

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

September 13, 2021 Volume 25 Number 19



## Making a splash

See more photos  
on the back cover

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## EDITORIAL

# Values that set us apart

BY TOBI THIESSEN



A reader of this magazine thinks we have got our name backwards. He thinks the name should be *Mennonite Canadian*. “You are Canadian,” he says emphatically. “You think you are different from other Canadians because you call yourselves Mennonite, but you are not.” The man raises an interesting question. In what ways are we Mennonites different from other Canadians?

In Waterloo, where this magazine is headquartered, there is a visible minority of Mennonites who wear plain clothes and drive horses and buggies. Their values clearly set them apart from secular society. What about the rest of us? Our houses, cars and clothes look similar to those of our neighbours. Are the differences between our branch of Mennonites and the rest of Canadian society all in our heads?

Another reader raised a similar issue when he had newly joined the Mennonite church. “When I meet the people in your churches, I can’t see what is distinctive about you,” he said. The man grew up in another country and became Mennonite while studying theology in seminary. After moving to Canada, he experienced a new culture both inside and outside the church and he could not see a difference. “Write articles that show newer Mennonites what you believe,” he suggested.

CM’s content gives a window into what Mennonites believe, but perhaps we are too subtle in connecting the stories to our faith. Perhaps the same can be said for “modern” Mennonites in daily life.

Mennonites often say that we show what we believe through our daily lives. We show faith in action: loving our neighbours, rejecting violence, supporting each other in the church community, working for justice. If these values are not visible to some people who attend our churches, they must be even less apparent to the outside world.

There are at least two other faith-based values that Mennonites have long emphasized: service towards others and resisting the materialism that surrounds us in society. In both cases, our ethic is to follow Jesus’ model of servanthood, placing the needs of others before our own.

We are called to share our resources with others, knowing that we have more than we need. We used to call it “simple living.” The 1976 *More-with-Less Cookbook* by Doris Janzen Longacre was countercultural and had a generation-long impact on Mennonite lifestyle and food choices. Do we emphasize these values today?

These days, much church attention is given to climate justice. Recommended actions are like suggestions made by Longacre 45 years ago, but they have become mainstream. Both church and secular conversations are about harm reduction to the planet. In church, do we connect the concepts back to the underlying challenge to resist consumerism as a whole?

This issue carries our annual Focus on Money. The feature article by fundraising consultant Jon Brandt observes that congregational giving patterns have changed in a generation. To allow our church organizations to succeed, we

need to adapt our attitudes towards how we fund these larger church bodies.

As well, this issue has articles about what to do with our abundance (ethical investing, responsible banking, generosity) but very little about adopting a simple lifestyle. In his column “What is enough?” Randy Haluza-DeLay refers to a 2005 article about simple living that had a long-term impact on him. He writes, “living simply is act of discipleship and a witness to higher values, as well as encouraging generosity, demonstrating alternatives and fostering sustainability.”

The values of simple living and sharing resources with others remain valid today. Here’s a call to strengthen our storytelling so that newcomers to our churches and neighbours on the street will see our faith through our use of money. In doing so, we may distinguish ourselves from other Canadians and perhaps—just like the ideas in the *More-with-Less Cookbook*—our 21st century Mennonite values will become mainstream.

## Farewell

With this issue, we say goodbye to Joanne De Jong, who has been correspondent for Alberta since June 2019. She’s written about the people and congregations of that province—their joys, challenges and contributions. Joanne has a passion for intercultural relationships, which was evident in her writing. We thank her for all her contributions.

This fall, Joanne and her husband Werner are heading to Ethiopia, as workers with MC Canada’s International Witness. They will serve as relief faculty at Meserete Kristos College. Our prayers go with them.  
—VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER



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While athletes were competing in the Olympics in Tokyo the week of Aug. 4 to 9, residents of the Leamington (Ont.) Mennonite Home participated in a competition of their own. Activity staffers Sydney Hildebrandt and Nettie Rivers organized several Olympic-inspired games, but the biggest splash went to the water-balloon toss, in which residents like Anne Tiessen aimed at a wall target and also at their staff. If creative fun gets a medal, they all deserve gold. See more photos on the back cover.

PHOTO BY NETTIE RIVERS / LEAMINGTON MENNONITE HOME

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## FEATURE

# Meeting on the common ground of God's love

When done well, fundraising connects 'those who need money and those who can give money': Henri Nouwen

By Jon Brandt

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*



PHOTO: © ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/PRINCESSDLAF

**D**o Mennonites believe there is something intrinsically, inherently important about our denominational institutions? If you think not, then you can skip this article and pick up another article instead.

I believe that there is something important here—within the pages of *Canadian Mennonite*, within Mennonite schools, our sending bodies, and our relief and development agencies. I believe that we, as churches, need to shift the way we talk about money, the way our organizations

present themselves and the way we allow others to raise money within our congregations.

Fair warning: I am a fundraiser by trade, and I've spent most of the past 25-plus years in the non-profit sector, so I am biased. I am also committed to the church, having spent almost all of my life within Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite churches, in Canada and the United States. I believe our denominational institutions have something important to offer the world, something that requires time

and resources to share.

Back when I was growing up, a few decades ago, the average congregational budget was focused on external giving, with 70 percent or more going to denominational organizations such as the mission board and the local Bible school. It was understood that Mennonite organizations were vital to our congregational life and were worth supporting. Certainly, people were free to give money to other organizations and international charities. And they did. During the 1970s and '80s, I saw no shortage of photos of sponsored children on fridges. But the church focused its attention on its own, while it encouraged giving toward those causes as well.

This pattern of giving was entrenched long before I entered the scene, with a long history of school building and the sending of overseas workers. We seemed to understand intuitively the need to build up our parachurch organizations, so that they in turn would build up our congregations.

And I believe it worked. I grew up a child of Bible school teachers and camp directors, and our family's "deputation" (church visitation) was simply part of the deal. During my elementary school years, I saw a lot of different churches throughout Saskatchewan and Alberta. Support for the various denominational institutions was there. The giving was baked into the church budgets, and people gave generously, glad to support their own. And the institutions thrived.

In time, patterns changed. I won't delve into all the reasons for the shifts. But Mennonite churches started to move away from exclusivity, first in participation and then in giving. We began hiring pastors who attended non-denominational schools, we sent our kids to non-Mennonite camps and schools, and we supported the international work of a variety of parachurch organizations. Many were good places, and we gained much from our broadened exposure.

Then two things happened, at approximately the same time, to affect our support of denominational institutions:

- **Our individual tithing** began to follow our shifting participation.
- **Non-denominational organizations, which** did a good job at marketing, flourished.

We also shifted our congregational giving. Individuals no longer gave as much through their home congregation, and, in response to reduced giving and an increased local focus, churches altered their budgets.

