


# CANADIAN MENNONITE

September 14, 2020 Volume 24 Number 19



## Graduating in a nursing home during a pandemic

story on back cover

PM40063104 R09613

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## EDITORIAL

# Substance over glitz

TOBI THIESSEN  
Publisher



While public conversation swirled in July over the details of WE Charity's speaker fees and all-expenses-paid trips for donors, my church was having a sermon series on Mennonite Central Committee's 100 years of service in the name Christ.

Over several weeks, church members who had volunteered with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Canada and around the world spoke about their experiences, why they felt called to serve and what they did while on assignment. Some weeks, we had guest speakers who currently work for MCC. Each Sunday, we had a glimpse into some aspect of MCC's programs for relief, development, justice and peace. We heard about the positive impact these programs made on people in communities. We heard that even small-scale, low-budget programs can bring about major improvements in people's daily lives.

Such a sermon series could also be done with stories from people who serve with other Mennonite agencies like Mennonite Church Canada Witness, Mennonite Disaster Service or Christian Peacemaker Teams, among others. These agencies are all founded on common values. They do needed work with simplicity and humility.

Doing voluntary service is something that is close to the Mennonite heart. Those of us who haven't done an extensive term of service, often volunteer in our churches and at events to raise money for Mennonite agencies.

And beyond our gifts of time and energy, we offer direct financial support. Mennonite agencies are the strong arms of our church body, as Doug Klassen, MC Canada's executive minister, observed in the Feb.17 issue of this magazine ("A call to strengthen our core"). They have done much good work around the world. We identify strongly with their missions and we are glad to help them carry them out.

When the public scrutinizes secular charitable practices, such as WE's staging of glitzy events to motivate students to do fundraising, Mennonites might look at how we manage our charities and what motivates us. All charities, Mennonite included, face the challenge of mobilizing volunteers and donors to support their missions. How do we motivate our supporters and volunteers?

Anyone who has been on a voluntary-service assignment, and anyone who has been to a typical fundraising event for one of our beloved agencies, knows that glitz is not our style. Still, when donor dollars start to flag, or when needs outweigh available resources, some may wonder if our more-with-less approach is outdated, and whether more glitz would work better. (Frankly, we get the same tension in this magazine, when some wonder if we would get more subscribers if we used better paper.)

As Mennonites, we are motivated particularly by scripture passages such as Matthew 25:31-40, where Jesus says that serving other people in need is tantamount to serving Jesus himself.

Menno Simons gave the passage prominence when he wrote in 1539: "True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant. It clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute, it serves those that harm it, it binds up that which is wounded, it has become all things to all people." Mennonites are motivated to serve because to do so is a way of showing love for God.

Mennonites offer our time and our money to the service of others as a basic part of our discipleship. We serve others in the name of Christ. Historically, no additional motivation was necessary.

In this issue, we present a Focus on Money section, with the feature article, "Selling generosity" by Darren Pries-Klassen, chief executive officer of Abundance Canada. Pries-Klassen writes that people often need encouragement to be generous. If they have been making donations out of a sense of duty, they will not stay motivated for long.

Pries-Klassen points out that the COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the divide between the "haves" and "have-nots" in our society, making it clear that there are needs waiting to be met and injustices waiting to be addressed. "As painful as this pandemic continues to be, it is also a chance for us to step up and be better than we were," he concludes.

Mennonite agencies like MCC and others have found ways to serve people in critical need for a century. They do it with little glitz but a lot of substance. Now here is a pandemic around us where we see more needs. Let's continue to respond to the call to serve, and let's do it gladly, in the name of Christ.✠



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PHOTO: DARLENE KLASSEN

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When I am asked what I do for a living, I often say, "I show people how much fun it is to give their money away," writes Abundance Canada CEO **Darren Pries-Klassen** in *CM's Focus on Money* feature. "You feel better when you give. . . Give it a try if you don't believe me."



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## FOCUS ON MONEY FEATURE

# Selling generosity

Charitable giving is an opportunity to share the resources you find in your possession

By Darren Pries-Klassen

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

**W**hen I am asked what I do for a living, I often say, “I show people how much fun it is to give their money away.” That elicits a better conversation than if I tell them I manage a registered, charitable, donor-advised foundation.

I love what I do. It’s a joy to work with donors and colleagues who give money to see the world become a better place through the kindness of generosity. I also like the opportunity to “sell” generosity and charitable giving to people.

Yes, it’s true. People don’t just give because it’s a good thing to do. Many need encouragement to be generous. Altruism is a journey, and charities know this. This requires conversations with prospective donors, creating website content that engages people, and publications that tell the stories of lives changed. Aggressively waiting for the phone to ring has proven an ineffective strategy for charitable organizations.

According to the 2018 “30 years of giving in Canada” report by the Rideau Hall Foundation and Imagine Canada, whose board I sit on, charitable giving in Canada in 2014 was “approximately \$14.3 billion in receipted and unreceipted donations to registered charities.” That is a 150-percent increase in real terms since 1984. The social value created by Canada’s 170,000 registered charities and not-for-profit agencies is larger than many people think. The sector employs two million Canadians and accounts for more than 8 percent of this country’s gross domestic product.

### **As beneficial as the charitable sector is, there is a problem**

Charitable giving is sometimes a bandage solution to bigger problems that lie beneath the surface, such as systems of injustice and the blindness that fails to see or acknowledge them, or (un)conscious bias and the strong

desire to keep the current social order in place.

The recent WE Charity/Canada Student Services Grant scandal has done little to help the conversation. We should be talking about the importance of the charitable sector and the need to do things differently, so that broken systems are fixed and marginalized people in society do not fall further behind.

Instead, the storyline has been about politicians who should have recused themselves from decision-making, the fall of the Kielburger brothers and their youth-motivation empire, and whether or not charities in this country can be trusted.

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc with the global economy and it has also shone a light on the growing divide between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” The doors to factories and many other places of employment have been kicked open, and we are forced to see with new eyes the “gig” workers and underemployed who have been hit the hardest. Essential workers now include those who stock grocery shelves and work the cash register, but their newfound importance is not reflected in how they are treated and paid.

Some have said that the pandemic has put us all in the same boat. Hardly. We might all be in the same storm, but some of us are weathering it in a yacht while others are in dinghies or clinging to driftwood.

Affordable housing in Canada has been decreasing since the 1980s. Wages have not kept up with inflation, and housing costs have risen to the point where adequate housing is increasingly unaffordable for a growing group of people. For many, home ownership is a pipedream.

Of course, there is value in donating to shelters and other facilities that work to keep people safe and off the streets, but that does not solve the affordable-housing problem. That is a larger issue that begs us to consider what a just society looks like, and asks, “What will we do to make that just society a reality?”

**The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc with the global economy and it has also shone a light on the growing divide between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots.’**



'JESUS, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?'  
(MENNOPIX DIGITAL ART  
BY ROSS W. MUIR)

**Yes, the poor will always be with us. Jesus said it himself. . . . Would our behaviour and mindset change if Jesus had said, 'The poor will always be with you, so what are you going to do about it?'**

foodbanks and we have sufficient volunteers to run the programs, but it fails to ask a far more important question: "Why do we have hungry people when the world has the capacity to grow enough food for everyone to live?" Donating to a foodbank is charity, but tackling the larger issue of why people are hungry in the first place requires us to address an injustice.

### **Charity and systems of injustice**

Where there is a need for people to be charitable, there is likely a system of injustice that needs to be addressed as well.

In the grand scheme of things, giving to charity is easy. It is voluntary and doesn't require donors to ask many questions if they don't want to. It is when we address the injustice that people become uncomfortable. As Dom Helder Câmara, a former archbishop of Brazil, said, "When I give food to the

poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist."

Yes, the poor will always be with us. Jesus said it himself. But isn't it strange that we have historically read that passage found in both Matthew 26:11 and Mark 14: 7 from the lens of prophecy? What if we read this passage as Jesus' indictment—as a call to right wrongs, free captives from societal prisons and create a world of justice? Would our behaviour and mindset change if Jesus had said, "The poor will always be with you, so what are you going to do about it?"

The solution is not a matter of picking sides between charitable giving or addressing injustice. It is a "both/and" solution. Give to causes that make a difference, but confront injustice as well.

It may not be your calling to plan a march or organize a protest, but that is hardly the only way one can confront injustice. You can:

- **Listen to the** experiences of others, especially those who are marginalized. I have no personal experience with hunger or homelessness. I have not lived in poverty. Until I am willing to listen to those who have experienced these things, I have nothing to add to the conversation but ignorance and arrogance.
- **Read the news,** attend events and listen to what frontline workers have to say. Awareness grows when we take time to educate ourselves about the issues.
- **Speak up,** especially when things are said that malign groups of people or make assumptions as to why people and things are as they are. Don't let your discomfort get the best of you in those moments. Ask people to explain themselves with open-ended questions and resist the temptation to make statements.
- **Listen with humility** and grace when your actions or words are critiqued. I've been called out for things I've said and done and, although a little embarrassing, I am better for the newfound knowledge. As Maya Angelou wrote, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then,

Food insecurity is another growing problem in Canada and around the world. Donating food to foodbanks is greatly needed, but is the objective just to feed hungry people or do we want to eradicate hunger? Feeding hungry people is an immediate need that is solved as long as enough money is donated to

*Jesus, can  
you spare a dime?*

when you know better, do better.”

- **Speak truth to power.** Jesus did this regularly. The difficulty is recognizing when we are on the side of power and injustice. Sometimes we need to admonish ourselves.

This list is hardly complete, and it is offered from the perspective of a white, middle-aged, cis-gendered heterosexual male, who has enjoyed the benefits of a system that was created for people who look just like me. I welcome the wisdom of those with lived experience different from my own to add to this list and to point out my blinders and insensitivity.

### **In the meantime, keep giving to charity**

The needs are immediate. Some problems, and the people who face them, can't wait for justice. They need support right now, and donations to charity can be some of the most efficient ways to ensure people and causes are supported.

Giving is the antidote to greed. The temptation to have more and accumulate is everywhere. Few people are immune to it. When the desire to have more gets the best of us, or we feel ourselves experiencing envy, it might be the time to donate something for the benefit of others. As it has been said, “If you are more fortunate than others, it is better to build a longer table than a taller fence.”

Charity isn't perfect. So what? Give anyway. Charities, like any other organization, lack perfection, but that doesn't mean they are without credibility. Except for a handful of organizations, charities in Canada run a pretty tight ship and do amazing work. You can donate to them knowing your donation is making an impact for a cause you care about. If you are still not convinced, find another charity to support, but don't use your angst as an excuse to sidestep living generously.

You feel better when you give. Many times I have heard people say how good they feel when they have supported charitable causes. Give it a try if you don't believe me. You might surprise yourself.

Stop giving out of duty and obligation. No, really. I'm serious! Some folks have it

**You feel better when you give. Many times I have heard people say how good they feel when they have supported charitable causes. Give it a try if you don't believe me. You might surprise yourself.**

in their head that giving is about duty and obligation to prove one's faithfulness. Charitable giving is an opportunity to share the resources you find in your possession. It is not the premium payment for the assurance of your salvation. Generosity is a holy moment given to you by God. Give thanks for the opportunity to be generous and do it with joy!

We are in the midst of a pandemic that has not only affected our physical and mental health but has kept us isolated from friends, family and colleagues, and wreaked havoc with our economy, the effects of which we might feel for decades to come. God willing, COVID-19 ends soon, but we may be in this for a while. That shouldn't stop us from lending our

voice and our wallets to do the right thing. As painful as this pandemic continues to be, it is also a chance for us to step up and be better than we were. ❧

*Darren Pries-Klassen has spent his career in the charitable sector. He is the past board chair of the Canadian Association of Gift Planners and currently sits on the board of Imagine Canada. Imagine Canada helps charities and nonprofits better serve people and communities. He is the chief executive officer of Abundance Canada, a faith-based, donor-advised foundation known formerly as the Mennonite Foundation of Canada.*



### ❧ **For discussion**

1. What charities do you support? Does giving bring you joy? Why or why not? Where did you learn to be generous? How would you describe to someone else the benefits of generosity?
2. Darren Pries-Klassen writes that giving in Canada in 2014 was 150 percent higher, in real terms, than in 1984. Do you find this statistic surprising? What reasons can you think of for this increase in giving? How has your community increased its charitable work in the last 30 years?
3. “Charitable giving is sometimes a bandage solution to bigger problems,” says Pries-Klassen. Do you agree? What problems do you see in your community that need a better solution than charities can provide? Can charities themselves be a problem?
4. What was Jesus' attitude towards the poor? Do you think Jesus expects us to do something about social injustice? How do you think Jesus would challenge inequality in our world?
5. Which of Pries-Klassen's ideas for confronting injustice are you involved in? Do you find any of them beyond the realm of possibility? What other ideas do you have for improving justice in your community?

—By Barb Draper

See related Financial Stewardship resources at [www.commonword.ca/go/1327](http://www.commonword.ca/go/1327)

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**OPINION**
**/// Readers write**
**✉ 'Better stories' needed for 'future inventories'**
**Re: "A Black/Menno inventory," June 22, page 13.**

I deeply appreciate this column. While I am sure that there is much more history than could fit in it, I wonder how to understand the general scarcity of stories of cultural contact and sharing. Is it too pessimistic to ask if the "gaps" in this Mennonite history indicate indifference or mistrust of Black neighbours rather than acceptance and neighbourliness?

