat no meat*," the Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 8:13. "If my not wearing a mask may endanger my brother, I will wear a mask," he might have written today.

The "deep disorder in our society" that Lippmann identified has been attested to in various ways since he wrote about it 75 years ago. You can fill library shelves with books about the "Me generation."

I worked for many years with youth who were frequently the negative result of the "it's all about me" parenting debacle. Sadly, the Christian church, and we its members, from time to time have also been seduced by the appeal to look out for No. 1.

We hear a lot right now about something called the "new normal." We also hear a call to return to the "American

way," often equated with rugged individualism, and by no means limited to the United States. Besides the fact that "new normal" is an oxymoron, the energy seems to be all directed at how quickly we can get back to the way things were.

Jesus sent his disciples out to announce a new kingdom, a kingdom based on his way. That kingdom is not a place. It is an experience: your experience when others put you ahead



PIXABAY PHOTO BY CANICEUS

The way of Jesus sounds very much like embracing a social contract. He is called 'the Man for others.' Early Christians were known by how they loved one another.

of themselves, and for others when we put them ahead of ourselves. It may be as simple as stepping out of the aisle so another person can pass a safe distance away or wearing a mask when such distance is not possible.

Then we begin to heal the deep disorder in our society and bring in God's Kingdom. ☼

Art Sheil is a co-pastor of Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig, Ont.

VIEWPOINT

God's paintbrush of diversity

Glen Guyton
Mennonite World Conference

It does not happen often, but I am at a loss for words as cities across the United States burn, and as I have endured several weeks of seeing Black bodies sacrificed in the name of order and discipline. I am torn between being an enraged Black man and being a leader in a predominantly white institution whose members are united by theology and, for many, a common ancestry.

The most recent names that have shredded my heart are George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.

I watched in horror as a woman named Amy Cooper who, walking her unleashed dog, attempted to weaponize the police against Christian Cooper (no relation), who simply wanted to peacefully watch birds in Central Park in New York City.

Christian Cooper, like me, is an African-American man. The language used on the white woman's call to police means that any Black male—me or my son—could have fit the description, giving the responding officers a licence to kill with the qualified immunity that withholds justice.

Systems of racial power would like nothing better than for leaders like me to lay my Blackness and pain aside; however, they are part of what shapes my identity.

As a leader, I am called to push down my fear and sadness. I need to call upon the people of Mennonite Church U.S.A. I also call on my Anabaptist family from around the world to speak out against racial injustice at home and abroad.

We must reject cultures that demonize dark skin. We must reject cultures that cause some to whiten their skin because that is somehow perceived as better.

Our Anabaptist churches need to speak to the growing injustice around

the globe. Missionaries have come from North America and Europe, wrapping God in the cloak of whiteness. But, as Anabaptists, we must insist that we are all created in God's image. The Spirit connects us all and we should treasure the brush of diversity that God uses to paint humankind.

Along with thoughts and prayers, we need action. We need to be unified around who we are as a global body of peacemakers. I have challenged the church in the United States to reflect on the following:

- **How will you** join God's peace at work in your community or nation?
- **Are there people** or organizations in your communities who demonstrate what peace looks like?

Missionaries have come from North America and Europe, wrapping God in the cloak of whiteness. But, as Anabaptists, we must insist that we are all created in God's image.

- **Where have you** found God's peace in the work that you're doing?
- **What are some** things you can do to actively be a conduit for transformative peacemaking?

People from around the world have reached out to me, asking how they can help. Let us stand for justice. Together, we can make a difference. We need to engage in more costly peacemaking, rooted in radical discipleship, which seeks to dismantle systems of



UNSPASH PHOTO BY SHRAGA KOPSTEIN

oppression anywhere we see them. The violence and unrest that is happening now in the United States is not an accident; it is what the system is designed to do, and it jeopardizes all of us. ❧



Glen Guyton is the executive director of Mennonite Church U.S.A.

NEWS

'Being the church together'

MC Canada donates \$50,000 to Global Sharing Fund to help meet basic needs of sister churches in Mennonite World Conference distressed by the COVID-19 pandemic

Mennonite Church Canada / Mennonite World Conference

Mennonite Church Canada is donating \$50,000 to the Global Sharing Fund operated by Mennonite World Conference (MWC) to help MWC-member churches struggling because of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Sister churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America, which make up 81 percent of MWC members, are requesting aid from MWC because they do not have enough food, water for handwashing, and soap. Local hospitals are not always equipped with medical supplies and governments do not have resources to offer social assistance.

"The need is immediate," says Arli Klassen, who sits on the Joint Council of MC Canada and is also the regional representatives coordinator for MWC. "I am receiving texts and emails every day from member churches who report that their communities do not have enough food. Congregations are making food packets or cooking large pots of food to share with those who are hungry."

In response to MWC's call for aid, the Joint Council approved a \$50,000 donation to the Global Sharing Fund. The donation is possible because the regional churches, which make up MC Canada, experienced fewer expenses than budgeted in the 2020 fiscal year.

"COVID-19 exacerbates dire conditions in countries already devastated by armed conflict, internal displacement and lack of health-care infrastructure," says César García, MWC's general secretary. "Many of our congregations live and work in these danger zones. They provide pastoral care and counselling to the fearful, the sick and the dying; they give medical care and livelihood support. MC Canada's financial support for our global family of faith brings light in a world covered by this pandemic's darkness. Local congregations continue their ministries thanks to your

generosity!"

A task force representing more than 10 global Anabaptist agencies will determine criteria of accountability and coordinate responses to requests. Mennonite Central Committee will lead the task force that includes leadership from the MWC Deacons Commission and delegates from around the world.

This interagency response will maximize the strength of diverse organizations, build on existing networks of primary relationships and mitigate competition for scarce funds.

Requests for assistance funds will come from MWC member churches, associate members or related organizations. With oversight from the task force, they will be channelled to an appropriate member agency.

Along with its \$50,000 donation, MC Canada is asking its member churches and congregations to match or exceed this donation by donating to the MWC Global Church Sharing Fund through their respective regional church offices.

"We find the lockdown limitations hard on us in Canada, but most of us continue to have food on our tables every day," says Klassen. "Even in the midst of our anxieties and fears, we can walk with congregations who have access to fewer resources than we do. That is what it means to be the church together."

Donations marked "MWC Global Sharing Fund" can be mailed to regional church offices or sent electronically through the regional church websites:

- **Mennonite Church British Columbia**, No. 305-32025 George Ferguson Way, Abbotsford, BC V2T 2K7 (mcbc.ca/giving)
- **Mennonite Church Alberta**, Box 1839, Pincher Creek, AB T0K 1W0 (mcab.ca/giving)

- **Mennonite Church Saskatchewan**, 600 45th Street West, Saskatoon, SK S7L 5W9 (mcsask.ca/giving)

- **Mennonite Church Manitoba**, 600 Shaftesbury Boulevard, Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 (mennochurch.mb.ca/giving)

- **Mennonite Church Eastern Canada** 201-50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1 (mcec.ca/giving)

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MWC PHOTO BY HENK STENVERS

Instead of being a great leveller, the COVID-19 pandemic is exposing pre-existing systemic inequalities that benefit some and disadvantage others. How can the Anabaptist family respond?

Prayer ‘keeps us going’

Mennonite community at centre of COVID-19 response in Kudus, Indonesia

Mennonite World Conference

As the world deals with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mennonite community in Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia, joins hands and works with the local government to mitigate the risk and manage the spread of cases in the city of more than 800,000 residents.

Mardi Rahayu Hospital was built in 1969 by members of the Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI) Kudus congregation after five years of running a clinic beside the church building. The hospital has been treating COVID-19 cases since March 20.

“The hospital has made some upgrades by adding isolation beds, four with ventilators,” says managing director Dr. Pujianto. “We have stepped up handwashing and hygiene procedures, applied a no-visitation policy, trained staff on how to pre-screen every person prior to entering the building, and handled suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases, as well as applied a ‘one patient per room’ policy at no extra cost, to prevent contagion.”

“It’s a trying time for us all, physically and emotionally,” says Rina Ristanami, a Gereja Injili Tanah Jawa church member who works at the hospital. “COVID-19 spreads so fast, and we are learning as we go about how to handle patients from the moment they come in the door until they are discharged. We often don’t know whether a patient has the virus until several days later.”

The hospital also needs to be prudent with personal protective equipment. N95 masks, examination gloves and protective suits are in short supply. “We are thankful for individuals and organizations who have dropped off protective equipment, sanitizers, meal boxes or little gifts of appreciation,” Ristanami says. “We know our brothers and sisters are also praying for our health and safety. This keeps us going.”



PHOTO BY TRIS SUYITNO

Hotel staff wear protective equipment to distribute lunches to hospital workers in quarantine.

Isolation hotel

Patients who come to the hospital unaware they have COVID-19, or who even lie about symptoms and contact history, take a toll on its staff. All 1,400 hospital staff are currently taking rapid tests for SARS CoV2 antibodies. As of May 3, 13 staff were confirmed to have COVID-19. Those who return reactive results are quarantined at two local hotels until they receive their swab test results. One of the hotels is managed by a Mennonite, Tris Suyitno from the GKMI Kudus church.

“The hotel is empty, and home-based quarantine is not practical for many people,” he says. “By serving quarantine at our hotel, each person has a dedicated living space, and does not have to worry about food, internet connection or passing on the virus to their household members.”

Initially, Suyitno was concerned about exposing his staff and family to the virus. “But it’s not right to just stay behind and not offer our place when staff members need work and the government is in dire need for quarantine facilities other than hospitals,” he says.

In addition, Mennonite churches in Kudus are also distributing lunch boxes and providing low-cost food staples for those who have no income or savings.

“The city-level government, provincial government, non-profits, businesses and community of faith are working together to manage this,” Pujianto says. “Please support us by praying for the health of medical and essential workers, and that people will adhere to government instructions to minimize the spread of the virus.”

