

CANADIAN MENNONITE

March 29, 2021 Volume 25 Number 7

Avoiding an environmental shipwreck

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EDITORIAL

Greening the church

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it” (Psa. 24:1) a congregation declares in its

worship service.

In recognition of Earth Day on April 22, this issue of the magazine carries the feature, “Avoiding an environmental shipwreck” (pages 4-6) by Tim Wiebe-Neufeld. As part of Mennonite Church Canada’s new Sustainability Leadership Group (page 23), Wiebe-Neufeld is encouraging congregations to continue taking steps in creation care.

How are Mennonite congregations caring for God’s creation? How might we expand our witness and influence? There are at least three areas:

Congregational worship, study and conversations around the climate crisis and stewardship of the earth.

We can shape worship and education around this topic and involve people of all ages in the conversation. We can learn what individuals in our congregation are doing in their own households and spheres of influence and we can encourage each other.

Check out the worship and education resources at Mennonite Creation Care Network, where you can also download a Greener Congregation Score Sheet to evaluate how your church is doing in its creation care.

An event scheduled for later this year is the Rooted and Grounded conference, organized by Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. This hybrid event will happen Oct. 14 to 16 and will include worship, theology, biblical study and

praxis around land discipleship. (See more information at bit.ly/3tRdnVp.)

Practical actions in congregational life to reduce our carbon footprint. As we’re considering the post-pandemic reality—when churches are once more allowed to occupy their buildings—let’s consider changes we might make in our congregational life.

What if we carried the practice of video meetings into some of the committee work? What if we did more car-pooling, cycling, walking, and use of public transport to get to church events? What if we turned down the heat and wore sweaters in church during the winter and opened the windows in the summer instead of using air conditioning? What if we composted food scraps from the church kitchen? What if part of the church property were used for community gardens? What if we installed motion-sensor lights in public areas of the church? What if there were charging stations for electric cars, on church property?

We at *CM* would love to hear how your church is putting new creation care ideas put into practice.

Joining with others to call for changes in policies and practices that harm the earth.

Whether through local advocacy groups, national or international groups, we can join our voices with others in our communities who share our concerns.

Comments made by Dianne Saxe, Ontario’s former environmental commissioner, are striking. Speaking to a reporter in March 2019, she said she had seen very

little coming from faith communities about environmental issues in the province. Saxe thinks that religious communities can—and should—influence key decisions around the environment.

“Faith leaders are in an ideal position to take action because they explicitly occupy a moral and spiritual ground, which the members of their community tend to share with them,” she said. Calling this kind of advocacy a “moral opportunity,” she challenged, “if religious communities won’t stand up to help steer the moral discourse on climate and human survival, what are they for?”

To find how to add your voice—and your congregation’s voice—to larger efforts, check out For the Love of Creation (fortheloveofcreation.ca), which encompasses the efforts of 35 Canadian denominations and faith-based organizations in a campaign of environmental action and advocacy.

Wiebe-Neufeld mentions the danger of “overwhelmism” in face of the many environmental challenges. May our faith communities take actions that lead to both hope and change in this, God’s beautiful earth. ❧

Corrections

- **Francis Machichi** was incorrectly identified in the March 15 From Our Leaders column, “Beginning the journey in prayer,” on page 8.

- **At Mennonite Church B.C.’s** virtual annual meeting on Feb. 7, the Leadership Board only offered individual congregations the option—based on their own priorities—of becoming a “society” that would transfer their property title from MC B.C. to the congregation. Incorrect information appeared in “New directions for MC B.C.,” March 15, page 26

Canadian Mennonite regrets the errors. ❧



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PHOTO: BY WOLLOX / CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE (BIT.LY/3RLHDZ4)

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Avoiding an environmental shipwreck

Often we find ourselves stuck between options that seem either too little to matter or too much to take on

By Tim Wiebe-Neufeld
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Every time you walk into the church building, that threadbare carpet stares up at you. Everyone agrees it's time for a change, but how do you replace a worn-out carpet without destroying the planet?

In the age of environmental awareness even a flooring choice goes well beyond a discussion of colour and price. Is the only option a new batch of carbon-intensive and off-gassing nylon, polypropylene and glue? What about sending all that non-recyclable material to the landfill?

As faith communities seek to live faithfully into the future, how do you factor creation care into your decisions?

For decades we have known that our choices damage the environment. For more than 40 years

Mennonites have been making statements recognizing God's call to care for creation, and yet we struggle to change our trajectory. (See sidebar on page 6.)

Climate change, plastic waste, loss of biodiversity—the list of issues is daunting, and continues to grow. It's as if we are on a ship heading straight for the rocks in spite of warning buoys, lighthouses or even the jagged shoreline looming ahead. Individual efforts seem insignificant, a choice between rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic and trying to turn the ship with our bare hands.

Often we find ourselves stuck between options that seem either too little to matter or too much to take on. However, there is a viable choice between tokenism and “overwhelmism.” There are ways to more fully live out our call to care for God's creation.

We begin moving towards a more sustainable way of living when we recognize that economics cannot be



GRAPHIC BY BETTY AVERY

When considering how to act against the damage of climate change, too often the focus has been only on the economic reality (i.e. Can a profit be made?), while ignoring the effects on environmental and social systems. But true sustainability only occurs at the place where all three spheres overlap.

separated from environmental and social well-being.

Joanne Moyer is a professor at the King's University in Edmonton and a long-time member of the Mennonite Creation Care Network. She defines sustainability as “promoting the flourishing of social-ecological systems and the individuals and communities within them.”

Economic benefit must be considered together with environmental and societal health if we are to meet our needs without jeopardizing the future of our children and grandchildren.

Increasingly, societal and business leaders are realizing that not only is movement towards a sustainable future possible, it leads to better outcomes for profits as well as people and the planet. The rudder of the ship can be turned, and we are

better for it. Many companies have realized that they can be financially viable while reducing—or even eliminating—negative effects on the environment. Some have found “green” alternatives that outperformed the original options. Others have recognized that without a healthy environment and social systems, they have no future in spite of short-term profits and gains.

How might we as people of faith “help move the rudder” to a more sustainable future? Following are some suggestions for strengthening our witness to the healing and hope we see in Christ, for each other and for all of creation.

Re-affirm our commitment to care for creation

Mennonite faith emphasizes combining faith and action. The creation story in Genesis 1 tells how God made a world that brought forth life in abundance and how the



PHOTO BY WOLLOX / CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE (BIT.LY/3RLHDZ4)

It's as if we are on a ship heading straight for the rocks in spite of warning buoys, lighthouses or even the jagged shoreline looming ahead. Individual efforts seem insignificant, a choice between rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic and trying to turn the ship with our bare hands.

Creator pronounced it “very good.” Ensuring that God’s world continues to bring forth life in all its kinds is a central component of our faith calling.

It feels difficult to take action to prevent deforestation, overfishing and even climate change when we’re faced with the real prospect of lost jobs. As society shifts to that sweet spot where environmental, social and economic sustainability intersect, we need to find ways to bear the cost of the transition together.

At the same time, environmental degradation has a profound effect on vulnerable people. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, published in 2005, found that harm to the environment had the most impact on those who are poor, resulting in growing inequality, increasing poverty and social conflict.

Matthew 25 has served as a guide for how to treat those in need, calling us to give food to those who hunger and something to wear to those in need. Is it possible for us to see creation care as showing love for the vulnerable, whether it be those being impacted today or for generations to come? Is it possible for us to see Christ in the faces of those who say, “Rising sea levels caused by climate change are flooding my land, and you did nothing to stop it?”

Consider costs beyond the financial bottom line

When my family installed a solar-power array on our roof, a common question was, “How long will that take to pay for itself?” While our array will take years to pay for itself, our primary motivation was reducing our carbon footprint. The fact that we may come out financially ahead made the decision a no-brainer.

Our economic system often excludes the costs of emissions or other negative effects on people and our planet. Efforts to place a dollar figure on these impacts is one way policy-makers address this problem. For example, Environment and Climate Change Canada has estimated the costs of adapting to rising sea levels, drought and other climate-change effects. Its experts calculate that these costs could exceed \$167 for every tonne of CO₂ we emit. Cost estimates such as these make it possible to calculate a “social return on investment.” This approach seeks to factor in social and environmental costs and benefits that are otherwise ignored when making financial decisions.

Many businesses are beginning to think about the full life-cycle impact of their products. This includes the impact of manufacturing, use and disposal.

Much of our consumption-based economy is structured on a cradle-to-grave model: resources are extracted from the environment, made into something, used and then disposed of in landfill. A more sustainable approach is known as “cradle-to-cradle,” in which used items provide the raw material for new ones. Often small design changes can result in a fully recyclable product.

Factoring in impacts beyond the bottom line is not new to Mennonite circles. Past initiatives such as Ten Thousand Villages helped create the fair-trade movement by providing producers with a fair wage. Caring for creation means choosing products with their full life-cycle impacts in mind, whether it be the clothes we wear or the flooring we choose.

Adding environmental factors to our purchasing decisions may seem daunting. As consumers we can choose to support companies that are clearly making efforts to become more sustainable.

One business leading the way is Interface, a carpet and flooring company. It recently achieved its goal of eliminating its harmful emissions. The company has now set its sights on creating products with net environmental and social benefits, including products that store more carbon than they emit over the course of their life-cycle.

Would we be willing to seek out companies like this when we replace the carpet at church? Would we be willing to be part of the movement to more sustainable purchasing choices?

Develop an action plan to help ‘turn the ship around’

As part of a broader faith-based community, we have the opportunity to improve our environmental and social sustainability as individuals, congregations, and as the broader church and its partner agencies.

First, assess your impact. Track your resource use, carbon emissions and other measures of environmental and social sustainability. Next, set goals for improving the sustainability of your activities. Your congregation may want

to start by considering how to reduce the negative impacts of your building and your transportation.

There are many tools and frameworks designed to help assess impacts, set goals and find solutions:

- **The Mennonite Creation Care Network** provides a “Greener Congregation Score Sheet” and other resources to help congregations assess their impacts and become more sustainable.
- **Mennonite Church Canada** has assembled a Sustainability Leadership Group to develop ways to lessen the negative impacts of the nationwide church’s activities and to help congregations wishing to put creation care into action.

A critical step is ensuring your congregation has the resources to meet sustainability goals. Finances may allow for more sustainable choices but more important are resources of time, attention and priority. In many instances, if you give attention to social and environmental impacts, you will also see savings in long-term costs. Establishing a creation-care team is one way for a congregation to devote attention to its sustainability efforts.

Toward the future

One congregation’s decision about carpeting will not change the climate-crisis trajectory on its own. However, each decision provides a small shift that will eventually change our course, leading everyone to greater sustainability.

Our faith story begins with a firm belief in a Creator God. Genesis 2 places humanity in a beautiful garden with the task to till it and keep it. But Romans 8:19 hints at the crisis in which we now find ourselves: *“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God.”*

My prayer is that we, as followers of Jesus Christ, may boldly live into this vision.



Tim Wiebe-Neufeld is executive minister of

Mennonite Church Alberta and chair of MC Canada’s Sustainability Leadership Group. He recently received his master of environment and business degree from the University of Waterloo, Ont.

A historical statement on creation

“**W**e believe that God alone is the creator of the earth and its resources, and that therefore only God is owner in any absolute sense. We are only stewards for the duration of our lives of that which ultimately belongs to God (Psalms 24:1, 2).

“While the biblical text affirms that human beings alone are created in God’s image and have therefore been given dominion over earth by God (Genesis 1:27,28), it does not imply that we are gods who need not pay any heed to our environment. Though created in God’s image, we remain creatures who cannot live apart from the environment God has created to sustain us. The biblical text reminds us of this by indicating that humankind does not have a separate day of creation, but shares the day and the table that has been prepared for them with the animals (Genesis 1:19-26).

“Since we now know that our spaceship earth is a closed system with finite (limited), rather than infinite (limitless), resources, it becomes apparent that the present generation has a responsibility to all future generations to so use and conserve the limited energy resources of the earth, that future human habitation of this planet will not be either impossible or else greatly impoverished (Isaiah 45:18-20).”

From “Christian Stewardship of Energy Resources,” General Conference Mennonite Church, 1977.

For discussion

1. When you think about renovating, such as replacing a carpet, how much do you consider the health of the planet? Does caring for creation feel overwhelming or more like tokenism? How much are the political leaders in your community committed to creation care?
2. Tim Wiebe-Neufeld writes, “Increasingly, societal and business leaders are realizing that not only is movement towards a sustainable future possible, it leads to better outcomes for profits as well as people and the planet.” Do you agree? Can you think of examples that bear this out?
3. The cost of emissions or other negative effects on the environment are not included in our economic system. Why do you think that has been the case historically? What would it take for these impacts to be fully included in all business models?
4. How has your congregation been working to increase its sustainability? Do you have a creation-care team? What things could be changed in your building and your use of transportation to reduce your congregation’s carbon footprint?
5. Because the earth’s resources are finite, what things are most important for Christians to do to ensure that there will be sufficient for future generations?

—By Barb Draper

See related Creation Care resources at www.commonword.ca/go/2256

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/// Readers write

✉ Fascism by any other name

Re: “Committed to seeking a deeper understanding,” Feb. 1, page. 13

It is a good idea that Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is willing to re-examine the role Mennonites played in National Socialist Germany. One would hope that their findings include a thorough explanation of the reasons why Mennonites found themselves in a difficult situation that predisposed them to participating in the evils of Nazism.

Fascism is largely a result of economic disparity between classes. One of MCC’s primary efforts in Europe was to resettle Mennonite refugees fleeing from the chaos of the Bolshevik Revolution and the resulting chaos in the former Soviet Union. There were strong reasons as to why the Mennonites were fleeing.

But, since their arrival in Russia in 1789, Mennonites were seriously engaged in what can now only be called a fascist pursuit of mammon, building empire and amassing wealth, and they did a great job of it. The Russian peasant/serf workers (freed from serfdom/slavery in 1861) were keenly aware of the incredible economic disparity and injustice between Mennonite kulaks/landowners/businessmen and themselves. Once the Bolsheviks began to address the economic injustices through violence, the Mennonites fled.