A few years ago, I visited the St. Catharines, Ont., church once attended by Harriet Tubman in between her journeys of salvation to rescue enslaved Africans. The church basement walls are covered in photos of Black Canadians dating back to the invention of the camera. The message is clear: Black people have been in Canada since the beginning, whether as enslaved people, as liberated (and liberator, like Tubman), or as settler-immigrants and community members. We should have stories about each other!

As someone not raised Mennonite, and without any family connection to the Black experience in Canada, I am trying to learn from both communities, which are not exclusive. The column suggests that, historically, Mennonites have not learned from, or acknowledged, the spiritual wisdom of Black communities. It is of critical importance that we centre voices that we have marginalized, embracing the challenge and possibility of interculturality.

I am grateful for the grace of those working with and within the Mennonite church as we seek this blessing. May we have better stories to tell for future inventories!

PETER HARESNAPE, TORONTO

*The writer is a pastor of Toronto United Mennonite Church and the national coordinator of the Student Christian Movement of Canada.*

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**✉ Polio mercy flight ends in tragedy**
**Re: "Legacy of the last great epidemic: The drama and trauma of polio lingers," June 22, page 26.**

This poignant article that, during our current COVID-19 pandemic, recalls the hardships of the 1950s polio epidemic, reminds me of my uncle, Gordon MacDonald, who died in an air ambulance crash on Nov. 22, 1953, while flying a seriously ill polio patient and his doctor from a remote jobsite to Edmonton for an iron-lung treatment. No polio

vaccine was available then, but the cumbersome iron lung helped patients breathe, hopefully to survive the disease.

Flight Lieutenant MacDonald served with the Royal Canadian Airforce (RCAF) during the Second World War as a bomber pilot and squadron leader. He flew 119 sorties between 1941 and 1945, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1944. When he left the RCAF in 1946, my uncle wanted only to go back to farming with his dad, "to feed and work with livestock, feel the soil in his hands and with his bare feet." Like so many soldiers, he returned from the war bearing scars of mind and body that are hard to heal.

Uncle Gordon tried farming and married his sweetheart, did a stint in the civilian air force and worked at various trades, but the young family could not establish itself. He became a commercial pilot with Gateway Aviation, for whom he flew advertisement banners and passengers around Alberta.

He took the emergency mercy flight, but his aircraft flew into a blizzard and became impaired by heavy icing on the wings and fuselage. He tried to return to Grande Prairie but could not, so the plane proceeded towards Edmonton, flying below the storm clouds. The blizzard did not abate, and the airplane crashed into the forest near Whitecourt. Everyone on board, aged 28 to 32, was killed upon impact, leaving behind their widows, children and parents to carry on, as best they could.

ROBERT PROUDFOOT, EDMONTON

*The writer attends Edmonton First Mennonite Church.*

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**✉ American became a Canadian citizen in order to vote**
**Re: "Why I'm not a Canadian," July 20, page 11.**

As an immigrant from the United States, I found Randolph Haluzy-DeLay's observations on life in Canada in many ways similar to my own. A big difference between us, however, is that he has chosen not to become a citizen of Canada, while I became one long ago and am happy even now to claim that privilege.

My allegiance to Canada is real, but on a much lower plane than my allegiance to Christ—more like my allegiance to my employer or my extended family or my Russian-Mennonite ethnicity.

In following the call of Jesus to love my neighbour, however, I believe the privilege of voting is extremely useful. After I've done all I can personally to slow the crises of COVID-19, global warming and species extinction, all of which affect the well-being of my



neighbours, especially the disadvantaged, I still find the global results disheartening. These problems, and many others, require collective action, and the best I can do is to join others in selecting leaders with similar concerns, which means I vote, thoughtfully and prayerfully.

RUDY WIENS, TORONTO

*The writer attends Mississauga (Ont.) Mennonite Fellowship.*

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### ✉ **Does racism really include the colour of bandages?**

**Re: “Today’s society is a progression of Canada’s colonial past” letter, July 20, page 7.**

Pierre Berton’s 1971 book, *The Last Spike*, records injustice against migrant workers.

Today, migrant workers pick our apples and hoe our vegetables, while our young people enjoy paid holidays and other benefits, unwilling to accept perceived manual tasks.

We want to save the planet at someone else’s expense but only if brown bandages are available (a reference to the letter writer’s statement, “Just try to find a bandage to match your skin colour if you are not white.”).

ROSS ERB, SHAKESPEARE, ONT.

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### ✉ **CM urged to ignore ‘call to gag’ letter writers**

**Re: “Silence those who are problematic” letter, July 20, page 7.**

Bev Hunsberger calls out *Canadian Mennonite* executive editor Virginia A. Hostetler, criticizing her for publishing a previous letter, headlined “Decolonize’ and ‘settler’ meaningless, pejorative terms,” June 8, page 8. Hunsberger urges the editor “to take away the voices of those who contribute to the oppression of people.”

I encourage the editor to ignore this call to gag some writers of letters to this magazine.

The editor’s responsibility is to edit for libel, obscenities and factual inaccuracies. The editor should not block opinions just because they are not considered “woke,” which seems to be the new way of saying “enlightened.”

I went back and reread the original letter that raised Hunsberger’s ire. I personally disagree with some aspects of the writer’s view, but it was a thoughtful reflection presented in a reasonable manner, and it deserved to be published.

Mennonites talk a lot about issues; that’s how we work things out. It’s true that our conversations go on too long sometimes, but that’s our peace-seeking alternative to antagonism and win-or-lose conflicts. This magazine is an important forum for this national conversation. It shouldn’t be restricted only to opinions that are currently popular.

It’s a measure of the editor’s integrity that she published Hunsberger’s letter, even though it criticized the editor’s judgment. It appears this letters section is in good hands.

CARL DEGURSE, WINNIPEG

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### ✉ **Those who value liberty should not silence others**

**Re: “Silence those who are problematic” letter, July 20, page 7.**

My plea to the *Canadian Mennonite*’s editor is to ignore any advice promoting political correctness or censorship. I will not ask you to silence any voice that I find disagreeable or even offensive. Moreover, I do not understand why anyone who values liberty would do so.

JOHN HILDEBRAND, MISSISSAUGA, ONT.

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### ✉ **Cross-border interaction in decline since integration**

**Since the integration of the General Conference and the (Old) Mennonite Church in 1999, American Mennonites have become increasingly isolated. Cross-border dialogue has been steadily declining, even before the current COVID-19 pandemic closed the border:**

- **Canadians who are** Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers, or artists, such as actors in Theatre of the Beat, are stymied by American border officials.
- **Spouses of Canadian** students at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., cannot work in the United States, and the number of Canadians on campus at AMBS, our binational seminary, is in single digits.
- **Both college and** seminary students do not cross borders to study in our Mennonite schools.
- **The decline of** the activity of the Mennonite Education Agency means that there is little interaction between Canadian and American Mennonite schools.
- **Mennonite Church U.S.A.** conference planners once welcomed dozens of Canadian youth to their conventions.

While MennoMedia cut its staff in Canada several years ago, the only bright spot in cross-border relations is provided by its new hymnal project. The *Voices Together* committee included many talented Canadians (43 percent), funds were raised north of the border, and Canadian orders for the hymnal have been strong.

As the music committee chair at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, I'm excited about the new energy this hymnal will bring to congregational life. This is a good example of what MC Canada and MC U.S.A. can do together in an era when the American

climate is becoming more insular.

FRED W. MARTIN, WATERLOO, ONT.

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## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Coursey**—Joan Louise Martens (b. June 1, 2020), to Heidi Martens and Joel Coursey, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

**Enns**—Emelia Rose (b. July 12, 2020), to Randy and Noelle Enns, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Froese**—Charlotte Claire (b. July 23, 2020), to Alex and Melissa Froese, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Godfrey**—Aria Bethany (b. July 15, 2020), to Joel and Sarah Godfrey, Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Harms**—Ellis Jacob Schellenberg (b. June 4, 2020), to Heather Schellenberg and Michael Harms, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Janzen Mathew**—Bruno Joel (b. July 26, 2020), to Adam Janzen and Asha Mathew, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Kampen**—Clover Rain (b. July 12, 2020), to Erika and Kevin Kampen, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Kuol**—Marial Warren (b. April 18, 2020), to Akol and Kristine Kuol, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Loeppky**—Liam Robert Schellenberg (b. June 15, 2020), to Adrienne Schellenberg and Aaron Loeppky, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Martin**—Nova Jean (b. July 17, 2020), to Kalynn Spain and Kyle Martin, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Plenert**—Georgia Lisette (b. June 12, 2020), to Natasha Plenert and Paul Figsby, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Thiessen**—Aksel John Friesen (b. July 28, 2020) to Kira Friesen and Kenton Thiessen, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Yantzi**—Jake Henry (b. May 27, 2020), to Amy and Nathan Yantzi, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

**Yantzi**—Myer Emmanuel (b. May 21, 2020), to Erin and Dustin Yantzi, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

### Marriages

**Bailey/Thomas**—Danielle Bailey and Sven Thomas, Home Street Mennonite Winnipeg, in Stonewall, Man, June 27,

2020.

**Bunnet/Wiebe**—Marta Bunnett and Kelsey Wiebe, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg, in Havelock, N.B., May 17, 2020.

### Deaths

**Bender**—Katie, 93 (b. June 2, 1927; d. July 14, 2020), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

**Buhr**—Norman Jacob, 85 (b. July 3, 1935; d. July 11, 2020), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

**Buller**—Cornelius, 65 (b. Dec. 1, 1954; d. July 19, 2020), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Dyck**—Louise (nee Unrau), 92 (b. Aug. 17, 1927; d. July 20, 2020), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Enns**—Madeline Abigail (Maddy), 21 (b. Sept. 25, 1998; d. July 13, 2020), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**French**—Jacqueline Anne (Beller), 74 (b. Feb. 12, 1946; d. July 25, 2020), Spring Ridge Mennonite, Pincher Creek, Alta.

**Jansen**—Margaret (nee Penner), 83 (b. Oct. 10, 1936; d. June 14, 2020), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Klassen**—Frank, 94 (b. Jan. 6, 1926; d. Aug. 2, 2020), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Klassen**—Verna (nee Regier), 91 (b. Feb. 28, 1929; d. July 16, 2020), Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Lehn**—Lydia Jean (Rempel), 90 (b. March 12, 1930; d. July 30, 2020), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Martens**—Abe, 82 (b. Aug. 30, 1937; d. July 18, 2020), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

**Wallman**—Helen, 95 (b. Aug. 30, 1924; d. Aug. 5, 2020), Leamington United Mennonite Church, Ont.

**Warkentin**—Hilda (nee Neufeld), 91 (b. June 21, 1929; d. June 23, 2020), Bethel Mennonite, Langley, B.C.

*Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to [milestones@canadianmennonite.org](mailto: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

## It's been a feast!

Doug Klassen

**F**ind us empty and wandering  
... find us in the wilderness,  
and fill us with your feast."

This lyric by Phil Campbell-Enns, pastor of Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, is from a song that was chosen for the first Mennonite Church Canada online worship service on March 22. At the time, it perfectly described where we found ourselves and how we felt.

We were just entering the season of Lent when COVID-19 cases and lockdown measures swept across our country in mid-March. Churches closed. We were bewildered. Across the nationwide church we asked, "What does it mean to be the church when we cannot gather for worship? How can we be church when we are not together?"

Prompted by the Spirit's leading, one congregation, then another, and then another, invited our nationwide family to join them for Sunday worship in the weeks after that initial service. Our sisters and brothers led songs, gave sermons and shared children's features, planning their services with our nationwide family in mind.

We celebrated Good Friday in Calgary, Easter in Lethbridge, Ascension Sunday in Vancouver, and Pentecost in Springstein, Man. We continued to celebrate together Sunday after Sunday, all summer long. What a feast it has been! Hundreds watched every week. Never has the MC Canada YouTube channel site ([bit.ly/3jvcOLR](http://bit.ly/3jvcOLR)) seen so much traffic.

But as we feasted, we were consistently reminded through prayers, songs and rituals of the many in our country, and globally, who suffer the brunt of the pandemic. Lost jobs, lost social networks, loneliness, isolation and despair. Even lost lives. Pastors and worship leaders encouraged us to pray for our sisters and brothers near and far who were wondering "How long, O Lord?" They encouraged us to "trust in God's steadfast love, rejoicing in [God's] salvation" (Psalm 13:1,3,5).

These services have changed us. Week after week, I have received notes and phone calls from members of our nationwide community of faith who were grateful and appreciative of these services. One person wrote wonderful

words of thanks that I want to pass on to our wider church family, especially those who shared their services with us: "I just wanted to thank you for providing the video church services from across Canada during this time of church closures. It was very interesting to be a part of various types of worship. I felt connected spiritually to the larger Mennonite family for the first time . . . these were uplifting and meaningful to my personal spiritual growth. I looked forward to each one!"

Sept. 6 was the final shared Sunday service, though. But we hope to keep this tradition alive in some form in the months to come.

Preparing these services has also made us think about what it means to be the church in this time. What is our core identity? What is the essence of who we are as the Body of Christ? We will explore these questions and more at our virtual study conference in October. Please be sure to register at [mennonitechurch.ca/tabletalk2020](http://mennonitechurch.ca/tabletalk2020). ☞



Doug Klassen ([dklassen@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:dklassen@mennonitechurch.ca)) is executive minister of MC Canada.