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Embodying God's mission with authenticity

Planning team members outline their hopes for discernment at 2020 Mennonite Church Canada study conference

By Katie Doke Sawatzky
Mennonite Church Canada

Table talk: Does the church still have legs?" the 2020 Mennonite Church Canada study conference, is a virtual event happening on Oct. 24. Plenary speakers from MC Canada-affiliated schools will share on themes of ecclesiology, worship and mission.

For the five-person team planning the conference, these themes are essential for this time, as the novel coronavirus pandemic has scattered worshipping bodies and introduced new ways of being church together. The team sees the present moment as an opportunity for participants to discern, discuss and explore what is really meant when people say, "We are church."

"It's become essential to reclaim a more sustainable and authentic way of being part of God's mission in the world," says Doug Klassen, MC Canada's executive minister.

In a roundtable discussion, the members answered questions about why this conference is important, about the future of the church, and what their hopes are for this nationwide virtual gathering.

The themes of this conference are ecclesiology, worship and mission. Why are these themes important to you?



Ryan Siemens (of Langham, Sask., executive minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan): Over the last three years, MC Saskatchewan has worked through the journey of "Deepening our walk with Christ, each other and the world." The themes of the study conference connect directly to our journey and will hopefully enhance our conversations/discernment.

As we continue to grapple with what it means to be the church in Canada today, we must ask the why questions, which tie directly to mission and purpose. Why do we gather on Sunday morning for worship [in-person or by Zoom]? Why do we pour our energies into "being church" together? And how do these activities/practices shape our understanding of the mission/vocation/purpose of the church in Canada today?



Marilyn Rudy-Froese (of Kitchener, Ont., MC Eastern Canada's church leadership minister and a former pastor and chaplain): Ecclesiology

has been a topic of interest for me in the last number of years. I have seen the decline in connecting with the church—among my peers and among my kids and their peers. I have been in conversation with pastors who are both energized by the possibilities of this time and discouraged by the long, slow work of addressing the things that no longer work in how we structure the church. In conversations with my children and their peers, and with pastors, I'm struck by the passion, love and vision for a life of faith, and hope this study conference will be a place where these voices can be heard.



Gerald Gerbrandt (of Winnipeg, Man., a former president of Canadian Mennonite University, 1997-2012): I

have, for some years, been convinced that the way we Mennonites came to understand church in the last part of the 20th century needs review. Our traditional understanding resulted in too hard of a boundary forming

around church. It also gives insufficient attention to the mission of the church within our context.



Doug Klassen (of Winnipeg, MC Canada executive minister and a former pastor): The primary theme of the conference is on the identity/nature/

essence of the church. As a Mennonite church, we naturally gravitate toward structure, or restructuring, when we have any kind of problem. When we know "who we are," then it's much easier to figure out how we organize ourselves.

Do you think the church still has legs? Why or why not?

Rudy-Froese: I think the church still has legs, but the legs need to stand in a new way. This pandemic has knocked the church off its feet, and everyone has scrambled in good and creative ways to figure out how to respond. I've been excited by the creativity I've seen, but I'm not sure how sustainable these new ways of being are, if this pandemic is going to last for months, even years.

I think the church has legs insofar as it names its centre in Christ, and lets the Spirit of Christ guide us. I think the world is hungry for the gospel of peace and good news, and the church has legs if it can embody that message in ways that are authentic.



Kim Penner (of Kitchener, Ont., an adjunct professor of Christian ethics at Conrad Grebel University College and of ethics at the University of Toronto): Yes, I definitely think it

does, but potentially in some radically different forms. The pandemic is a valuable opportunity to reflect on the heart of what it means to be/do church, which is related to the question of “Why church?” For me, this means bringing our focus back to the heart of what matters: the hope, love and justice that God wants to embody with us and in all creation. What role do mission and worship play in this context? And how do we understand them?

Gerbrandt: I believe the church is the Body of Christ, not an institution that we humans control. I expect significant change in the way this church works in the years ahead but I firmly believe that it “has legs,” that in some format Christ’s body will continue to exist.

Klassen: For sure, but I think, since Christendom has been waning, the legs have been getting loose and shaky, and the ground beneath the table is moving.

What is your hope for this event?

Siemens: That we open ourselves to God and one another as we discern the Holy Spirit’s leading for this time and place.

Rudy-Froese: I hope this event will be a place for honest conversation about the identity and mission of the church. I hope that younger generations will participate and contribute to the church-wide discussion, offering their vision, passion and love for God and for the world.

Penner: That we are able to draw in people who do not typically attend conference events [in addition to those who do], so that we can have a dynamic and honest conversation about the state of the church and where to go from here.

Gerbrandt: My hope is that MC Canada leaders from across Canada, both pastors and laypeople, will take some time from their regular preoccupations to think about the church, what it is and is called to be, in relationship to the

Canadian context. This thinking should then lead to some practical implications for how their congregations contribute to the mission of the church in their local settings.

Klassen: For us to come to a renewed

sense of who God is calling us to be in this time, and why. ☞

For conference information, visit mennonitechurch.ca/table-talk2020.



JoinHands grant approved for Calgary Chin Christian Church

Mennonite Men

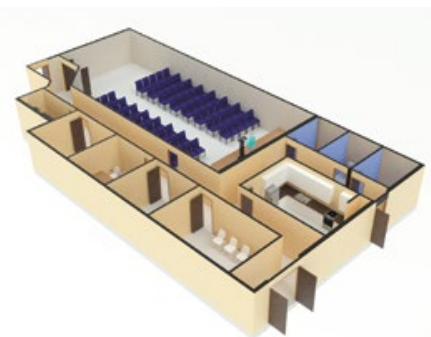
Church discernment and decision-making can be challenging at the best of times. Making critical decisions about the purchase of property in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic is monumental.

For the congregants and leaders of Calgary Chin Christian Church in Alberta, the culmination of their dreams for the purchase of a church home landed right in the middle of uncertain times. The church has deep investment in this dream, stating on its website, “Choosing where you and your children will learn the things of God and serve the Lord Jesus Christ have eternal ramifications.”

An application to Mennonite Men’s JoinHands program became a critical step in securing the financial resources to make this project viable for this relatively small congregation. As a board of Mennonite Men that met virtually in April, the consideration of this congregation’s request for a grant was primary on its agenda.

The board chose to provide a grant of \$40,000 (all funds in US dollars) to assist the Calgary Chin congregation in pursuit of its dream. With the support of Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, the executive minister of Mennonite Church Alberta, and the thorough documentation provided by the congregation, the board gave unanimous support to this grant approval.

Calgary Chin Christian Church began in mid-2010 and became part of MC Alberta in 2013. The congregation currently rents basement space in another church building, with limited space and time available for their activities. The goal as a congregation is to celebrate its 10th anniversary as



A 3D rendering of the new Calgary Chin Christian Church that the congregation hopes will be renovated in early 2021 for worship services.

a gathered community, with the opening of its newly renovated worship space in early 2021.

Inviting men to engage in their faith through giving, the JoinHands program is one of three initiatives of Mennonite Men. In the past three years, it has funded eight grants totalling \$217,812, to help new churches acquire their own permanent meeting places in North America and overseas. This has been a substantial increase funded by individual gifts, churches tithing new construction projects, and, more recently, an estate gift.

Mennonite Men is the men’s organization for MC Canada and MC U.S.A., with a mission of “engaging men to grow, give and serve as followers of Jesus.” ☞

To learn more about Mennonite Men, visit mennonitemen.org.



Following Jesus into the climate crisis

Global Mennonite enviro task force established

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

The mandate of a new Mennonite World Conference (MWC) creation-care task force states: “MWC is a global communion of Anabaptist churches that are together facing the climate crisis.” It then asks: “What does it mean to follow Jesus into this crisis?”

The task force is to:

- **Explore** ways in which MWC member churches are impacted by climate change;
- **Explore practical** ways to encourage ecologically faithful living in member churches;
- **Develop** “theological capacity relevant to the climate crisis”;
- **Formulate** a strategic plan for MWC, with immediate and longer-term commitments; and
- **Develop specific**, practical actions and projects in the short term.”

The volunteer task force will not have dedicated staff capacity within MWC, but it will have at its disposal the \$65,600 in the MWC Carbon Offset Account.

Since 2010, the organization has put aside \$50 for every 1,000 kilograms of carbon burned as a result of official MWC air travel. The money, to be managed by the task force, is intended as “seed money for grants to help churches with creation-care initiatives.”

Task-force chair Doug Graber Neufeld of Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., has worked with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Cambodia and Kenya, connecting with farmers. “All those farmers know that something is happening,” he says of the climate crisis. He speaks of a Kenyan family whose crops were wilted in a place that used to be productive. Now, they are forced to cut down forest to make charcoal to sell in order to feed themselves. The bitter irony, of course, is that their cutting of



MCC PHOTO BY BRENDA BURKHOLDER

Sibonokuhle Ncube of Zimbabwe is a member of the new MWC creation-care task force.

trees contributes to the climate change that forced them out of agriculture.

Based on his experience, Graber Neufeld says that many people in the Global South are well aware that they are most affected, while northerners are most responsible for emissions. This dynamic must be part of the MWC work, he says.

The task force, which has met once, will meet virtually at least bi-monthly, with work happening between meetings.

As an indication of the importance of addressing the climate crisis, the work of the task force is “owned” by all four MWC commissions: Deacons, Mission, Peace, and Faith and Life. It is empowered to propose that commissions do the tasks it recommends.

John Roth, the MWC commissions

coordinator, says that part of the challenge is to be “appropriately sensitive” to the range of assumptions and beliefs about climate change within the Anabaptist world. Not everyone agrees, he notes.

Rick Cober Bauman, the executive director of MCC Canada, says that, among people he met with in Uganda in 2017, the question of climate is “beyond debate.” The sense of the conversation there, as he relays it, was that climate crisis was so obvious, how could anyone believe otherwise?