It seems that Russian Mennonites were primed to embrace the fascism of Germany in a variety of ways. They were fleeing in large part because the peasants would no longer be the victims of the Czarist regime, which included Mennonites with predilections toward economic elitism, anti-rationalism, religious fundamentalism and racial superiority.

Russian Mennonites came to a National Socialist Germany with pre-determined fascist tendencies, which seemed to fit in with the Nazi movement after the First World War. It is not surprising that some Mennonites, or perhaps many, participated in the evils of Nazism.

PETER REIMER (ONLINE COMMENT)

To read a longer version of this letter online, visit bit.ly/3eB9XC9 and scroll down to “MCC and National Socialism.”

✉ ‘We just sucked it up and carried on’

Re: Horst Unger’s comment in “Readers weigh in on MCC’s research on National Socialism,” Feb. 15, page 7.

Thank you, Horst Unger.

All who immediately comment on German armies, people and language in a mostly negative manner may pay attention to what he has written. You wanted to get away from the Russia you had chosen, then grasped on to Germany for safety, and then on to Canada, where mostly you had not much good to say about Germans.

My ancestors came to Canada from Deutsch Kazun in Poland, in 1948. As a child, I continued to be called a “DP kid,” together with many others—even by the local Russian Mennonites who themselves had been immigrants earlier.

No counselling was available to us for “being bullied.” We just sucked it up and carried on. We were postwar immigrants who stuck together and survived.

Historians need to get all their information together, as there are many sources available now.
INGRID REGIER, VIRGIL, ONT.

The writer attends Niagara United Mennonite Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

✉ ‘606’ is a global Mennonite musical phenomenon

Re: “A hymn by any other number,” Feb. 15, page 4.

I applaud the new, modern hymn book, *Voices Together*. It was long overdue. Well-used hymn books connect scattered bodies of believers. This comes home to me when I visit other congregations far from home.

I much appreciated the background behind the old “606” anthem. I can appreciate raising the “cultural secret handshake” matter, as Kaufmann writes, when referring to “Praise God from Whom” as “606.” Referring to a song by its number can, in some circles, indeed be unwelcome if it generates insider feelings.

I have, however, more often experienced “606” as a common, shared experience. I was privileged, in 1979, to be in Nairobi at the same time as Mary Oyer. She led a gathered group of North American Mennonites in a hearty hymn sing one Sunday afternoon. Our eyes lit up when she announced “606.” We could hardly wait to start singing.

At a Mennonite Central Committee retreat in Alexandria, Egypt, I experienced the same collective,

eager response to the announcement of “606.” It brought an eclectic group of Mennonites together in a praise song that many had memorized.

This has been repeated many times in different places.

Personally, whenever I see the number 606 on a clock or a licence plate, I automatically start singing it to myself. It is an invitation to praise. Is that a secret code?

That being said, I’m not advocating for retaining the number. The hymn should be placed where it best belongs.

ALLEN HARDER, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

The writer attends Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford.

✉ Humour much needed during the pandemic

Re: “What is appropriate humour?” March 1, page 19.

Just before I opened today’s copy of *Canadian Mennonite*, we had our regular Bible study on Zoom. At the end of our session before prayer, Otto, my husband who leads the study, asked if anyone had any final comments. Immediately after he asked, the dog of one of the attendees barked. And we all laughed. Appropriate? I say yes, especially during a time of so much grief and loss.

And then, after we closed with prayer, I opened up *CM*, and what did I see but Joanne De Jong’s article on appropriate humour. Appropriate? Yes, again, and I suspect God was chuckling as well.

FLORENCE DRIEDGER, REGINA

The writer and her husband are pastors of Peace Mennonite Church, a house church in Regina.

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

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Clement—Sadie (b. Feb. 27, 2021), to Olivia and Kevin Clement, Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Fowler—Jade Rose (b. Jan. 9, 2021), to Cory and Alicia Fowler, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Visch—Avery (b. Jan. 7, 2021), to Bethany and Kyle Visch, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Weddings

Burkholder/Wenger—Hannah Burkholder and Andrew Wenger, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg, Dec. 27, 2020.

Deaths

Boshart—Kenneth Eugene (“Ken”), 73 (b. April 18, 1947; d. March 8, 2021), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Brenneman—Ralph, 81 (b. May 8, 1939; d. Feb. 28, 2021), Poole Mennonite, Ont.

Derksen—Gordon, 92 (b. April 25, 1928; d. Feb. 25, 2021), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Gascho—Doris, 87 (b. March 13, 1933; d. March 1, 2021), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Grove—Joseph, 87 (b. Feb. 5, 1934; d. Feb. 9, 2020), Hanover Mennonite, Ont.

Heinrichs—Ruth (Zacharias), 90 (b. Aug. 16, 1930; d. Feb. 27, 2021), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Helmuth—Paul Norman, 75 (b. June 2, 1945; d. Feb. 13, 2021), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Lebkuecher—Annemarie (nee Adischkewitz), 91 (b. March 6, 1929; d. Feb. 9, 2021), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Martin—Willis, 84 (b. Jan. 22, 1937; d. Feb. 6, 2021), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

McAllister—Rosemary (Milburn), 74 (b. May 8, 1946; d. March 5, 2021), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Neufeld—John Herman, 87 (b. Nov. 12, 1933; d. Jan. 11, 2021), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Schellenberger—Pete, 66 (b. Aug. 11, 1954; d. Feb. 14, 2021), Poole Mennonite, Ont.

Schwartzentruber—Willard, 92 (b. Jan. 23, 1929; d. Feb. 22, 2021), Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Wiebe—Dorothy (nee Kroeker), 93 (b. March 14, 1927; d. Jan. 11, 2021), Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Zacharias—Al (Allister), 86 (b. April 5, 1934; d. Feb. 20, 2021), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

'Rooted in Christ, reaching out in love

Michael Pahl

COVID-19 has forced most of us to embrace that most rousing of Anabaptist virtues: simplicity. Our lives have been simplified, stripped down to the essentials. We have gone out only when needed, we have bought only what we must, we have travelled only when there was no other choice.

Hopefully we learn lessons from this

simplicity: "Rooted in Christ, reaching out in love." This theme grew out of our staff reflections on Colossians 2:6-7: "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

"Rooted in Christ" is the core of our

members. We are grounded in Jesus. We find our unity, community and identity in Jesus.

"Reaching out in love" is the core of our vision as Christians. This is the core of our vision as Mennonites, in our own distinctive way. We "continue to live our lives" in Jesus, as Paul puts it; or, more literally, we "continue to walk in Jesus," to walk in Jesus' way of love.

Jesus has laid a path before us that we follow. It is a path of solidarity with the suffering, the oppressed, the marginalized, the dispossessed. It is a path of costly love that gives up everything for all of us together. It is the path to the cross that Jesus walked himself. It is the path the resurrected Jesus continues to walk with us, by the Spirit.

In these waning days of enforced simplicity, may we seek the simplicity that matters most: centred on Jesus and on Jesus' way of love. ❧

We are rooted in Christ. There is no other foundation for us. There is no other centre for us.

that outlive the pandemic. In a society driven by consumption, driven to the devastation of human lives and the destruction of the very earth itself by our greedy consumption, we can use all the simplicity we can muster.

Many of us have also experienced a greater spiritual simplicity. It turns out that a pandemic is a good time to reflect on what really matters, outwardly and inwardly, and collectively and individually. As Christians—as Mennonites—what is really most important?

Our Mennonite Church Manitoba Gathering 2021 theme provides one way we might express this spiritual

identity as Christians. This is the core of our identity as Mennonites, in our own distinctive way. We "have received Christ Jesus the Lord" from our forebears collectively. We "have received Christ Jesus the Lord" individually.

We look to Jesus as crucified Christ and resurrected Lord, as the One who lived, taught, blessed, healed, suffered, died and lived again a whole way of life, a way of love that we seek to follow.

We are rooted in Christ. There is no other foundation for us. There is no other centre for us. Jesus of Nazareth, our Messiah and our Lord, is the head of his body, the church, of which we are



Michael Pahl is MC Manitoba's executive minister. Email him at mpahl@mennochurch.mb.ca or find him on Twitter @MWPahl.

A moment from yesterday

Nothing says "occasion" like a panoramic group photograph. Pictured, Sharon Mennonite Church in Guernsey, Sask., commemorates its 50th anniversary in 1955. The congregation consisted primarily of Mennonite settlers from the Waterloo, Ont., region. The special panoramic camera brought from Saskatoon was sharp enough to keep the entire crowd in focus.



Text: Lauren Harder-Gissing

Photo: Gibson Photo / Mennonite Archives of Ontario



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 THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

Accountability

Arli Klassen

Jean Vanier. Ravi Zacharias. John Howard Yoder. We add to this list in our own Canadian Mennonite church community every year. My Lenten reading in March was from Matthew 23, where Jesus chastises faith leaders who do not practise what they teach and who tie heavy burdens on the shoulders of others. Our accompanying devotional resource made the link to ministerial sexual misconduct and the damage done to the church.

I have been serving as moderator of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada for nearly three years. How many cases of ministerial sexual misconduct have we dealt with in those years, and are currently on our agenda at the regional church? Far too many, mostly historical, many from events in the 1980s.

I was a naive and trusting young woman in my 20s in the 1980s. It has taken me decades to name the behaviour I experienced in my first “real job,” and from my doctor, as sexual misconduct. It has taken courage for me to simply say out loud “me too,” as if I am breaking confidentiality or being selfish in naming this pain.

I am in awe of the survivors of ministerial sexual misconduct who are ready to hold their offenders to account. I am

deeply grateful that survivors are willing to take these actions. As a church community, we offer our appreciation to these survivors and their advocates who long for truth and justice.

I am not a theologian or a minister. There are many who have thought through these issues and understand our theology much better than I. But as a church leader who thinks about policies in the context of our theology, I have questions.

How can there be so many historical cases that were not stopped or believed? What does ministerial accountability mean at all levels of the church? How do we address harm experienced by the whole church, in addition to the harm experienced by individuals and congregations?

As Anabaptists, our binational ministerial sexual misconduct policy assumes that misconduct occurs between individuals within a congregation. Our regional churches hold the ordination credentials of our ministers, setting expectations and providing resources, but it is the employer (congregations) who provides direct supervision. Congregations can also be naive, trusting and ill-equipped when it comes to sexual misconduct.

Ordination is for life. Who supervises and holds credentialed ministers accountable when a local congregation fails to do so, or ministers are not serving in a congregation? Today we give little space to denominational structures to wield authority. Those who come from a tradition of bishops are happy to have left behind their power.

Regional churches, after receiving a complaint about a minister, have policy to conduct investigations, figure out truth and decide on discipline. We do not mandate reconciliation between victims and offenders, which cannot be forced, and rarely happens in sexual-misconduct cases. What are the regional and nationwide churches’ roles in training, supervision and accountability pre-misconduct? What do repentance, reparation and reconciliation look like in the wider church post-misconduct? We have more work to do on these matters.

The main step now is to know the truth, to live with lament that such severe breaking of trust by people whom we have anointed to be our ministers has taken place. Many days I wish we had sackcloth and ashes. If survivors need 40 years to be able to let the truth be known, maybe we need to live with lament for another 40 years. ❧



Arli Klassen serves as moderator of MC Eastern Canada.

 Et cetera

The beet goes on at CMU

An unfamiliar brown substance appeared on the sidewalks at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) this winter: beet-juice brine. CMU began using the ecologically friendly solution as a form of ice control in January. It replaces the traction grit and the limited amount of salt that the Winnipeg university used in the past. “It’s fast acting, long lasting and more environmentally friendly,” says Charles Paetkau, CMU’s physical plant manager. Cities like Toronto and Calgary have used similar products in recent years as an alternative to corrosive road salt. The brine is made using a by-product from sugar-beet refinement. Regular salt-water brine begins to freeze below -8 or -9 degrees C. Adding beet juice to the brine lowers its freezing point, making it effective below -20 degrees C. “We’re excited about it,” Paetkau says.



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Cave of emptiness

Troy Watson

I spend at least 30 minutes a day in silent prayer and meditation, but sometimes this isn't enough. A few times a year I need a fuller and deeper experience of silence. I need solitude.

Paul Tillich says, "Loneliness expresses the pain of being alone, and solitude expresses the glory of being alone."

Being forced to be alone for long periods of time creates isolation and disconnection. Yet there are many examples in the Bible of people, like Jesus, seeking to be alone for days or even weeks, in order to find clarity, integration and a deeper connection to one's true essence and Divine Spirit. I believe this kind of solitude is an essential spiritual practice. We often call this kind of solitude a "silent retreat."

I've been as busy as ever during this pandemic, maybe busier. I've had more to do while simultaneously experiencing less connection with the people I'm doing these things with and for. This fragmented reality has made me feel disconnected, isolated and even a little lonely at times. A part of me longs for more interaction with others. Yet another part of me longs for solitude.

Over the past year it seems there's always something left undone to get to tomorrow:

- **More people to** check in on.
- **More technology to** learn and adapt to.
- **More meetings to** schedule online.
- **More to figure out** on being a faithful church now and moving forward.
- **More processing of** why some people have disengaged from our church community, if it's permanent, and what I could have done better.
- **More time trying** to get myself motivated to preach into a camera.
- **More working on** my days off than I'd like to admit because I feel the weight of

responsibility and expectation more than ever before.

I imagine the same is true of your pastor as well.

Some pastors get addicted to this weight. It swallows them up and becomes their identity. The responsibility and expectations placed on them as "pastor" defines who they are. They

... None of us is as important or as irreplaceable as we think. That's just one more illusion to let go of so we can spend time in the void its loss creates.

would be lost without it.

I prefer to manage the weight rather than lose myself in it. So I try to carry and balance it until it starts crushing me. And it always does, eventually. When I feel the weight getting too heavy to bear, I know I need to take the time to release it in a healthy way. That requires solitude.