## You can't have it both ways. You need to either commit to supporting your denominational organizations or you allow them to fundraise more intentionally within your congregation.

Today, many congregations are hard-pressed to commit even 30 percent of their budget to parachurch or denominational organizations. As members give more outside of church budgets, churches have less to spend, and they have redirected more of their diminishing funds to local congregational programming.

This has created a challenging environment for Mennonite institutions. Perhaps they were too familiar to us. They were well-known to us—but not known well. We took them for granted and, at the same time, we didn't allow them to market themselves well. And, frankly, many Mennonite institutions didn't know how to market themselves well. When they did try, they were often chastised.

I have worked for a Mennonite high school, a Mennonite sending agency and a Mennonite international development agency; I attended four Mennonite schools and volunteered at multiple other organizations (including consultation on fundraising for *Canadian Mennonite*).

The patterns have been similar in all of them. At every one of those institutions, save one, I've heard one comment from donors: "Don't spend so much on what you send me [to raise funds], save that for the ministry."

So Mennonite organizations have been in a difficult place: reduced congregational, and then denominational support,

but with limited freedom to promote themselves to their churches' members.

You can't have it both ways. You need to either commit to supporting your denominational organizations or you allow them to fundraise more intentionally within your congregation.

In the institutions, there is a parallel set of concerns. For too long, many of our organizations have seen themselves as "the church" and so were simply part of all that the church did. The expectation

was that church members would give to the organization because of the denominational connection. And, 30 years ago, that was true. But in the intervening years, there has been a significant shift away from that loyal giving.

In addition to the congregational shifts, many among us have a deep and abiding mistrust of fundraising. We have a particular understanding of what fundraising is—and we don't want it. The wife of my college professor, when she learned I was taking a public relations degree, said, "So, you are going to learn how to lie?"

Some years ago, I was working at a Mennonite organization and explaining to its board why it needed a full-time professional fundraiser. It was clear to the board that congregational giving, which had once been very regular and substantial, was dropping quickly; churches were hiring more staff and were also more willing to partner with non-Mennonite organizations to do ministry. Those outside organizations were committing substantial resources to marketing and fundraising, as they had no natural "in" with the churches, no automatic relationship. They needed to build those relationships and understood that took time and resources.

Some board members, despite having been recipients of that relationship building, refused to accept that the



Mennonite organization might need to do the same. They saw it as somehow bad or shameful. One member, after hearing all the reasons why we should be more intentional about our relationships with our individual donors and supporting congregations, said to me, “But I don’t want to hire a used-car salesman.”

My apologies to those who work in the used-car industry, but the stereotype was clear: He didn’t want someone who would simply go for the money, because he was sure that is what fundraisers did.

There are two issues at play here. One is the negative reputation of fundraising within the church, and the second is the belief that good causes should simply receive the money they need, especially when they’re part of the church.

I understand the negative response to fundraising. There are many examples of aggressive sales techniques masquerading as fundraising. Why I value fundraising, and why I think it needs to be a key element of our organizations, and our churches, is that, at its core, raising funds is an invitation to ministry.

In *The Spirituality of Fundraising*, Henri Nouwen writes, “Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission.”

When done well, fundraising creates a relationship between the donor and the fundraiser, as they together work toward the vision to which they have been called. An organization must have the confidence, and be given the freedom, to speak boldly regarding its mission, to invite others to come alongside. Too often, however, our churches have discouraged this boldness, wanting organizations to be humbler and more restrained. We chastise Mennonite organizations for spending too much money on materials that celebrate the good work being done or on talented people to tell those stories. And then we wonder why they are struggling.

We need to encourage our organizations to invest in that invitational work. “Those who need money and those who can give money meet on the common ground of God’s love,” writes Nouwen.

As to good causes automatically receiving the money they need: it no longer works that way, even if it once did. Good causes need good marketing, as we see all around us. What works in secular fundraising also works within the church. The same people who give to the local hospital, school or preferred medical research also sit in our churches. Long ago, we decided it was okay for major secular institutions to spend money on marketing, to create ad campaigns, to tell their stories and build relationships with us. Yet, somehow, we are not as generous with our own institutions, wanting them to restrict their marketing to the barest of efforts.

And so, although churchgoers in general, and Mennonites specifically, have a strong reputation for generous giving, we do not give nearly as generously as we could to our own institutions. This has significantly weakened our institutions, and thereby weakened our

witness to, and our impact on, the world.

We Mennonites are called to shine our light, to proclaim boldly, to bear witness with confidence. But apparently not if it costs money.

Individual churches also need to tell stories of impact, to share within their congregations about the good work they’re doing. But that is a topic for another day. For now, let’s remember: If we believe we have good news to tell, then let’s tell it, and let’s encourage our institutions to tell those stories well, too. ❧



*Jon Brandt is a non-profit consultant, with a background in faith-based organizations and board*

*engagement. He attends Toronto United Mennonite Church. For further reading, he recommends *The Spirituality of Fundraising* by Henri Nouwen, and *Growing a Generous Church* by Lori Guenther Reesor.*

### ❧ For discussion

1. What are the Mennonite organizations that you support financially or with volunteer time? What is your reaction when fundraising appeals for these institutions appear in your mailbox? Is information about the institutions helpful? What fundraising projects has your congregation promoted or participated in?
2. Jon Brandt says that, “a few decades ago, the average congregational budget was focused on external giving, with 70 percent or more going to denominational organizations.” Was that true for your congregation? How do you explain the shift in congregational spending, with less money going to denominational institutions? What organizations have a line in your church budget?
3. Brandt writes that, “many among us have a deep and abiding mistrust of fundraising.” Do you agree? Why do you think this mistrust exists? Why might some people have a sharper criticism of fundraising campaigns by Mennonite organizations?
4. Fundraising that is done well invites donors to share in the vision and mission of the organization, says Brandt. Can you think of examples of fundraising that achieved this goal? Is it possible to do this well without spending money on professional marketing?
5. What do you think the future will be for Mennonite institutions such as camps, schools, publishing, or mission, service and development organizations?

—By Barb Draper

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## OPINION

### /// Readers write

#### ✉ Nonviolence is the greatest ideal and goal

Re: “Finding a balance between pacifism and reality” letter, Aug. 16, page 8.

Like the letter writer, for much of my life I found nonviolence and pacifism a wonderful ideal to aspire to, even as I struggled with its apparent impracticality. Yet, over the past decade, I’ve become convinced that nonviolence is not only the greatest ideal, it is also the greatest goal and the best means by which to achieve these goals.

The Bible’s many love commands are calls to consistently honour people and always treat one another with dignity and worth. This is the polar opposite of current cultural trends, in which we eagerly vilify, caricature and outright ignore those with whom we strongly disagree. We are now on the verge of demonizing one another over vaccinations, and we will see very quickly that this will not win anyone over to our way of thinking.