In general, Cober Bauman says that MCC program staff hear about climate



MCC PHOTO BY ANNALEE GIESBRECHT

The water pump at MCC partner Sembrandopaz’s experimental farm just outside of Sincelejo, Colombia. The Montes de María region of Colombia is suffering a shortage of water due to a combination of factors, including aggressive land clearing and droughts worsened by climate change, as well as poor infrastructure. The experimental farm is home to one of the only functional water pumps in the surrounding area, and throughout the day local residents come to the farm to fill up containers.



PHOTO BY MATTHEW LESTER

Joyce Ngumbao and her husband Pius Kisumo stand in a corn and bean field on their farm in Kwa Kavisi, Kenya, that is not planted using conservation agriculture techniques, but was prepared using conventional methods of plowing and scattering seed. These crops are stunted and not growing well. When they can afford to hire help, they want to plant this field with conservation agriculture methods too.



impacts in a “substantial way” from partners on the ground. That is part of the reason he says MCC is putting a “strong, sharp advocacy person”—Anna Vogt, who heads the MCC Ottawa Office—on the MWC task force.

In addition to Vogt and chair Graber Neufeld, the other members of the task force are Rebecca Froese, a German PhD student; Sibonokuhle

Ncube, a Zimbabwean climate activist and student at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.; Juliana Morillo, a missionary and climate organizer in Colombia; Nindy Sasongko, an Indonesian PhD student at Fordham University in New York City; and Jennifer Schrock, an American theology student and director of the Mennonite Creation Care Network. All are involved in Anabaptist congregations.

The three task force members from the Global South were not available for comment.

‘An embodied sense of responsibility’

Marta Bunnett Wiebe is a young Mennonite woman who has thought very practically about faith, community and our relation to the rest of creation. A 2019 graduate of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, she and her husband currently grow vegetables on the New Brunswick farm where she grew up and developed an embodied sense of responsibility for healthy soil, animals and people.

She says it is easy to create a list of things people can do to be sustainable, and such things are important, but her hope is that “we, as a church, can grow in imagination for a different way of relating with the land. . . . If we are to really engage thoroughly in conversation and action, it would be helpful to imagine a different way of living in relation with the created world.”

Part of this, for her, is the practice of growing food and part of it is listening to other people’s stories. She would value hearing from Mennonite congregations on different continents.

With the new task force, that sort of imaginative exchange, and the action it can lead to, will now be more possible. ❧

News brief

Mennonite archival database gets boost with five new partners



The online Mennonite Archival Information Database (MAID) is adding five new institutional partners to the existing nine. The newly expanded database features thousands of historic photos and a quickly expanding number of entries describing one-of-a-kind letters, diaries, meeting minutes, travel documents, biographies, audio and video recordings, and more—all accessible to the public. The new members are Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada in Winnipeg; MCC U.S. in Akron Pa.; Mennonite Church U.S.A Archives in Elkhart, Ind.; Bethel College Mennonite Library and Archives in North Newton, Kan.; Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society in Hubbard, Ore.; and Goshen College Archives in Goshen, Ind. The four American archival collections were featured in the “Mennonite Archival Commons” online project but are migrating their data to MAID. The online archive was founded by Canadian partners in 2015 as a photographic database to help archival institutions manage their collections and provide public access to historic material. “When MAID was launched, we dreamed about its potential to include more Mennonite partners,” says Lauren Harder-Gissing of the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, MAID’s site administrator. “We are thrilled that other archives have also seen this, and look forward to collaborating with them to provide an enhanced online service to anyone wanting to explore Mennonite history.”

—MENNONITE HERITAGE ARCHIVES

MC Eastern Canada terminates retired pastor's ministerial credentials

Evidence of Wilmer Martin's misconduct 'sufficiently compelling and credible,' leadership finds

By Aaron Epp
Online Media Manager

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada has terminated a retired pastor's ministerial credential after investigating him for ministerial misconduct and ministerial sexual misconduct. The regional church made the announcement about Wilmer Martin, 75, of Waterloo, Ont., on June 16.



Wilmer Martin

Martin served pastorates at Tavistock (Ont.) Mennonite Church and Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo from 1968 to 1991 before becoming the president and CEO of Habitat for Humanity Canada from 1991 to 2000. He was then president of TourMagination, a Mennonite-oriented travel company, from 2000 until his retirement in 2016.

The complaints against Martin stem from his tenure at Erb Street Mennonite.

Terminating a credential is the most serious outcome of an investigation and is not something that MC Eastern Canada does lightly, said David Martin, the regional church's executive minister. "The church is deeply saddened and grieved when it believes that ministerial leaders have caused harm to congregants. Our highest value is on the well-being and safety of people in our congregations."

Investigation protocol

According to David Martin, MC Eastern Canada began its investigation after receiving a written complaint against Wilmer Martin on Oct. 31, 2019. He wouldn't specify the nature of the misconduct, citing complainant confidentiality, nor the number of complaints.

As stipulated by the Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure manual, MC Eastern Canada appointed three people to investigate the matter.

After receiving the investigation report,

MC Eastern Canada's Leadership Council—a seven-person group that oversees the calling, training and credentialing of pastoral leaders—spoke with the investigators and Wilmer Martin.

The council determined that the evidence against Wilmer Martin "was sufficiently compelling and credible to terminate his ministerial credential," according to an MC Eastern Canada news release.

Wilmer Martin, appealed the council's decision.

A three-person appeal panel reviewed the documentation from the investigation and conducted a hearing, during which they heard from the accused and Leadership Council. The panel ruled that the investigation process was valid and upheld the Leadership Council's judgment.

"I am terribly disappointed in the findings of [MC Eastern Canada]," Wilmer Martin told *Canadian Mennonite* in an email. "I did not commit ministerial misconduct, sexual or otherwise."

He criticized MC Eastern Canada's handling of the matter, saying that the regional church did not provide him with details of the allegations, which prevented him from responding with documents or witnesses.

MC Eastern Canada also did not allow Wilmer Martin's lawyer to be present during his interview. The reason for that, said David Martin, is because the internal church procedure to determine the status of a ministerial credential is not a legal court proceeding.

"The individuals involved in the . . . proceedings reflected a broad range of professional expertise and experience," David Martin said, "including investigation of workplace harassment complaints, police officer training and experience, professional therapists, ordained clergy, and

persons with training and experience in understanding sexual abuse and sexual harassment."

"[MC Eastern Canada] believes that the investigation, hearings and appeal were conducted fairly and in good faith," he added.

Other parties respond

- Jen Helmuth, church council chair at Erb Street Mennonite Church, told *CM*: "Erb Street joins with our wider Mennonite community in holding survivors and others impacted by [the Wilmer Martin] announcement in our prayers; that we may all be open to God's grace and healing. When allegations or concerns of misconduct are received, they are passed on to [MC Eastern Canada] for response according to their policy and protocols. We have no further comment on their process."

- Three days after MC Eastern Canada made its announcement, Habitat for Humanity Canada issued a news release, saying the organization is not aware of any allegations or complaints against Wilmer Martin while he was employed there. But it has hired Janice Rubin of Rubin Thomlinson LLP, which has set up a dedicated email address that individuals can use to share information or concerns relating to Wilmer Martin's time at Habitat for Humanity Canada: HFHreview@rubinthomlinson.com.

- Leadership at Tavistock Mennonite Church declined an interview, saying that the congregation is still processing the news released by MC Eastern Canada.

- Len Rempel, pastor of St. Agatha (Ont.) Mennonite Church, where Wilmer Martin is currently a member and occasionally preaches, declined to comment.

- A spokesperson for TourMagination declined to comment.

- **The Waterloo Regional Police Service** has not received any reports about Wilmer Martin.
- **Canadian Mennonite's** attempts to reach the complainants for comment were unsuccessful.

The impact of ministerial sexual misconduct

Survivors of ministerial sexual misconduct face long-lasting trauma, said Carol Penner, an experienced pastor and an assistant professor of theological studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo. Although she could not speak about the Wilmer Martin case specifically, Penner—who has written resources for MC Eastern Canada related to healthy boundaries in the church—said in an email, “[Survivors] often lose their trust in authority figures, their trust in the church, their trust in God,” adding, “Healing is measured in decades, not years.”

Surviving sexual abuse is a personal journey that is different for every person, added Barbra Graber, a survivor herself and founder of the Mennonite Abuse Prevention (MAP) List, an archive of documents on Anabaptist church leaders who have been credibly accused of sexual violations. Graber, who lives in Harrisonburg, Va., said, “These incidents can create long-term struggles with sexual dysfunction, depression, lack of self-esteem, inability to trust others, eating disorders [and more], but sometimes people who have experienced it don’t even realize their struggles are connected to the incident they thought was just a thing they could shove out of their minds and be fine.”

Options for survivors

David Martin advises survivors of ministerial misconduct who wish to report the incident to seek the support of a trusted friend or spiritual guide, and with that person’s support, to bring their concern to the regional church—even if they are unsure about whether or not what they experienced was misconduct.

MC Eastern Canada has background materials on its website to help people understand what sexual ministerial misconduct is and how to contact someone if they wish to discuss their experience:

mccc.ca/resources/sexual-misconduct.

“My advice to an individual with a concern is to definitely explore it, to be confident that the church will hear your story in good faith and trust, and that you can expect that the exploring of that concern and any potential laying of a complaint is one that will be safe and is one that will be confidential,” David Martin said. “They do not need to expose themselves or fear that they will have to be put on public display.”

But Graber said that survivors who want to report what has happened to them can reach out to a local crisis centre or non-Christian therapist specializing in sexual abuse. She specifies non-Christian, saying, “The Christian ones too often want [survivors] to forgive and ‘find closure.’”

Survivors can also talk to a lawyer, a prosecutor, a civil authority or a survivor network like the MAP List, Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), or Into Account, a Kansas-based organization that provides resources for survivors, she said.

“Someone who can objectively help them think through their personal options and will not try to push them in any one direction is important to find,” Graber said. “I advise never to start with telling someone getting a paycheck from the institutional church, especially if the abuser is from the same community. You may want to return to church people for support, but, if you start there, you will likely not be encouraged to explore all your options.”