On silent retreats it's not just television, smartphones, emails, calls, texts, news updates, social media and people I leave behind. I also leave behind the weight of my responsibilities and identity. I stop, drop and roll before I enter the sacred ground of solitude. It's become a ritual. I pause and drop whatever burdens I'm bringing with me and I envision the expectations that I and others have placed upon me rolling off my shoulders before I begin my retreat. Then I'm free to enter and abide in the emptiness this creates, which is not as easy as it sounds. It's hard work.

One of the hardest things to let go of is our sense of importance. We think our business, workplace, church, organization or family couldn't live without us for five days. We have to be accessible. What if . . . ? Yet, none of us

is as important or as irreplaceable as we think. That's just one more illusion to let go of, so we can spend time in the void its loss creates.

Josh Waitzkin, an American chess master and author, says that human beings have an impulse to fill empty space as soon as it arises, but the discipline of not filling that empty space is extremely powerful and transforma-

tive. He calls this "the cave process." The cave process is about sitting in space that is empty enough to escape the inertia and reactivity in our lives. Inertia is the force pulling us to where we're heading, and reactivity is the force pushing us away from where we are or have been.

We tend to fill empty space as quickly as possible. It terrifies us. Yet this empty void contains profound insight and truth that can't be found anywhere else. As American author Joseph Campbell reportedly said, the cave we fear to enter holds the treasure we seek. As Jesus models it, resurrection comes through three days in the cave of death.

This pandemic has given many of us opportunities to spend time in the void, in the spaciousness of emptiness. Let's not waste these opportunities. Sooner than we think life will be back to "normal." What will we have done with the caves of emptiness we were offered? ❧



Troy Watson is a little emptier and lighter since his solitude last week.

EARTH DAY VIEWPOINT

What would Jesus think about factory farms?

Sandy and Jason Yuen
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

In Genesis 9:3, God says to Noah: *“Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.”* But when God declared this, did he have factory farms in mind?

For those who might not have encountered this term, Wikipedia.org defines factory farming as a “type of intensive agriculture, specifically an approach to animal husbandry designed to maximize production while minimizing costs.”

On the outside, this approach to meat production aims to provide meat at an economical cost to consumers. On the inside, through revealing documentaries like *Peaceable Kingdom* and *Forks Over Knives*, and photos and videos from We Animals Media, we have learned that animals are subject to abuse, cruelty and exploitation, and are treated as a means to an end. Further, the environmental impacts of large-scale intensive meat production contribute to global warming, deforestation and water pollution. Finally, pandemics such as swine flu and COVID-19 continue to raise serious concerns about intensive animal agriculture as a breeding ground for diseases.

We are God’s people, called to care for creation (Genesis 2:15), yet the impacts of factory farming seem to directly contradict our faith. It is the main system of meat production that many of us may unknowingly support through our diets.

Troubled by this, we have been frequently turning to prayer to see what God has set on our hearts on this topic. As we reflect on what it means to be a Christian, we think about God’s love, grace, compassion, peace and mercy. Jesus said, *“Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy”* (Matthew 5:7).

When we think about factory farms,



ANIMAL EQUALITY PHOTO
BY JO-ANNE MCARTHUR

Calves are taken away moments after birth and placed in veal crates.

and the way several egg-laying chickens are crammed into dirty, smelly, windowless prisons, and how they are unable to spread their wings and go outside, our heart grieves.

When we think about how calves are taken from dairy cows immediately after birth, and the anguished cries that can be heard for days or even weeks afterwards, we can’t imagine how it would feel to have our own children torn away from us moments after birth.

When we think about how mother pigs spend their entire lives on concrete floors in narrow, confining spaces and are continuously and forcibly impregnated for three or four years before slaughter, we cannot help but feel the injustice done to these sentient and intelligent beings.

God gave humans the mandate to care for animals, and we feel that, in many ways, factory farms have abused this power and embraced cruel practices that emphasize profits over love, compassion and creation care.

According to AnimalJustice.ca, in 2019, 834 million land animals were slaughtered to sustain the meat, dairy and egg industries in Canada. Where is the love and mercy here? Where is creation care in the midst of all of this?

In Romans 14:3, Paul weighs in on the topic of different diets, and he advises that *“the one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else’s servant?”*

His words humble us, and our intent here is not to judge other people or their diets. But, as Jesus calls us to speak up for injustice, we look to raise the issue of factory farming, an issue that we observe is not widely discussed in church circles.

From a personal perspective, our reflection and prayers over the years have motivated us to gradually remove meat, seafood, dairy and eggs from our diet. What started as a 30-day challenge has evolved into a whole-food,



PHOTO BY SANDY YUEN

The Yuen family likes to eat fresh veggie bowls.

plant-based diet, full of experimentation and discovering fun new recipes with our kids.

We were thrilled when the Canadian government updated its food guidelines in 2019 and began promoting a healthier plant-based diet to all Canadians. Our hope for Earth Day is to encourage honest dialogue on where our food comes from and how our dietary choices can be an opportunity to promote greater love, compassion, peace and care for all of creation.

Resources

- **Watch the *Peaceable Kingdom*** film online for free at bit.ly/3lflfZh.
- **We Animals Media** (weanimalsmedia.org) has a collection of 10,000-plus photographs and videos that document animals used for food, clothing and entertainment.
- **Watch *Honouring God's Creation***, a Christian Vegetarian Association video, at bit.ly/3vkVeRH, or read its *Joyful Compassionate Eating* booklet at bit.ly/2Oq6uf3.
- **Christian Animal Rights Association** (christiananimalrights.com/).
- **Visit All-Creatures.org.**
- **Read the Factory Farm Collective's** article, "Does factory farming exist in Canada? Here's what the data says," at bit.ly/3cvV7di. ☞

Sandy and Jason Yuen attend Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church and love cooking and tasting vegan meals from different cultures.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE YUEN FAMILY

Sandy and Jason Yuen and their children.

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Menno recipes with a vegan twist

Jo Snyder talks about her new cookbook, *The Vegan Mennonite Kitchen*, which reimagines recipes from the classic *Mennonite Community Cookbook*.

canadianmennonite.org/veganmennonite



Forgive us our sins

On the blog, Alberta pastor Ryan Dueck uses the season of Lent as the starting point for a reflection on sin and its place in our lives.

canadianmennonite.org/blog/sin



A response to racial discrimination

Get to know Deborah Tewelde from Kitchener, Ont., and find out how she's putting her faith into action.

canadianmennonite.org/tewelde



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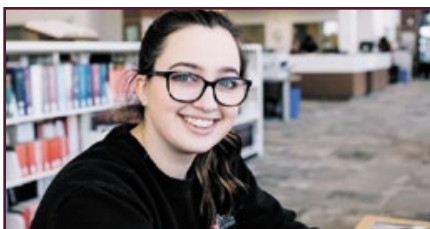
The 2021 Mennonite Disaster Service Canada Spirit of MDS Fund has approved \$54,900 in grants for 24 congregations and church-related organizations.

canadianmennonite.org/grantsapproved

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CANADIAN MENNONITE

Schools Directory featuring Westgate Mennonite Collegiate

Learning and teaching the truth about reconciliation

By Jeremy Siemens
Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg

It has been over five years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) final report brought “reconciliation” into the mainstream of Canadian discourse. Over that time, we at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate have learned a few things about our role in Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations:

- **Instead of simply learning about Indigenous peoples, we need to learn from our Indigenous neighbours.** Whether this takes the form of studying the work of Indigenous authors in English, listening to elders in world religions class or hosting discussions with Indigenous MLAs/MPs in social studies class, we are trying to create spaces for first-hand Indigenous experiences across the curriculum.
- **Students can lead this movement.** Shortly after the release of the TRC’s Calls to Action, two of our Grade 12 students organized a meeting with our Westgate staff to successfully advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous spiritualities within our world religions class. This initiative, and many others like it, remind us of the necessary role of youth in this process.
- **There is a lot of work left to do.** In addition to the curricular initiatives listed here, we, as a Westgate community, have engaged



WESTGATE MENNONITE COLLEGIATE PHOTO
Teacher Jeremy Siemens, left, in the classroom. He teaches geography, social studies, language arts and life skills.

in a variety of reconciliation-focused efforts beyond our classrooms, including: staff-wide professional development, community advocacy for Bill C-262, and the integration of reconciliation into our spiritual-life programming. With each of these initiatives, we have confronted our own ignorance and acknowledged the need to do more. Instead of allowing us to reside in the comfort of this moderate progress, I hope that these initiatives can propel us further into the difficult work of fighting for justice alongside Indigenous Peoples.

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NEWS

Allowing God's light to shine 'out of us'

MC Saskatchewan considers what it means to respond to God's call in these pandemic times and beyond

Story and Screenshot by Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent

“We hear God's voice from a place of knowing who we are,” said Kirsten Hamm-Epp. In her meditation that opened Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's annual delegate sessions, the regional church minister talked about how Mary heard God's voice and responded.

When God called Mary to be Jesus' mother, she went to stay with her cousin Elizabeth for three months. Hamm-Epp suggested that this time was, for Mary, a kind of wilderness experience in which she discovered who she was—a woman beloved by God and a woman who loved God.

Like Mary, MC Saskatchewan has found itself in a kind of wilderness—this one created by the changing dynamics of being the church in the 21st century and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The theme chosen for the March 13 sessions, which were held on Zoom, was “Called to hear.” Throughout the day, the 110 participants reflected on who they are and who they hear God calling them to be.

For three congregations, responding to God's call in 2020 meant making the painful decision to close their doors. Lois Siemens offered thanks for Superb Mennonite, which held its final worship service on May 31 last year.

Both Hanley Mennonite and Zoar Mennonite in Waldheim will close in 2021.

Steve Kroeger, Hanley's chair, acknowledged that “congregational energy was a huge factor” in their decision to close.

Liz Baerwald, who chairs Zoar Mennonite, said that a decline in membership meant her congregation's life together was no longer sustainable.

While some grieve their church's closure, others see God calling them to new beginnings. With support from MC Saskatchewan's Ministries Commission, Josh and Cindy Wallace began an experiment in planting a new congregation in

Saskatoon.

Josh, who is church engagement minister for MC Saskatchewan, also participated in online training through the New Leaf Design Shop and is looking forward to sharing what he learned about re-imagining church with the rest of MC Saskatchewan.

In addition to church planting, the Ministries Commission responds to God's call through the Walking the Path Committee, which is working at identifying and protecting Indigenous sacred sites, such as the Ancient Echoes Interpretive

climate conversations. He said that one MC Saskatchewan congregation will be conducting an energy audit this year, and another is looking into installing solar panels on its church building. In addition, Jeanette Hanson is assembling a collection of stories related to creation care.

The Pastoral Leadership Commission hears and responds to God's call as it assists congregations in hiring new pastors. It also offers several ways for pastors to connect with, and learn, from one another. Mentoring relationships pair new pastors with seasoned colleagues, and



During a memorial service held as part of MC Saskatchewan's annual delegate sessions, Kirsten Hamm-Epp lights a candle for three congregations that, in 2020, made the difficult decision to close. Superb Mennonite closed in May 2020. Hanley Mennonite and Zoar Mennonite in Waldheim will close in 2021.

Centre near Herschel, Sask.

Creation care is another area in which the Ministries Commission responds to God's call. Mark Bigland-Pritchard said that 2020 witnessed the launch of For the Love of Creation, a national inter-faith group created to promote faithful

pastor peer groups provide opportunities for them to receive support and encouragement from their peers.

Many in MC Saskatchewan responded to God's call to generosity in 2020. Finance chair Gordon Peters reported that the regional church fulfilled all of its

commitments and ended the fiscal year with a \$30,000 surplus. He said that the regional church contracted Sean East of MC Eastern Canada to oversee accounting and bring reporting in line with the rest of MC Canada.

Kevin Koop, pastor of Carrot River Mennonite, pointed out that the budget for 2021 does not designate funds for church planting or church growth. “Rather than doing crisis planning,” he said, “could we allocate [an amount] from funds when churches close [toward church planting

and growth]?”

Ryan Siemens, MC Saskatchewan’s executive minister, replied that he thought this was a good idea, but that more conversation needs to take place, and that it would be better to have this conversation in person rather than on Zoom.

Finally, several individuals answered God’s call to serve in various elected positions. In addition to those who agreed to serve a second term, delegates elected Myrna Sawatzky and Trevor Siemens to the Youth Farm Complex board, and

Alison Jantz to the MC Canada Joint Council.

Those who gathered online for these sessions don’t know where 2021 will take the regional church, but Hamm-Epp reminded them of the cyclical nature of God’s call. “If we are faithful to the journey, we know that that’s where the path will lead us again,” she said, urging her audience to be “ready to participate, to spread God’s light, [and to] allow that light to shine so deeply that it shines out of us.” ☞

Reimagining Assembly 17

More participants will be able to attend through hybrid in-person/online formats

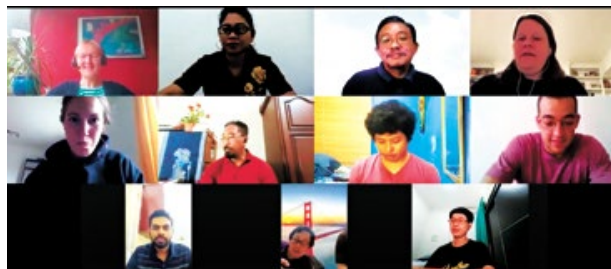
Story and Screenshot by Mennonite World Conference

Following the decision to offer the 2022 Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly in Indonesia as a hybrid event, the Program Committee members and assembly staff are now re-imagining the event and its additional online opportunities.

“The goal remains the same: to give every generation of church members an opportunity to worship, learn, fellowship and share experiences together, but with the added option of online participation, so more people around the globe can join the event,” says Liesa Unger, MWC’s chief international events officer.

Although live streaming has been part of the past two assemblies, the rapid development of communication technology has created new opportunities to meet virtually in 2022. The assembly team is exploring the following ideas:

- **Hybrid workshops** that allow online participants to interact with those attending in person. The presenter may also be speaking remotely.
- **Workshops and plenary sessions** as on-demand videos to revisit at different hours or after the assembly.