To engage nonviolently and listen to another person is about so much more than hearing their argument. It is an act of respect and dignity that tells the speaker that they are a person of worth, who has something to say and to add to the conversation. This is invaluable if we want to build bridges and make progress on any issue.

In our current cultural climate, I am convinced that the most important gift the Mennonite church has to give is this capacity to love our enemies—to treat all people with respect and dignity no matter how strong our agreements. I have personally found that focusing on respecting the other as my highest goal and priority to be a transformative experience, both of my conversation partner and of me.

Nonviolence doesn’t always work, but violence works even less often. It only entrenches differences.  
HERB SAWATZKY, FENWICK, ONT.

#### ✉ Lack of ‘Jesus’ in CM challenged

Re: June 21 issue.

*Canadian Mennonite*, a Christian journal, has sunk to the level of an elaborate riff on current worldly cultural issues, albeit “Jesus” is mentioned once in its 32 pages, in an advertisement.

HENRY EWERT, SURREY, B.C.

*(Managing editor’s response: Actually “Jesus” was mentioned four times on the editorial pages of the June 21 issue: in our mission statement on page 3; in Troy Watson’s “Being, doing and becoming” column on page*

*11; in the “I feel happy that I am helping the community” article on page 17; and in the Mennonite World Conference’s 2022 global assembly Calendar announcement on page 30.)*

#### ✉ CM accused of not respecting gender diversity

Re: “Accessibility as an act of love,” Aug. 16, page 14.

I was disappointed to learn that *Canadian Mennonite* refused to use they/them pronouns for one of the interviewees in this article, despite the author having submitted the article with correct pronouns. Using the pronouns that best reflect a person’s sense of self is a basic act of respect, which should be the bare minimum for a magazine that claims to uphold Christian values. If *CM* wants to reflect the diversity of voices in its constituency, that simply must include respect for gender diversity.

JONAS CORNELSEN, CALGARY

#### Canadian Mennonite responds

In the Aug. 16, 2021 issue, *Canadian Mennonite* published an article in which we removed the pronouns “they” and “their” referring to a quoted person with a non-binary identity and rewrote the sentences without using pronouns. In the article, “Accessibility as an act of love,” page 14, writer Jacqueline Giesbrecht intended to use “they” and “their” to refer to author Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha.

With feedback from some readers, and out of concern for inclusivity in language and in the life of the church, we have reconsidered that decision. We have changed the *Canadian Mennonite* policy to include the use of they/them pronouns. We are determined to portray members of the LGBTQ+ community with understanding and respect. We apologize for the harm caused by our former word choices, in this and other articles.

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER,

Executive Editor

*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](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org) and include the author’s contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.*



## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Take a breath before the plunge

Michael Pahl

**W**inston Churchill, Great Britain's Second-World-War-era prime minister, famously said, "Never let a good crisis go to waste." Or maybe it was Rahm Emanuel, former White House chief of staff and mayor of Chicago. The internet is unsure.

Regardless, the phrase is both problematic and insightful. There is no such thing as a "good crisis," especially for the most vulnerable in society. Racialized people, the poor, children, the elderly, and others without means or on the margins of power, always bear the brunt of crises like climate change or COVID-19.

Yet there is a truth in the saying. Crises—whether large-scale or in our individual lives—are revelatory. They peel back the layers of our beliefs and practices, our structures and systems, and more, and they expose both our strengths and weaknesses as individuals, groups or society as a whole. Crises also force us to make difficult decisions, some of which may have been needed for some time, but have been delayed due to our fears or uncertainties. Because of this, crises can also spark creativity, pushing us to re-assess old assumptions, and to

think or act in fresh ways.

Crises, then, can bring about new life—a resurrection out of death.

We are not out of the COVID-19 pandemic yet. As a pandemic—a global outbreak—the novel coronavirus with all its variants is very much an ongoing crisis. The most vulnerable are still bearing the brunt of this crisis.

However, even with a fourth wave here, for many of us in Canada it feels like we are on the downside of the COVID-19 curve. Most of us are vaccinated, we are comfortable with the rhythms of masking and distancing, and so we are ready to dive back into something resembling "normal," including in our church worship services and programs.

But before we plunge into the deep end of this "next normal," though, I encourage us to take a deep breath. Let's make sure to pause before jumping back fully into the way things were. Let's not "let this crisis go to waste." Let's ask ourselves some deep questions; make some difficult decisions; and be open to the work of the Spirit among us to re-assess our beliefs and practices, our structures and systems, and perhaps lead

us into a new, resurrection life as churches and as a nationwide church.

What have our 18 months of COVID-19 so far revealed to us about our strengths and weaknesses as a church? What has flourished? What has faltered or failed? How have vulnerabilities been exposed? How have the vulnerable been exposed, and even harmed, among us and around us? What difficult decisions have been delayed due to fear or uncertainty, which now can be made for us to move forward? How has our theology, our collective practices, our church structures or our systems supported our ministry during this crisis, and how have they missed the mark? ☞

*Mennonite Church Manitoba has produced a guide for reflection for churches around these questions (<https://bit.ly/3sUv07v>). MennoMedia has also produced resources to help guide church leaders into the "next normal" (<https://bit.ly/3kBiUga>).*



*Michael Pahl is executive minister of MC Manitoba.*

## A moment from yesterday



**David Hunsberger's photos are normally more well-composed. But it appears he saw the expression of expectation and joy on the face of music teacher Doris Moyer and he couldn't wait to capture it. She grew up in Pennsylvania and taught at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ont., in 1954, when this photo was taken. With her husband, Harold Good, she was a founding member of the Menno Singers choral group. Following a long career teaching music in numerous places, she passed away in Virginia in May of this year.**

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



## IN THE IMAGE

# The pack of smokes on my mantel

Ed Olfert

**O**n my mantel stands a pack of smokes. It's in a place of honour.

It's probably been 50 years since I last purchased cigarettes for my own use. It's a phase that came and went quickly. I'm good with that.

A week ago, I attended a gathering at Stoney Knoll, a short distance northwest of Laird, Sask. It was the 15th anniversary of the signing of a document on that same site. Lutherans, Mennonites and First Nations gathered at that time to commit to working towards justice for the descendants of Indigenous folks that were left landless more than a century ago, when the government made the rich local land available to new immigrants, represented in large part by local Mennonite and Lutheran farmers and church communities.

Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan has been involved from the start to encourage this unique conversation.

I didn't grow up at Laird and, therefore, have limited skin in the game. But two granddaughters are growing up at the base of Stoney Knoll. How the community works to resolve difficult history certainly impacts them and their worldview.

At the ceremony, I was identified as a Mennonite elder and invited to engage in

some storytelling. I gaped a little at the request, as my eyes swept around the tent and identified others with more age, more wisdom and more history relevant to the issue at hand. Then I was presented with a gift of tobacco. That's the packet that sits in a place of significance in my home.