“We know that false allegations are rare and multiple false allegations even rarer,” she said. “In the case of sexual abuse, especially by clergy. . . the rule should not be, ‘innocent until proven guilty,’ but ‘guilty until proven innocent.’”

Canadian Mennonite is investigating allegations that challenge the MC Eastern Canada investigation’s timing and process.

A longer version of this article is online at canadianmennonite.org/wilmer-martin-credentials.



News brief

Songs removed from *Voices Together* after allegations of sexual misconduct against David Haas made public

VOICES
Together

After recent multiple accusations from Into Account and the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) of serial sexual misconduct and spiritual manipulation by Catholic composer David Haas, the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee is removing all seven of his songs from the forthcoming *Voices Together* worship and song collection in order not to amplify his voice and increase the possibility of ongoing harm. Removing Haas’s work from *Voices Together* was a complex decision made within particular time constraints, according to Bradley Kauffman, general editor of *Voices Together*, which is slated for publication this fall by MennoMedia. “With Haas’s work in circulation on numerous platforms, not including it in *Voices Together* focuses ongoing conversations among worship committees, pastors, leaders of worship and congregants,” Kauffman says. “The actions announced here are not the end of a conversation, nor an implied prohibition of ever engaging work by this composer. The timing of this conversation provides an opportunity to stand with survivors or participate in patterns that have enabled abuse. We stand with survivors.” He added, “Our team is confident in this decision given the information and time available to us.”

—MENNO MEDIA

When pandemics are disasters, MDS is there

Mennonite Disaster Service
WINNIPEG

Twenty Mennonite Church Canada congregations are among the first 40 churches that have received grants from the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) Canada Spirit of MDS Fund.

The fund was created by MDS Canada in April to help Canadian churches respond to people in their communities facing hardship due to COVID-19.

“MDS normally responds to natural disasters like hurricanes, floods, fires and earthquakes,” says Ross Penner, director of operations for MDS Canada. “But the pandemic is a disaster for many people in Canada. Since we aren’t able to respond in the usual way, we want to do it through local congregations that are on the front lines of responding to needs.”

By province, the 20 churches are:

British Columbia

- **Peace Church** on 52nd in Vancouver will use the funds to help a homeless man who lives on the church property buy a new sleeping bag and sleeping mat, and to provide rent assistance for a recently arrived couple who have lost employment, and for grocery cards and food for local people in need.
- **Sherbrooke Mennonite Church** in Vancouver will use the funds to provide refugees served by the church with food, personal hygiene items and household goods.
- **Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church** in Abbotsford will use the funds to stay connected with seniors in the congregation. This will include upgrading its recording equipment and technology, and purchasing other supplies.
- **Eden Mennonite Church** in Chilliwack will use the funds to help low-income seniors get groceries, to provide lunches for children in the local school system, and to help families with young children get things like diapers and formula.

Alberta

- **Edmonton South Sudanese Mennonite Church** will use the funds to help congregants affected by the pandemic. This includes those who have been laid off and a disabled person struggling to make ends meet during this time.
- **First Mennonite Church** in Edmonton will use the funds to help members access worship services. This would include buying phone cards for long-distance charges for those without internet access.

Saskatchewan

- **Rosthern Mennonite Church** will use the funds to provide seniors in a housing complex operated by Mennonite Nursing Homes with iPads so they can communicate visually with family members during this time of lockdown. They will also use the devices to participate in online worship services.

Manitoba

- **Sterling Mennonite Fellowship** in Winnipeg will use the funds to provide an honorarium for an unemployed student who will fill a need for increased technology services, as the church has moved to an online format for its worship services.
- **Home Street Mennonite Church** in Winnipeg will use the funds to provide cleaning supplies and masks for individuals and families served by its Coffee and Conversation drop-in and Home Plate food-bank programs.

Ontario

- **Windsor Mennonite Fellowship** will use the grant for its benevolent fund.
- **Westview Christian Fellowship** in St. Catharines, will use the funds to replenish its food pantry with items like bread, milk and eggs in its service to low-income people in the community.
- **First Mennonite Church** in Kitchener will use the funds for rent assistance for a family that lost employment due to the pandemic.

Waterloo-Kitchener Mennonite

Church in Waterloo will use the funds to help the Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support retrofit its office and guest house to allow for physical-distancing measures.

- **Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church** will use the funds to buy personal protective equipment for ministries helping people who are homeless and poor, along with those who serve in long-term-care facilities.

- **Toronto Mennonite New Life Church** will use the funds to pay its building insurance. Since the pandemic started, the small congregation of newcomers and refugees has been unable to meet and hold offerings, with the result it had to borrow money. The grant will enable it to pay back the loan.

- **Connect City** in Toronto will use the funds for masks and other protective gear for food distribution, and to upgrade its Zoom account so it can better reach and serve refugees and others in their community, which includes offering a virtual summer camp for children.

- **The Warden Underground Church** in Scarborough will use the funds to set up a podcasting studio so the youth it serves can engage with each other during lockdown by creating podcasts about issues of concern to them and the community.

- **Goshen Mennonite Church** in Ottawa, which worships in Swahili, will use its grant to assist members of the congregation impacted by the pandemic who need help with food, rent and other assistance.

Quebec

- **Hochma Mennonite Church** in Montreal will use the funds to buy a TV for its shelter ministry, and for food, coffee and furniture.

- **Centre Bethésda Mennonite de Quebec** in Quebec City will use the funds to provide food for newcomers and refugees facing challenges due to COVID-19. ❧

COVID-19 outbreak in Bolivian colonies

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

Although precise data does not exist, *Die Mennonitische Post* reports numerous presumed COVID-19-related deaths on several Mennonite colonies in Bolivia. Kennert Giesbrecht, the *Post's* editor, who is highly regarded among colony Mennonites in Latin America, is in regular contact with people on many colonies.

One clinic reported having treated patients from more than a dozen colonies. There are more than 80 colonies in Bolivia.

In a July 7 email, Giesbrecht said, "Over the last weeks many people have died of COVID-19," including at least one bishop and two ministers. Funeral announcements in the *Post* have roughly doubled. In Riva Palacios Colony, there were 18 deaths reported for June, more than it would typically report in a year. Many of those deaths are presumed COVID-19

cases, although not nearly all were tested.

According to the *Post*, some Mennonites resist getting tested, in part because they feel it could lead to further restrictions or because testing is only done at government hospitals, which tend to be viewed as inferior to private clinics and not desirable places to stay. Some medical facilities are, of course, operating under considerable strain due to the virus.

People generally use private clinics, but these facilities will not necessarily receive COVID-19 patients.

According to the Bolivian government website, there had been 41,545 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country as of July 8, and 1,530 deaths. The population of Bolivia is 12 million.

Die Mennonitische Post, widely read on colonies, is providing news as well as COVID-19 prevention information. ¶



DIE MENNONITISCHE POST PHOTO

Boys in a store on the Pinondi Colony in Bolivia in 2018. The first reported COVID-19 death on a Mennonite colony in Bolivia happened at Pinondi, when Isaak Wiebe, aged 45, died on June 5.

News brief

Camps with Meaning offers pop-ups, day camps



PHOTO BY DARRYL NEUSTAEDTER BARG

Spending time at Camp Assiniboia's farm is a favourite activity of many campers. Camps with Meaning staff will be running two weeks of day camp at Camp Assiniboia this August.

Camps with Meaning (CwM) staff have been working hard to creatively reimagine summer camp amid the COVID-19 pandemic. While regular programming like overnight camp is cancelled at both locations of Mennonite Church Manitoba's camping ministry, staff will be running two weeks of day camp and a series of five pop-up camp days. Pop-up camp days will take place throughout July in Steinbach, Morden, Winnipeg and at Camp Koinonia, while day camp will run at Camp Assiniboia in August. Day camp will feature some classic activities like Bible, archery and farm, as well as new ones like kayaking on the camp's new lake. Pop-up camp days will offer programming like Bible, nature, crafts and games. Daily screening, small group sizes, thorough cleaning and frequent hand washing will be mandated to ensure the health and safety of all. Campers will also be asked to bring a towel or mat to make appropriate distancing easier to understand. For more information or to register, visit campswithmeaning.org.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



Keeping the arts alive during the pandemic

Theatre of the Beat reaches out to audiences through audio drama

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

Cedric Martin, artistic producer of Theatre of the Beat, knows that live theatre “will be one of the last gatherings to be allowed again” as businesses reopen in the shadow of COVID-19. That reality forced the staff of the Canadian touring company to get creative.

With the goal “to keep the arts alive and [their] community engaged,” he says the company adapted its stage version of *Yellow Bellies* into an audio drama series “that can be enjoyed while physically distancing.” The historical play, written by Johnny Wideman and Rebecca Steiner, “highlights the experiences and public response to Mennonite conscientious objectors during World War II.” It features verbatim interviews as well as fictionalized scenes “from an often overlooked chapter of Canadian history.”

To turn *Yellow Bellies* into an audio drama the troupe “started from scratch,” according to Martin, hiring a new director, Sukhpreet Sangha, and Michal Heuston, an editor who was new to the project. It tapped into connections at CBC Podcasts for advice, and reached back to the “origins of this format, radio plays” for techniques like the use of foley (sound effects), panning (use of left/right speakers), and layering audio.

There were no changes made to the script, but a whole new recording of the show, including new versions of music that conscientious objectors (COs) would have sung, was made while cast



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THEATRE OF THE BEAT

Cedric Martin, artistic producer and actor for Theatre of the Beat, records his part in *Yellow Bellies* the Audio Drama in his closet.



Johnny Wideman, playwright, actor and co-founder of Theatre of the Beat, records his part in *Yellow Bellies* the Audio Drama from his home.

and crew were physically distancing from each other.