## A moment from yesterday



In Saskatoon, at the 1975 Conference of Mennonites in Canada annual conference, the Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) board, "long embarrassed about faculty salaries," asked for funds to raise salaries to a maximum of \$20,000 per year for PhD professors after 10 years of service. Many leaders and teachers in our churches and church institutions have given sacrificially of their time, talents and finances. Pictured in 1972 or 1973, Waldemar Janzen, second from right, a CMBC professor in Winnipeg, has a discussion with three students, including Edgar Schmidt, far left.

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Unknown / Mennonite Heritage Archives



## IN THE IMAGE

## Bethel moments

Ed Olfert

A story in Genesis 28 describes the patriarch Jacob stopping for the night while on a journey. His sleep includes a dream of a visit from God. In the morning, Jacob awakes and offers the profound observation, *“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I didn’t know it! This is none other than the house of God!”*

As a result of that experience, Jacob names the spot “Bethel.”

Rereading those words invites me to think of the Bethel moments in my life.

Recently, we received the unexpected news that a cousin had died. Yet I spent the day mostly thinking about welding; about how a significant project that I was considering might be approached; how I might successfully tackle a challenge, even though it might well be a little beyond the capability of my energy and my equipment. I raised it with my mate, and Holly succinctly offered, “Don’t decide that now. You’re dealing with Diane’s death, and your mind goes off in a direction that is familiar and comfortable, and leaves you in control. This is not a time for big decisions.”

Wisdom of almost 50 years of relationship was being held out, and my mouth was left agape. *“Surely the Lord is in this place.”*

A recent online meditation reminds me that a sense of wonder and awe are the best indicators of that presence of God. I think of recent and separate conversations with my two oldest grandchildren, and certainly those times were Bethel moments.

Love of God, of others, of creation, always finds its roots, its beginning, in wonder and awe. If, in fact, there is another beginning point claimed for love, it becomes something more calculated, something more about control. Wonder and awe are held in an open palm, where they can be considered but never grasped tightly.

Three grandsons came to spend time with Grandma and Opa. As the two youngest argued and tussled unendingly, Grandma picked up five-year-old Jaxon and carried him to his bedroom for some mandated quiet time. He meekly agreed, but Grandma later discovered that his time of penitence included sneaking into his brother’s room, scooping the clothes out of his suitcase and hiding them under his bed.

A spirituality of “how awesome is this place, this person, this experience,” cannot help but get us out of bed in the morning filled with expectation.

A few weeks ago, I visited friends

Willy and Dora (pseudonyms). Although they have been married for many decades, the current levels of support they require dictate that they reside in two different care homes. Due to restrictions, my visits were the first time I had seen them in many months.

Willy awaited me in a courtyard. We quickly got into his favourite topic, scripture on which he has been meditating. As I am no scholar, my responses probably tend to the jarringly pragmatic rather than ethereal, but our conversation challenged us both. We talked and prayed together, and we celebrated the easing of restrictions that permitted this time.

Then I drove up the hill to where Dora resides. Here, we visited through a chain-link fence. Dora is blind and has significant hearing loss, so phone conversations have been difficult. Now we could swap stories, joys, fears, giggles and encouragement. Because of COVID-19, Dora hasn’t seen Willy for five months and hasn’t had visits from anyone for that long. She acknowledged that this had been very hard. As a social person, she has found herself sinking into depression.

Having friends like Dora and Willy invites me into that “Bethel” awareness of God. The relationships offered fill me with wonder and awe.

*“Surely the Lord is in this place!”* %



Ed Olfert (p2ptheo @sasktel.net) seeks Bethel moments 24/7.

## Et cetera

## Ecumenical online prayer service a big draw

On May 30, the Canadian Council of Churches hosted “Together in One Place (Acts 2:1),” an online ecumenical prayer service for Western Pentecost and Eastern Orthodox Ascension. More than 750 people registered for the event, which was held via Zoom, making it the biggest ecumenical event the Council has organized in recent memory. Prayers, Scripture readings and reflections were offered in English and French, and the service was attended by participants from both English-speaking and francophone regions of Canada.

Source: The Canadian Council of Churches



Canadian Council of Churches president Stephen Kendall welcomes participants to the ecumenical prayer service and invites them to greet one another and share territorial acknowledgments in the Zoom chat pane.



## MIND AND SOUL

# Learning from Quakers

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

**B**ecause of my Christian friends I'm taking a hiatus from social media. One has repeatedly posted a meme of Jesus with an AK-47 assault rifle. I tried hard to explain in detail why I thought this was horrible. What I mean, of course, is that we argued.

Then there are the Christian friends who live in a few cities where racial-justice protests and police violence had been all over the news. So I asked about it, which prompted a long response, ending in "And I know you love to debate stuff, and be all intellectual and stuff, but I just want to read my Bible, pray and let God figure it all out for me."

Smoke blew out of my ears and the smartphone almost flew out the window.

You've experienced this too, I daresay. The controversies can be many. How best to live the faith? Should Christians address injustice? Mennonites working in oil and gas, and Mennonites concerned about the climate crisis. LGBTQ+ inclusion and the church. Congregations have split or left over such issues.

These are fighting matters! Didn't some Menno write a book called *Peace Shall Destroy Many*? Oh, wait, that author was in a different Mennonite denomination.

Quakers are another historic peace

church, so maybe we can learn from them. They have similar sorts of conservative/moderate/progressive versions, and comparable dissension. I was shocked to attend a Quaker church once and see the United States flag behind the pulpit, knowing how vehemently other Quakers would object.

Philosophy professor Jeff Dudiak took on this breadth of the Quaker spectrum in his short book, *Radicalizing Spirit*. Quakerism is a form of Christianity that is critical of Christianity, he writes. Like Anabaptism, it arose as a radical reform movement. The founding inspiration was to be free from worldly authorities for the sake of obedience to true authority, which is the light of the Spirit. Quakers were "dissenters" from state religion, with histories of plain dress, congregationalism and conscientious objection.

But, despite a persistent emphasis on unity, Dudiak writes, Quakers are sorely divided. Sound familiar?

We all know the pulls of the past and the future, tradition and innovation, the questions of how to respond to social trends and new ideas. In this context, Dudiak says, we need "a radical third way. Neither this, nor that, but something that gets us unstuck; not polarized, but energized."

In particular, follow Jesus and "begin at the end," he says. Swords beaten into ploughshares imagines the end. In this violent world we don't know how to get there—although there is an astonishing amount of research on the effectiveness of nonviolent movements—so expect to be surprised. Jesus repeatedly stunned his disciples, onlookers and argumentative types. Looking back, we can sort of see how his end goals were paved by the peculiar path(s) he took.

Keeping the end in mind helps unity, since we probably have more agreement on end goals. Christian scientist Katherine Hayhoe says focusing on common values reduces polarization on contentious issues like climate change. Dudiak says that we have to give up our own identity to follow Jesus; our deeply held views cannot take priority over that identity. We are energized to listen better to those who differ, and expect them to listen better also. I don't yet know how to do that in the face of the facts of anti-Black racism and that friend who was so deeply unconcerned. No matter how wrong I think they are, my anger will not help. The smoke is no longer blowing out my ears, and when I go back on social media I hope we can talk. ☿



*Randolph Haluza-DeLay attends First Mennonite Church in Edmonton and he used to marvel at the bowtie worn daily by Dr. Jeff Dudiak.*

## Et cetera



### MCC helps with pumpkin seed harvest in Zaire

In 1993, Mennonite Central Committee worker Jeanne Zimmerly Jantzi, centre, harvests seeds with women members of a farmers group in Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo). Agriculture was the main focus of MCC's efforts in Zaire at this time, when political and economic instability brought uncontrolled inflation, pushing the basic necessities like food and medicine out of reach for many people.

Source: MCC / Photo by Dan Jantzi



## TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

## A spiritual disruption

Joshua Penfold

*“Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God” (Hosea 14:1).*

In this final chapter of Hosea, God bids the Israelites return to God and acknowledge their waywardness, but also to be assured they will find compassion and fruitfulness in God.

It’s really not a unique theme, but I think it offered me a biblical image to help me understand my own situation. Can waywardness happen for various reasons? Could it be a slow and gradual unintentional change? Can it be thrust upon you against your will?

For the first few months of 2020, I’d developed a pretty regular routine of reading my Bible, journalling and praying. Four out of five mornings each week everyone in my house would be off to work and school, which would afford me up to an hour before I had to head off to work myself. It had become my small time of sanctuary, my only alone time in which I could replenish my spirit and keep myself grounded.

Then life changed. Not just my life, but the whole world. We were all told to stay home and we suddenly had nowhere to go. It took me a long while to figure out why I’d been slacking in my Bible reading, my reflective writing, my praying. The answer became clear to me:

I’d lost my routine. That sacred space that had been carved into my schedule had dissolved as life had shifted.

Suddenly, my children were home all day, my wife was working from home, and before long I also had to put a pause on my support work. We were all learning to adjust to a new temporary normal, and through it all I am still trying to figure out how best to develop a new routine for my personal spiritual practices.

Maybe it’s a stretch to compare my situation to the waywardness of the Israelites. Their invitation to return to God is quite different from my waywardness of personal devotion disruption. But perhaps they both share the same trajectory: Do the work of figuring out how you’re going to adjust your life so that you’re aligned to walk with God again.

Reflecting on my life, I realize that this is certainly not the first time I have encountered changes in routine that have disrupted my spiritual practices, and I’m sure it will not be the last. I still reflect with fondness on times years ago when I had established spiritual routines that were consistent and

meaningful. Each time life changes, I am given an opportunity to take stock of my present situation and engineer my days in the hope of fostering space for meaningful connection with God in this chapter of life.

Routine spiritual practices don’t happen spontaneously; they require intention and take practice. They will blossom only when tended to with regular care and given time to take root. I find I must be gentle with myself, acknowledging that a thriving spiritual routine involves self-discipline as well as self-graciousness. Just as the Israelites were invited to return to God after their comparatively colossal mistakes, God continues to lovingly invite us back, to return to being rooted in God: *“I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily”* (Hosea 14:4-5). ☿



Joshua Penfold ([penfoldjoshua@gmail.com](mailto:penfoldjoshua@gmail.com)) is a support worker and a member of Tavistock (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

## Et cetera

## Joint peace message laments start of the Korean War

A joint ecumenical peace message for the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War was publicly delivered on June 22 during a livestreamed event. Co-sponsored by churches and councils of churches around the world, including Mennonite Central Committee Canada, especially from countries that participated in the Korean War, the message describes the war as an “appallingly destructive conflict” after which no peace treaty was ever concluded. The message also calls for suspension and cancellation of any further military exercises in the region. Following the public presentation of the peace message, the Ecumenical Forum for Peace, Reunification and Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula met to share information and analysis on current developments in the region.

Source: World Council of Churches / Photo by Grégoire de Fombelle



*The demilitarized zone between the two Koreas.*



## VIEWPOINT

# White Mennonite static

*Six self-imposed hurdles white Mennonites have to overcome if they want to dependably help dismantle racism*

Tobin Miller Shearer

**T**he Mennonite church has the opportunity to become a dependable partner in the work of dismantling racism.

The church as a whole has a record of racism—both overt and covert—that has been attested to by generations of Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) community members both within and outside the church.

The question is not whether there is racism among white Mennonites but whether we who are white and Mennonite will be able to do the work necessary to be effective allies in the struggle.

In the hope of equipping the church to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem, I offer thoughts on six channels of white Mennonite static that get in the way of effective participation and allyship. They are a tradition of martyrdom, conflict style, separation from society, familial connections, service superiority and a sort of shunning.

To begin, a clarification: When I employ the term “white Mennonite” I refer mainly to Mennonites like myself who claim an ancestral link to the roots of Anabaptism through a Russian, German or Swiss lineage. The static I describe is, if you will, broadcast primarily from those geographic and cultural locations.

At the same time, I have observed that many white Mennonites who are attracted to the Anabaptist movement join Mennonite congregations because they often resonate deeply with the patterns that I will describe.

Much of what I have to offer here emerges from several decades of talking with, and listening carefully to, Mennonite BIPOC leaders. For the trust that those exchanges have offered me, I am deeply grateful.

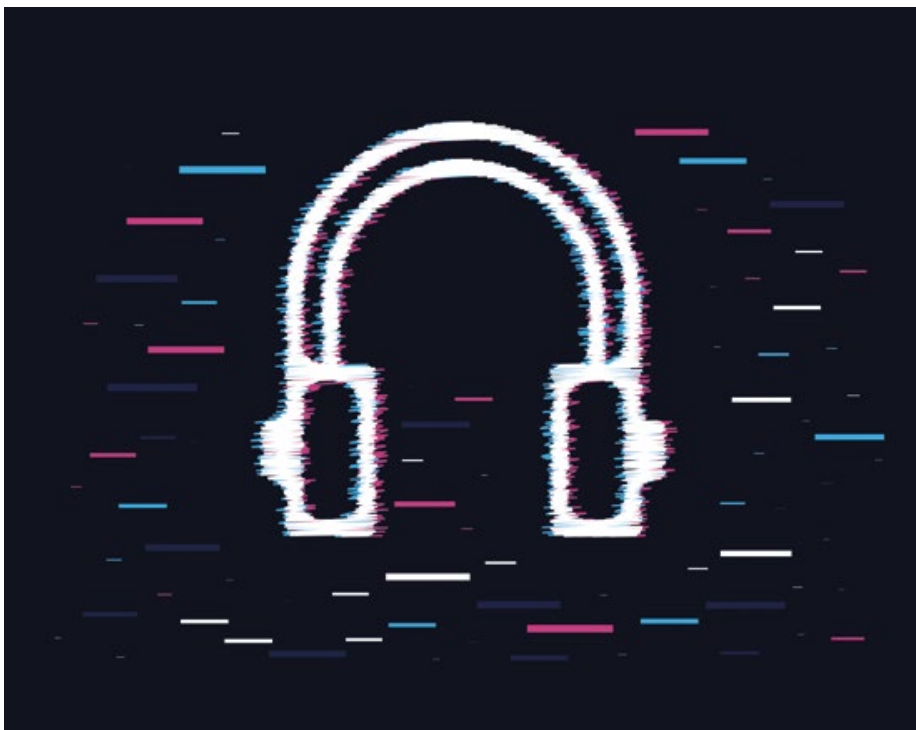


PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/LLYAST

## The six channels

- **Channel 1:** a tradition of martyrdom. Although few white Mennonites have any but the most distant of connections to 16th-century Anabaptist martyrs, many carry the notion of martyrdom in our psyche. We are quick to offer up the idea of personal sacrifice but seldom see it through.