Tobacco is, of course, a traditional gift offered by Indigenous folks to their elders. It is a very notable mark of respect. Beyond that, as I've thought and prayed about the lessons contained in that little cellophane-wrapped box, I've been led in interesting directions.

We who have formed our thought patterns with significant European understandings are much rooted in debate and argument. Our understanding of justice, law, and often conversation itself, is a give and take affair. You will make a strong statement, and I will counter with one of my own. How often do we end those exchanges with "agreeing to disagree?"

Tobacco represents a different priority. That priority is "gift." If I invite you to share your thoughts and wisdom, I preface that by honouring you with a gift. Offering and receiving a gift moves us away from debate, away from winning. The respect inherent in the gift is

returned in the wisdom of the words. The gift includes respectful consideration of words offered.

On a number of occasions, I've noted the impact when Indigenous values were used in formal situations. The first time I sat at a healing circle, actually a mock-up of such an event, I was soon in tears by the passion, honesty and respect that was offered to every person in the circle. There was little energy given to denial, excuses or blame.

Similarly, I've been part of a parole hearing, at which the offender chose to use traditional understandings and values to shape the hearing. We were asked to remove our shoes, as this was now a holy space. We were then offered the opportunity to smudge. In the respect shown to each person in the circle, it soon became apparent that, ultimately, each person was desiring the same thing, and that was planning for the best outcome for both the offender and the community into which he was asking to reintegrate. Again, there were tears.

How we speak and hear matters. The concept of gift is not strange to us Christians, who reach out to receive and embrace what God offers. Can we also look to the traditions of our neighbours around us, and receive and offer with that same understanding of gift and respect? Can we finally give sharp words a rest? ❧



*Ed Olfert (p2peho@gmail.com) gives thanks for all traditions.*

## Et cetera

### Mennonite played roles in John Wayne movies

In 1954, Jacob U. Hiebert was a young man from the Nuevo Ideal Colony in Durango, Mexico, looking for work. He heard that a movie crew for *White Feather* was looking for extras, so he signed up. In the following years, he played various roles in John Wayne movies, usually riding horses or driving a wagon. He didn't speak English, but Wayne could speak German, and the two men became friends. After his marriage, Hiebert lived in the Mennonite colony, but the relationship was strained because the church disapproved of his movie roles. In 1973, he and his family moved to Ontario, where Hiebert died in 2003.



John Wayne

PXFUEL.COM PHOTO

## MIND AND SOUL

# What is enough?

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

**“W**ho says they have enough money? We’ve never heard such a thing!”

blurted the students at a Christian college at which I used to teach. I had just told them that I was going on an international human-rights delegation. After asking about funding, they vocalized their surprise that I was paying my own expenses. “I have enough money,” I had said.

Clearly, if these students had encountered ideas of simple living or living “more with less,” those notions had had little impact so far. They are decidedly countercultural ideas in our society. Even in parts of Christian religiosity, prosperity is associated with divine blessing. I don’t mean the crassness of the exorbitant; the Bible has plenty of truth-telling about the rich. What about every-day people who earn “average” incomes?

High on my all-time best things ever read was an article entitled “Whatever Happened to ‘Living Simply’?” published in *Canadian Mennonite* back in its Nov. 28, 2005 issue. Among the benefits Esther Epp-Tiessen listed are that living simply is an act of discipleship and a witness to higher values, as well as encouraging generosity, demonstrating

alternatives and fostering sustainability. We need a concept of “enough” or we never have enough.

Loads of research shows that after achieving a level of income sufficient to meet reasonable needs in one’s society, increases in income do not lead to increases in happiness. Even more thoroughly researched is the link between low levels of income inequality and stronger, healthier, more stable and happier communities.

A now-defunct website called the “Global Richlist” was another influence on me. It allowed people to input their country and income, then drew on credible databases to place them among the range of incomes for the population of the entire world. Astonishingly, only about 25 million people of the world’s 7.7 billion earned more than I did. I was in the top half of the top 1 percent of the world’s population. Zoinks!

That was with an income less than the median income of Alberta. While I lived in the richest province in Canada, the facts are that nearly all of us are the global elite. That’s why thinking about money is crucial.

Epp-Tiessen adds another benefit to living simply. It invites discernment. It forces decisions, judgments even, about

how best to live to create shalom in the entire community of humanity and creation.

Living simply is not easy, even if it is a deliberate choice, and poverty is not a choice. Living simply requires carefulness, self-control, and attention to budgets and life’s details. It can have extra stress. It does not solve problems of global structures.

Still, it may allow us to be better agents or recipients of God’s blessings. Some years ago, Mennonite Central Committee Alberta needed a billet for one of the main speakers at its annual general meeting, a Christian journalist from Lebanon. I was nervous to do so because my kids and I were renting a two-bedroom suite on one floor of a house. I gave him my bedroom. It was so small that he had to crawl under the desk to get to the bed. That was embarrassing. But why?

After our time together, he said he had gained an entirely new perspective on Canadians, that even a university teacher would—had to—live in such a way showed him another side of Canada. We talked deeply about the important question of how much—or what—was enough. I think both of us were blessed. ☸



*Randolph Haluza-DeLay lives in Toronto, in a household of other adults exploring what it means to be “community” with each other.*

## Et cetera

### Graphic designer wins peace award

Dona Park of Abbotsford, B.C., pictured right, was awarded the first #BringthePeace Award by Mennonite Church U.S.A. A graphic designer and digital illustrator, Park is a graduate of Goshen (Ind.) College. As an artist, she has worked with Women Peace Makers in Cambodia and is a co-author of *Navigating the Nexus of Art and Peace*. She has also contributed artwork for several peace and justice initiatives of MC U.S.A. The #BringthePeace Award is sponsored by the denomination’s Church Peace Tax Fund. To read more about the #BringthePeace Award, visit <https://bit.ly/3gRcNDi>.

Source: Mennonite Church U.S.A.



Dona Park



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 TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY
 

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# Making it personal

Joshua Penfold

**O**ccasionally, if my wife Rebecca doesn't get home when I was expecting her, my mind will become morbidly creative.

I mustn't be the only one who has "daymares" of their spouse dying in a car accident. Selfishly, I must admit I spend less time focusing on the details of the accident and more time on the repercussions of her death. I play out the grief I would experience, the heartache of parenting alone, the financial consequences, or whether I could fathom remarrying.

Then, somewhere down this dark and disheartening road, I get interrupted by the arrival of my very alive wife, oblivious that her 30-minute detour has caused me moderate emotional strife.

Perhaps a little melodramatic, but you get the point.

Enter poor unfortunate Ezekiel and his wife. Amid all the other creative and tangible ways God has used Ezekiel to portray to Israel messages of destruction, sinfulness and judgment, God is now going to use Ezekiel's wife as the next prophetic metaphor.