The cast and crew rehearsed over Zoom but used professional microphones to record individually on separate devices. Martin found the best place to record was in his tiny closet, where his clothes helped to dampen the sound. They combined all the local recordings, layered in sound effects and music, and mixed it together to create the audio drama as three half-hour episodes.

Audiences can simply enjoy the radio drama as a piece of theatre art, or they can engage with a group using a study guide designed

by Theatre of the Beat, ideal for youth and adult church programming, family discussions, community forums or school at home. The company will even provide a facilitator to lead the discussion, if desired.

Martin says *Yellow Bellies* connects to current conversations around anti-Black racism, discrimination and white privilege: “This audio drama looks at the topic of discrimination against Mennonites. It is very relevant today . . . because it reminds us that we [Mennonites] once faced discrimination for our faith and our beliefs . . . so it should be our duty to now stand up for those who are facing discrimination.” He adds that the company “has made a commitment to hire and tell the stories of more Black, Indigenous and people of colour moving forward.”

Several churches, youth groups and individuals have already purchased the



The cast of *Yellow Bellies the Audio Drama* records altogether through a Zoom call. Pictured from left to right, top row: actor Johnny Wideman, actor Cedric Martin and musician Joe McLellan; and bottom row: actor Kimberlee Walker and director Sukhpreet Sangha.

audio play, which became available in late June. Of note, Martin says, is a long-term-care home looking for programming for its 350 residents, several of whom were COs. He also heard positive feedback from a church with a visually impaired participant, who appreciated the accessibility of this program.

Upcoming plans

Martin says the theatre's staff have been "busy during the pandemic . . . using this time wisely." Forced to postpone its tour of *Selah's Song*, an original musical on the topic of peace, Theatre of the Beat created an online *Selah's Song* night, a video that is

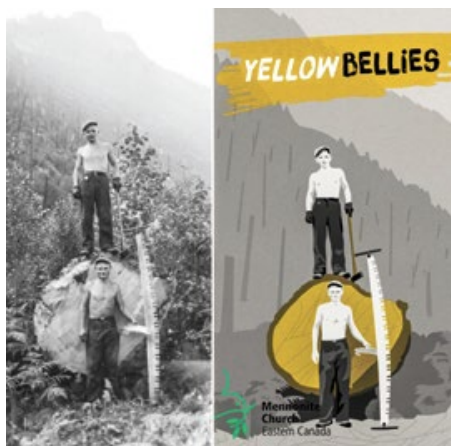
still available on its YouTube channel, which includes several songs by Bryan Moyer Suderman.

The company hopes to tour *Selah's Song* in 2021 if possible, but will also apply for grants to create more digital content to reach audiences, imagining it could even offer "hybrid programs" which some could listen to in person, and some from home.

Also in the works is a production of the play *Captivity*, which tells the James Loney story. Loney and four other activists with Christian Peacemaker Teams were kidnapped and held for ransom during the Iraq War. ❧

Information and package options for Yellow Bellies the Audio Drama are available online at theatreofthebeat.ca.

Read a 2017 review of Yellow Bellies at canadianmennonite.org/stories/audience-finds-co-play-deeply-moving.



The historical photo, left, that inspired the visual, right, for *Yellow Bellies*, the original play produced as live theatre and now as an audio drama by Theatre of the Beat.



A promotional poster for *Yellow Bellies the Audio Drama*.

News brief

New ways to raise funds for MCC



PHOTO COURTESY OF
MCC ONTARIO

The Heu family of First Hmong Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., raised \$640 for Mennonite Central Committee by baking 184 orders of crème brûlée.

- Organizers of the New Hamburg (Ont.) Mennonite Relief Sale moved its quilt auction online this year because of COVID-19. They auctioned a "curated selection" of a "beautiful variety of quilting techniques" live to the highest online bidders with spectators watching on Facebook, raising \$7,840 for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). The Spring into Auction: 100 Quilts for 100 Years of MCC also sold a collection of small quilts through an online silent auction, generating \$78,025.
- The Run for Relief also moved online. Participants were invited to "take steps toward change in the world," by raising funds and snapping a photo to share how they joined in on their own.
- In addition, MCC invited households to celebrate baking traditions on National Doughnut Day as a way to raise funds. Two families from First Hmong Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., took up the challenge. The Heu family raised \$640 by baking 184 orders of crème brûlée, and the Vang family raised \$1,325 by mixing, rolling, frying and packaging 888 spring rolls. The Vang children even set up a lemonade stand to raise money for an MCC worker whose son is undergoing cancer treatment.

—BY JANET BAUMAN

Engaging with ‘people not like us’

A young adult discussion series

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent

A group of Mennonite young adults from Alberta has been gathering on Zoom for six Sundays in a row to learn about engaging with “the other.” Topics included “Engaging the religious other,” with a focus on Islam, and “Engaging the culturally other,” with a focus on connecting with people from other races and cultures, and exploring cross-cultural experiences. The final meeting was held on June 28, wrapping up with “Asset-based community development” or engaging “the other” in the neighborhood.

But who is “the other”?

According to Rebecca Janzen of Edmonton First Mennonite Church and a graduate of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg with a bachelor’s degree in biblical theological studies, “‘The other’ is a term that can be used and interpreted many ways. We intentionally wanted a term that was vague, to leave the conversation open to discussing different cultures, religions and racial inequalities.

“As Christianity in North America has been shaped by, and built its image around, the white church, there are many people who have been silenced and hurt by the dominant image of the church as white,” she says. “Using the term ‘the other’ refers to those outside of the white church, those that we, as Christians, must listen to and be allies with. Seeing as North American society has not been built for ‘the other,’ we, as Christians, must follow the example of Jesus . . . walking with, supporting and being voices for those whom society has deemed as an outcast.”

Each two-hour meeting was hosted by Janzen; Jon Olfert, director of Camp Valaqua; and Donna Entz, director of Mennonite Church Alberta’s North Edmonton Ministry. Guests were invited to share about their experiences, and then participants were separated into break-out rooms for discussion and questions.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAYNA GOERZEN

Dayna Goerzen of Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury, Alta.

Ethan Haluza-DeLay, a global and international studies student at Carleton University in Ottawa and a long-time member of Edmonton First Mennonite Church, attended all six sessions. “The theme was generally about how to engage with people ‘not like us’ with a focus on acceptance, understanding and intentionally seeking out others,” he says.

One of his favourite discussions was “Becoming an ally to the oppressed.” “It was so timely,” he says. “We’re all talking about this right now, and it was thought-provoking and impactful. I appreciated having a safe space to talk and share openly with people I knew from camp and my community.”

Another conversation that stood out for him was a discussion about Mennonites and how “we’re not necessarily as welcoming as we might think we are.” Participants wondered if historically European Mennonites have now become too exclusive, as most of their churches are predominately white.

Dayna Goerzen of Bergthal Mennonite Church in Didsbury, Alta., also attended

all six sessions. She is currently working towards a bachelor of education degree at the University of Saskatchewan. Like most participants, she has worked at Camp Valaqua for many years. When she heard about the discussion series, she thought, “I love learning; this sounds sweet!”

For her, “Calling people ‘other’ can be dangerous. We have to be really careful,” she says. “If we think of people as ‘the other,’ it can sometimes create this idea that people who are different are bad. Everyone is equal.” She adds, “Engaging [with] and learning about people, like in this series, can help us see them less as ‘the other.’ We start to see we are more similar than we realized.”

A highlight for both Goerzen and Haluza-DeLay was Sabira Devjee, a Muslim whom they described as open and kind in her teaching about her faith. Goerzen says she never knew Jesus was mentioned in the Qu’ran, and she found her talk inspiring.

Like Haluza-DeLay, Goerzen found the “Becoming an ally to the oppressed” session a highlight. “It is important to be always reflecting on your own bias,”



PHOTO COURTESY OF ETHAN HALUZA-DELAY
Ethan Haluza-DeLay of Edmonton First Mennonite Church makes his voice heard at the climate-change protest in Ottawa in September 2019.

she says. “I was also reminded that being an ally is a verb, not a noun. The session reminded me to keep going, take action and not just when something is trending. If all you do is share things on social media, that will not change the world. If Jesus were here, he would actively be working for change. He wouldn’t just sit by.”

For Goerzen, this discussion series was about “learning, growing and being more open to people.” Like Haluza-DeLay, she says it was great to have like-minded people to bounce ideas off of.

Janzen was pleasantly surprised by the level of engagement and commitment when so many are tired of online platforms. Participants who knew each other as youth were excited to reconnect, as so many now live spread out across Canada.

Now that the series has ended, the group has set up a Facebook group so conversations can continue. ❧

/// News brief

MCC Ontario leases former Ten Thousand Villages building



MCC PHOTO BY MARK PATFIELD

Thirty-five-hundred square metres of the former Ten Thousand Villages distribution centre located in New Hamburg, Ont., are being repurposed by Mennonite Central Committee Ontario.

Six months after the closure of the corporate operations of Ten Thousand Villages (TTV) Canada, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada’s fair-trade social enterprise, MCC Ontario has reached an agreement with the new owners of the former TTV distribution centre in New Hamburg, Ont., to lease approximately 3,500 square metres of the building. MCC Ontario’s plans for the space are threefold:

- The MCC rePurpose Centre in Elmira will relocate its “by-the-pound” retail store and processing operations there. It is anticipated the move will be completed in stages, with the rePurpose store opening in mid-August and the donation processing and warehousing following later in the fall.
- The MCC New Hamburg Thrift Centre will move part of its donation processing there, allowing for a 450-square-metre expansion of their the thrift centre’s space. When complete, the larger thrift centre will feature more than 1,200 square metres of selling space and it will remain a shopping destination in Waterloo Region.
- The MCC Material Resources warehouse, currently located at 50 Kent Avenue in Kitchener, will be moving much of its processing and storage facilities there, giving the MCC Thrift on Kent shop additional retail and processing capacity.

—MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

/// News brief

Archivist gives voice to the past



MHA PHOTO
Conrad Stoesz records ‘Still Speaking’ a radio show produced for Golden West Radio.