Following the decision to offer the 2022 Assembly in Indonesia as a hybrid event, the Program Committee members and assembly staff are now re-imagining the event and its additional online opportunities.

- **On-site and** online exhibits with the possibility to schedule meetings with the exhibitor.
- **On-site and** online friendship or prayer groups
- **Virtual tours** of Global Church Village and more.

César García, MWC’s general secretary, says, “Early last year, we wouldn’t think that we would host a global multi-time-zone event virtually. But “Online Prayer Hour” and online conferences in which we have participated have shown us that we can. Technology does not replace face-to-face interactions but allows us to expand multicultural and transnational

connections.”

“Attending online also benefits those who cannot travel due to health, financial, family or visa issues,” says Unger. “In the past, their only option was to watch the livestreamed plenary sessions or read about [the] assembly afterwards. We are excited about making it possible for them to fully participate virtually, beyond just watching a broadcast.”

Paulus Widjaja, the National Advisory Committee chair, says: “Just like our theme for assembly,

‘Following Jesus together across barriers,’ we are forging ahead despite some uncertainties. Meeting face to face and building cross-cultural friendships are meaningful, and we still hope to welcome and host you in person; however, we take comfort in the knowledge that fellowship, worship and prayers transcend boundaries and physical limitations.

“God is moulding us to learn new ways of worship and fellowshiping with each other. Through technology, we will bring the assembly to a lot more people!”

Registration for both the online and on-the-ground event will start at the end of 2021. ☞

MC Manitoba looks to the future amid a pandemic

Annual church gathering focused on being 'rooted in Christ, reaching out in love'

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

Mennonite Church Manitoba's 74th annual gathering was confined to screens this year due to the ongoing pandemic, but reports of the regional church's work came from all over the province, like a small-town ice rink and the Camp Assiniboia lodge.

The gathering's theme, "Rooted in Christ, reaching out in love," symbolized the way people have cared for each other this year and pointed to the thread of peace and justice that wove throughout the morning. Participants heard about congregations working with food banks

Delegate Erwin Warkentin of Bethel Mennonite Church asked about the regional church's plans to revisit the conversation about including LGBTQ+ people in the church. In 2017, MC Manitoba congregations agreed to make space for different understandings of marriage in the church, and they put a three-year moratorium on the conversation. But reviving the discussion last year didn't happen after COVID-19 hit.

Pahl said he has begun "exploring how best to fulfil this commitment we made to each other," to see how the Spirit has nudged congregations. He will discuss with pastors, then make a plan with the board.



SCREENSHOTS BY DARRYL NEUSTAEDTER BARG

MC Manitoba's annual gathering began with the installation of Michael Pahl, right, as the regional church's new executive minister. Also pictured, left to right: Doug Klassen, executive minister of MC Canada; Gerald Gerbrandt, moderator of MC Manitoba; and Lisa Bueckert, church council chair of Morden Mennonite Church.

These pre-recorded videos from regional church staffers joined a morning of worship, Q&A periods and voting. Participants numbering 175 gathered virtually on March 6, including 115 delegates representing 31 of the 39 MC Manitoba congregations.

The morning began with the installation of Michael Pahl as MC Manitoba's new executive minister, making formal a position he started on Jan. 1. In his meditation, he drew on the Apostle Paul's words in Colossians 2: "For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, and I rejoice to see your morale and the firmness of your faith in Christ." He encouraged congregations to notice where God is at work and to move forward with hope despite being physically scattered. "Who are we, as Mennonite Church Manitoba, and what is it that God is calling us to become?" he asked participants.

and economic justice.

MC Manitoba and Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba announced a new initiative: the Mennonite Indigenous Solidarity Group of Manitoba. The group will respond to invitations from Indigenous people to partner in projects and create resources and a safe place for Mennonite-Indigenous conversations.

Pahl said part of his role is "to draw us into important conversations of how our Mennonite identity and faith intersects with the deep needs that we find among us, in our communities, and in our world." He asked how Mennonites might live into the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, advocate for peace in Palestine and Israel, and tackle climate change. "How do we root out racism and misogyny among us, so that we can live more fully into the abundant life of Christ together?" he asked.

Financial impacts of COVID-19

- **COVID-19 significantly affected MC Manitoba's finances in 2020.** Congregational contributions were almost \$59,000 under budget and Camps with Meaning took a big economic hit.

However, the regional church ended the fiscal year with a surplus. Operating expenses were almost \$38,000 lower than expected, reduced by not having a permanent executive minister on staff for six months, lower travel costs and staff layoffs. MC Manitoba forwarded less than it budgeted to MC Canada, a compensation for past overpayments. Unexpected government subsidies and capital funds also helped.

- **Camps with Meaning (CwM) will suffer more losses.** Last year it came up short by \$38,000, but this year it could be three times that amount, said Dorothy Fontaine, director of mission

The camp budget for 2021 is a set of projections based on two possible scenarios, since there is so much

uncertainty about what vaccination speeds and government restrictions will be. Either scenario will produce a significant deficit, which CwM will try to weather in several ways, including applying for grants (it recently received a Winnipeg Foundation grant for \$30,000) and fundraising for a COVID-19 stabilization fund.

“We’ve enjoyed 70 wonderful years of camping ministry and we hope to serve for 70 more,” Fontaine said.

Whatever that final deficit is for 2021, with hard work from staff and the continued generosity of donors, MC Manitoba will make it through, Pahl said: “I suggest that the story these numbers tell is this: that even in times of turmoil and uncertainty, God has provided and God will continue to provide.”

Other business

The budget and projections were passed, along with the minutes, board actions and nominations slate.

The meeting also included updates on International Witness work, pastoral leadership ministries, and partner organizations like MC Canada, Canadian Mennonite University and MC Saskatchewan.



Rick Neufeld, MC Manitoba's director of leadership ministry, gave his report from the ice. A lively hockey team debate ensued in the Zoom chat room!

The meeting concluded with a wave of appreciation from participants, who thanked the staff and board for a creative and well-executed meeting. One delegate said what many seemed to be feeling: “This has been a great delegate meeting. I feel hopeful.” ❧

News brief

MC Saskatchewan staff help stressed congregations



Sandra Sinnaeve leads worship during the first of three pre-recorded worship services created by MC Saskatchewan staff and their families.

Worship within the parameters of COVID-19 protocols has meant extra work for pastors, worship leaders, church musicians and, especially, audio visual technicians. As a way of offering respite to these individuals, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan staff prepared three pre-recorded worship services for their congregations to use at any time of their choosing. All three services were built around the theme for the regional church's March annual delegate sessions, “Called to hear.” The first service, hosted by MC Saskatchewan's executive minister, Ryan Siemens, and his family, explored the call of Abram and Sarai. The second service focused on the call of Samuel, and was hosted by Josh and Cindy Wallace and their children. The third service was available in time for the regional church's March 13 annual delegate sessions. Incorporating the worship resources from *Leader* magazine for the fourth Sunday of Lent, this service featured regional church minister Kirsten Hamm-Epp, who preached on the call of Mary, and included a service of remembrance, celebrating baptisms that had taken place, acknowledging three churches that had made the decision to close, and remembering those who had died in the past two years. The service concluded with communion, led by Siemens and Hamm-Epp.

—STORY AND SCREENSHOT BY DONNA SCHULZ

News brief

Rockway's Spiritual Emphasis Week focuses on resilience

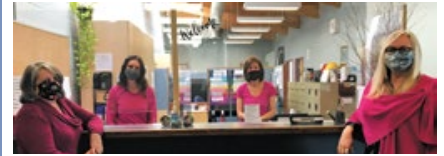


PHOTO BY JENNIFER HOFFMAN-BAILEY

Staff at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont., get into the spirit of Pink Shirt Day and its anti-bullying message. This happened during the school's Spiritual Emphasis Week, which focused on resilience, the chapel theme for the year.

KITCHENER, ONT.—Susan Schwartzentruber, a 1989 alumna of Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, was the keynote speaker for the school's annual Spiritual Emphasis Week, held from Feb. 23 to 25. Schwartzentruber, clinical director and counsellor at Shalom Counselling in Waterloo, gave three presentations on the theme of “Resilience: Bending, not breaking in the storm,” using biblical stories as her framework. She gave practical tips for living within the realities of the pandemic and other challenges. She emphasized the importance of relationships and a sense of community for support, and encouraged her listeners to name their feelings. Her three presentations were made available to the Rockway community virtually. Normally held in September, Spiritual Emphasis Week was postponed until February this year, given the uncertainties at the beginning of the school year and the newness of delivering Rockway's chapel program virtually. Spiritual Emphasis Week is an opportunity for the school community to dig deeply into a relevant topic from a faith perspective, with a guest speaker who also visits some classes. Connecting to this year's chapel theme of resilience was chosen as a way to nurture students' health and well-being during the realities of the pandemic. Mennonite Church Eastern Canada helped to sponsor the event.

—BY JANET BAUMAN

A life-altering gospel and simple faith

How leaders are nurtured in Ethiopia's rapidly growing Mennonite church

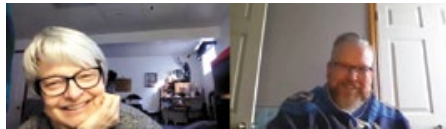
By Katie Doke Sawatzky
Mennonite Church Canada

Over Zoom, Norm Dyck shares a photo of a church-planting map from the Nazareth-Adama region of Ethiopia. At the top is the mother church established in 1948 with the help of Mennonite mission workers.

In the style of a genealogical tree, but going from top to bottom, the map shows a total of 46 churches birthed from the mother church. What started as a small missionary movement has grown exponentially.

"Each regional church has a map like this," says Dyck, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's mission minister, who has been seconded part-time to MC Canada's International Witness program. "Even individual congregations have maps like this."

Today, Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) has more than 647,000 members, 1,135 local churches, and 1,112 church-planting centres that are growing congregations



Jeanette Hanson, director of International Witness, left, and Norm Dyck, MC Eastern Canada mission minister.

supported by a mother church. Twenty-seven thousand people were baptized in 2019 alone.

For believers in Canada, this growth is staggering. But for those members of MKC, the church growth is intimately tied to the church's history of persecution and the methods it took to survive. Out of these practices developed a robust process for nurturing leaders, who were encouraged to plant churches in their own neighbourhoods and whose gifts were discerned by communities of believers.

Persecution happens to this day in some

regions, but the darkest time was during the Derg government from 1974 to 1987, when the Ethiopian military overthrew the government and established communist rule.

"That's when discipleship really kicked into high gear," says Dyck.

The MKC went underground, meeting in secret in houses and fields. Women carried Bibles in the folds of their clothing because they were less likely to be searched. Once a group gathered more than 12 households it split up to avoid attention. During this time, the membership increased tenfold.

A simple faith

Fanosie Legesse, MC Eastern Canada's intercultural mission minister, grew up in Ethiopia during the communist rule. Groomed to be a communist leader as a teenager, he joined MKC when he was 17.

"As soon as I became a follower of Jesus Christ, it made sense," says Legesse. "It made sense to give everything up and follow him to wherever he led me."

Legesse describes rural Ethiopia as a place without electricity, roads or telephones. For him, the gospel was "literally, a light." He made a personal commitment to take that light to the surrounding villages and he says his story is a sample of what many women and men chose to do during the darkest time of persecution: "It made sense to give everything up and follow him to wherever he led me."

Legesse became a leader in his local church in Sire, in the early 1990s, and he went on to study at Meserete Kristos College (MKC's seminary) in Debre Zeit-Bishoftu. He came to Canada in 2003 and returned to Ethiopia with his family as Witness workers from 2007 to 2010. He pastored Zion Mennonite Fellowship in Elmira, Ont., from 2015 to 2019.

Dyck, who visited Ethiopia for the first



PHOTO BY NORM DYCK

The church building for the Wooliso congregation.



PHOTO BY NORM DYCK

A church-planting map of the Nazret Regional Church in Ethiopia.

time in 2015, was struck by the expectations MKC has for new believers. They are assigned a mentor right away and they attend prayer meetings and Bible studies every week for at least two years. The connection with their church family is constant until they mature spiritually. It reminded him of the catechumenal process

of the early church.

“There’s a high level of accountability early on in your faith journey,” says Dyck. “It becomes part of the fabric of everything that you do.”

Legesse highlights the key components of MKC’s leadership development: communal discernment of individuals’ gifts, mentorship by mature believers and regular prayer meetings. But then he takes a moment to mention how even the term “leadership development” seems like a western complication of something that at the time was necessary for survival.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FANOSIE LEGESSE

Fanosie Legesse, MC Eastern Canada’s intercultural mission minister, points to information about the Nazret Regional Church in Ethiopia.

until you hit the wall. Then you would say, ‘I may have made a mistake,’ or you pray or fast about it. You ask forgiveness and correct and continue.”

For Jeanette Hanson, MC Canada’s International Witness director, what is inspiring about MKC leadership development is that simplicity. “It really comes from a very grassroots level of discipleship,” she says.

How does this speak to us?

MC Canada has a sister-church relationship with MKC. Both denominations commit to pray for each other, encourage and learn from each other, and share resources in mission: prayer, personnel, teaching and finances.

Current financial support provides scholarships for students and short-term teachers at the seminary. MKC church leaders come to the seminary after they receive training from their local and regional churches, some of which have their own colleges. The local church pays for leaders to study at these colleges and supports the family of the leader while he or she is away studying.

In terms of what congregations here in Canada can learn from MKC, Dyck says it’s a realization that the gospel is life-altering and transformative.

“That’s the challenge I keep coming back to in my personal journey,” he says. “I don’t experience that power of transformation within my own faith journey.”

He attributes that to the fact that, in Canada, there are systems in place that attempt to alleviate the realities Ethiopians still face: poverty, inadequate health care, and religious persecution.

“In Ethiopia, that’s the church,” he says.

MKC’s February newsletter highlighted the church’s prison and peacebuilding ministries, which are examples, Dyck says, of the Ethiopian church’s ongoing discipleship in the name of Christ.