In the arena of anti-racism, this martyr's burden shows up in inauthentic subservience, false humility and a sense of powerlessness to effect change through nonviolent struggle.

People of colour have frequently mentioned to me that they don't trust white Mennonites who say they will take costly risks because so often there is no follow-through.

- **Channel 2:** a conflict style that buries, rather than surfaces, tension. It is one thing to dampen conflict in a congregational or office setting. It is another to do the same as calls for racial justice usher from the streets. People of colour who have worked, or currently work, in predominantly white Mennonite settings frequently tell me that a lack of clear, uncompromised means of engaging in

conflict leaves them at a distinct disadvantage.

“White Mennonites fight quiet, but they also fight dirty,” one BIPOC leader once told me. “I'd rather have it out in the open than have to sit at my desk worrying that I'll get stabbed in the back.”

Only by learning to argue in a more healthy and above-board manner will we be able to join in anti-racism struggles, which always involve some measure of conflict.

- **Channel 3:** separation from society. Many have written about Mennonites as the “quiet in the land” who not only avoid conflict but eschew connection to society. We who are white and Mennonite frequently think of ourselves as set

apart from societal ills because we are not really “in” society. And yet our collective history is one of accepting unjust enrichment born of colonialism, privilege and genocide.

These are the fundamental plotlines of our nation’s engagement with Black and brown peoples. Until we recognize our full collusion with the racism of this country, we will be blocked from full participation across racial lines simply by virtue of the fact that we are in denial. People in denial are never engaged with the reality at hand.

- **Channel 4:** familial connections. The “Mennonite Game” effectively defines who is in and those who is out. On more than one occasion, my colleagues of colour have had to remind me to refrain from making such connections upon meeting other white Mennonites, because they will always be left out. I have begun to discontinue the practice. I recognize how alienating it can be to my sisters and brothers of colour.

- **Channel 5:** service superiority. I didn’t really understand the volume of the static on this channel until I wrote an article more than two decades ago in which I called out “Fake Latinos,” a term I used with permission from a Black member of the Mennonite church. He had grown frustrated with white Mennonites returning from overseas service assignments having adopted or appropriated the culture of the community in which they had served. As a Black person, he had never been afforded such an option. And neither did he want it.

The response to the article was, well, deafening. Naming cultural appropriation also unearthed the very apparent sense that white Mennonites really did feel that they did service—and especially overseas service—better than everybody else. And by “everybody else,” I mean other majority, white, church service groups.

Rather than taking the opportunity to reflect on the ways that white supremacy was present in the service model itself, white Mennonites chose, and often continue to choose, to deny the history

and present practice of colonialism. In so doing, our church again misses an opportunity to be dependable allies in the work of dismantling racism.

- **Channel 6:** a sort of shunning. I’ve written elsewhere about the “sort of shunning” I experienced as a result of the anti-racism work in which I’ve participated. The distinct channel of static that I identify here is one of rejecting those white people and people of colour in our midst who push the community too hard.

In essence, we tune into this channel when things get a bit too uncomfortable. We have seen this happen in the past with a host of BIPOC leaders. Some white folks in the church have experienced it as well.

The way that this kind of static interrupts our participation in anti-racism efforts is that the work of anti-racism itself requires as a baseline a bracing and uncompromised assessment of the ways in which Mennonite institutions have participated, and continue to participate, in the active promotion of white supremacy, privilege and power at the expense of people of colour.

Until we can go through that assessment without rejecting those who help us face ourselves, we will not be ready to participate in broader efforts to dismantle racism in society.

Identifying these six channels of static is, of course, only helpful if we clean up the broadcast. We have to go to the transmitter to get rid of the static. That will mean, at the very least, coming to terms with the racism in those church institutions over which we have the most influence and equipping them for the anti-racism work that is ahead of us all. ✎

*Tobin Miller Shearer is the director of African-American Studies at the University of Montana and a professor of history. This piece originally appeared on Mennonite World Review’s “The World Together Blog” on Aug. 3.*



## Canadian voices on racism

### To read

- Mennonite Church Canada offers several resources, through its office of Indigenous-Settler Relations, including the “TRC Trilogy”: *Wrongs to Right; Yours, Mine and Ours*; and *The Quest for Respect*. Borrow or purchase from Commonword.ca.
- *The Skin We’re In*. Journalist Desmond Cole documents incidents of systemic racism in Canada, one for each month of 2017.
- *The Inconvenient Indian*. Author and activist Thomas King offers stories and insights on the experience of Indigenous peoples in North America.
- *Cracking Open White Identity towards Transformation*. This eight-session resource for group study was published by the Canadian Council of Churches. Borrow from commonword.ca.

### To listen

- *Colour Code*. This 11-part podcast series, produced by the *Globe and Mail*, includes interviews with authors, academics, artists and leaders on various aspects of racism in Canada.
- *The Secret Life of Canada*. This CBC podcast includes perspectives from BIPOC communities.

### To watch

- CBC Gem (gem.cbc.ca) free streaming service includes:
  - A long-running documentary series, *Maamuitaau*, tells stories, in both Cree and English, of the James Bay Crees;
  - We Need to Talk: Addressing Systemic Racism in Alberta*. A virtual town hall on systemic racism in Alberta, through first-hand accounts; and
  - Unmasking Racism*. A virtual town hall about systemic racism in the workplace, the media and in day-to-day interactions in British Columbia.
- National Film Board of Canada (nfb.ca) has a list of documentaries on anti-racism, for free streaming, featuring Indigenous, Black and people of mixed ancestry, and people of Asian descent.

—COMPILED BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER

## NEWS

# EU grant helps MCC support peacebuilding projects in Middle East

By Emily Jones  
Mennonite Central Committee

With a 994,000-euro grant (C\$1.5 million) from the European Union, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is empowering organizations to implement peacebuilding projects across four Middle Eastern countries.

MCC and its Lebanese partner, Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA), a non-profit organization that promotes sustainable development, are using the funds over three years to support the work of 17 non-profit organizations as they counter religious intolerance and promote peace between faiths in their communities.

Six of the organizations are from Lebanon, five from Iraq, four from Jordan and two from Syria. They work with people of many faiths, including Shia and Sunni Muslims; Christians from Catholic, Maronite, Orthodox and evangelical backgrounds; and people of minority sects like Alawites, Druze and Yazidis.

MCC and DPNA are supporting the organizations through advanced peacebuilding training, capacity building, direct mentoring and networking. In addition, the organizations are using the grants to support local peacebuilding projects.

The projects are helping to restore relationships that have been strained by years of conflict throughout the region. The Middle East continues to experience numerous conflicts, including the civil war in Syria and protests against the Iraqi government. The region's diverse religions often play a role in these conflicts.

Garry Mayhew, an MCC Lebanon and Syria representative, says the initiative is currently MCC's largest peacebuilding project in the region. "The overall impact we are hoping to achieve is to reduce religious violence and enhance mutual understanding and respect between faiths," he says.

Following an August 2019 kickoff



PHOTO COURTESY OF PEACE ORGANIZATION

*A presenter with Peace Organization, a Syrian non-profit, stands with a participant during a peace dialogue in Damascus, Syria. (Their names are withheld for security reasons.) At these sessions, held last fall, youth discussed the definition of peace, the role of young people in building peace, and how to start a peace initiative.*

conference hosted by MCC and DPNA in Lebanon, the 17 organizations began taking steps to implement their new projects. But because of the novel coronavirus pandemic, most activities, except those that can be carried out virtually, have been suspended temporarily until people can meet together again.

Although each peacebuilding project is unique, all share a common theme of empowering religious leaders and laypeople, especially women and youth, to understand and respect people of other faiths and promote religious tolerance within their communities and spheres of influence.

Ardi Association, a Lebanon-based non-profit, launched a peacebuilding workshop that included 80 students from four schools. The workshop helped students explore how to accept religious differences.

Peace Organization, a group in Syria, included youth from different religions in

two dialogues on the definition of peace, the role of youth in building peace, and how to start a peace initiative. It also conducted two workshops about nonviolence and conflict transformation.

Other organizations are still preparing to launch peacebuilding projects that engage participants in unique ways. One project will include designing and installing a mural, another will lead tours to cultural heritage areas that reflect different faith traditions, and a third plans to invite young adults to organize a social-media campaign for community events that promote peace.

"Peace is not something that can be imposed from the outside," says Mayhew. "Instead, we trust that, just like the tiny mustard seed, the impact of this project will be far-reaching, beyond what we can currently envision." ❧



# Evangelical path to truth and reconciliation

*Candid conversations about change*

By Will Braun  
Senior Writer

I started out by digging into the commitments recently made by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) in relation to Indigenous peoples, commitments that include renouncing “white supremacy” and “unsettling” evangelical theology. I finished off by having candid conversations with three friends from three different First Nations about how churches can make things better.

The commitments made earlier this summer by the EFC—of which Mennonite Church Canada is a member—are rooted in the “Reconciliation Proclamation” that came out of a 1995 sacred assembly in Quebec. That event brought together key church and Indigenous leaders for four days. The resulting one-page Proclamation, which is at once hard hitting and brimming with grace, says the starting point for healing and reconciliation is “personal communion with the Creator God.”

Standing on the groundwork of 1995, the current EFC commitments essentially involve four components:

1. **Education and awareness raising** (with reference to the '95 Proclamation, the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples);
2. **Theological work**, including around the notions of “white supremacy” and that “Jesus is found amongst the most vulnerable and persecuted”;
3. **Networking**; and
4. **Establishing an “accountability mechanism”** to measure progress.

Emphasis on the '95 Proclamation is a strength and a weakness. The Proclamation, which Bruce Clemenger, the current EFC president, helped draft, is deep and

incisive. It makes me wish I had been at what was clearly a remarkable gathering. But recommitting to it now—more as a new step than a continuation of ongoing work—highlights how quickly the church commitments of 1995 faded.

## Caution

EFC leaders were somewhat hesitant to do an on-the-record interview with me. They needed time to vet answers with their Indigenous-Settler Relations Working Group, and next steps will be clearer after a fall meeting of that group. Fair enough.

As per an interview conducted by Katie Doke Sawatzky of MC Canada, the EFC does not yet have an action plan to accompany the commitments. Given that the EFC itself is an umbrella organization of 45 denominational groups, 83 ministry organizations and 34 schools, it needs to proceed with care.

## Candour

That caution, understandable as it is, stood in contrast to the candour and immediacy of the Indigenous friends I spoke with. These are community leaders I have known for years. I asked what they think churches and non-Indigenous people in general can do to make things better.

Les Dysart, a member of O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (OPCN) in northern Manitoba, is focused on the massive hydropower diversion that has turned their homeland on its head, pulling the rug out from underneath a highly lucrative fishery and an exceptionally self-reliant community.

Dysart is a commercial fisherman and the designated lead for OPCN on hydro-power issues. He has been to the UN in New York on behalf of his community and is involved in a major seven-year research



PHOTO BY WILL BRAUN

*Les Dysart of O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation in northern Manitoba.*

partnership based at the University of Manitoba.

OPCN's direct request for changes to operation of the river diversion last year was simply ignored by the provincial government, part of a long pattern. For Dysart, political will is a matter of life and death: the life of the once highly successful fishery, and the life of the lake and river at the heart of the community.

## Blunt reality

Dysart's answer to my question is simple: Churches and citizens “gotta become the unsilent majority.” They need to do the work of creating political will. They need to get educated and raise their voices for change.

He lives in a blunt reality: “We need a collective voice out there that's not only brown.”

He refers to 1999, when an interchurch group convened a public inquiry at which senior government and Manitoba Hydro officials testified and were questioned.

For many years, Dysart resisted using the word “racism,” feeling it was over-used. “I don't like using it,” he says, “but that's what it is.” Governments would

not allow the lakes of white cottagers to be destroyed in the same way, he says, adding that Manitoba Hydro's system, as overseen by governments, is a "race-based operation" that delivers "predominantly race-based benefits."

Both he and I know that I will never be able to comprehend and experience that on the level he does. If his analysis offends people, he says—in his ever-reasonable tone—"let's sit down and chat."

### Christianity and control

A few hundred kilometres down the river system, Robert Spence is equally unsettling in his comments. A commercial fisherman, hunter, trapper and dog-musher from Tataskweyak Cree Nation (TCN), Spence is now a band councillor, "straight from the bush to the boardroom," as he puts it. TCN territory is home to numerous hydropower mega-projects, including the \$8.7-billion Keeyask dam, currently under construction. The ongoing damage caused by these projects is a grief beyond words for Spence, a grief mingled with the harm done by churches.