“Still Speaking” is a radio show created by Conrad Stoesz, the archivist at the Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg. It helps listeners “learn about the past, the role of archives in society, and [gives them] something to think about,” he says. These short stories are currently airing on Golden West Radio 950, 1220 and 1250 AM each Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 9:20 a.m. (CST). They are also available online at mharchives.ca/features/still-speaking.



—MENNONITE HERITAGE ARCHIVES



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CM awarded 12 CCCA certificates

Awards were 'handed out' digitally due to novel coronavirus pandemic

Canadian Mennonite
WATERLOO, ONT.

In the inaugural awards ceremony of the new Canadian Christian Communicators Association (CCCA), *Canadian Mennonite* received 12 awards for writing, photography, design and original art for work published in 2019.

First-place entry

• Service Journalism, open.

Elise Epp, the coordinator of the Manitoba Fashion Revolution, author ("Clothes to match your values," Sept. 16, page 17).

Judge's comment: "I love the way the piece is organized by social concern. It felt like the story was conceptualized as service journalism right from the beginning."

Second-place entries

• News Story and News Photo, magazine.

John Longhurst, author and photographer ("More than restoring a building" [story] and "Franke served time here" [photo]," Sept. 16, pages 20-23.)



Judges' comments: (story) "What makes this interesting and valuable is the information about those who helped restore the [residential] school—and the very fact that the Indigenous community wanted it restored." (photo) "I was awe struck with your . . . photograph, so powerful and emotional."

• Editorial, magazine.

Virginia A. Hostetler, author ("Moving beyond 'climate grief,'" March 4, page 2).

Judge's comment: "Good use of personal anecdote to introduce larger theme. Warm and inviting reader to join her. Well integrated editorial."

• In-Depth Treatment of a News Story, magazine.

Virginia A. Hostetler, Tobi Thiessen, Amy Rinner Waddell, Aaron Epp, Lisa Williams, Rachel Bergen, Hilda Bergen, authors; Ross W. Muir, editor ("Gathering 2019 coverage," July 22, pages 4-6, 12-18, 40).

Judge's comment: "The main story is an excellent synthesis of all the news and events arising from the Gathering. . . . The editor made intelligent decisions to break out separate stories on budget and finances, denominational evangelism and growth, and how to bring hope to a world of pain."

• Media Review, open.

David Driedger, author ("Help for reading the Old Testament," Sept. 16, page 16).

Judge's comment: ". . . a well-written and insightful review of Melissa Florer-Bixler's *Fire by Night*. There is a particularly good balance of summarizing the book's content and providing interpretive and evaluative reflection. The result is a helpful and invitational review of an invitational book."

• Biblical Interpretation, open.

Peter Haresnape, author ("How long until the fullness of time?" Feb. 4, page 4).

Judge's comment: "A vivid vignette from the gospels illustrates a broad biblical theme with immediate contemporary application. Engagingly written."

• Personal Experience/First Person Account, circulation over 10,000.

Diane Sims, author ("Poppies for Dad," Oct. 28, page 15).

Judge's comment: "I'm drawn to the duality contained within: the peaceful with and against the violent. . . . It's too brief, and I wanted to know more about the dad and his loving but scared daughter.

. . . As a veteran and a Christian, I know how hard it can be to carry the tension between Christian nonviolence and the need for some swords to remain after the ploughshares have been made."

• Feature photo, magazine.

Ross W. Muir, photographer ("Shopping is good," Nov. 11, page 4.)



Judge's comment: "This entry is a wonderful example of how using photography in the abstract works. . . . The sense of speed and people rushing around is done so well. . . . [Y]ou should be proud."

Third-place entries

• Original Artwork, magazine.

Ross W. Muir, artist ("Face Painting Phantasm," Oct. 28, page 5.)



Judge's comment: "Effective composition and a dynamic colour palette make for an engaging piece that strikes a balance between photorealism and abstract art. This pairing [of text and art] works well

because the illustration is nothing like a 'paint-by-numbers' image."

- **Photo Essay**, magazine.

Michael Veith, photographer; Betty Avery, designer ("Expiring City: A Macau Photo Exhibit," Nov. 25, page 28-31).



Judge's comment: "The hardest thing when preparing an exhibition or photo essay is to choose your introductory photograph. It must command the viewers' attention and introduce your exhibit. You have done this well. The colours [are] amazing. I also like the variety of your work, using abstract photographs to introduce both speed and movement."

- **Column**, magazine.

Ed Olfert, author (In the Image: "No 'happy clappy Christians' for Blake," June 10, page 10; "Parable of the 'phone incident,'" Sept. 16, page 15; "'Tell God I say yes,'" Dec. 9, page 11.)

Judge's comment: "The author tells stories that easily extend from the personal and particular to the universal because they are highly relatable. . . . The column contributes richly to readers' understanding of how a daily walk of faith can look." ❧

CCCA is the name of the expanded organization formerly known as the Canadian Church Press.

❧ News brief

The Mennonite, MWR announce name of new journalistic ministry



The name of the new independent, multi-platform journalistic ministry being created by the merger of *The Mennonite* and *Mennonite World Review* will be *Anabaptist World*. The new ministry's platforms will include a new print magazine and website, to launch in September, building on the legacies of their predecessors. *Anabaptist World* will use the tagline "Mennonite news, inspiring stories." It will seek to reach members of all Mennonite groups, especially Mennonite Church U.S.A., the largest constituency of both predecessors. More broadly, it will appeal to anyone interested in Anabaptism, both within and outside Anabaptist denominations. *Anabaptist World* magazine will be published every three weeks, 16 times per year. It will include a mix of news, features and commentary. Paid circulation is estimated to be nearly 9,000 at launch. Subscribers of *The Mennonite* and *Mennonite World Review* will have the time left on their subscriptions added to their subscription of *Anabaptist World*. *Anabaptistworld.org* will be the digital home for timely articles, podcasts and other multimedia. Digital readership will build on the predecessor platforms' reach, which stretches into the tens of thousands monthly. The merger of The Mennonite Inc. and Mennonite World Review Inc. will create a new non-profit, Anabaptist World Inc. Its purpose statement says, "Anabaptist World Inc. is an independent journalistic ministry serving the global Anabaptist movement. We seek to inform, inspire and provide a forum where Mennonites and anyone interested in Anabaptism can explore faith and culture."

—THE MENNONITE/MWR

❧ News brief

EFC releases statement on racism



In the wake of riots in the United States following the death of George Floyd, a black man in Minnesota who died in police custody, and similar protests in Canada, the Evangelical Association of Canada (EFC) has released a statement on racism, saying, "The EFC condemns racism and its underlying denial that all people are loved by God, are created in his image, and have equal dignity and value. Racism is a form of discrimination that values and privileges some groups of people above others and denies the personhood of some based on skin colour, descent, national or ethnic origin. We call upon churches to combat racism and its related attitudes and injustices. We join in the collective grief and lament of so many that this problem, with its horrible implications and impact on the lives of so many, continues on. This is not only an American and Canadian problem, but is universal. Racism has impacted Canada and continues to plague us, as we are reminded by current demonstrations in Canada and the legacy of racism told in the pages of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the lived experience of our sisters and brothers of colour. Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to be peacemakers and ambassadors of reconciliation, and to break down the walls that divide, including racism. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of justice and peace, and we invite you to join us." Mennonite Church Canada, an EFC member, called on its congregations to set aside time on June 7 "to join our sister churches in Mennonite Church U.S.A. as they lament the injustice and violence suffered by people of colour in the U.S."

—BY ROSS W. MUIR

Churches cautiously resume worship together

Face-to-face meetings working for some in B.C.

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

With most churches remaining closed four months into the pandemic, some in Mennonite Church British Columbia are finding innovative ways to worship together—with limitations.

On July 5, members of Sherbrooke Mennonite Church in Vancouver held an outdoor service in the church parking lot, their first physical gathering since March.

“We took advantage of the good weather and took a break from Zoom,” says Kevin Barkowsky, the church’s interim pastor. “People loved seeing each other in 3D and there was no Zoom delay.”

With provincial protocols limiting gatherings to 50 people, the July 5 holiday weekend was selected as a trial because more people were likely to be away. Those attending had to pre-register with names and addresses that the church is required to keep for one month.

“We had 31 people attend, which is a good number for a first try, because there were things we needed to sort out,” says Barkowsky. “We are thinking we might do it again in three weeks; however, we have to see because there are a number of people who cannot attend because of health risks, who prefer Zoom.”

Garry Janzen, MC B.C.’s executive minister and a member of Sherbrooke, says, “Sherbrooke’s physically distanced outdoor worship service was a beautiful time together, with amazing weather.”

Another Vancouver congregation, Chinatown Peace Church, began meeting in a local park on June 28, and about half to two-thirds of the congregation have been attending.

“Some are health-care workers and others are spending a great deal of time with senior relatives, so [they] would rather not take any risks by congregating,” says

Tim Kuepfer, the English congregation pastor. “To include these, we are also paralleling the service with Zoom, which so far has been a bit awkward, but we’re learning.”

Kuepfer says that being a small congregation means the members value being together as much as possible. “The worship service’s production value and professionalism is less significant for us than is the opportunity for everyone to be there, whether in person or online; hence, we have resisted simply livestreaming the service,” he says.

United Mennonite Church of Black Creek has slowly evolved to holding services in its church building, with precautions. At the start of the pandemic, services were broadcast from the pastor’s home over Facebook Live to the church’s Facebook page. Then the broadcast was moved to the church to make use of the sound system, with several people leading worship.

“Some people in our church do not have Facebook, or even computers at all, so I invited a handful of people to come to the church so they could be there for the live broadcast,” says Pastor Gerry Binnema.



PHOTO BY GARRY JANZEN

Members of Sherbrooke Mennonite in Vancouver met for an outdoor worship service on July 5. They followed provincial protocols by encouraging masks and discouraging strong singing, and with worship leaders behind plexiglass. The parking lot location allowed sensitive members to stay in cars.