Many of the prophets have their work and family lives inextricably bound together. Hosea marries a known seductress for the purpose of using her

unfaithfulness as an image to draw upon in his prophecies. The names of Isaiah's children become the prophecy to Israel, while Jeremiah is not to have children as part of his prophetic word from God.

Ezekiel joins the ranks of mixing personal and professional when God tells him: *"I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes. Yet do not lament or weep or shed any tears. Groan quietly; do not mourn for the dead"* (Ezekiel 24:16-17).

My heart breaks for Ezekiel. For all who wish God would speak to you, take warning: Those prophets who heard from God did not live easier, more comfortable or reassuring lives because they heard from God.

What struck me most was the fact that the Scriptures were created not out of abstract objective ideas but were enfolded in the personal lives of the prophets. The message was tangible and relatable. The message was a story with a place, a time and a context.

When I began writing for this column, I was encouraged to focus on the places where my reflections intersected with my personal life. The editors liked how I used elements of my life to help me to connect with, and relate to, the Scriptures. It is called "Tales from

the Unending Story," recognizing that the story of God is interwoven throughout Scripture, but it extends beyond that and into all of history, into my life and your life.

Our lives then interact and intertwine with the stories of Scripture. All of our stories are in God and are part of the unending story of God.

My reflections use my life to help me better understand the story of God. This is similar to the ways that the prophets used their lives to help the people around them understand the story and message of God.

I'm not attempting to claim that my writing is prophetic in the same way, but if we have eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts that are open, we will find that God is, in fact, already using our stories, both joyous and painful, to help us more fully enter into the biblical story, God's story, the grand unending story. But we need to do the important work of stopping, reflecting and meditating on the biblical writings and on our own lives.

Although I desire to deepen my relationship with God through these practices, I still don't wish for Ezekiel's job. ❧



*Joshua Penfold (penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) loves the bewildering, bizarre, yet beautiful Bible.*

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## Et cetera

### Goshen alumni contribute to Pfizer vaccine efforts

Two Goshen (Ind.) College alumni played important roles in the development of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine against COVID-19. Robert Lerch was head of lab and site management, and business operations, at the pharmaceutical company Pfizer. He was responsible for many parts of the vaccine development process, including fulfilling lab and office space needs, keeping track of budgets and ensuring that Pfizer had enough scientists and researchers for the vaccine project. Mark Wittrig was senior director of quality assurance at Pfizer's manufacturing site in Kalamazoo, Mich. He was involved in the quality and regulatory aspects of the vaccine, working with scientists to ensure that each process, piece of equipment and testing procedure was qualified and validated. To learn more, visit [canadianmennonite.org/vaccine](http://canadianmennonite.org/vaccine).



Robert Lerch



Mark Wittrig

## VIEWPOINT

# The view from a large farm

By Ron Krahn

Over the last few months, I have read with interest and concern the articles and letters to the editor about farming, including one entitled “What would Jesus think about factory farms?” (March 29, page 12). Although factory farms are often associated with animal production, there are many parallels between large animal farms and large grain farms. As someone who co-owns and manages a large grain farm, I can speak with first-hand experience about why certain aspects of agriculture have gone large scale.

Increasing farm size is mainly driven by economic factors. Margins (or profits) are low in food production. The high cost of production relative to the profit level means the risk for the farmer is high. To make sure that the farm is economically viable, size (hectares or number of animals) is often increased. This is often referred to as “economies of scale.” So, over time, farm sizes grow just like almost every other business.

We see an example of a large farm—dare I call it a factory farm—back in biblical times. Job 1:3 describes Job’s farm, which included 11,000 animals. That would have been huge in those days! And Scripture says that Job was favoured by God.

My understanding of stewardship includes the idea of efficiency. A great example of stewardship is making the most of a resource, like land, water or nutrients, so we reduce the amount that is needed. *The More-with-Less Cookbook* was born out of the ideas of stewardship and efficiency:

- **Don’t waste.**
- **Get more food** with the same amount of inputs or ingredients.

Large farms are doing the same thing that every church does by using a



PHOTO COURTESY OF RON KRAHN

*Ron Krahn, pictured, and his family own and operate a 4,900-acre farm in Rivers, Man.*

50-cup coffee perk instead of a single-serving brewing machine for the after-service coffee time. But those kinds of farms are on a scale that is hard for many consumers to understand because many consumers are multiple generations away from living on a farm.

Our family farm produces wheat, canola, peas, soybeans, sunflowers and corn. It includes my brother and me, our spouses and kids, and our parents, who are easing into retirement. We have one full-time employee and two to three seasonal, part-time employees.

Increasing the size of our farm means we can afford technologies like GPS and section control. These reduce the amount of fertilizer, seed and chemicals we use on our farm by up to 6 percent. This technology would be unaffordable for a 400-hectare grain farm and is a great example of more-with-less in farming. Technology and education have allowed us to farm more than 10 times the amount of land that my grandfather did, without needing 10 times as many hours of labour.

I suggest that our land is healthier and more productive than when my grandfather farmed it. He did the best he could with the equipment, technology and knowledge available at the time. We now do the best we can, and our organic

matter is higher than 50 years ago, and we have fewer weeds. We have eliminated wind erosion and increased our soil tilth (a physical condition of soil, especially in relation to its suitability for planting or growing a crop), and water infiltration rates, due to our zero-till practice. These practices have greatly reduced the compaction in our soils while increasing our yields per hectare. This stewardship translates back to consumers in cheaper food than if factory farms didn’t exist.

It’s a first-world privilege to be able to choose how our food is produced. Many in our own country cannot afford to choose. The lowest price is the deciding factor.

There have been examples of abuse and mistreatment of animals and land from factory farms. This is unfortunate, and I will make no excuses for it. Farmers need to work to eliminate those instances. What is often forgotten, however, is that abuse happens on small-scale farms as well. For example, I know of a small farm engaged in regenerative agriculture practices that had animals die of malnutrition last year. Does that mean that all regenerative or small-scale agriculture is bad? Of course not. Just like not all large-scale farms are bad. There are farmers—large and small—who make poor choices or are faced with circumstances that don’t allow them to do what’s best for their animals or land.

There is room in the food production sphere for all types of systems—small and large. Organic farms and “conventional” ones that use fertilizers and pesticides. Farms that sell only to local consumers, and ones that ship their grain halfway around the world.

All have their place, and all supply food to the world. Forcing everyone to farm in a specific way because of ideology and good intentions will cause damage to the earth, our environment and society.

I believe Jesus would approve of factory farms whose land, animals, people and resources are used in a sustainable way. ☸

## NEWS

# Coming from a place of love

*Young Chippewayans invite Mennonites, Lutherans to a gathering of friendship at Stoney Knoll*

Story and Photos by Donna Schulz  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
LAIRD, SASK.

One by one, they slipped inside the large tent, out of the drizzle. They came from far and near to hear stories, share a meal, play games and enjoy each other's company.