Spence's story is a soul-jarring reminder that, given the extent of abusive activity perpetrated by Christians—not limited to residential schools—and given the ways in which resource extraction activity and government complicity continue to cause immense damage to Indigenous lands, church reconciliation efforts will encounter choppy waters.

He talks about the imposition of church people "thinking they knew more than the people they thought they needed to save." In his experience, a lot of people in the church look at Indigenous people as

"heathens and savages."

He also knows people who are homeless, addicted, or who took their lives because of sexual abuse by Ralph Rowe, an Anglican priest who flew around the North in the 1970s and '80s, preying on as many as 500 youth, according to the law firm launching a class-action suit against him. Rowe has already been convicted of 75 sex crimes.

Spence's analysis goes beyond individual actions; he also sees the church institution as inseparable from an overall societal system of oppression that has sought to control and bulldoze his people.

In his daily experience of meetings and dealings with governments and Manitoba Hydro, he comes face-to-face—literally, viscerally—with racism that denies his people clean drinking water, a clean environment, control of their destiny and basic respect. "No matter how nice they are," he tells me, "deep down you know what they are doing—trying to keep you from getting what is rightfully yours."

In his view, the church, as an institution, plays along with that system. "They are used to creat[ing] a norm," he says.

Of course, he says, there are also good people in the church, but his account lays bare the sorts of raw realities that churches will have to face on the path to healing.

Perhaps that brings us back to the EFC commitments that say the true essence of faith, Jesus, "is found amongst the most vulnerable." The closer we get to the unpolished reality, the closer we get to the truth that can set us all free.

### Systemic injustice

David Scott is from the Swan Lake First Nation in southern Manitoba. He started working on policy issues for his community when he was 16, after standing up to an arrogant government official at a meeting in the community. He has worked on a range of policy matters at home and in other provinces, sometimes called in by the Assembly of First Nations to appear before standing committees of Parliament. He also serves as a sort of ambassador for his community, connecting with surrounding schools, churches, Hutterite colonies and civic officials.

Sitting in my backyard, he says to me,

"The laws are written to protect you, not us." I'd never thought of it like that. Like Dysart and Spence, Scott is not speaking in the abstract or only about the past.

"It's against us," he says of the courts and laws. He's been involved in various legal actions to improve things for Indigenous people. He speaks of the almost desperate need of governments to exert control over Indigenous peoples. "Self-government," for instance, ends up being freedom for First Nations to operate within clear parameters set by government.

Here Scott sees common cause; both on reserve and in society at large, people "have to take back the power," he says, "to address how people are elected."

No small order—to work at changing laws, the justice system and the electoral process—to "talk to those who are in power." Scott says it starts with trying hard to understand the legal reality, how we got to where we are.

He also admonishes us to "look internally within the church organization; what works against humanity?" We must all start by "looking at everyone as a human being."

### Reconciliation has become clichéd

Scott is the only one of the three I interviewed to use the word "reconciliation," and he doesn't use it much. For a good many Indigenous people, the term "reconciliation" has a hollow ring, one to which their ears are well tuned. Yet more good intentions. As my friends have pointed out, more than once, the prerequisite for reconciliation is truth. There's no short cut.

### Leap of faith

I struggle to link my friends' heartfelt comments to the EFC commitments. There is little obvious overlap in tone or content. I can't quite see the EFC inviting Spence to speak at its next national event. But this is the reality. This is where I, a committed church person, ended up when I asked a simple question of Indigenous people I came to know initially through church involvement. I met them all through my previous work with the Manitoba Interchurch Council on Hydropower.

The EFC, considering where its members are at, has sought entry points—study,



PHOTO BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY /  
COURTESY OF INTERCHURCH COUNCIL  
ON HYDROPOWER

**Robert Spence of Tataskweyak Cree Nation, 2013.**

reading, theologizing. Essential groundwork. The people I spoke with started with immediate, urgent, grassroots practicalities. Maybe that is too big of a leap for churches. Maybe not.

Maybe that's where faith comes in.

Does our faith not compel us, and indeed embolden us, to touch the pain of the world, to go to the messy margins—the places Jesus went—to uncover healing, humility, compassion, love?

### Good news

We are people of good news; I hope the good news that we, as non-Indigenous Christians, can proclaim is that we care.

We care enough to understand, to walk alongside, to humble ourselves, to respond with courage and creativity. The good news must be that we care enough to put aside our need to help, to solve, to save, to make a mark, before even listening. The good news must be that we recognize that our destinies are intertwined.

I believe that heaven and earth are overflowing with grace. I need that, because talking with people like Dysart, Spence and Scott is challenging and bruising, as well as fun and rewarding. Grace is not a backdoor for when we are too afraid to act; it is what provides the space in which to act.

The 1995 Proclamation—and the EFC

has done a great service by putting it before us—says that the starting point is “personal communion with the Creator God.” For me, the call to connect with Indigenous people is less of a social-justice impulse than a spiritual one. This is not so much the work of politically dialed-in activists, as it is the path of people seeking truth and love. This is less about moral compunction than a deep understanding that we discover something vital about faith, truth and church when we go humbly to the edges of society. ✎

To read the 1995 Reconciliation Proclamation, visit [bit.ly/3kYoQz1](http://bit.ly/3kYoQz1).



# ‘Remember your baptism’

*Trilateral dialogue report presents gifts and challenges*

Mennonite World Conference

The final report on the Lutheran-Mennonite-Roman Catholic trilateral conversation on baptism has been published. The report summarizes five years of theological consultations between the three communions on the understanding and practice of baptism in light of contemporary pastoral and missional challenges facing all three Christian communities.

“The report shows that today these three churches agree that baptism is for discipleship,” says Larry Miller of France, one of six Mennonite World Conference (MWC) delegation members. “It raises the question for each of these churches: Are there ways of acknowledging our different practices of baptism that grow the unity for which Jesus prayed?”

Representatives of the Catholic Church’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and MWC met from 2012 to ’17 to discuss the understanding and practice of baptism.

The report, entitled “Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church,” summarizes the discussions on three fundamental themes that took

place over those five years:

1. **The relation** of baptism to sin and grace.
2. **The celebration** of baptism and the communication of grace and faith in the context of the Christian community.
3. **The living** out of baptism in Christian discipleship.

“We are grateful for the gifts of trust, patience and receptivity that our Catholic and Lutheran partners have given us,” says the report’s section on Mennonite reflections. “We welcome the challenge this dialogue has brought us to more clearly see . . . [that] working for church unity enlarges our faithfulness to the gospel.”

“These dialogues were convened to promote better mutual understanding between our communions and lead to greater faithfulness to Jesus Christ,” says César García, MWC’s general secretary. “We believe this report will help our member churches to appreciate the harmony we find despite differences between Lutheran, Catholic and Mennonite communions—and to better understand our own convictions and practice of baptism.”

The report follows upon the Lutheran-Mennonite bilateral report, “Healing Memories,” which led to a service of reconciliation in 2010 and the Mennonite-Roman Catholic bilateral dialogue that resulted in “Called to be Peacemakers Together.”

“This has been an exercise in deepening our own convictions and, at the same time, respecting the convictions of sisters and brothers in Christ in other traditions,” says John D. Rempel of Canada, a member of the MWC delegation.

Miller says the dialogues taught him to “remember my baptism! Though they often baptize infants, both Catholics and Lutherans call upon the believer—sometimes every year—to ‘remember your baptism’ into a life of discipleship. . . . Could this be an example of the gifts these churches have to give to us?”

### Concluding Mennonite reflections

The 93-page report concludes with reflections from the church bodies under the headings of “Convictions held,” “Gifts received,” “Challenges accepted,” and “For consideration.”

Under “Convictions held,” MWC states: “We believe that baptism on confession of





PHOTO BY WILHELM UNGER

**Representatives of the Lutheran-Mennonite-Roman Catholic Trilateral Conversation on baptism include, from left to right: Alfred Neufeld, Theodor Dieter, Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga, Marie-Hélène Robert, Larry Miller, Friederike Nüssel, Fernando Enns, John Rempel, Luis Melo, Kaisamari Hintikka, Musawenkosi Biyela, William Henn, Avelindo Gonzalez**

faith is the norm in the New Testament and the apostolic church, as scholars in diverse Christian traditions affirm. We are one of the churches that witnesses and practises this pattern.”

Under “Gifts received,” MWC states: “We are thankful that, after centuries of conflict concerning baptism, this dialogue has been possible and fruitful. We are grateful for the gifts of trust, patience and receptivity that our partners have given us throughout the entire process.” Also, “Through the dialogue we have realized that many of our historic prejudices about Lutheran and Catholic understandings of baptism never were, or are no longer, true. We have seen that we share a Trinitarian and Christocentric faith and its expression in discipleship.”

Under “Challenges accepted,” MWC states: “We welcome the challenge this dialogue has brought us to more clearly see a commitment to the unity of the Body of Christ as integral to our sense of church and mission. . . . We recognize the pain that those traditions express when we baptize someone who has been baptized as an infant in their churches, which suggests to them that we consider their baptism invalid.” Also, “We have much to learn concerning the faithful practice of ‘reconciled diversity’. . . . One of these realities is . . . willingness to learn from,

and co-operate with, those of different convictions that also arise from obedience to the gospel.”

Under “For consideration,” MWC proposes, among other things, “that Anabaptist-Mennonite churches consider receiving members from infant-baptism churches on the basis of their confession of faith and commitment to discipleship without repeating the water rite . . . [and calls for] collective and individual soul-searching as to why it has been so difficult for us to hold together the quest for purity and the quest for unity, among ourselves and with other churches.”

“This report is not meant to sit on a shelf,” says John D. Roth, secretary of the MWC’s Faith and Life Commission. The Commission will prepare tools for churches to study the “Gifts received” and “Challenges accepted” by MWC from its participation in the dialogues.

Other participants representing MWC during the dialogue were Rebecca Adongo Osiro of Kenya, Alfred Neufeld of Paraguay, and Fernando Enns of Germany/The Netherlands. ☸

*With files from the Lutheran World Federation.*

*To read the entire report, visit [bit.ly/trilateral-baptism-report](http://bit.ly/trilateral-baptism-report).*



## News brief

### Pandemic sends Summer Peacebuilding Institute online



When the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) moved online this year in response to COVID-19, it lost some of the aspects that attract people to the Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) program in Harrisonburg, Va., each summer, like in-person networking and conversations shared over meals. But it also opened the door for many to attend who otherwise couldn’t due to travelling and attendance costs, visa complications and work commitments, says SPI director Bill Goldberg. This year, more than 180 participants from 27 different countries tuned in to SPI sessions via video conference. For a few groups, the online format and lowered cost allowed them to enrol an entire team. The Jamaica Mennonite Conference sent four pastors to SPI, sponsored by a grant from the C.P. and Izetta Yoder Mission Endowment Fund administered by Everence. Clyde Kratz, executive conference minister of Virginia Mennonite Conference, who applied for the funding to assist in equipping the Jamaican church leaders, says that, had SPI not gone online, he would have only been able to sponsor one attendee, given the costs of transportation, lodging and meals. A team from the Church of England’s Diocese of Chester also found this an opportunity to learn together. Seven priests and administrators attended the online “Trauma, resilience and healing in times of the pandemic” course taught by Al Fuentes.

—EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

# MWC signs statement against nuclear weapons

*'As an historic peace church, MWC opposes war and violence as a means to solve problems at a personal or state level': César García*

Mennonite World Conference

**A**ugust 2020 marked the 75th anniversary of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) has joined a wide coalition of faith-based communities from around the world that issued a call to governments to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

"As an historic peace church, MWC opposes war and violence as a means to solve problems at a personal or state level," says César García, MWC's general secretary. "Nuclear weapons—which cause indiscriminate destruction of humans and creation long after their discharge—must not be a tool for any country. MWC has formally spoken against nuclear threats for decades."

"Nuclear weapons do not create peace, rather they intensify the scourge and threat of war in our world, lives and communities," the coalition's statement says. "We reaffirm that the presence of even one nuclear weapon violates the core principles of our different faith traditions. . . . Nuclear weapons are not only a future risk, their presence here and now undermines the ethical and moral foundations of the common good."

The statement calls governments to commit to a world that is "more peaceful, safe and just" without nuclear weapons.

By the end of 1945, 213,000 people had died as a result of the bombings in Japan. The attacks caused pain, suffering and more death of both humans and creation in the following years.

The statement recognizes the survivors of those attacks, who bear witness to the harm of nuclear weapons: "We lament the racism and colonialism that drove the nuclear-weapon states to test their weapons on the communities that they



UNSPLASH PHOTO BY DANIL AKSENOV

*Paper cranes, a symbol of peace, hang in a window.*

deemed expendable, lives far away from their own, lives that mattered less, lives that were taken in pursuit of destructive power for a few. We acknowledge the immense suffering, oppression and exploitation faced by the Indigenous communities around the world whose bodies, lands, waters and air have served as the testing grounds for the ambitions of those who dominate with force."

The United Nations adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017; it will enter into force 90 days after it is ratified by 50 states.

## Some MWC words against nuclear threats

- "The threat of nuclear war and the potential nuclear pollution of the

environment have been described as the chief moral issues of our time. Nuclear weapons not only kill; they destroy all life. As God's people, we serve in hope even in the face of the nuclear threat. . . ." (Peace Committee message, XI Global Assembly, Strasbourg 1984)

- "[W]e, as Christians, regardless of our nationality, politics or standpoints, feel compelled to speak out against nuclear power production. . . ." (Letter of Concern, Third Asia Mennonite Conference meeting, Taipei, 1986) ❧

Read a recent CM editorial at [canadianmennonite.org/stories/shattering-spears-and-bows](https://canadianmennonite.org/stories/shattering-spears-and-bows).