Transformation is what people witness when they encounter the global church, he says. “It was simple, not complicated,” he says. “It was a literal interpretation of the Bible”

'How lovely is your dwelling place'

Calgary Chin Christian Church celebrates 10th anniversary and grand opening of new building

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
CALGARY

"God is so good to us," said Pastor Leng Nawn Thang excitedly as he spoke about all the ways God has taken care of Calgary Chin Christian Church, a member of Mennonite Church Alberta, over the last 10 years. "When we came to Canada, we asked, 'How can we sing a new song in a strange land?' Now we are celebrating our 10-year anniversary and the grand opening of our new church building!"

On June 6, 2010, a small group of Chin refugees from Myanmar started teaching Sunday school in a small house in their Calgary community. On March 14, the 87 church members plus friends celebrated all that God has done at a special three-hour live-streamed service from their new church building.

The service kicked off with the pastor declaring that the church's open door shall be a gateway to God's kingdom, shutting out hate and inviting everyone to come

and use the building seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Doug Klassen, executive minister of MC Canada, recalled how he had preached in that little house, pressed against the TV while the church was packed with families in the living room, kitchen and dining room. He spoke at the dedication service, saying, "I saw you as my brothers and sisters because we become who we worship. We are one because we both worship Jesus Christ."

Thang said the church faced the challenges leading up to its 10th anniversary, including a financial one. In 2011, it was finally able to rent space from the Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church. Made up of mostly low-income families, and struggling to save money for its own building, the Vietnamese church only charged the Chin church \$150 per month for the entire 10 years so it could reach its dream. After 10 years, Chin church

members were able to save \$100,000 towards a down payment.

Although grateful for the low-cost accommodation, the desire to have new ministries that would require more time and space became a growing challenge. When someone from the Chin community dies, whether in Canada or abroad, there are three nights of services. The women's and youth group and worship teams also needed more space to meet and practise, so they met in homes. Special events were difficult to host.

When the opportunity to purchase a property came up, the Chin congregation began to pray. It was calculated that the church would need \$200,000 for the down payment and another \$200,000 for the renovations. Every Saturday the women's group prayed for two hours. Congregants were challenged to give to a building fund beyond their tithing. Due to their sacrificial commitment, the church members



CALGARY CHIN CHRISTIAN CHURCH PHOTO

Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, executive minister of MC Alberta, preaches via Zoom at the 10th anniversary and grand opening of Calgary Chin Christian Church on March 14.

came up with another \$62,290. Members were also asked to give interest free-loans. Fundraisers were held. But it still wasn't enough.

Then the binational organization Mennonite Men gave the congregation almost \$55,000 through its Join Hands program. MC Alberta gave \$18,000. Foothills, Springridge and Calgary First Mennonite churches gave thousands of dollars. In total, other Mennonite supporters gave the Chin church \$88,604.

Calgary Chin churches from multiple denominations contributed \$4,500. Individuals gave time and skills, which saved thousands of dollars. One person gave a double fridge worth \$3,000.

Church chair Salai San Awi wept as he gave official thanks at the grand opening.

Brenda Tiessen-Wiens, MC Alberta's moderator, who has been very involved in the lives of Chin families over the years, shared how she has been richly blessed in these relationships, and she prayed for the Holy Spirit to continue to empower them.

Two sermons were given, one by Pastor Chau Deng of the Vietnamese Mennonite Church on the importance of giving Christ first place, and one by Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, executive minister of MC Alberta, on Psalm 84, "How lovely is your dwelling place," with reflections on how a church is built with living stones, the cornerstone being Christ.

Bergthal Mennonite Church in Didsbury was invited to offer a prayer of thanksgiving, so the congregation gathered on Zoom to pray, and then every member held up a cut-out heart in unison to show their love and shared thanksgiving.

The service ended with the church leadership handing out certificates and small gifts to recognize their partners.

To the question, "What is God calling you to do next?" Thang replied, "In my heart I feel we need to learn a lesson from those who have given generously. We need to ask how we can extend our ministry by giving and sharing." He said one way would be to bless another church like the Vietnamese church blessed Calgary Chin Christian Church. "God has done great things for us and now any ministry we want to do, we can do!" ▄

Meet MC Canada's Sustainability Leadership Group

Addressing of nationwide environmental, social impacts of community of faith

By Katie Doke Sawatzky
Mennonite Church Canada

Mennonite Church Canada is committing to improve the sustainability of its programs and ministries.

"Leadership and commitment are some of the most critical pieces in helping an organization become more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable in all that it does," says Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, executive minister of MC Alberta and chair of MC Canada's Sustainability Leadership Group (SLG).

After being approved by Joint Council in January 2020, the group has met six times since its inception in February 2020. Its members focus on the environmental and social impacts of MC Canada activities. It identifies ways the regional churches and the nationwide church can improve in these areas while remaining economically sustainable.

"The term 'sustainability' links economic, social and environmental effects," says Wiebe-Neufeld. "It intends to find that place where we meet current needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

The group is also committed to supporting congregations in assessing their own sustainability by providing resources and networking with other agencies, like Mennonite Creation Care Network.

In preparation for Earth Day on April 22, the Sustainability Leadership Group encourages congregations to study the network's curriculum "Every Creature Singing." The group is also developing an online tool based on work by students from the King's University in Edmonton,



MC CANADA COLLAGE

MC Canada's Sustainability Leadership Group, pictured clockwise from top left are: Joanne Moyer, Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, Henry Krause, Jess Klassen and Allan Hiebert.

to help congregations prioritize actions and identify resources on sustainable practice. It will be released this summer.

"A sustainable church community understands that creation care is foundationally linked to our beliefs and practice of faith, as a grateful response to God the Creator and as an integral component of justice and peacemaking with our neighbours (human and otherwise)," says group member Joanne Moyer.

The group currently includes representatives from three of the five regional churches, people who work or volunteer for organizations that prioritize creation care and sustainability.

For more information, visit mennonitechurch.ca/sustainability/.



Blackness and whiteness

Anabaptist preconceptions on race explored in 2021 Bechtel Lecture

Story and Screenshots By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent

WATERLOO, ONT.

This year's virtual Bechtel Lecture, "Blackness, whiteness and the Anabaptist 'imagined community' in print and mission," featured two speakers:



Diana Braithwaite and Chris Whitely perform 'This Little Light of Mine' as part of the Bechtel Lecture on blackness and whiteness in Anabaptist print and mission.

- **Diana Braithwaite**, an accomplished blues, gospel and jazz performer, and founder and director of the Rella Braithwaite Black History Foundation, where she researches, preserves and shares the story of Blacks in Canada.
- **Timothy D. Epp**, an associate professor of sociology at Redeemer University, Ancaster, Ont., who researches Anabaptists and the "discourse of race in North America during the 19th and early 20th centuries" by studying their denominational publications.

Braithwaite shared several anecdotes she called "good news" stories from her ancestors' experiences in early settlements in Wellington County, Ont. Black and Mennonite families "lived side by side," their children played together, they shared farm equipment, helped each other with threshing, and shared food together at the end of the day's work, she said. In these anecdotes she sees the "ability of human

beings to connect and become friends despite their differences in religion or the colour of their skin."

She and Chris Whitely performed "This Little Light of Mine" to end her presentation.

Epp began by acknowledging that, while there is no biological basis for race, the "lived impact" of race is very real, as expressed through the Black Lives Matter movement. He said that racist "seeds of violence are very present in Canadian society, and even within our own Anabaptist histories."

In his study of Anabaptist-Mennonite newspapers and periodicals from the late 1880s to 1908, he found that Anabaptists sometimes challenged the dominant assumptions about race by emphasizing Christian unity and how the gospel is meant for all people. But he also found examples of how dominant cultural concepts of blackness and whiteness were "reflected and reproduced" in these same newspapers, and how they informed

Mennonite mission activity in North America.

Epp gave examples of common stereotypes that portrayed whiteness as "standard" and blackness as "other" and therefore undesirable. In morality tales and other articles, whites judged the character of Blacks based on these stereotypes without challenging any of the social constructs in place.

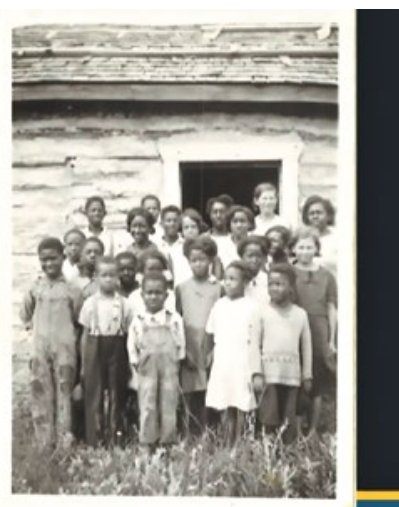
He found that Blacks were portrayed as:

- **Old, weak**, poor and forgiving.
- **Happy, simple-minded**, docile, humble and grateful.
- **As savages** prone to criminality and in need of civilization and Christianization through education to overcome their "inferior cultural and evolutionary state."
- **As shiftless**, unreliable failures who needed charity and education from "white saviours" to improve their prospects for success.

Epp said that positive friendships



Timothy D. Epp, left, describes Black and Mennonite relationships in the Shiloh community of Saskatchewan in the 1930s as part of his presentation at Conrad Grebel's 2021 Bechtel Lecture on blackness and whiteness in Anabaptist print and mission.



between Blacks and Mennonites blossomed in some places, even while Mennonites held “racialized ideas.” These personal encounters could be transformative, he said. “If you know somebody, you might change your mind,” because the relationship might “reveal the limitations of [your] preconceptions of race and identity.”

He described how Blacks in the Shiloh community in Saskatchewan developed friendships of mutual support with their Mennonite neighbours. However the Mennonite-initiated Western Children’s Mission, which aimed to “evangelize the spiritually destitute” by way of summer Bible school, saw Shiloh as part of its “foreign mission field,” even though it had a Black church with vibrant worship.

An object lesson used by the Western Children’s Mission portrayed a white heart as good and pure and a black heart as bad and sinful, in need of washing by the blood of Christ to make it “white as snow.” A Black mother found the object lesson offensive, arguing there was no biblical proof for the image.

Epp said he sees the way forward as “getting to know our neighbours” and living side by side in “mutual dependence.” These encounters “may be transformative” if we can see all humans as created by the same loving God. Furthermore, he said that whites need to undergo an “honest appraisal of our past,” recognizing how they are “privileged by our whiteness.”

In response to questions, Epp noted that his research is only “scratching the surface.” More needs to be done to find stories in Western Canada of relationships between Blacks and Mennonites. He also said that some of the history of the Black settlements in Wellington County is being reclaimed and restored as more research is done on how Mennonite settlers acquired land previously settled by Black pioneers. Mennonites are beginning to “awaken” to our connections to Black history, and see how our stories are “woven together.”

The 2021 Bechtel Lecture at Conrad Grebel University College was held for the first time in its 21-year history, without benefactor Lester Bechtel in attendance. He died in January, at the age of 91.

Marcus Shantz, Grebel’s president, expressed condolences to the Bechtel

family and gratitude for the rich legacy of Bechtel’s vision to connect academic scholarship in Anabaptist-Mennonite history, theology and culture, to the wider community.

To watch the 2021 Bechtel Lecture, visit bit.ly/3nVDgjR.



News brief

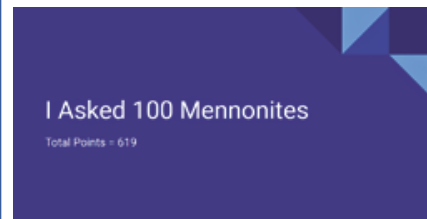
Manitoba youth ‘amplify Jesus’ during Lent

Every Sunday night throughout Lent, Mennonite Church Manitoba youth have been gathering virtually to sing, pray and reflect together. Kathy Giesbrecht, the regional church’s associate director of leadership ministries, hosts the worship series, entitled “Amplify Jesus.” “It’s been a long year for our youth and the MC Manitoba Youth Ministers Fellowship discerned that the coming Lenten season would be a good time to provide a wider church worship and connecting space,” she says. “The name ‘Amplify Jesus’ was chosen to express our hope that we would encounter an expanded and enlarged Jesus during our six Sundays together,” she says. Around 40 “screens” show up each week, which Giesbrecht estimates translates into about 50 youth and 10 youth pastors and leaders. Looking at the sea of faces, the advantages of meeting virtually are clear, despite how confining screens may feel at this point in the pandemic. Youth from all across Manitoba are hanging out—from First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg to Springstein Mennonite Church and Morden Mennonite Church, and many congregations in between. “We have invited our weekly special guests to respond to the question: What do you love about Jesus?” In addition to these reflections, the half-hour services feature Scripture told by youth and singing from *Voices Together*, led by Mackenzie Hildebrand, a former Camps with Meaning staffer.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

News brief

Family Feud event raises money for Camp Valaqua



Family Feud PowerPoint slide by Kevin Stoesz.

“If you asked 100 Mennonites their favourite book of the Bible what do you think they would say?” This question and many others were asked on March 6 at the first online Family Feud event, with approximately 150 Mennonite Church Alberta congregants in attendance, along with their family and friends. Host Kevin Stoesz of Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary invited MC Alberta churches and others to put together teams to fundraise for Camp Valaqua. The suggested registration fee was \$20, but, as of March 15, \$9,185 had been raised. Twenty-five teams of five were put into breakout rooms to answer questions from four categories: “I asked 100 middle schoolers,” “I asked 100 Mennonites,” “I asked 100 men,” and “I asked 100 women.” Stoesz collected answers from the middle school where he teaches, as well as through email, Facebook and the MC Alberta newsletter, the *Communiqué*. Groups made up team names such as the Freudian Slips and the Giesbrecht Gang. The winning team was called the We-Nufes, made up of Edmonton Wiebes and Neufelds. Although no official prize was given, a trophy is on its way to the victors. According to Stoesz, the gospel of Luke was identified as Mennonites’ favourite book of the Bible, with Matthew coming in a close second.