On Aug. 24, the Young Chippewayan First Nation welcomed Mennonites and Lutherans from Laird and the surrounding area to a gathering of friendship at Stoney Knoll, the fourth gathering of its kind.

"We've come together to reassure non-Indigenous people," said Gary LaPlante on behalf of the Young Chippewayan people. "We're not here to displace anybody. These are truly friendship gatherings."

And friendship truly defined the day.

coordinator of Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan's Indigenous Neighbours Program, served as emcees, welcoming everyone who had come and introducing the day's speakers, singers and storytellers.

Hot homemade soups, bannock and Mennonite-style farmer's sausage warmed participants at midday, and then the games began. Delano Kennedy of Sweetgrass First Nation, near Gallivan, Sask., taught participants a variety of games that Indigenous children and youth used to play. Games using string, rope or pocket knives were played to develop dexterity and strength, and simply to have fun.

If successful, the guesser's team gets one of 12 sticks as a point. If unsuccessful, the hider's team gets a stick. The first team to get all 12 sticks is the winner.

Three groups of players, taught by Donovan Arcand, Kirkland Weenie and Kim Weenie, tried their hand at hand games, with both confusion and laughter ensuing.

Outside the rain ended and, to close the day's activities, Chief Sylvia Weenie led participants in a friendship dance.

Gatherings like this one have taken place at Stoney Knoll every five years since 2006. The first year, representatives of each of the three groups—the Young Chippewayan, the Mennonites and the Lutherans—signed a memorandum of understanding, stating that they would continue to work together to redress the wrongs of the past.

Stoney Knoll is a gentle rise of land several kilometres east of the North Saskatchewan River and about 70 kilometres north of Saskatoon, not far from the village of Laird. It was once part of Reserve 107, granted to the Young Chippewayan people following the signing of Treaty Six in 1867. In the years that followed, the Young Chippewayan people faced starvation, so they left their reserve in search of food. The Canadian government subsequently sold the land to Mennonite and Lutheran settlers without consulting the Young Chippewayan people.

Stoney Knoll was also once the site of St. John's Lutheran Church. Although the congregation eventually moved its church building to Laird, it retains title to the land and maintains its church cemetery there.

"I've had people asking me for permission to be here," said St. John's pastor, Jason Johnson. "That doesn't sit right with me. I never ask my children for permission [to visit], I just go see them."

In 1976, following the centennial of the



*Delano Kennedy, standing right, gives last-minute instructions as Randy Klassen, on the ground left, and Logan Janzen prepare to face off in a rope tug-of-war. This game is one of many that Indigenous children and youth used to play to test their skills and strength.*

As a light rain continued to fall outside the tent, inside people set up lawn chairs around the perimeter and chatted with their neighbours. They exchanged warm greetings with old friends and introduced themselves to newcomers.

LaPlante and Randy Klassen, the

Hand games continue to be popular in many Indigenous communities. In a guessing game, one player holds two small "bones" in closed fists. One "bone" is striped and the other is plain. A guesser on the opposing team tries to guess in which hand the hider is holding the plain bone.





**Donovan Arcand, kneeling centre, teaches participants how to play Indigenous hand games.**

signing of Treaty Six, Young Chippewyan descendants visited the Laird community to talk with the farmers about their claim to the land. The encounters resulted in fear and anxiety on the part of Mennonite and

Lutheran farmers, and frustration on the part of the Young Chippewyan people.

Thirty years later, Young Chippewyan Chief Ben Weenie approached the Mennonites and Lutherans to discuss

the possibility of having a party at Stoney Knoll. He and LaPlante assured farmers that they didn't want to take the land away from them. This was to be a gathering for building friendship and trust between the two groups.

When Ben Weenie died in 2016, his wife Sylvia became chief. She and her children carry on his vision of friendship.

"When we mix two nations, it's important to remember to come from a place of love," said daughter Kim Weenie. She spoke of how her father responded to conflict. "Dad always shook hands and walked away with a smile," she said, adding that those who attended the first Stoney Knoll gathering in 2006 had come together from a place of love. "That was before the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission], before reconciliation became a common word," she said. "I'm grateful we're still here, still laughing together. Dad lives on in everybody here."

Wilmer Froese, who farms nearby, responded to Kim's words. "Your dad's love is what made this possible," he said. %

To watch three videos of the event, visit [canadianmennonite.org/stoney-knoll-2021](http://canadianmennonite.org/stoney-knoll-2021).



**Chief Sylvia Weenie speaks at a friendship gathering hosted by the Young Chippewyan people at Stoney Knoll recently.**

# MCC volunteers worked at boarding school being probed

By John Longhurst

**M**ennonite Central Committee (MCC) supported an Indigenous boarding home that is under investigation by the Saskatchewan RCMP.

The Mounties say a complaint was made in 2020 about a death that potentially occurred at the Timber Bay Children's Home at Montreal Lake, Sask., in 1974.

At the time, the home was operated by the Brethren in Christ Church, (now called the Be in Christ Church), with support from MCC, that supplied volunteers for the home, which housed Métis, First Nations and non-Indigenous children, from across Canada from 1973 to 1990.

The home served as a school until 1969, when a school opened in Timber Bay and students went to that school. Some also went to a reserve school at nearby Montreal Lake First Nation.

No charges have been laid.

In a statement, Rick Cober Bauman, MCC Canada's executive director, said, "We lament the pain experienced by residential school survivors and intergenerational survivors. We are committed to walking alongside Indigenous peoples seeking justice and will co-operate fully with any investigations."

Given the legal status of the case, Cober Bauman said MCC was unable to provide further comment.

Although the Roman Catholic, United and Anglican churches operated most of the residential schools in Canada, Mennonites were involved in a few of them.

According to Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonites became involved with residential schools during the Second World War, when Mennonite conscientious objectors



MENNONITE HERITAGE ARCHIVES PHOTO

*The Timber Bay Children's Home at Montreal Lake, Sask., as it appeared in 1974.*

were placed as teachers in day and residential schools in Manitoba.

From 1948 to 1968, Mennonites operated day schools at Pauingassi and Bloodvein in Manitoba, and in Alberta. For 24 years, from 1962-1989, the Northern Light Gospel Mission, a Mennonite organization based in the United States, operated a residential school in northwestern Ontario at Poplar Hill. A related organization, Northern Youth Programs, also ran two residential high schools at Stirland Lake and Cristal Lake, also in northwestern Ontario, in the 1970s and '80s.

In 1997, both organizations apologized to Indigenous people for their role in residential schools. In subsequent years, the mission was re-organized, first as Impact North Ministries, then as Living Hope Native Ministries. The new organization issued another apology to students at Poplar Hill in 2013.

In 2014, MCC expressed regret for "our part in the assimilation practice that took away language use and cultural practice, separated child from parent, parent from child, and Indigenous peoples from their culture."