# MWC shifts Assembly 17 to 2022

Mennonite World Conference

In close consultation with the national advisory committee in Indonesia, the host country, the executive committee of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) has decided not to hold Assembly 17 in 2021, as originally announced. Instead, MWC has decided to postpone its next global assembly until July 5 to 10, 2022.

“The COVID-19 pandemic continues to infect hundreds of thousands of people each day,” says J. Nelson Kraybill, MWC’s president. “Restrictions of large group

gatherings are still in place, and travel is not advised. These limitations will remain in place for many more months. The likelihood we can safely gather in person as a global family for group worship, service and learning in 2021 seems low. To allow both MWC staff and attendees to properly plan for the event, we have chosen to postpone it to 2022.”

“The Indonesian Mennonite churches are committed to hosting the assembly in Indonesia,” says Reverend Paulus Widjaja,

chair of the Indonesian national advisory council. “Please continue to pray for the healing of the world, and for the assembly!”

“The assembly venues will remain the same,” says Liesa Unger, the assembly’s chief international events officer. “The gathering will still happen in Semarang at Holy Stadium, at the beginning of July—but in 2022. Similarly, the Global Youth Summit will remain in Salatiga, but will shift to July 1 to 4 in 2022 instead.”

“2022 will come quickly,” Unger adds. “Stay tuned to MWC’s website [mwc-cmm.org] and social media for more information as you plan to attend assembly. We are looking forward to a Psalm 133 experience of how good and pleasant it is for brethren [and sisters] to dwell together in unity!” ☯



PHOTO BY JONATHAN CHARLES

An international band leads worship at Assembly 16 in Harrisburg, Pa., in 2015.

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# Fair-trade store emulates Ten Thousand Villages

By Amy Rinner Waddell  
B.C. Correspondent

The Ten Thousand Villages (TTV) store in Vancouver has closed, but the idea of fair-trade products continues to inspire a new generation to shop both ethically and globally. Kasandy/Locally Global occupies the space that TTV formerly had on Granville Island.

“We are a fair-trade shop in exactly the same ethos, values and beliefs as TTV,” says owner Jackee Kasandy. “They, in fact, are who we emulated as we started our business.”

Kasandy describes her business as “an independent, fast-growing destination for locals and tourists at the centre of downtown Vancouver, offering consumers unique, everyday products and gifts at affordable prices, a fun shopping experience and the opportunity to make a global impact. The only difference is we have more contemporary products: leather goods, Kenyan baskets, et cetera.”

Since Kasandy is from Kenya, she personally knows the importance of

enabling artisans to support family and community through selling their crafts. Most of her products are from East Africa, but she also supports local artisans and other groups from around the world by selling their products too.

“We have been buying wholesale from TTV for some of our products and are looking forward to continuing to do so,” she says.

Mennonite Central Committee Canada closed most of its TTV shops earlier this



PHOTO COURTESY OF JACKEE KASANDY

*Selling fair trade items, Kasandy/Locally Global in Vancouver continues in the spirit of Ten Thousand Villages stores.*

year. Abbotsford’s MCC Centre location is the only one remaining in British Columbia. ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOSH WILLMS /  
TEXT BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

*Level Ground Mennonite Church of Abbotsford, B.C., created a ‘field of dreams’ for members to get together on Aug. 11, with a ‘Level Grounders’ bring-your-own-picnic and softball game at a local park. Precautions for physical distancing included having everyone wear masks and bring their own chairs, food and ball equipment, and making sure bats and balls were sanitized regularly. Fourteen showed up for the first event, not enough for two teams, but players cycled through to make sure everyone had a chance to bat and rotate positions. Level Ground has also been hosting outdoor Wednesday worship nights behind the church building.*



OMMC FACEBOOK PAGE PHOTO / TEXT BY JANET BAUMAN

*Ontario Mennonite Music Camp participants show the wacky utensils they chose for eating lunch with during their virtual one-day camp experience on Aug. 20. Normally, camp staff would host a busy two-week, overnight program centred at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., but with COVID-19 restrictions in place, they adapted to offer the one-day program. Campers engaged in a variety of musical activities, including a conducting workshop, a campfire sing-along and opportunities to play their instruments. In the evening, bluegrass band Rescue Junction gave a livestreamed concert. Campers also joined in a chapel service to sing together, and lament and pray over how COVID-19 was impacting their lives.*

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# Defeating Goliath

*Remembering how a community prevailed against the nuclear industry*

By Donna Schulz  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
WARMAN, SASK.

It's been 40 years since David battled Goliath on the plains of Saskatchewan. David, in this case, was a group of ordinary citizens, many of whom were Mennonite, and Goliath was the nuclear industry.

In 1976, when the Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation optioned to purchase 583 hectares of agricultural land east of Warman, Sask.—about 25 kilometres northeast of Saskatoon—residents were told the land might be used for a shoe factory.

Eventually, they discovered that Eldorado Nuclear, a federal crown corporation, planned to set up a uranium hexafluoride refinery, which would turn yellowcake, a refined form of uranium ore, into fuel for nuclear reactors.

It didn't take long for residents, many of whom were Mennonite, to become concerned about what they saw as a threat to their faith and their way of life.

Ernie Hildebrand was a recent graduate of Canadian Mennonite Bible College



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAKE BUHLER

*Ernie Hildebrand, standing at the microphone, speaks at the FEARO hearings regarding a proposed uranium refinery in the Warman, Sask., area, in 1980.*

(CMBC), a precursor college to Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, when Osler Mennonite Church hired him as its pastor. Osler is about eight kilometres north of Warman.

"I was 31 or 32 when this hit," he says. "When I left CMBC, I didn't [intend] to be an activist pastor, but people asked, 'What's your church going to do?' So I got involved."

Hildebrand and several congregation members invited the community to a meeting to discuss the proposed refinery.

This group eventually became the Warman and District Concerned Citizens Group, with Hildebrand serving as chair.

Other core members included vice-chair Nettie Wiebe, Jake and Louise Buhler, Leonard Doell, and Edgar Epp, who would later succeed Hildebrand as chair.

Over the next five years, group members educated themselves and others about the uranium industry. They published articles in the local newspaper and visited neighbouring Berghaler and Old Colony Mennonite communities, speaking with them about the proposed refinery. They travelled throughout Saskatchewan, across Canada and even into the United States, speaking and leading workshops on the nuclear industry.

Over time, the group grew to upwards of 500 registered members. But while it gained supporters, it also had opposition.

Eldorado courted town and rural municipal councils, flying them to Port Hope, Ont., to tour the nuclear refinery



*More than 200 community members, many of whom were Mennonite, testified at the FEARO hearings regarding a proposed uranium refinery in the Warman, Sask., area, in 1980.*





**Members of the Warman and District Concerned Citizens Group gather for a group photo. Pictured from left to right, front row: Wilfred Buhler and Jake Buhler; second row: Emille Van Pinxteren, Garry Boldt, and Edgar Epp, who was the organization's second chair; and back row: Louise Buhler, Sam Rempel, Gertie Rempel, Leonard Doell, Peter Froese, Jeanie Van Pinxteren, Lyle Stucky and Ruth Buhler. Missing from the photo are Nettie Wiebe and Ernie Hildebrand.**

there. Many were won over by the promise of jobs and revenue for their community. With Eldorado's encouragement, they formed the Warman and District Informed Citizens Group.

"The issue divided the community into 'concerned' versus 'informed,'" says Doell. "There were very strained relationships within families and between community members."

The five-year struggle culminated in January 1980 with three weeks of hearings before the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Organization (FEARO).

The citizens group was told it could testify, but that it should choose one individual to act as its spokesperson. Instead, it invited as many people as possible to testify. There were expert testimonies, including that of David Schroeder, a CMBC professor, but most were just ordinary citizens: farmers, teachers, pastors, high-school students, businesspeople, environmental activists and Indigenous people.

"What got us the victory was we identified who we were," says Jake. People talked about their faith, their values and their

way of life.

It took until the spring of 1981 for FEARO to announce its findings. The environmental panel concluded that Eldorado's proposal was technically and environmentally sound, but that the corporation hadn't considered the impact of a refinery on the mainly Mennonite community. It would need to complete such a study for its project to be approved.

Eldorado withdrew its proposal within a week, returning the land to its previous owners.

### Looking back

Former citizens group members recall their battle against Eldorado as a time of high emotion and tension.

"In the months preceding the hearings, we felt that our phones were being tapped," says Jake. "It was so tense. The stakes were so high that we felt the world was against us."

Hildebrand, who calls it being "all-consuming," left his pastorate at Osler Mennonite to give himself full-time to the work of opposing the refinery.

And when it was all over, many of the members felt exhausted.

"We were so fatigued after five years of struggle," says Jake. "We didn't meet as a committee after that."

In spite of this, these former activists still feel they did the right thing and that the struggle was worth it.

"I'm still enormously gratified that we were able to mount that kind of resistance with the methodologies that we used," says Wiebe. "The Warman experience, for me, illustrated just how complex—but also how effective—grassroots, democratic organizations can be."

Doell echoes her thoughts. "We fought a giant," he says. "Everyone said that it couldn't be beaten. But if people work and stand together, you can actually effect change, no matter how big that beast looks." ❧

### News brief

#### Voices Together contents announced



The full list of songs and resources included in *Voices Together* is now available at [VoicesTogetherHymnal.org](http://VoicesTogetherHymnal.org). "These lists of songs and worship resources include materials spanning more than a thousand years in more than 40 languages—many styles of music and language drawn from previous Mennonite collections and new sources. We hope people can begin to imagine how these songs and resources will fit into the life of their communities," says Katie Graber, a member of the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee. As *Voices Together* products ship to congregations this fall, two new curricula for Sunday school classes, ministry teams and worship committees will be posted for free online at [VoicesTogetherHymnal.org](http://VoicesTogetherHymnal.org). A five-session curriculum will help introduce *Voices Together* and its companion products to congregations. "The pew edition curriculum walks communities through the what/who/where/when/why of the collection, helping them explore the songs and worship resources found inside the book," says Anneli Loepp Thiessen, who wrote the material. A four-session curriculum that accompanies the *Voices Together* worship leader edition will also be available. Written by Sarah Johnson, who edited the worship leader edition, this curriculum is meant to help worship committees and ministry teams think through the rituals and practices of Mennonite worship in their contexts.

—MENNOMEDIA

# MCC connects with supporters through digital media

*Webinar and podcasts share 'incredible stories' of service in the name of Christ*

By Janet Bauman  
Eastern Canada Correspondent

**O**ne bar of soap isn't just a drop in the ocean of need. The ripples keep moving out in ways we may not even be able to count."

Sophia Bezopenko, who coordinates material resources for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Winnipeg, insists that "the small things are not as small as we think." The reality of the pandemic, she says, "makes us aware of the impact one bar of soap could make" for one person's health and that of their family.

Bezopenko was taking part in MCC's monthly webinar series, sharing stories about the organization's work in Canada and around the world. The webinar she took part in, called "From hearts to

hands: Material resources," highlighted meaningful volunteer opportunities in Canada for people making and packing material resources, such as comforters and hygiene kits, and the impact of those gifts on recipients.

The webinars allow MCC to connect with its constituency and provide a "behind-the-scenes look" at

its service in the name of Christ. Two of the five webinars address how MCC is responding to COVID-19, and a growing global food crisis, drawing on experts in the field and their partners.

The episode called "Working toward right relationships" highlights MCC's Indigenous Neighbours program, and features Bridget Findlay, coordinator in British Columbia, and Beverly Lightfoot, a partner and friend of MCC from the Cree community.

Findlay describes how the Kairos blanket exercise—a participatory history lesson—is a powerful tool in her educational work with churches. She challenges churches to make reconciliation work an ongoing commitment rather than a one-time project to check off a to-do list.

Lightfoot speaks to the transformative power of these kinds of "participatory exercises" that call people to re-examine their biases and stereotypes.



MCC PHOTO BY MYRIAM ULLAH

**Nadine Ens and her daughter Jenice tie knots in a comforter at the Great Winter Warm-up in Saskatoon on Jan. 18, to kick off MCC's centennial. MCC is using a webinar series and new podcasts to share stories about its work in Canada and around the world.**



MCC PHOTO BY EMILY-ANN DOERKSEN

**Volunteer Gord Friesen helps load 210 completed comforters into a truck at the end of the Great Winter Warm-up event at North Kildonan Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg, on Jan 18. An MCC webinar episode, called 'From hearts to hands: Material resources,' describes meaningful volunteer opportunities for people to make and pack comforters and relief kits.**

The next webinar, called "Advocacy for peace and justice: Conversations from the field," and scheduled for Sept. 24, will focus on MCC's advocacy work in Israel, Palestine and Latin America for marginalized and displaced persons.

Each webinar is recorded and includes time for questions and answers. Participants are invited to sign up ahead of time. The webinars are hosted by MCC Canada's executive director, Rick Cober Bauman, sporting a different bowtie each month.

In a similar vein, Ken Ogasawara, part of the communications and community engagement team at MCC Ontario, is experimenting with a new way of sharing what he calls the "incredible stories we are privileged to hear." He hosts a podcast called "Undercurrents." There are six episodes featuring stories from staff, program participants, volunteers and others.