—BY JOANNE DE JONG

A dehydrator and a dream

Ontario congregation working to help International Witness couple in the Philippines

By Charleen Jongejan Harder
Special to Canadian Mennonite
LEAMINGTON, ONT.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began a year ago, global food security networks were put to the test. In the Philippines, where Dann and Joji Pantoja serve as Mennonite Church Canada International Witness workers, the people in the city were suddenly cut off from their food supply as the country locked down.

In the mountain region where they work, vegetables were piling up without a market. The Pantojas, who are regularly called upon to respond after natural disasters, such as typhoons, invested in a truck, and got special permission to deliver vegetables such as cabbage, lentils, carrots, and beans into the city.

As they made these deliveries, Joji's mind began to wander back to the fall of 2015, when the couple visited Leamington United Mennonite Church, one of their supporting congregations. She was given a tour of the local Southwestern Ontario Gleaners facility that collects local surplus vegetables and dehydrates them for

distribution to places with food insecurity, while reducing food waste at the same time.

As the chief executive officer of Coffee for Peace, Inc., her entrepreneurial mind began to simmer about the possibilities of bringing a dehydrator to her community in Davao City on the island of Mindanao. A chef could develop a flavourful soup mix for their product line, she thought, reducing food waste while building up the community. This could be a shalom-building project, in harmony with creation and their neighbours, for the well-being of the whole community as an expression of the whole gospel of



COFFEE FOR PEACE PHOTOS

The pulp from these coffee cherries can be 'upcycled' into cascara tea.



A variety of vegetables grown around Coffee for Peace's coffee farm. From her visit to Leamington (Ont.) United Mennonite Church and the local Southwestern Ontario Gleaners facility a few years ago, Joji Pantoja got the idea that a vegetable dehydrator could reduce waste, help feed the hungry following natural disasters, and provide additional income for her and her husband's PeaceBuilders Community ministry.

Jesus Christ.

The dream for the dehydrator goes beyond vegetables, however, to another initiative that would transform the waste product of coffee into a marketable tea. In Vancouver, the Pantojas first encountered cascara, a Latin-American "tea" produced by brewing the dehydrated pulp of the coffee bean. They have experimented with sun-drying the pulp locally and preparing small batches. But a dehydrator would be more efficient.

It would also reduce their own waste by allowing them to store surplus dehydrated vegetables for future emergency relief, and generate more income for their PeaceBuilders Community ministry.

Lois Konrad of Leamington United Mennonite was first inspired by the Pantojas when they spoke at a national assembly in Abbotsford, B.C. She was part of a learning tour to the Philippines in 2010, and supported the congregation's partnership with the Pantojas through International Witness. The congregation has felt a strong connection to the

‘Making plans, but holding them lightly’

Columbia Bible College academic year successful despite restrictions

Story and Photo by Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Pantojas’ ever-changing ministry over the past decade, engaging regularly through emails, prayers and updates in worship three to four times a year. And the couple visit regularly during their furloughs.

Konrad is currently part of the early stages of raising funds for the dehydrator project, which she hopes will broaden beyond the congregation to become a full community partnership, in an effort to raise the approximately \$15,000 required.

Inclusive development and social enterprise are core elements of the Pantojas’ peacebuilding work, empowering local residents to use the resources God has given them. While much development within the Philippines has benefited rich investors and international corporations, they are committed to bringing social development to the people.

Dann is appreciative of the nature of their partnership with MC Canada, which is very sensitive to decolonizing missions. He says that MC Canada does not have a top-down approach to mission but listens to the local people, who have a voice in what development means to them.

Listening, says Dann, is the first act of love. “Our relationship with [MC] Canada is a model in which we don’t feel dominated or colonized religiously.”

This expression of partnership and peace is noticed by Pantojas’ partners, particularly the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and various indigenous groups. One Muslim leader once commented to Dann, “If this was the kind of Christianity that was brought here first, there would not have been a war.”

Jeanette Hanson, director of MC Canada’s International Witness program, gets excited about the synergy between local Canadian ministries and what is happening internationally. In the case of the Pantojas and the dehydrator project, there is a two-way flow of inspiration and connection.

She wonders what else is on the horizon—not only for the Pantojas and Leamington United Mennonite—but for other Canadian churches and other International Witness partnerships: “What is in our hands as churches in Canada, and how is God calling us to use that within our international partnerships?” ❧

As the academic year draws to a close, students and staff at Columbia Bible College are reflecting on how the college has successfully navigated offering in-person learning despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. These have included reduced class sizes, mask fatigue, teaching behind plexiglass, and keeping resident and commuter students apart.

A high priority on safety protocols has assured the lowest possibility of viral transmission.

Bonner Wolf, the college’s marketing communications manager, reports that Columbia has had a few cases of COVID-19, including in residence, but was able to contain them without the virus spreading across campus.

He says that “things have gone better than we expected,” as all members of the Columbia community, in keeping with much of the rest of society, have had to adjust in the face of constantly shifting situations. “Everyone has had to adjust to the idea of making plans but holding them lightly. In a nutshell, all that we

normally do has had to be evaluated, and regularly re-evaluated, to see how it can be adjusted or changed to fit the ever-changing provincial health requirements.”

One of the areas of significant change has been in the athletics and recreation department, where varsity basketball and volleyball competition seasons were cancelled.

“While disappointing for our student athletes and coaches, they have done an incredible job of staying positive throughout the year,” Wolf says. “Teams are still able to train but with physical distancing in place along with other COVID protocols for sport.”

Other members of the student body have also continued to be active.

“While our recreation programming had to make appropriate changes to meet COVID guidelines, we’ve been encouraged to see many students stay involved and active despite not being able to do all that they would like related to recreation offerings,” he says.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of



Masks and distanced desks are two of the changes students at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C., have had to adjust to this past year.

being a student at Columbia during the pandemic is the restriction of gathering.

Trever Renshaw, who attends Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, says the added stresses of this school year have at times been overwhelming as he has learned to adjust to safety protocols and associating with a smaller bubble of friends on campus. “Last year, my struggles were more focused on performing well in

my classes, making friends and trying to engage in the [college] community,” he says. “This year has brought the additional struggle of having to be cautious with what I am doing.”

“A positive aspect of being a student at [Columbia] during COVID is that I have grown in my ability to let go of control and allow God to guide me,” he continues. “Letting go has always been a challenge

for me, but my experience has taught me that it is all right to not be in control of my situation. Through this, I have learned to have grace for myself, as well as others.”

Wolf says, “Even with all these restrictions in place, students consistently told us they were willing to endure all of this inconvenience because being physically part of this community during this season was worth it.” ❧

Expanding the ministry conversation

Pastors share ideas for ministry during COVID-19 and beyond

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Two Mennonite Church B.C. pastors spearheaded an online event in January called “Incubate” to help their fellow pastors share answers to this question: “What ideas and opportunities is God revealing during COVID time?”

Church leaders have especially missed the LEAD conference this year that normally precedes the regional church’s annual general meeting.

Jon Reesor, pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church in Langley, and Rob Ayer, transitional pastor at Mission’s Cedar Valley Mennonite Church, organized the idea-sharing event to be something more in-depth than the biweekly half-hour MC B.C. pastoral Zoom times. Twenty participants from 14 congregations took part.

“Jon and I have very similar spirits and hope that MC B.C. would not find itself looking back at March 2020 and pining for the return [of those pre-COVID days], but rather wondering what the church needs to look like out of the pandemic,” says Ayer.

“We wanted to create an ongoing forum for discussion of ideas that have been fruitful during the pandemic.”

Adds Reesor, “A secondary goal was to see if there were common themes about what God is doing in the churches,” rather than focusing on what they were not able to do during the lockdown time. He cited the example of how biblical figures such as

Moses and Gideon responded to God’s call to minister using what they already had.

Garry Janzen, MC B.C.’s executive minister, says, “I was very excited when Rob Ayer approached me with this idea, because it is tremendous to see leaders in our congregations coming forward to plan things for the benefit of the whole MC B.C. community.”



Jon Reesor



Rob Ayer

Some of the ideas that were reported at the meeting:

- **Peace Church** on 52nd in Vancouver usually hosts a Christmas meal in its community. This year it boxed up the meals and delivered them to homes.

- **Peace Mennonite Church** of Richmond partners with Peace Chinese Mennonite Church to carry out youth ministries. They also have hired a youth pastor and are concentrating on video projects.

- **Level Ground Mennonite** of Abbotsford had success with an outdoor prayer ministry at Thanksgiving and is sharing devotionals written by members.

- **Cedar Valley** has concentrated on making its property more inviting to the community, including changing its parking lot from a “no skateboarding” space to getting insurance to welcome skateboarders. They also hosted a drive-through event at Christmas at which members collected items for the local food bank.

- **Yarrow United Mennonite Church’s** Darnell Barkman suggested the use of video blogs, a popular medium to reach young people. The congregation also hosted a drive-through trick-or-treat time on Halloween.

- **Bethel Mennonite** has been involved in community support through partnering with the Langley food bank, rental support and craft bags for children.

“The overall feedback was very positive,” says Ayer. “Now we want to expand the conversation even further.” ❧



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AMBS window

Supporting leaders in all seasons of ministry

Three new programs designed for active and emerging leaders and launched in 2019–20 by AMBS's **Church Leadership Center** are bearing fruit in the lives of participants. The programs were made possible by a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.'s Thriving in Ministry initiative in 2018.

"Through these programs, we're seeing pastors become integrated into relationships of support and develop self-awareness, curiosity and intercultural competence," reflected **Julia Schmidt**, MDiv, Program Administrator for the grant. "They're experiencing greater clarity in their roles through honest conversation and feedback."

Transition to Leadership

Transition to Leadership supports new pastors over a period of two years as they enter into ministry following completion of their seminary studies. Through one-on-one mentoring with an experienced pastor, weekend gatherings with peers in the program twice a year, and learning sessions with consultants, the pastors find a supportive structure

and freedom to learn in ways that are suited to their unique settings and experiences. The program is designed for cohorts of five people. Participation in all three grant programs is confidential.

The mentoring relationship is a key component of the program. During the first Weekend Learning Event, the mentor pairs create and share timelines of their life journeys, noting significant experiences and events related to faith development, call and ministry. They also complete a personalized learning covenant for the mentee that focuses on self-assessment, goal setting and growth in six pastoral ministry competency areas. The pairs assess the mentee's progress during the semi-annual gatherings and also meet monthly to discuss ministry formation challenges and opportunities facing the mentee.

Each Weekend Learning Event also includes sessions on intercultural competence, character formation, spiritual disciplines and conflict transformation led by Church Leadership Center consultants **Nekeisha Alayna Alexis**, MA,

Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism (ICUR) coordinator, and **David B. Miller**, DMin, Teaching Associate of the Church Leadership Center. Worshiping together helps deepen faith and form trusting friendships.

Because the gatherings have taken place online due to COVID-19, planners have worked to create a sense of "retreat" by offering funds for participants to rent a space from which to participate and by sending them a care package (pictured above). (continued on p. 6)

PARTICIPANTS TO DATE

- Transition to Leadership:** 13 mentor pairs
- Ministry Integrity Circles:** 18 participants
- Leadership Integrity Circles:** 4 participants
- Represented:** 11 U.S. states, 3 Canadian provinces; 4 time zones
- Total hours gathered:** 90; more than 65 of them on Zoom
- Participants who are AMBS alumni:** 23

Above: Care package items for Transition to Leadership pastors (Credit: Rachel Denlinger)

Thriving together with resilience and hope



David Boshart (Credit: Peter Ringenberg)

AMBS serves the church as a learning community with an Anabaptist vision. That's where our mission statement begins. It's been a hard year since COVID-19 came to visit and decided to stay for a while. It's been a year of adaptive change. Yet this challenging time has evoked an amazing spirit of resilience in this learning community that can only be attributed to the power of God at work within us.

That is not to say that things have been stress-free. It has taken extra work and energy from everyone to meet the challenges of this year. We have been "making the road by walking." But we have walked the road together. We have laughed and we have cried our "face-masked way" through this time of isolation, walking together as closely as safe distance allows. We have continued to worship together on Tuesdays outside — all winter long! — and on Fridays online.

Even as we serve our graduate students, we also serve those already in professional leadership roles, considering what they need in order to thrive. Since July 1, 2020, 478 people have participated in our Church Leadership Center's noncredit programs (see p. 1 to learn about three of them). While our

annual Pastors and Leaders event — on the theme of "Thriving Together" — was held on Zoom this year (March 1–4), participants told us it was one of the most engaging and creative Pastors and Leaders event they've attended.

At AMBS, we have received everything we need to thrive with resilience and hope! With gratitude we celebrate the highest enrollment AMBS has had in 10 years (see below and p. 3). We have received strong calendar year-end financial contributions, the strongest we have seen in more than 20 years. We feel God's care for AMBS with the church so generously tending to our needs.

I begin every day at the seminary with an early morning prayer walk through Waltner Hall. As I walk the halls, I pray for wisdom and resilience for our faculty, students, staff and myself. And I pray with gratitude to God for making it possible for this learning community to thrive in our mission to serve the church. At AMBS, we believe that the power of God is more real than the power of evil. One day we will overcome this pandemic. In the meantime, we will continue to thrive together with resilience and hope. Thank you for your strong support of our mission at AMBS!

• —David Boshart, PhD, President

AMBS Window Spring 2021 Volume 31 Issue 1

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A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

BY THE NUMBERS

Academic year 2020–21

Grad students: **128** (highest in 10 years!)
Incoming class size: **28**

Women: **67**
Men: **61**

Countries represented: **12** (Argentina, Canada, Chile, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Tanzania, United States, Zimbabwe)

Students by faith tradition

Mennonite or Anabaptist-related: **104**
Other-than-Anabaptist Christian traditions: **24**

Students by program

Master of Divinity Campus: **22**
Master of Divinity Connect
(distance education option): **27**
MA in Christian Formation: **8**
MA: Theology and Global Anabaptism: **17**
MA: Theology and Peace Studies: **12**
Graduate Certificate: **6**
Guest or visiting students: **36**

Campus residents

Current students: **18**
Family members of students: **8**
Employees/volunteers: **4**

Giving thanks for our students!