"We are aware that we have a long path to walk," MCC added. "We hope to build relationships with First Nations communities so that we can continue this learning journey and walk this path together." ❧

*John Longhurst is a faith reporter for the Winnipeg Free Press. Originally posted on winnipegfreepress.com on July 31. Reprinted by permission of the author.*

*A national Indian Residential School*

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*Crisis Line has been set up to provide support for former students and those*

*affected. People can access emotional and crisis referral services by calling toll-*

*free the 24-hour national crisis line at 1-866-925-4419.*

# 'This is my learning, my journey'

*Winnipegger is reading and researching all 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*

Story and Photo by John Longhurst  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

**L**ike many Canadians, Winnipegger Kim Thiessen was devastated when she learned about the 215 unmarked graves of children at the Kamloops, B.C., residential school earlier this year.

"I didn't know what to do with the sadness, despair and rage I felt," says the 57-year-old mother and grandmother.

After giving it some thought, she decided to educate herself about residential schools in Canada, along with learning more about the history of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

"I think that's what Indigenous people are calling us to do," she says. "They are calling on non-Indigenous people to learn about their experiences at the hands of the government and the churches."

Thiessen, who moved to Manitoba in 2016 from Alberta after working with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in that province for 18 years, decided to start her educational journey by reading and researching each of the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In making the decision, she was motivated by her faith; by her parents, who, she says, "patterned for me the importance of working for justice and fairness"; by her work at MCC, and also by her long-time friendship with a residential school survivor.

"I saw his pain, how he worked hard to not pass the trauma on to his children," she says.

She also is doing it because of her grandchildren.

"I want them to grow up in a world where equality and justice is expected, where all people can be seen as important," she says.

Soon after starting, Thiessen realized the experience could be more meaningful

if she shared what she was learning with provincial and federal politicians in order to spur them to take action.

Since starting the project, she has read and researched seven of the Calls to Actions and written about them to federal and provincial politicians. "After researching each call, I send them a letter about it," she says. She didn't expect any replies but has heard back from three of the politicians. "That meant a lot," she says.

When she gets to Calls to Action Nos. 58 to 61, which address the ways faith groups in Canada can respond, she plans to write letters to church leaders as well.

As part of her journey, Thiessen, who is a member of Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary, made a visit to residential school survivors tending the sacred fire at the Manitoba legislature grounds.

"I'm doing it for them, too," she says of her project. "They've been beating on doors for many decades, so I thought maybe it's okay if I do that, too."

Friends who know about her project have suggested that she post her letters and what she has learned online. She is not sure about that. So far, she says, "this



*'As a settler, I know very little,' says Kim Thiessen of Winnipeg. 'But I am trying. . . . I have a burning desire to set things right and do what I can.'*

is my learning, my journey, to do what I can to respond to the Calls to Action."

With 87 Calls to Action yet to do, Thiessen, who is between churches after moving into Winnipeg from rural Ste. Anne, Man., in December, knows the challenge is a big one. But it still feels like it is the least she can do.

"As a settler, I know very little," she admits. "But I am trying. . . . I have a burning desire to set things right and do what I can." ❧

**Hagerman Mennonite Church in Markham, Ontario is providing an "ALPHA for ALL" program through Zoom on Thursday evenings from September 23 to December 2, 2021 at 7:00 PM Eastern time.**

If you have been thinking about running an ALPHA program and would like to try it out, you are welcome to join. You may also invite a person in your congregation or a friend to join the program.

Let us know if you would like some promotional material for your friends or for your congregation.

**Contact: Andrew Reesor-McDowell at [arm5@sympatico.ca](mailto:arm5@sympatico.ca) or by phone at 905.642.0211.**



# MC Canada announces theme for Gathering 2022 in Edmonton

*'We Declare' will take place from July 29 to Aug. 1, 2022*

Mennonite Church Canada

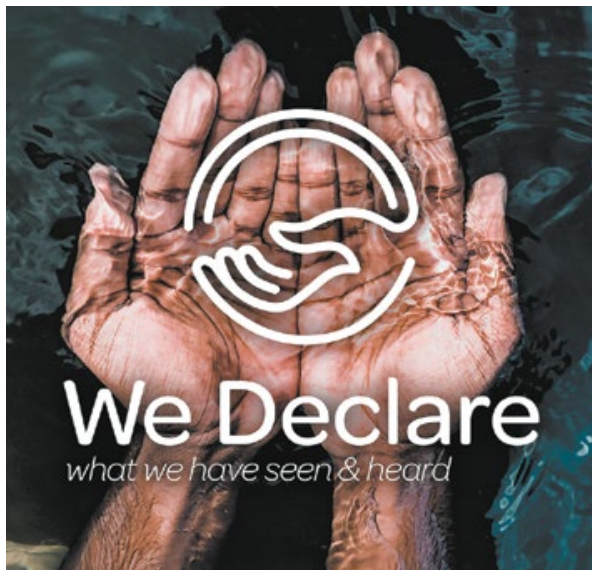
**“W**e declare: What we have seen and heard” will be an opportunity for members of the nationwide church to re-examine what it means to tell the good news and to share and hear stories of bearing witness to the gospel of peace.

“Across Mennonite Church Canada, the idea of sharing the good news elicits strong reactions, from ‘I owe my life to the person who invited me to faith in Jesus,’ to ‘I can hardly say the word ‘evangelism’” says Doug Klassen, MC Canada’s executive minister. “We need to have a nationwide conversa-

biblical and theological studies at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg.

- **Cheryl Bear**, a musician, speaker and teacher from Nadleh Whut’en First Nation in British Columbia.
- **Kara Carter**, lead pastor of Wellesley (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

There will also be programming for a Young Leaders Experience, for those aged 16 to 20, at Gathering 2022. Information about all youth programming is forthcoming.



tion about communicating our faith, and to nurture each other in how we bear witness to the gospel of peace in tumultuous places and times.”

The event, co-hosted by MC Canada and MC Alberta, will take place at the Holiday Inn Edmonton South, kicking off on the evening of July 29 and ending midday on Aug. 1.

Three guest speakers will engage the theme of witness and evangelism throughout the weekend:

- **John Boopalan**, assistant professor of

“Amplify: Giving voice to what we have seen and heard” is the theme for Youth Gathering 2022, to be held at Camp Valaqua, in Water Valley, Alta., from July 31 to Aug. 4.

“I am looking forward to having youth gather together under the trees to share stories and amplify their voices as part of the larger nationwide gathering,” says Joani Neufeldt, event coordinator for “Amplify.”

*Information about Gathering 2022 will be regularly updated at*

[mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022](https://mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022) and [mennonitechurch.ca/amplify](https://mennonitechurch.ca/amplify).