In the episode called "Being Jesus," Pete Olson, who runs the Toronto Ontario





MCC PHOTO BY EMILY-ANN DOERKSEN

**Corinne Narine, left, her daughter Jaden Narine, and Ting Terrazas, all of Winnipeg, are tying their first comforter of the day at the Great Winter Warm-up, a comforter-tying event that was held across Canada, the United States and Europe to kick off MCC's centennial on Jan. 18. In total, MCC received 9,504 comforters, exceeding the goal of 6,500.**

Opportunity for Service and Learning program, describes his approach. "I push them hard," he says, referring to participants who come with common stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness. After the interactive two- to four-day programs in downtown Toronto, Olson challenges them to be "Matthew 25 Christians" by asking, "What will you do when you go home?"

In that episode, Ogasawara also explores research and stories about how "housing-first" programs in various cities are addressing complex needs of people who are homeless.

Another episode features the story of Maria, who found "radical acceptance" from staff in MCC's restorative justice program, helping her to cross the bridge from prison to community life, and begin to overcome her isolation, stigma and shame.

A new podcast from MCC Canada called "Relief, Development and Podcast" helps people stay connected with each other and with the realities faced by displaced and vulnerable people around the world. Podcasts include stories from the field, special guests and updates about MCC's peace and justice work.

In one episode, Annalee Giesbrecht and Paul Fast share the story of how MCC partners contributed to the elimination of cholera cases in two remote

communities in Haiti, and how these lessons can be applied to a COVID-19 response.

In another episode, Mulanda Jimmy Juma shares about how his experience as a displaced person helps inform his work for MCC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where efforts to prevent COVID-19 in camps for displaced people are a top priority. Cindy Klassen, former Olympic speedskating medallist, reflects with host Scott Campbell about her life now and

why she supports the work of MCC.

Like many other organizations, MCC's finances have been affected by the pandemic. According to Campbell, director of communications and donor relations for MCC Canada, COVID-19 forced MCC,

like many charities, "to think creatively about connecting our faithful and generous supporters with the impact they are having here in Canada and around the world." The webinars and podcasts allow them "to hear directly from the people involved with MCC projects, ask them questions, and see behind the scenes of relief, development and peace in the name of Christ."

He says the format of interviews and storytelling is a "unique opportunity to look at the work of MCC from a different perspective, with different voices, and dig deep into important themes that define the work, or [that] supporters care about."

Response has been positive. Listeners express appreciation for the insightful guests, and the opportunity to ask questions in the webinars.

Campbell says MCC will continue producing the podcast and webinar until the end of 2020, when it will review and plan for 2021. ☿

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PHOTO BY HOSSEIN TALEBI

**Carol McNaughton hikes the Wasootch Ridge as a participant in the 2020 Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon fundraiser.**



PHOTO BY CORINNE MARTENS

**Scott and Corinne Martens participate together in this year's Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon fundraiser.**



## 'It's a bit overwhelming'

*Valaqua almost doubles amount raised at this year's fundraiser*

By Joanne De Jong  
Alberta Correspondent

**C**amp Valaqua received great news recently. As of Aug. 26, its annual hike-a-thon raised a record amount of \$34,456, nearly double the previous record of \$18,000.

Ron Janzen, who is often the biggest fundraiser, beat his own record, raising more than \$10,000 this year.

Why was so much raised in 2020?

Jon Olfert, Valaqua's camp director, has an idea. "I think it has to do with us

being shut down, and our supporters being worried about us," he says. "It's a bit overwhelming, to be honest. The nature of the event also created flexibility in terms of timeline, so that may have helped as well. I think we'll maintain some sort of remote option in the future!"

Twenty-two hikers participated from Mennonite churches across Alberta this year. ☘



PHOTO BY PATRICK EARL

**Lorne Earl of Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton, hikes along the North Saskatchewan River in Edmonton, in support of the 2020 annual Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon fundraiser.**



PHOTO BY ELAINE KLASSEN

**Lethbridge Mennonite Church and Springridge Mennonite Church in Pincher Creek, Alta., join forces to raise money for this year's Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon.**



# 'A different kind of ministry'

*B.C. pastor transitions from pastorate to Bible college dean*

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent

Abbotsford, B.C.

**A** longtime B.C. pastor and church leader is making a transition to a different kind of ministry.

After 30 years as a pastor, most recently of Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen began a new career chapter on Aug. 1 as dean of students at Columbia Bible College.

"After 20 wonderful years at Level Ground, I felt it was time for me to move on to new challenges in a different sort of context," she says of the move. "[I am] ready to be stretched in new ways and to apply my gifts in a fresh context."

Thiessen received her master of divinity degree from Mennonite Brethren Bible College, a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg, in 1990, and she pastored at River East Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg for a decade. She became part of Mennonite Church British Columbia when she and her husband Richard and their family moved west in 2000.

"At that time, there were no opportunities for women to serve in lead pastor positions in B.C. in the MB denomination," Thiessen says. "West Abbotsford [Mennonite Church] was looking for a pastor, and I was looking for a people to serve." She continued as lead pastor at the new congregation of Level Ground Mennonite Church, formed when West Abbotsford merged with Wellspring Mennonite Church in 2009.

As she transitions to her new administrative role, Thiessen looks back fondly on her two decades serving her Level Ground church family, including the unique

ministry to Kinghaven Treatment Centre residents living next door to the church.

"I will miss the opportunity to work with a very diverse and eclectic group of people at Level Ground who are seeking to follow Jesus," she says of her years with

opportunities for people to follow Jesus more fully and wholeheartedly," she says. "My work as dean is more administrative in nature, and it gives me incredible opportunities to mentor, train and empower staff who are directly involved in discipling the young adults who study at Columbia."

Thiessen acknowledges that her job transition comes at a challenging time. Level Ground had planned an appreciation celebration for her in mid-March, but the COVID-19 pandemic forced the church to suspend public events, and the congregational farewell had to be cancelled, much to everyone's disappointment. However, a small group of church leaders did host a small backyard gathering in July to share together, remember and celebrate Thiessen's 20 years at Level Ground.

"[It] helped me find a sense of closure to the two decades of ministry that have irrevocably shaped my life," says Thiessen. "I will always remember my time at Level Ground with a sense of deep gratitude for the opportunity I had to be part of this amazing community of Jesus followers."

Now Thiessen is part of what she calls "an amazing team" at Columbia that has the challenge of adapting to the unexpected reality of offering in-person residential education during a time of pandemic.

"I am looking forward to working with an incredible community of people at [Columbia] in a shared ministry that provides the opportunity for young adults to explore their faith and ultimately commit their lives to following Jesus in transformative ways," she says. ❧



COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE PHOTO

**After 20 years as lead pastor of Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen has begun as dean of students at Columbia Bible College.**

the congregation. "I will especially miss the opportunity to walk with people from recovery as they learn what it means to surrender their lives to Jesus as the higher power in their lives."

In addition to her pastoral duties, Thiessen has taken an active part in MC B.C. She served as secretary for a short time and as vice-moderator for several terms. She also represented MC B.C. on the MC Canada General Board for a term and sat on the boards of CMU and Mennonite Central Committee B.C. She was also a prison chaplain.

Thiessen sees her new role of dean of students as one of both service and ministry. "Like my work at Level Ground, my work as dean of students at Columbia is all about transformative discipleship, creating

### /// Staff change

#### Moyer Suderman resigns from AMBS Advancement Team

**Bryan Moyer Suderman** of Kitchener, Ont., has resigned from his half-time role as advancement associate for Canada for Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., as of Aug. 21. "It's been a joy and an inspiration to meet with constituents across Canada, expressing gratitude for support and encouraging further support for AMBS's vital mission," he says. "I remain enthusiastic and supportive of the seminary, and its role in helping the church be the church during these times." Moyer Suderman will continue to be available via videoconference as a resource for congregations and organizations as a teaching associate of AMBS's Church Leadership Center, in partnership with his music and teaching ministry, SmallTall Ministries. (Visit [ambs.edu/invite](http://ambs.edu/invite).) He also will work at St. John's Kitchen in Kitchener. "Bryan's outgoing personality, insights into the concerns and needs of Canadian Mennonites, and ability to quickly connect with others are gifts our Advancement Team is sorry to lose," says Daniel Grimes, vice president for advancement and enrolment. "We're grateful for his service and his ongoing presence with our Church Leadership Center."

—AMBS



### /// Staff change

#### At-Home faith resources continue under new leadership

**Elsie Rempel** has been writing a t - h o m e w o r s h i p resources for families with children for almost two decades, producing a total of 36 booklets since 2002. Rempel, who attends Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, is saying goodbye to that work and passing it on to Talashia Keim Yoder this fall. The At-Home series consists of devotionals and activities for children that supplement *Leader* magazine's worship resources for Lent and Advent. For the first 14 years, Rempel developed the series as part of her work as director of Christian formation at Mennonite Church Canada. In 2016, after her position was cut, she continued to work on it for MC U.S.A. Keim Yoder is a pastor of Christian formation at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., and the theatre director at Bethany Christian High School. She creates content for the *Building Faith* website ([buildingfaithfamily.com](http://buildingfaithfamily.com)), a ministry of the Mennonite Early Childhood Network, whose goal is to provide easy-to-use resources to help children grow holistically, including in faith. "I am so pleased there is a young and gifted person to take over this project during a pandemic season when At-Home faith formation is more important than ever," says Rempel.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



### /// Staff changes

#### Pastoral transitions and new communications coordinator in B.C.

**Justin Sun** has been affirmed as youth pastor by both Peace Mennonite and Richmond Peace Chinese Mennonite churches. The two congregations are combining their youth ministries into a single program serving both. They share the same building on Daniels Road in Richmond, located in the midst of a multicultural community. Sun, a graduate of Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, B.C., began his ministry on Sept. 8.



**Nick Toews**, is also joining the Peace Mennonite Church staff after being affirmed as community engagement and outreach pastor. This is a new position as Peace looks to engage with people in the community in creative and innovative ways. Toews, a graduate of Columbia Bible College, also began Sept. 8.



**Ken Dueck** is the new MC British Columbia interim communications coordinator and administrative assistant; he began Sept. 1. Dueck, originally from southern Manitoba, has been a pastor and transitional pastor for 30 years, mostly with Mennonite Brethren congregations. He and his wife Jeanne are currently hosts/caretakers at Deertrail Guesthouse in Abbotsford. Dueck replaces Rita Ewert, who had taken on the role for the past year while Kevin Barkowsky stepped away temporarily to become half-time interim pastor at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver.



—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

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/// **Staff change**

**Pastoral transition in Saskatchewan**

**Rose Graber** recently retired from her position as lead pastor at Grace Mennonite Church in Regina, a position she held for 10-and-a-half years. A graduate of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., Graber pastored a number of churches in both the United States and Canada before coming to Regina. Her career also included nine years as a missionary church planter in Recife, Brazil, and three years as a chaplain at Indian Creek Foundation, in Souderton, Pa. In 2019, Graber published *Talking about Sex: Sexuality and Biblical Law* following a study she undertook while on a sabbatical. Graber says she is enjoying being a pastor's wife for the first time, as she now lives in Drake, Sask., where her husband Dan is pastor of North Star Mennonite Church.



—BY DONNA SCHULZ

/// **#COVIDkindess**

**Daughter learns new instrument to serenade her mother**

Trudy Enns, a member of St. Catharines (Ont.) United Mennonite Church, used to visit her mother Betty Enns numerous times every week at Radiant Care Pleasant Manor in nearby Virgil, where her mother resides in the long-term-care unit. That all changed in the middle of March because of COVID-19 restrictions that shut down such visits. As her mother's room is on the ground floor, she switched to standing outside her room, holding signs against the window, making hand gestures, talking through the glass and smiling. As Trudy, an accomplished pianist, was laid off work because of the pandemic, she spent the time learning to play a new instrument—a recorder—that she could take along while visiting with her mother. She taught herself to play hymns and German folk songs, and now serenades her mother and anyone else that can hear her at Pleasant Manor, bringing them joy.



PHOTO BY PENNY COLES

**Trudy Enns plays for her mother, a resident at Radiant Care Pleasant Manor in Virgil, Ont.**

—BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

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# Steady giving sustains churches through COVID-19

*Manitoba congregations sidestep financial hit*

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

Manitoba Correspondent

**A**mong the multitude of concerns COVID-19 has caused, the novel coronavirus's effect on congregational giving has been one of them. What do church finances look like when congregations close their doors and stop passing offering baskets through the aisles on Sunday mornings? It turns out that in many Mennonite congregations across Manitoba, they look just fine.

"People have made a real effort to continue to give. I have been really impressed with that. It's been very encouraging," says Ruth Siemens, treasurer at Gretna Berghaler Mennonite Church. She says that the church, which has about 30 participants on a Sunday morning, has received virtually the same amount of donations this year as last, up to this point.

Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg has had a similar experience. "We anticipated that right off the bat things were going to be different this year," says Helmut Sawatzky, finance chair of the congregation. "But, in all honesty, they really have not changed."

When COVID-19 first hit Manitoba in March, there were a couple weeks when Covenant Mennonite Church in Winkler

didn't receive any contributions, says treasurer Doug Dyck. But he soon discovered that "people still wanted to be making their donations. "They asked about whether we were meeting budget. People were concerned about the finances for the church, so the ongoing programs could continue." It had simply been more difficult for people to give once they had stopped gathering in-person.

Dyck quickly set up an Interac e-Transfer account so people could make gifts via email. He estimates that three-quarters of Covenant's members now use the platform to donate. He says the total budget will suffer from the church's inability to lease its facilities during the pandemic. But the deficit won't be coming from the church's 60 participants, 35 of whom are members; as of June, congregational giving was right on target.