AMBS reported a total enrollment of 152 students for 2020–21, a 36-percent increase from 112 students in 2019 and its highest enrollment number since the 2010–11 academic year. Of these, 128 are graduate students and 24 are participants in the nondegree **Journey Missional Leadership Development Program** of the seminary's Church Leadership Center. These figures are from the close of registration on Sept. 14, 2020.

Graduate programs

Of the **128 students** taking graduate-level courses, **92 are enrolled in degree or certificate programs** (representing a 19-percent increase from 2019), and 36 are guest students or auditors (more than three times the number from 2019). **Daniel Grimes**, MPA, Vice President for Advancement and Enrollment, noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most campus courses have been meeting via videoconference. Also, several courses specifically addressing pandemic-related topics, as well as new courses taught by new faculty members, have drawn more registrants — including alumni.

The 2020–21 graduate student body represents **12 countries**, with 82 students coming from the U.S., nine from Canada (the highest number in 10 years), and 37 from outside of the U.S. and Canada. Assistant Dean and Registrar **Scott Janzen**, MDiv, noted that this is the highest number

of international students at AMBS on record in the past 30 years of available data.

Fifteen of the seminary's 26 Ethiopian students are enrolled in the seminary's fully online **Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism** program through a partnership with Meserete Kristos College in Ethiopia. Due to travel and student visa restrictions, six new international students opted to take courses online, and more than 20 international students had to postpone enrollment.

"While we're disappointed that so many of our new international graduate students had to defer enrollment because of student visa and travel restrictions, we're thrilled that our enrollment figures still exceeded our enrollment goals," said Grimes. "This affirms the need for and relevance of the theological and spiritual formation that AMBS offers."

The flexibility that online study offers continues to draw students; Janzen noted that the number of students taking an online course jumped more than 40 percent over the prior year — even without counting campus-based courses meeting remotely due to COVID-19. Additionally, AMBS's distance-friendly **MDiv Connect** program has more students than its on-campus counterpart, the **MDiv Campus** program, for the second year.

Journey Missional Leadership Development Program

Of the **24 Journey program participants** — whose number held steady from 2019 — 17 are from the U.S., one is from Canada, and six are from two countries in Southeast Asia (locations not shared for security reasons). Eight of the participants in the distance-friendly program are women, and 16 are men. The U.S. and Canadian participants reside in California, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Ontario.

Traditions represented by participants include Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Church Canada, Evana and the Bible Church. • —*Annette Brill Bergstresser*

Below: Members of the AMBS learning community leave worship at the Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount during orientation week in August 2019. (Credit: Peter Ringenberg)



New online conversations connect alumni and faculty

To help AMBS alumni get to know current faculty members and learn about what's happening at the seminary, last October AMBS launched a series of free monthly videoconference conversations with selected AMBS Teaching and Administrative Faculty members as an exclusive benefit for AMBS alumni.

These hourlong **"Third Thursdays" webinars** consist of a half-hour interview facilitated by Alumni Director **Janeen Bertsche Johnson** (MDiv 1989), followed by time for Q&A.

"We've been thrilled by the strong interest in these webinars," Johnson said. "Alumni have started sending me their questions for the speaker ahead of time, and several have initiated contact with our faculty directly. One told me he was so energized listening to our faculty that he wished he could start seminary again because he knew he 'would love learning with this generation' as much as he loved his own professors."

The virtual conversations, which are held on the third Thursday of each month from 12 to 1 p.m. Eastern Time, are only open to AMBS alumni at this time; registration is required. Recordings of the webinars are available for anyone to view for free online.

To learn more or register, and to view recordings of past webinars, see ambs.ca/thirdthursdays.

Upcoming sessions

- **April 15:** **Jamie Pitts**, PhD, Associate Professor of Anabaptist Studies; Director, Institute of Mennonite Studies; Editor, *Anabaptist Witness*
- **May 20:** **Janna Hunter-Bowman**, PhD, Assistant Professor of Peace Studies and Christian Social Ethics

Past sessions

Recordings available online:

- **October:** **Drew Strait**, PhD, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins
- **November:** **Nekeisha Alayna Alexis** (MATS 2008), Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism coordinator
- **December:** **David Boshart**, PhD, President
- **January:** **Susannah Larry**, PhD, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies
- **February:** **Leah Thomas**, PhD, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care and Contextual Education
- **March:** **Beverly Lapp**, EdD, Vice President and Academic Dean

Learn about experiences that have shaped these interviewees, pivotal moments in their faith development, subjects they are passionate about, their dreams for AMBS, and what they most want to ask AMBS alumni! •



Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Credit: Lynne Zehr)

Virtual alumni reunions coming!

The following Zoom reunions will be organized by decade, and you can attend whichever gatherings fit your years of study at AMBS. We'll have breakout groups within each gathering so that you can connect with your classmates. Reunions will take place online on **Thursdays at 7 p.m. Eastern Time:**

- **1950s and 1960s:** April 15
- **1970s:** April 29
- **1980s:** May 6
- **1990s:** May 13
- **2000–09:** May 27
- **2010–20:** June 3

In addition, a Zoom reunion for **alumni from any time period** will be held June 10 at 12 p.m. ET. See: ambs.ca/reunions • —Janeen Bertsche Johnson, MDiv, Alumni Director

Call for nominations

We welcome nominations of AMBS graduates for the **2021 Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition**, which honors alumni with an outstanding record of faithful ministry and service. We will select two recipients: one who has served in pastoral ministry and one who has served in another type of ministry (peace work, academics, mission work, etc.). The criteria for these awards and a list of recipients since AMBS began awarding the honor in 2004 can be viewed at ambs.ca/alumni/ministry-service-recognition.

Please send nominations to jbjohnson@ambs.edu as soon as possible. Along with the name of the person(s) you are nominating, please describe their ministries and their impact on others. Thank you!

Official transcripts now available electronically

AMBS students and alumni can now request to have official transcripts sent electronically to a third party — for free! Sending transcripts electronically is the Registrar's preferred method for issuing official transcripts since they are transferred instantly and are securely encrypted. Please note that electronic official transcripts cannot be sent to students or alumni directly, however — only to third parties such as schools or potential employers. Official paper transcripts can still be requested (to be sent to the student or a third party), and current students can still print unofficial transcripts via Populi at any time for free. See: ambs.ca/transcripts

Why I love working at AMBS

When I joined the AMBS Development Team three years ago, it was quite a shift from my previous ministry involvements. I was rather nervous and hoped this decision was not a mistake. Looking back, I am extremely grateful for these three years!

In my work, I get to hear the stories of so many people who share their heartfelt passion for AMBS's mission of educating leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world. Alumni often tell me about the positive impact that their formation at AMBS has had on their lives and ministry. I am honored when people feel free to express their concerns about the church and AMBS.

I have also had the privilege of simply listening to the life stories of these dear friends of AMBS — times of joy as well as painful heartache. One person with terminal cancer reflected with gratitude on the life she has lived.

Another, suffering the effects of Parkinson's Disease and barely able to talk, vigorously shook my hand with gratitude for the ministry of AMBS.

In all of these times I recognize that I am on holy ground. I have been so inspired by those who support our ministry. It is truly a blessing to be a part of AMBS in this way!

Another thing I have come to learn in my work is how much we at AMBS rely on our Annual Fund to provide creative learning environments, meaningful worship opportunities, creation-friendly practices, and all the support

services needed to help our students learn, grow and thrive. We count on endowment earnings for annual revenue to carry out our mission without raising tuition costs for our students.

We also depend on people who have generously included AMBS in their estate plans. For many, this will be their largest financial contribution to AMBS. Only about half of the adult population in Canada and the United States has set up a will. And only a small fraction of those people have included a nonprofit organization as a beneficiary.

If you have already included AMBS in your estate plans ... **THANK YOU! THANK YOU!**

If you have not, I invite you to consider including AMBS in your plans, whether as a bequest in a will or trust, or as a designated beneficiary of your retirement plan or life insurance policy. Your support will make a tangible difference in the lives of future leaders.

For those of you I've had the pleasure of meeting, thank you for entrusting me with your stories. We truly appreciate all of you who make an impact on AMBS — both now and in the future! •

—*Bob Yoder, DMin, CFRM,*
Director of Development



Above: Bob Yoder (Credit: Jason Bryant)

Below: Malinda Elizabeth Berry, PhD, Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics, chats with Jamie Pitts, PhD, Associate Professor of Anabaptist Studies, following AMBS's commencement service in August 2020. (Credit: Peter Ringenberg)





AMBS creates worship materials for April 11

Recognizing the toll that COVID-19 has had on pastors and worship planners over the last year, members of the AMBS community have prepared worship materials for congregational use for the Sunday after Easter (April 11). The resources, which are based on the John 20:19-31 lectionary reading, include a prelude, a call to worship, an opening prayer, two hymns, a Scripture presentation, a sermon, two student testimonies, an Amharic song, intercessory prayer, the Lord’s Prayer in three languages, a benediction and a postlude.

Elements of a separate worship service based on the story of Jesus in the temple as a boy (Luke 2:41-52) are also

available for congregational use. These materials were originally made available for Epiphany, but the message of the sermon is broadly focused on the topic of faith formation, so they could be used at any time.

These free resources are available at ambss.ca/worship-materials. We invite congregations to use whichever ones are useful to you and to give pastors and worship leaders a break from preparing! We’d love to hear from you if you decide to use any of the resources; email me at jbjohnson@ambss.edu.

—Janeen Bertsche Johnson, MDiv,
Director of Campus Ministries,
Development Associate

Above (l. to r.): AMBS students Sibonokuhle Ncube of Zimbabwe, Marcos Acosta of Argentina, Salomé Haldemann of France, Andios Santoso of Indonesia and Quinn Brenneke of the United States sing “Jesus, we are here” in a video that is part of the worship materials.

Thank you to our board members!

The AMBS Board of Directors includes representatives from the seminary’s sponsoring denominations, Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, and other AMBS constituencies. We recognize and thank our board members who concluded their terms in 2019–20 for contributing their time, experience and expertise:

- **Meghan Larissa Good** of Glendale, Arizona (July 2012 – June 2020)
- **Byron Pellecer** of Harrisonburg, Virginia (July 2016 – June 2020)
- **Rod Roberson** of Elkhart, Indiana (July 2016 – December 2019)

We welcome and thank the following new members, who began terms of service in 2020–21:

- **John Daniels** of Sarasota, Florida (July 2020 – June 2024)
- **Gilberto Pérez, Jr.**, of Goshen, Indiana (July 2020 – June 2024)
- **Rachel Siemens** of Carman, Manitoba (December 2020 – January 2025)
- **Mandy Yoder** of Goshen, Indiana (July 2020 – June 2024)

A list of board members is available at ambss.ca/about/board-of-directors.

Supporting pastors (cont’d. from p. 1)

Participants expressed affirmation for the gatherings and learning sessions.

“Nekeisha was so inviting of our perspectives and offered such a calm presence in the midst of presenting hard stuff — with no judgment,” one participant wrote of an ICUR session.

Ministry Integrity Circles

Ministry Integrity Circles bring together groups of six pastoral leaders four times over one year for reflection to help them reimagine their call to ministry during a time of transition. Before each gathering, participants prepare a Ministry Reflection Report on a specific ministry incident or experience to share with the circle and consultants Alexis and Miller. Through this sharing, pastors gain greater awareness of barriers that stand between them and wholeness; insight into situations of brokenness; and clarity about how to move toward healing and restoration.

“I was surprised at how useful the written reflection was for me,” one participant wrote. “It is also helpful just to be in the presence of others who are not saying, ‘Everything is fine,’ and are working with real issues of ministry.”

Leadership Integrity Circles

Leadership Integrity Circles bring together groups of four to six experienced organizational leaders from any sector who desire to grow in their vocation as wise and effective leaders deeply shaped by their faith commitments. With the guidance of two seasoned consultants — **Betty Pries**, PhD, and **Rick Stiffney**, PhD — participants learn through self-reflection, peer support, conversation, reading and spiritual practices. Three times in a year, they gather to share specific leadership challenges and to grow in spiritual skills and theological thinking to accompany more technical, managerial and organizational skills.

“I found the conversations about how to solve ‘either/or’ problems by ‘both/and’ thinking very helpful,” reflected one participant. “It seems I put out and recognize a lot of fires these days and have not been taking the time to sit and wrestle. Thank you.”

—Annette Brill Bergstresser

Faculty and staff transitions

The AMBS learning community bid farewell to two employees and welcomed several new employees in the winter of 2020–21. Some teams also reallocated responsibilities as employees shifted into different roles to optimize the use of their gifts and strengthen the seminary's service to its constituents.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



Nekeisha Alayna Alexis's role as Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism (ICUR) coordinator was expanded, with

approximately one-third of her role devoted to internal/institutional ICUR leadership and assessment and two-thirds to external consulting through AMBS's Church Leadership Center. Alexis (MATS 2008) has served as ICUR coordinator since 2014. In February, she concluded her role as Graphic Designer and Website Specialist, which she has held since 2007.



Rachel Denlinger began Jan. 4 as half-time Graphic Designer and Marketing Specialist. Denlinger most recently served for six years as Associate

Graphic Designer for 1st Source Bank in South Bend. She also has been a freelance graphic designer since 2014 and served as Communications Coordinator for Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference in Goshen, Indiana, for two years. Denlinger will also be responsible for communicating about Church Leadership Center events and programs.



Ben Parker Sutter, who has served as Digital Marketing Manager and Church Leadership Center Marketing Coordinator since

July 2018, increased his time as Digital Marketing Manager on Jan. 1. His responsibilities now include managing the seminary's social media accounts, maintaining the website and overseeing digital analytics and strategy. A current

student in AMBS's MA: Theology and Global Anabaptism degree program, Parker Sutter has a background in communications with a focus on video and online marketing.

Continuing team members include Marketing and Communications Director **Melissa Troyer** and Communications Manager **Annette Brill Bergstresser**.

DEVELOPMENT TEAM



Tony Hartman, MBA, concluded his role as Advancement Associate in November 2020 after having served since July 2016. While at AMBS, he

also completed a Master of Business Administration through Goshen College. He has moved into a sales position with a local heating, ventilation and air conditioning company.