“As restrictions were loosened, we slowly increased the numbers of people, till at this point we encourage people to come every other week, and watch online the other week. Some people come more often, some people are happy to join us online.”

Binnema says the church is taking precautions by asking people to sanitize their hands upon entry, to sit in every other pew, to wear masks, and to socialize outside rather than gathering in the foyer. Additionally, the church takes a picture of the congregation at the start of the service to aid with contact tracing.

“So far, our gathering size has not exceeded 30, and we have even had a couple of new people join us,” says Binnema. “[This is] the blessing of having a small congregation, and a facility that can handle more people than we have.” ❧



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PEOPLE

A life dedicated to helping others

Winnipeg man lost in fatal boating accident

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Nour Ali's name is known in households across Manitoba because of his passion for helping people and for making the world a better place. On June 13, Ali died in a boating accident on Lake Winnipeg. He was 42.



Nour Ali

Ali and four others were in a boat on the lake when it took on water and capsized near Bélair, Man. RCMP have said that weather likely played a factor, causing dangerous conditions from high winds and waves. Three survived, but Ali's 73-year-old father, Hamza Ali, was killed in the accident, and Ali went missing. His body was found after five days of searching by dozens of family, friends, police officers and other searchers.

Ali made a huge impact throughout the province in the seven years since he arrived in Winnipeg. He and his wife, Maysoun Darweesh, and their two daughters, Rooj and Naya, came to Canada in 2012 as refugees, when they were sponsored by Douglas Mennonite Church through Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

In 2006, Ali fled Syria after being taken a political prisoner for his political and human-rights work. He went to China, where his family joined him a year later. When they were unable to return to Syria, they moved to Macau. There they met George and Tobia Veith, who were Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers in Macau, and through them became connected with Douglas Mennonite.

Although Ali identified as agnostic and didn't become a formal member of the church, like Darweesh, he had many friends in the congregation, says Don Rempel Boschman, Douglas Mennonite's senior pastor.

The whole family became Canadian citizens in 2018, and Ali was very proud to be one.

Rempel Boschman says, "For him, being Canadian meant that a lot of cultures and a lot of faiths were welcome here, and he worked really hard at making connections."

This was clear at the graveside service for Ali and his father, which included Islamic prayers, Christian prayers, and a smudge and prayer song by an Indigenous elder.

Ali treated the chance to come to Canada as a gift and he dedicated his life to making sure as many other people as possible could experience this gift too.

He created the Kurdish Initiative For Refugees Inc. (KIFR) and, through it, he and Darweesh started a summer day camp for newcomer children in 2016. Hosted at Douglas Mennonite, the program also created opportunities for Syrian young adults to develop leadership skills as they led the camp.

KIFR has sponsored hundreds of refugees over the years, often through a partnership with MCC.

"He'll be missed as a champion for newcomer opportunity, for refugee sponsorship," says Darryl Loewen, executive director of MCC Manitoba.

Loewen says that a quick scan through well-wishes on social media reveals that Ali's network of connections reaches wide. "You just know from Boissevain to Steinbach and beyond . . . wherever sponsor community groups who have been active through MCC, wherever they are, they know Nour."

Ali was full of life and energy. He met with politicians about refugee and minority rights, arranged rallies and spoke in schools. He did translating, took people to the hospital and helped arrange weddings.

"Nour, he was in the driver's seat," says Hadji Hesso, a close friend of Ali and the director of the Yazidi Association of

Manitoba. "He drove the community, the Kurdish community and the Syrian community. And definitely he was an ally and he was a good friend of the Yazidi community. Ali led by example."

He adds, "One of the families that did not have a place [to live], he went out there, he made sure he doesn't come back home unless he finds a house for this family."

By 2017, Ali had started his own business called Thank You Canada, which did restoration and renovation work. His goal was to hire refugees and newcomers, to help them build their skills and to adjust to working in Canada.

"Nour was the kind of person who could always dream big, and he accomplished a lot," Rempel Boschman says. "What I said in my sermon [at the funeral] was, in some ways for the Syrian community he was like a Moses. He was providing leadership when they had gotten out of a very difficult situation, but, like Moses, he wasn't a perfect man . . ."

Despite his mistakes and flaws, Ali will be remembered as a tireless advocate for refugees and a strong presence in many communities.

"We are so incredibly proud of you, and you have changed so many lives and impacted so many people that your work won't go away," said Ali's daughter Rooj at his funeral. "Because you have left a legacy behind and you've changed people's lives . . . everyone will be eternally grateful for it." ❧

'He'll be missed as a champion for newcomer opportunity, for refugee sponsorship.'
(Darryl Loewen)

MC Manitoba executive minister blessed by relationships

Ken Warkentin reflects on his pastoral and administrative duties over the past 39 years

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

After nine-and-a-half years of service, Ken Warkentin concluded his time as executive minister of Mennonite Church Manitoba on June 30.

But his ministry goes back much farther than that. He remembers the exact date he began at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon—Oct. 4, 1981—where he was a music and youth minister for five years. In 1986, he moved to Manitoba and worked at Elim Bible Institute and then pastored at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church from 1988 to '96. For the next 10 years, he filled several pastoral positions at Church of the Way and then served as pastor of Niverville Mennonite Church (now Niverville Community Fellowship) from 2006 to '10.

Warkentin clearly has no shortage of experience and passion for congregational ministry, so it comes as no surprise that a focus on relationships characterizes his time at the MC Manitoba offices. He stepped into the role of executive minister in January 2011, replacing Edgar Rempel after his retirement.

Warkentin says that his greatest moments as executive minister centred on connecting with people. "It is for me a joy to be a part of the Body of Christ, the larger body that reflects both my understanding of God and God's will for humanity, and also working together to accomplish that," he says.

He looked forward to every summer and the chance it brought to witness leadership development in action at the regional church's camping ministry, Camps with Meaning (CwM). "I sometimes get to surreptitiously observe these young adults in action, and it is a beautiful thing to witness," he says. He found preaching, speaking in Sunday school classes and working with church councils to be "tremendously gratifying."



PHOTO BY DARRYL NEUSTAEDTER BARG

Ken Warkentin finished his work as Mennonite Church Manitoba's executive minister on June 30.

He says that everyday interactions with the "incredibly talented and dedicated staff" of MC Manitoba were important to him. "I can always count on someone in our staff to, with great inspiration, remind me of why we're here and why we're doing the things we're doing."

It makes sense then that some of the biggest challenges Warkentin faced over the years were issues that revolved around relationships.

Leading the regional church through MC Canada's Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process was one of them. As congregations discussed sexuality, faithfulness and identity in the church from 2012 to '16, many churches across Manitoba found the conversation about same-sex relationships to be divisive, and at least five left the regional church over the issue.

Another task was to address misconduct in congregations.

"When I started this role, that wasn't on my radar," he says. "It very quickly became part of my understanding that the role of the broader church is to hold our pastors

accountable to the vows that they have made. . . . That took an inordinate amount of time and energy, spiritual energy and emotional energy, to do that work."

One of the biggest challenges he knew he would face was around CwM, whose three-location model was proving to be unsustainable. It took a long time to discern CwM's future, which eventually involved selling one camp and changing the management structure at another. But it was an effort to make the best possible camping ministry within the church's limitations. "I think we've developed a really strong program," he says.

A significant issue he didn't anticipate was the reorganization of MC Canada in 2017. Warkentin was a member of the Future Directions Task Force that guided the restructuring. It didn't just mean a title change for him—from executive director to executive minister—but also a shifting of responsibility. However, with the extra work came benefits: an increased connection to the executive staff of the other regional churches and the new nationwide church structure, and more shared resources among them.

As a characteristically cautious leader, Warkentin hopes he has become bolder during his time in leadership. Over the years, he has realized that working in the church is more about blessing than success or failure. "And blessing is simply the promise and understanding that God is with us, and a promise that we will walk together in goodness and in love," he says.

When he became executive minister, he knew he wanted to return to pastoral ministry when he finished, and he still feels that way today. In mid-August, he will join the pastoral team at Jubilee Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

"There is a rhythm of life that con-

gregational life affords . . . of entering into life from birth literally to death. And to walk with a congregation through all of those stages is an incredible honour, privilege and blessing.”

Although he didn't expect to be MC Manitoba's executive minister for nearly a decade, Warkentin concludes, “I have been so blessed by being in this role. I am thrilled to have served the church in this way.” ❧

/// Staff change

Michael Pahl named new MC Manitoba executive minister

Michael Pahl has been appointed as the next executive minister of Mennonite Church Manitoba by the board of directors of the regional church. He will begin his new role on Jan. 1, 2021. “I'm excited to see what God is doing in the churches,” Pahl says. “We have been through some challenging times as [MC Manitoba] congregations, and we are facing new challenges with COVID-19. Yet many gifts have risen to the surface among us to meet those challenges—creativity in mission and theology, greater attentiveness to the needs of the vulnerable—and those gifts will serve us well going forward as congregations and as [MC Manitoba].” Pahl comes to the position having served as lead pastor of Morden (Man.) Mennonite Church since 2013. Prior to Morden, his professional journey moved between academia and congregational ministry. With a doctorate in theology (biblical studies) from Birmingham (U.K.) University, various teaching posts and service in diverse congregations, he brings a wealth of thoughtfulness, experience and lived Anabaptist conviction to his new position. He is married to Larissa, with whom he has co-pastored, and they have four children. Ken Warkentin, outgoing executive minister, completed his role at the end of June. Rick Neufeld, MC Manitoba's director of leadership ministries, will serve as interim executive minister until Pahl begins.



—MENNONITE CHURCH MANITOBA

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‘There is something beautiful’ about those people

David Martin reflects on 15 years in regional church leadership

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

“The people,” he says. “There is something beautiful . . . about all those people . . . being the presence of Christ in their communities.”