Springfield Heights also opened new avenues of giving for its roughly 250 active



RUXIPEN.COM PHOTO @ UNSPLASH.COM

***What do church finances look like when congregations close their doors and stop passing offering baskets through the aisles on Sunday mornings? It turns out that in many Mennonite congregations across Manitoba, they look just fine.***

participants. When the church closed to the public, so did the access to its debit machines that many members used to contribute. So it enabled people to donate directly to the church online, Sawatzky says. People were still able to drop off cheques in the church mailbox, which was especially helpful for those who don't use online technology, like some elderly congregants.

At Gretna, congregants can give via cheque or online. One congregant even brought cash to the credit union and deposited it anonymously into the church's bank account. Now that the church is meeting in person again using physical distancing measures, a box has been placed at the back of the sanctuary where people can deposit their money, rather than passing around an offering bag, in order to limit contact points.

All three finance coordinators cannot remember offering prayers being part

*(Continued on page 36)*

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# Maximizing Generosity

By [Marlow Gingerich](#)

Ralph lost his wife to cancer. When he stopped into our office with a cheque to top up his Gifting Fund™, he was still working through the tangle of emotions and practical tasks such life events bring. I invited him into my office for a coffee and to catch up. As we chatted, Ralph described the charity distributions that he wanted to complete in memory of his wife.

Ralph had always been a keen analytical thinker, and our discussion turned to Abundance Canada's metrics from the last year. When I mentioned the significant influence in-kind donations of publicly traded securities (stocks, bonds and mutual funds) from non-registered investment accounts were having on the foundation's annual donation totals, his eyes lit up. Ralph had never donated anything other than cash, so the idea of gifting publicly traded securities was a whole new concept for him.

I explained the tax efficiency of in-kind donations of publicly traded securities, as compared to selling the securities and donating the cash proceeds from the sale. This gift planning strategy provides the donor an added tax advantage: when donating in-kind publicly traded securities, the capital gain has a zero-percentage rate inclusion (you pay no tax on the capital gain). The donor receives a charitable receipt for the market value of the donated securities

## PROMOTIONAL SUPPLEMENT



based on the date the transfer is initiated.

Ralph considered all the information and told me not to cash the cheque he'd brought just yet. Although he had a hunch that

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By donating publicly-traded mutual funds instead of writing a cheque to his favourite charity, Ralph minimized his taxes and maximized his generosity.

---

this new gift planning option might be very relevant to his situation, he wanted to explore this in-kind donation idea with his financial advisor and get a second opinion.

Within three days, Ralph notified Abundance Canada to "rip up the cheque" he had left with me. He was excited to maximize his giving while being tax efficient. Instead of donating cash, he initiated an in-kind gift of mutual fund units to Abundance Canada. Knowing he would incur a zero-

percentage tax rate on the capital gain, Ralph decided to be even more generous. The total value of the in-kind transfer was fifty percent higher than the initial cheque had been!

After the mutual funds were received by Abundance Canada and sold, Ralph provided us with recommendations to support three of his favourite charities and to leave the remaining balance of the proceeds from the sale of the securities in his Gifting Fund for future distributions.

Ralph and I met again this year to create his Generosity Plan™, to help achieve his charitable goals now and into the future. We took into consideration all his giving options and developed a plan that fits this new phase of his life.



*Marlow Gingerich is a Gift Planning Consultant with Abundance Canada. Since 1974, Abundance Canada has helped people with their charitable giving at every stage of life and beyond. To learn more about how you can create and implement a Generosity Plan visit [abundance.ca](http://abundance.ca) or call 1.800.772.3257.*



## FOCUS ON MONEY

## News brief

## MDS issues second call for Canada Spirit of MDS Fund applications

The Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) Canada Spirit of MDS Fund is issuing a second call for applications from churches in Canada. The goal of the Spirit of MDS Fund is to provide financial support to Canadian Anabaptist-Mennonite congregations that are assisting people in their communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of \$100,000 has been made available; to date 46 congregations and other ministries have received support from the Fund. With funding still available, a second call for applications has been issued for this fall; this second call for funding is in operation until Oct. 31. Grants will be a maximum of \$1,000, although there can be some flexibility on a case-by-case basis. Projects that can be funded include replenishing a deacon's fund; restocking a food pantry; assisting with a family's emergency financial needs; purchasing technology to help churches serve their members through online services, or to help seniors or shut-ins connect with family and friends; and assisting with rent for a refugee, among others. To apply, visit [bit.ly/mds-spirit-fund-app](https://bit.ly/mds-spirit-fund-app) and fill out the downloadable form. Then send it by email to [somds@mds.mennonite.net](mailto:somds@mds.mennonite.net) or mail it to MDS Canada, 200-600 Shaftesbury Boulevard, Winnipeg, MB R3P 2J1.

—MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE



(Continued from page 34)

of their churches' online services during COVID-19, save for maybe one time. Whereas many churches normally have a designated offering time, with prayer and music, in many cases that didn't continue online.

Yet people continued to give. This is likely for many reasons, including automatic payments, long-standing habits, and retired congregants and farmers whose income didn't change as much with COVID-19.

Gretna and Springfield Heights both sent out notes to their congregations near the beginning of the pandemic that included reminders of their financial need. Dyck has found it interesting that Covenant's congregants are making their contributions on Saturday or Sunday, in preparation for—or in response to—the church service for the week.

Covenant also has a system that Dyck thinks has helped it during the pandemic. Before approving the church budget at the annual meeting, congregants make an anonymous pledge towards the budget, writing down what they want to give that year. Although not an absolute commitment, it helps the congregation budget accurately and creates ownership within the community.

Dyck thinks it's part of the reason Covenant isn't under stress now. "I've been extremely thankful for how diligent, how committed, how dedicated people of my congregation have been. We have not been under stress or duress financially throughout this time at all," he says. "I have been concerned, but my concerns were apparently not warranted."

Rick Neufeld, Mennonite Church Manitoba's director of leadership ministry and interim executive minister, says the pastors he has spoken with across Manitoba haven't felt a financial toll on their churches during this time. "That's really quite remarkable that giving has remained fairly even throughout," he says. He does not know of any congregations within the regional church whose finances are being critically impacted during the pandemic, although he says he could be unaware or uninformed about some. ❧

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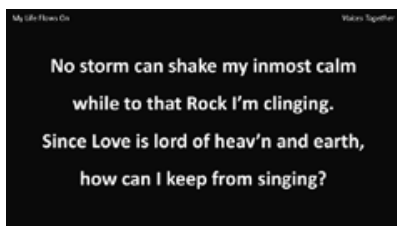
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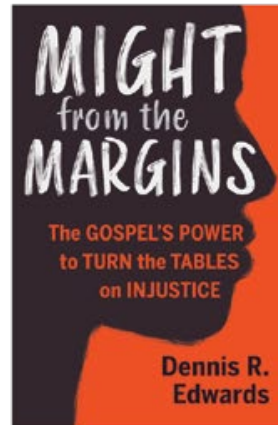
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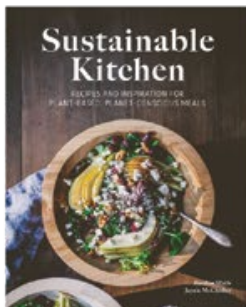
At a time when many feel disillusioned and distressed, Hart calls the church to action, offering a way forward. Dr. Hart's powerful testimony points the church toward meaningful social change and a more faithful witness to the way of Jesus.



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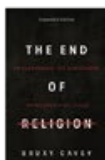


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## /// Calendar

### Nationwide

**Oct. 24:** Registration is now open for “Table talk: Does the church have legs?” Mennonite Church Canada’s virtual study conference. Join the nationwide community of faith as it gathers for a virtual study conference on the nature and identity of the church and the role of worship. Plenary speakers from MC Canada-affiliated universities and colleges will speak on themes of ecclesiology and worship. For more information or to register, visit [mennonitechurch.ca/tabletalk2020](http://mennonitechurch.ca/tabletalk2020).

### Alberta

**Every Monday to Thursday:** Congregants from across Mennonite Church Alberta are invited to join a Zoom group for morning prayer on Mondays and Wednesdays at 7:30 a.m. MDT, and evening prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9 p.m. MDT, for about 15 to 20 minutes, using Take Our Moments and Our Days. Register online at [mcab.ca/events](http://mcab.ca/events).

### Manitoba

**Oct. 16:** Canadian Foodgrains Bank’s “Singin’ in the Grain” virtual fundraising concert, featuring the Quonset Brothers, Kristel Peters & Korey Peters, and Steve Bell,

on World Food Day, at 8 p.m. (Central Standard Time). To watch, visit [foodgrainsbank.ca/singing](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/singing).

### Ontario

**Sept. 21:** MCC Ontario holds its annual general meeting via Zoom from 7 to 8 p.m. This year, a bylaw change will be presented to amend the official definition of membership with MCC Ontario. The proposed bylaw change will remove membership of individual congregations and move it to the Anabaptist conferences and regional church that support the work of MCC Ontario. This change ensures greater accountability between MCC Ontario’s governance and conferences. To register, visit [mcco.ca/aggm](http://mcco.ca/aggm).  
**Sept. 23:** Beginning on Sept. 23,

the MC Eastern Canada Truth and Reconciliation Working Group will begin a yearlong series of online storytelling events centred on covenants broken and renewed. The first storyteller will be Myeengun Henry, manager/counsellor of Be-Dah-Bin Gamik, Indigenous services at Conestoga College, and former chief of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation. To register, visit [mcec.ca/events](http://mcec.ca/events).

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



## /// UpComing

### Registration now open for MC Canada virtual study conference

“Table talk: Does the church still have legs?” will examine what it means to be the church and the role of worship. The conference will be held through Zoom, a virtual-meeting platform. The conference is intended for pastors, lay leaders and anyone interested in an academic-oriented approach to discerning the purpose and nature of the church. The conference will consist of four sessions, featuring seven plenary speakers from MC Canada-affiliated universities and colleges:

- **Sara Wenger** Shenk, former president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, will give two plenaries exploring the nature and identity of the church.
- **Irma Fast** Dueck and Gerald Gerbrandt of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Jeremy Bergen of Conrad Grebel University College, and Jesse Nickel of Columbia Bible College will examine the role of worship in the Bible and in the church in the western context;
- **Sheila Klassen-Wiebe**, a New Testament professor at CMU, will lead a Bible study on the parable of the great banquet in Luke 14; and
- **Bryan Born** of Columbia will share what it means to be missional in this time.

Pre-released plenaries are planned to allow more time for questions and engagement between speakers and participants. A recommended readings list will be released to registered participants leading up to the conference. To register, visit [mennonitechurch.ca/tabletalk2020](http://mennonitechurch.ca/tabletalk2020).

—MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA



## /// Classifieds

### Employment



#### Employment opportunity Advancement Associate

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# Graduating in a nursing home during a pandemic

*Mennonite Nursing Home honours high-school grads among their employees*

By Donna Schulz  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
ROSTHERN, SASK.

Graduation was disappointing, or non-existent, for many high-school students this year, thanks to COVID-19. So Karen Chaskavich and the team at Mennonite Nursing Home (MNH) held a graduation celebration of their own.

The nursing home, a ministry of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, located just outside of Rosthern, has seven high-school graduates on staff, including two summer students. Three of the grads have family members who are residents of the home and who wouldn't have been able to attend celebrations outside the home.

"I had seen a picture of another home," says Chaskavich, who is director of care at MNH. "They had one girl working there who was graduating, so they invited her to come in her [graduation] dress and walk around."

Chaskavich was excited by the possibility of doing something similar at MNH, and her enthusiasm was contagious. "It was a whole team effort," she says. "The kitchen staff made hors d'oeuvres, which they set up banquet-style in the auditorium." Activity staff decorated the auditorium with balloons and "Grad 2020" banners.

"Even our maintenance man got involved," says Chaskavich. On learning that a resident didn't have dress clothes, he went to the local thrift store and bought him a suit jacket. Other staff members helped dress residents and curled their hair.

Each graduate had an escort for the June 25 celebration, chosen from among the nursing home's residents. Tammy Unger escorted her daughter Emily, who works in the kitchen. Doug Knoll escorted his granddaughter, Kendra Schlichemeyer, a



PHOTO BY DARLENE KLASSEN

***Mennonite Nursing Home honoured seven employees with a graduation celebration recently. Pictured, from left, are: Emily Unger, Hague High School; Kate Hanson, Rosthern Junior College; Kael Wilton, Waldheim High School; Micah Wood, Rosthern Junior College; Kendra Schlichemeyer, Rosthern High School; Rhoan Alfel, Rosthern High School; and Alysia Wielinga, Rosthern High School.***

summer student. And Don Regier escorted his grandniece, Kate Hanson.

Because of the need for physical distancing, only grads, escorts and other staff members were included in the ceremony. But during the grand march, grads walked down each hallway so that residents who couldn't attend could still enjoy seeing them in their formal wear and offer congratulations.

During the ceremony, Chaskavich, who served as emcee, introduced the grads, stating their name and school, their favourite Grade 12 memory and their plans for the future. The grads crossed the stage

to receive handcrafted certificates congratulating them on graduating during their time of employment with MNH. The certificates featured the colours of each grad's particular school.

Graduate Alysia Wielinga's mother, who also works at MNH, approached Chaskavich with tears in her eyes. "Thank you for doing this," she told Chaskavich. "It made them feel like they were able to graduate."

Tammy Unger held back tears as her daughter was honoured.

And Knoll, when asked if it was a proud moment for him, replied, "More than you'll ever know." ❧