"Tony was able to connect well with individual donors and communicate how AMBS was serving the church," said **Daniel Grimes**, MPA, Vice President for Advancement and Enrollment. "His education in pastoral ministry and organizational management and his experience in education served him well in his role. We also appreciated how Tony applied current learnings from his collaborative MBA program to his role."

Bob Yoder, DMin, CFRM (see p. 5), began a new full-time role as Director of Development on Jan. 1. Yoder (MDiv 2001) worked for 17 years in ministry with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, Central District Conference and Goshen College before returning to AMBS in January 2018 as an Advancement Associate. In 2020, he completed a Certificate in Fund Raising Management at the Lilly School of Philanthropy of Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis.



Doug Amstutz (MDiv 1996) began Jan. 1 as half-time Development Associate for Canada. Amstutz, who has served as a pastor for 25 years,

also will continue to pastor at Erie View Mennonite Church in Port Rowan, Ontario. He has been a service worker

in Egypt with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), and he and his wife, Wanda, were country representatives for Ethiopia with MCC.



Randy Detweiler (MDiv 2007) began Feb. 1 as a full-time Development Associate. He has served as a pastor in three congregations over the last 30 years, most recently at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Indiana. He is a member of the board of Amigo Centre in Sturgis, Michigan, and also has served in jail ministry and in various leadership capacities with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference.

Continuing team members include Grimes; Development Associate **Janeen Bertsche Johnson** (MDiv 1989); and Data Services Manager **Aaron Yost**.

HUMAN RESOURCES



Barb Gamble retired from her part-time role as Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll in February. She began in February 2008.

"Barb was experienced and knowledgeable about all things HR," said **Ron Ringenberg**, MBA, MS, Vice President for Administration and Chief Financial Officer. "She brought warmth and compassion to her role, caring deeply about all the people with whom she worked. We will miss her outgoing, positive presence, her good humor and the joy she brought to our learning community."



Steve Norton is taking on the part-time role of Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll in addition to his part-time role as Program

Assistant for the Thriving in Ministry Grant, which he began in September 2020. Norton spent 14 years in church planting in Germany and was co-pastor of Goshen City Church of the Brethren for eight years. He also helped establish and manage the Elkhart Rise 'n Roll Bakery. • —Annette Brill Bergstresser

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— **Jamie Pitts**, PhD,
Associate Professor of Anabaptist Studies

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MDiv student Anna Ressler of Ohio (Credit: Peter Ringenberg)

UPCOMING OFFERINGS

Anabaptist Short Course

Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication, April 14 – May 25. Join **Betty Pries**, PhD, to explore the possibilities and pitfalls of courageously engaging differences within congregational life in this six-week online noncredit course.

ambs.ca/shortcourses

Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program

This two-and-a-half-year nondegree program offers mentor-mentee partnerships, distance-learning opportunities and community support. People from any tradition are welcome to apply!

ambs.ca/journey

Spiritual Direction Seminars

Prepare for a ministry of spiritual direction through this supervised program.

ambs.ca/seminars

Invite AMBS

Interested in trauma-informed caregiving? Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism consultations? Workshops on leadership for God’s reconciling mission in today’s world? Engage these offerings and more with Invite AMBS, which provides unique

opportunities to have AMBS faculty and staff interact with you via videoconference. Schedule one of our speakers or ask for another faculty member to share with you! ambs.ca/invite

!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth

Students in grades 10–12 can explore ministry and theology, grow in spiritual practices and listen for God’s call through a summer congregational internship and a Group Experience (at AMBS in 2021 and Mennonite World Conference in 2022). Participants can participate in both and receive a \$1,000 stipend each year. Scholarships are available. Tap a shoulder!

ambs.ca/explore

New scholarships available!

We offer generous need-based financial aid, church matching grants and scholarships, including three new merit-based scholarships for new graduate students from the U.S. or Canada: an **Ecumenical Student Scholarship**, **Multicultural Church Scholarship** and **MDiv Connect Student Scholarship**. Recipients can study at a distance or on campus. ambs.ca/grow

Take an Intensive Term course!

Three-credit courses beginning in May:

- Christian Leadership in the 21st Century
- Ethics and Care: Living and Dying with Purpose
- Practicing and Embodying Nonviolence
- Psalms
- The Spirit World and the Global Church

Some courses may be audited, and some are available in distance format. Nonadmitted students get 50 percent off their first course for credit!

ambs.ca/onecourse

Intensive Term course

Decolonization and Discipleship: June 14–25. This three-credit-hour course will explore the spiritual, ecological and sociopolitical dimensions of decolonization as a process of inner and outer transformation. Students will learn about ongoing impacts of settler colonialism under the Doctrine of [Christian] Discovery and will consider reparative responses in light of Jesus’ call to Jubilee justice. This course will meet in person using safe protocols.

ambs.ca/trailofdeath

Remembering John H. Neufeld

Nov. 12, 1933 - Jan. 11, 2021

By Gerald Gerbrandt
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

John H. Neufeld died on Jan. 11, 2021, after a life of serving the church in numerous places and in various roles. Born in Winnipeg, he lived and served in British Columbia, where he directed a camp and taught school at various grade levels over the years. He also taught at the Seminário Bíblico Mennonita in Montevideo, Uruguay, along with two longer periods of service in the Mennonite settlements of Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil.

Over the course of his career and in retirement, he served as teacher, pastor, administrator and writer. He also contributed a number of radio meditations for Mennonite Church Manitoba's Faith and Life program and for the German-language program, "Frohe Botschaft," for more than 25 years.

I first heard of John in the mid-1960s, when I was a student at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) in Winnipeg. Some fellow students raved about this amazing instructor at Bethel Bible Institute in Abbotsford, B.C. I came to know him personally a few years later, as he was at what is now known as Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., and I at nearby Earlham School of Religion.

Our paths crossed more frequently after he moved to Winnipeg in 1969 to become lead pastor of First Mennonite Church, one of the largest congregations in the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. For 15 years he led that congregation, challenging it with dynamic preaching, providing pastoral care across a broad age spectrum and leading the congregation with a robust vision for the church.

In 1984, he moved across town to become president of CMBC (a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University [CMU]), serving the church in that role for 13 years. Those of us who worked there came to know him as an excellent administrator, an outstanding teacher, and an effective public spokesman and advocate for the school.

Each week he would lead a two-and-a-half-hour meeting of faculty and administrators, a vocal group ready to debate with each other and leadership. He may have found this frustrating at times, but he did it joyfully and energetically. He would challenge us, or even reprimand us, when he felt it was needed. His forthright,

some might call it blunt, style could be grating, but we all knew he was doing it in an effort to move us to a consensus that served the church.

When students saw he was scheduled to speak in chapel, it would be full. He would tackle boldly any

issue, whether it be how he understood conversion or how students might manage their sexuality. They knew he would be well prepared and sprinkle his talk with humour.

Not surprisingly, his course in homiletics developed a strong reputation; many Mennonite Church Canada pastors were nurtured in their preaching craft by him. One year he taught I Corinthians to one of the largest classes at CMBC, making the book come alive and relevant.

Budgets at a school like CMBC were always very tight, so he tackled fundraising with his typical energy. He not only hired the first development director, he devoted countless hours to the task of fundraising himself. He found a real joy there as the relationships he developed with many business people became occasions for pastoral care.

John's direct and open way of dealing with people and issues continued in retirement. Only a few months after he left his role at CMBC in 1997, I received a phone call. His first words were, "Gerald, I have cancer." For the rest of his life, cancer was a companion in his life journey. But rather than being overcome by it, he took



John H. Neufeld

it on as a challenge. When he observed the solemn mood of those taking chemotherapy with him, he brought comic movies to the treatment room, and they then watched them together. Laughter, he believed, would help healing.

John's illness also did not prevent him from continuing to preach, teach and write. Indeed, some of his best teaching may have taken place during these years. His sermons were published in a book called *The Story That Shapes Us*. He developed courses on aging, on mortality and suffering, on forgiveness and forbearance, and on the Book of Revelation, sharing them with congregations across Canada, and in CMU's Xplore program. He remained perpetually curious, always ready to share his insights.

A year ago or so he asked for time with CMU emeriti faculty so he could share with us his latest research and insights about the Bible and its role for the church. Until very recently he remained actively engaged in issues around him, ready to send an email with observations, critiques and suggestions. Preaching and teaching, the Bible and the church, these were central to who he was and what was important to him.

Mourning his death are his wife of 65 years, Anne Hiebert, originally from Waldheim, Sask., four children, plus 28 grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as well as the larger Mennonite community. ❧

/// Calendar

Nationwide

April 8-May 6: MC Canada's Indigenous-Settler Relations program is hosting a five-week online book club focusing on "Beloved Amazonia," a collection of documents from the Pan-Amazon Summit held in Rome that featured church leaders, missionaries and scientists who discussed the church's relationship to Indigenous peoples, their spiritualities and their lands, and the need for the church to discover an integral ecology. To register, visit mennonitechurch.ca/beloved-amazonia.

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. MST, and evening prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9 p.m. MST, for about 15 to 20 minutes, using Take Our Moments and Our Days. Register online at mcab.ca/events.

Ontario

April 8, 10, 11: Theatre of the Beat presents "Unmute: The impact of a pandemic on gender-based violence" in conjunction with local churches and organizations. Anyone anywhere is welcome to attend these free virtual performances. Visit theatreofthebeat.ca/unmute for details.

April 23, 24: MC Eastern Annual Gathering, on the theme "Let's walk the path together ..." held on Zoom. Register at mcec.ca/annualchurchgathering

April 24: Webinar featuring Mary Anne Caibaiosai in the storytelling series Treaty as Sacred Covenant: Stories of Indigenous-Mennonite relations. 7:00 p.m. EDT. Register at mcec.ca/programs/truth-and-reconciliation



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

/// Staff change

Chief operations officer leaves for other pastures

"Over the last two years, I have felt God's leading toward full-time pastoral ministry and I am excited to have this opportunity now," says Len Rempel. He will complete his service with Mennonite World Conference (MWC) as chief operations officer in April. A trained accountant, he came to MWC in 2011 with a wealth of experience in finances and international work with Ten Thousand Villages and Shoppers Drug Mart. "Len is a team player," says César García, MWC's general secretary. "He helped us to quickly respond to needs created by the pandemic this year by working on the logistics of the COVID-19 response fund, which allowed MWC and Anabaptist service and mission partners to disburse grants of up to \$10,000 to 45 projects in the Global South. In addition to ably managing our finances and interpreting them to staff, Executive Committee and General Council in a way that can be understood, he is also a pastoral presence. We will miss his sense of adventure, and his beautiful pictures of MWC events and nature scenery." Since 2016, Rempel has served part-time as pastor of St Agatha Mennonite Church, Ont.

—MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

/// Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



FOOTHILLS
Mennonite Church

Employment opportunity
Lead Pastor
Calgary, Alberta

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

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

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

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

/// News brief

EMU prof awarded Calvin Institute worship grant

HARRISONBURG, VA.—Jerry Holsopple, professor of visual and communication arts at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), was recently awarded a Vital Worship Grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. He and co-applicant Rebecca Slough, academic dean emerita at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), will use the funds for a collaborative project that looks at visual forms of Anabaptist worship. "The chance to interact with six congregations, work closely with students and investigate how the visual functions in worship combines many of my life passions," Holsopple says. "I can't wait to see what we discover and how this will empower the church to enlarge their vision for the visual within their worship practice." Holsopple and Slough plan to assemble a team of art students from EMU, graduate students from AMBS, and congregational leaders from six different Anabaptist churches from a variety of cultures and ethnicities. "The overarching goal is to learn how the visual aspects of worship, including specific forms of visual art, function in Anabaptist and Mennonite congregations to support the theology and practise of worship," Holsopple says. Another piece of the project will be a documentary video, created by the EMU students, about this collaborative research process.



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JERRY HOLSOPPLE

PROMOTIONAL SUPPLEMENT

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Getting to know Nelson Okanya

Mennonite World Conference

In this short interview, Nelson Okanya speaks about his role as chair of the Global Mission Fellowship on the Mission Commission, one of four Mennonite World Conference commissions.

How does this commission practise being together in Christ?

Okanya: Living together apart is our new reality in this COVID-19 world. As a commission, we talk with one another, share our life experiences, pray for one another and share resources. In November 2020, we brought the commission together via Zoom to give updates, our responses to COVID-19, and to report on what churches are doing.

What is one example of the commission's togetherness?

Okanya: I've been in North America half of my life now. For the first time, when I called my mother in Africa, they were dealing with the same dynamics as in Lancaster, Pa.: masks, food off the shelves, social distancing.

In our meeting, we heard common experiences like that from people in Portugal, Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya and North America. It was a surreal moment. We took time to pray for God's intervention, for peace and for hope.

Why are you pleased to serve on the Mission Commission?

Okanya: I am deeply committed to the call of mission. God's mission is to redeem all things and establish shalom, wholeness of creation. All people who claim allegiance to Christ are called to be on mission with God.

What is the name of your local church?

Okanya: James Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster City. My wife is a pastor there.

How do you serve the Mennonite church in your daily life outside of your Commission work?

Okanya: I work with leaders on training and leadership coaching. We work mainly with businesses and organizations, but I have a deep sense of call to serve the church. I am currently putting together training for Mennonite pastors and mission workers.

How do you experience togetherness in the Body of Christ in your daily life?

Okanya: When we participate in communion, there's



PHOTO BY BARBARA HEGE-GALLE

Nelson Okanya serves as chair of the Global Mission Fellowship on the MWC Mission Commission.

a sense of being together, sharing in the story of God and Jesus. That builds me up and the Body of Christ. I share resources and study materials, write blog posts and articles, do teaching and spiritual direction (both giving and receiving).

How has being part of MWC affected your local congregation?

Okanya: Last year, during our mission Sunday, our pastor asked me to share about my role with the Mission Commission and MWC generally. We played a video from [an MWC] assembly. The congregation is very much engaged with MWC. They were excited to be reminded of the larger Mennonite communion, that we have a worldwide body of Christ. ☸