This is David Martin’s first response when asked about highlights from his 15 years as executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, a job he will retire from at the end of July. Prior to that, he pastored for 25 years at three Ontario congregations: Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite in Waterloo as youth pastor, then Hagerman Mennonite in Markham and Stirling Avenue in Kitchener.

Especially significant for him was the “intercultural development” of the regional church. He notes that the “cultural diversity has increased” to the point that there are now 17 languages of worship each Sunday. He sees this growth as an opportunity for “mutual gifting.”

A surprise for him, he says, was how international ministry, which “was always the national church’s work,” became part of MC Eastern Canada’s focus. When congregations “want to be in mission back in their countries of origin . . . it becomes part of our mission,” he says.

Martin experienced this first-hand when he travelled to Myanmar twice with a delegation to explore what it means to share Anabaptist theology, faith and practices in that context. He says that collaborating in international mission “makes the Mennonite World Conference community of faith that much more real for us.”

From the beginning, Martin grounded his work at MC Eastern Canada in spiritual practices. He says it was important to “maintain strong, daily, spiritual and physical disciplines.” He met regularly with a small prayer-support group and invited others to pray for the work of the regional church. Just last year, a woman in her 90s



PHOTO COURTESY OF MC EASTERN CANADA

Jehu Lian Ching of Myanmar Missions International, left, and David Martin, right, are pictured with a musician from the convention they attended in Myanmar in 2015.

approached him to say, “I am still praying for you every day.” He also called on a group of spiritual directors for prayer during annual church gatherings and difficult situations. “That broad kind of spiritual support . . . has just been invaluable. . . . I have felt its impact,” he says

Martin reflects on being part of rethinking the new nationwide church structure. People in the regions “felt disconnected” from the nationwide church, he says. The new model “that engages the regions more” is a “positive shift.” Now people are “starting to see the nationwide community seeping into the pews,” as more than a thousand people a week tune in to services across the country made available by MC Canada during the pandemic. He hopes to see congregations become increasingly “connected into that nationwide community and its witness.”

He has also seen the church adjust to changes in Canadian society by asking, “What does it mean to be a community of faith in a secular society? . . . What does it mean to be the presence of Jesus in our

communities?”

There is a shift toward connecting and building relationships in our neighbourhoods, he says. “We’ve got a light.” How do churches go about “sharing God’s peace with our world . . . in ways that have integrity?”

In reflecting on challenges, he names ministerial misconduct as an issue the “church simply needs to be honest about.” He acknowledges that “the church is a sinful, broken, community of faith seeking God’s healing and redemption.” And when leaders fail, he says, “the church needs to address that.” There are “systemic underlying attitudes that reach into our pews. . . . This is a society-wide issue,” he adds.

Martin knows there is more work to be done, but he says he is encouraged that “we are finding and building resources to address it” in Mennonite circles and beyond. He names actions like commissioning Theatre of the Beat to develop and perform the drama *#Church Too* across the country, and developing

(Continued on page 38)



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EU grant helps MCC support projects in Middle East

With a \$1.5 million grant from the European Union, Mennonite Central Committee is empowering organizations to implement peacebuilding projects in the Middle East.

canadianmennonite.org/mccgrant



Grebel prof honoured with teaching award

Lowell Ewert, a professor at Conrad Grebel University College and the University of Waterloo, has been honoured with a UWaterloo 2020 Distinguished Teacher Award.

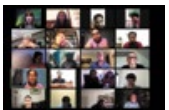
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We shouldn't be colour blind

Moses Falco, a Winnipeg pastor, reflects on recent world events, and his own German-Filipino ancestry, on the blog.

canadianmennonite.org/blog/mf-colour



Physically distanced but together in prayer

Mennonite World Conference held its first online prayer meeting at the end of May, praying for government and church leaders around the world, as well as frontline workers and the poor.

canadianmennonite.org/mwconline

(Continued from page 37)

sexual-harassment policies and preventative training sessions for leaders, as positive steps.

Another challenge he faced was concern over an increase in “theological diversity.” He says, “We’re not as homogenous as we used to be, and that’s a good thing.” However, a variety of factors have “sharpened” differences. He says he was sad to see some congregations leave the regional church as a result.

“My concern for the church going forward is that we handle that theological diversity well,” he says. “We need to be able to have frank, trusting conversations . . . because both ends of the spectrum have something to say.” He says he wishes people could say, “I don’t agree with you, but I do have a relationship with you that is stronger and bigger because Christ draws us into relationship,” so that those looking at the church could say, “They don’t agree with each other but they still love each other.” That would be “an incredible and immense witness to our secular society that is fracturing and polarizing.”

When reflecting on his hopes and dreams for the church, Martin wonders, “How do we build relationships interculturally that move beyond sharing food to actually sharing relationships? . . . How do we integrate everybody? All of those different cultural groups bring a sense of wisdom, power and experience that we all need to learn from.” Here, too, he says, “The church has an incredible potential to witness to society.”

On top of the list of things he would like to do in retirement is spend more time with his wife Doris and their family, admitting that, at points, they sacrificed during his time in church leadership. He also anticipates extra time for curling and going to the gym.

While looking forward to a slower pace, Martin is exploring possibilities with Mennonite World Conference, saying he still wants “to be engaged in the life of the church . . . in some way.” ❧

To read about his virtual farewell party, visit canadianmennonite.org/stories/he-kept-looking-ahead.



Organizing a virtual event?

Use the CM Calendar to promote your event

canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar
or email
calendar@canadianmennonite.org

CANADIAN MENNONITE

Calendar

Please Take Note

In an attempt to keep COVID-9 from spreading, some of these events may have already been postponed or cancelled. To be sure, contact the organizers in advance.

British Columbia

Oct. 16-18: MC B.C. women's retreat. Theme: "God is bigger." Speakers: Karina Loewen and Nichole Forbes of "We Should Record this Podcast." More information to follow.

Manitoba

Nov. 6-7: Canadian launch of new "Voices Together" hymnal, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, from mid-afternoon on Nov. 6 to the evening of Nov. 7, when a community-wide worship fest

will be held. Registration will be required. More details to follow.

Ontario

Oct. 17: A one-day New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale, at the New Hamburg fairgrounds.

International

Oct. 10-17: MCC Bolivia 60th anniversary learning tour in western Bolivia. For more information, visit mcco.ca/events.

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



Housing Opportunities

Fall 2020 Creative Housing for University Students in Winnipeg. Online classes? Potential isolation? Grocery shopping line-ups? Minimize the impact by living at Emmaus House Community. We have room for 2 men! Pass on this invitation and visit: emmaushousewinnipeg.ca

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Employment Opportunities



Employment Opportunity
Lead Pastor
Vancouver, B.C.

Sherbrooke Mennonite Church is looking for a **full-time Lead Pastor** who passionately loves and follows Jesus. We are seeking a pastor who views the Scriptures with an Anabaptist focus, to help our church to grow in faith and discipleship.

We are a small congregation with diverse backgrounds and an average weekly attendance of 50. Priority would be given to someone who is interested in growing a church and fostering healthy relationships within the congregation.

Candidates will be asked to complete and submit an MCBC Ministerial Leadership Information Form (MLI). Please send resumes and inquiries to:
pastoral-search@sherbrookemennonite.org
by Aug. 15, 2020, for an intended start date of Sept. 15, 2020.

sherbrookemennonite.org

Classifieds

Announcement

ABNER MARTIN MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

This annual scholarship is awarded by Menno Singers to a student who is affiliated with a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation and is, or will be, in a full-time program of music study, graduate or undergraduate, during 2020-2021.

Applications must be mailed by Sept. 15, 2020. For application documents or further information, contact Linda Janzen at
email: lindajanzen@sympatico.ca

Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal

Employment Opportunity
Pastor (0.5 FTE), start date: August 2020

The Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal is a small, diverse and welcoming congregation in the heart of Montreal. Being the only English Mennonite church in the area, participants come from many parts of Montreal and beyond. With four universities nearby, we are invigorated by students who make MFM their church home while in Montreal.

The Fellowship is searching for a half-time pastor, as our current pastor is retiring (summer 2020). Responsibilities include giving a meditation two Sundays per month, pastoral care and working with the elders group and church council as our congregation seeks God together in the context of this lively city.

To learn more go to mcec.ca/ministry-opportunities or contact pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca.

mfmtl.org

Upcoming Advertising Dates

| Issue Date | Ads Due |
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| Aug. 17 | July 31 (<i>early deadline</i>) |
| Sept. 14 | Aug. 31 (<i>Focus on Money</i>) |
| Sept. 28 | Sept. 14 |
| Oct. 12 | Sept. 28 (<i>Focus on Education</i>) |
| Oct. 26 | Oct. 9 (<i>early deadline</i>) |
| Nov. 9 | Oct. 26 (<i>Focus on Books & Resources</i>) |
| Nov. 23 | Nov. 9 |

God's love in a pandemic

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

“Are little kids really going to enjoy me coming to physically distance chat with their mom? Not likely!” says Judith McCartney, pastor of Soul House, a Mennonite Eastern Canada congregation in Scarborough, Ont. “So I brought McDonald’s french fries for the kids—and they were a hit!”

COVID-19 has greatly impacted Toronto over the last three months. Soul House continues to find ways to minister to its congregation and community.

“It’s spreading a little bit of joy during this vulnerable time for people,” says Judith.

Zoom meetings have allowed those at a distance to join the Soul House community.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MC EASTERN CANADA

Warden Underground pastors Jordan Thoms and Jon Folkeringa are pictured with a load of food to deliver to people in their neighbourhood.

The “french fry family” does not have a car and would need to take public transit to be a part of the church’s gatherings.

“Zoom allows them to be an active part of our family,” says Colin McCartney, Judith’s husband and the director of Connect City Toronto, which includes the Soul House and Warden Underground congregations.

Soul House and Warden Underground have found themselves baking cookies, and collecting food, face masks and hand sanitizer to deliver to their own people and also to the community at large. They were able to arrange a drop-off of diapers and baby supplies to a young mom who recently had her baby. ☘