## Staff change

### Joani Neufeldt to coordinate Youth Gathering 2022



**Joani Neufeldt** has been hired by Mennonite Church Canada as the event co-ordinator for Youth Gathering 2022 in Alberta. “Amplify: Giving

Voice to What We Have Seen and Heard” is for youth ages 12 to 18; it will take place at Camp Valaqua, near Water Valley, from July 31 to Aug. 4, shortly after the main Gathering 2022 event in Edmonton, from July 29 to August 1. Neufeldt has extensive event planning experience. She plans the annual charity dinner and silent auction at Alberta’s Interfaith Food Bank. She is also a “lifer” at Camp Valaqua, having been a camper as a child/teen; most recently, served as head cook. She is excited that Gathering 2022 youth will meet at one of her favourite places. Currently a member of Lethbridge Mennonite Church, she graduated from Canadian Mennonite University in 2006 with a degree in biblical and theological studies. Recently she completed her second term as Christian education coordinator at Lethbridge Mennonite. Neufeldt looks forward to leading the Youth Gathering 2022 planning team and bringing her creativity to materials around the theme. She is passionate about youth programming because she has seen how important it is for teens to feel supported as they grow up.

—MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

# Fun in the sun

*Springridge Mennonite Church celebrates summer with a picnic*

By Joanne De Jong  
Alberta Correspondent  
HILL SPRING, ALTA.

The all-day annual Springridge Mennonite Church picnic was held this year at Fishburn Park on Aug. 15. Beginning with worship in the morning, the day included a potluck lunch; games in the afternoon, including an intergenerational baseball game, a ladder-ball-toss game, badminton, frisbee throwing and football; and ended with a barbecue supper. ☸



*Springridge Mennonite Church of Pincher Creek, Alta., begins its annual picnic with worship in Fishburn Park. The speaker was Bev Janzen, standing.*



PHOTOS BY TANY WARKENTIN  
*Kenai Warkentin participates in a ladder-ball-toss game at this year's Springridge Mennonite Church picnic.*



*Finley Anjo, left, and his mom, Hilary Janzen, share a big bag of peanuts at this year's Springridge Mennonite Church picnic.*



## VIEWPOINT

# Will COVID-19 create lasting divisions in churches?

By Will Braun

Senior Writer

The correlation is unavoidable. Some of the areas with the lowest vaccination rates in Canada are areas inhabited by lots of Mennonites.

*The Globe and Mail* reported on vaccination resistance in the Aylmer area of Ontario, with special mention of Mennonites.

The southern Manitoba city of Steinbach made national headlines for a COVID-19 spike and church-led anti-restriction protests. The city is so German-Russian Mennonite that not only does the mayor have a German-Russian last name (Funk) but his office is on a street with another such name (Reimer Avenue).

The Rural Municipality of Stanley in southern Manitoba, where I live, appears to have the lowest vaccination rates in the country (at press time, 22 percent of those over 12 had at least one dose). And German-Russian Mennonites are surely the dominant group here.

Winkler, a small, heavily-Mennonite city surrounded by the municipality of Stanley, has also made headlines as a hotbed of vaccine and mask intransigence. Even during the height of lockdown, I visited many businesses in which not even staff wore masks.

We Mennonites are clearly not “all in it together” with everyone else. No, of course it is not only Mennonites, and not generally Mennonite Church Canada Mennonites, but somehow the Mennonite heritage has proven fertile ground for people who respond to this pandemic with a focus on personal freedoms and a preference for conspiracy theories over medical advice.

The social toll of this is significant. Martin Harder, Winkler’s longtime mayor, told the *Winnipeg Free Press* that differing views on COVID-19 are “breaking families

apart,” as well as churches.

After hearing of an MC Eastern Canada congregation that expects to lose members who disagreed with COVID-19 restrictions in church, I wondered about the extent of pandemic-induced division in other churches.

So I talked to representatives of 10 MC Canada congregations:

- **Two urban churches**—one in BC, another in Winnipeg—reported no discernible tension. Everyone is on board with restrictions.

- **A pastor in rural Saskatchewan** said there are a handful of people in the congregation not coming because of risks posed by members who are not vaccinated. And some unvaccinated people are not coming because they feel like they are being treated like “lepers.”

Despite the sometimes “all-consuming” nature of COVID-19 and the uncertainty ahead, this pastor has an energetic attitude about the church’s future.

The other pastors I spoke with are in four southern Manitoba communities:

- **Corey Hildebrand** is pastor of family ministries at Emmanuel Mennonite in Winkler. The leadership at Emmanuel has chosen to promote vaccination, offering people rides to vaccine clinics and speaking about it from the pulpit and to the media.

Still, Hildebrand is open about tensions within the congregation. While those tensions are “manageable,” he said there are differing views that will not change. And then there is the awkward uncertainty of not knowing where some people are at.

“I would expect that we have lost people,”

Hildebrand said of members who may not return due to COVID-19 tensions.

With government-mandated restrictions now lifted in Manitoba, churches must decide what approach to take. These can be charged decisions.

After speaking to the *Winnipeg Free Press* about COVID-19 in May, Hildebrand said some local pastors contacted him privately saying they “wished they could have” spoken out publicly. When asked how he felt about this, Hildebrand acknowledged the importance of the backing of the leadership at Emmanuel and also noted that those other pastors could have had influence if they would have spoken up.

As for wearing the “Menno & Vaccinated” T-shirt someone gave him, you probably won’t see him in it around town.



Such is the climate in this area, where donning a mask is a loaded action.

- **Another southern Manitoba pastor** said views in his church span the spectrum,



although the majority are vaccinated. (*Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, I'm only naming pastors who have spoken previously to the media.*) This pastor said that 90 percent of people are probably fine with getting back to normal. But, he said, the measuring stick for the church is how we treat the weak and vulnerable.

"There's a small group in our congregation who are still very much at risk," he said. And some who are not vaccinated due to fear of being ostracized by family and friends not part of the congregation.

"I default to Scripture," he said, quoting Philippians 2: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition." He sees COVID-19 precautions as an opportunity to live out faith by putting the good of others ahead of individual freedom.

The leadership group in his church has spent much time discussing what to do now that government restrictions have turned into recommendations. It was easier, he said, when they could simply default to government requirements. Now, he said that "discernment is a moving target," with ongoing revision and revisiting required as the situation changes.

This pastor spoke about a "spirit of divisiveness." He asked: "How do we respond when this spirit enters into our homes and churches?"

He believes it is essential to listen to everyone. "People need to be heard," he said, and also appreciated. Then he graciously seeks to involve people in the complicated practical decisions required within the church context. Differing voices must be considered, various interests must be acknowledged, and the well-being of vulnerable people needs to factor in.

He told of an older woman saying to him, "I'm so glad we wore masks last Sunday; I feel more comfortable going to visit my husband in hospital now." People do not always consider those sorts of scenarios.

• **Mark Tiessen-Dyck**, lead pastor of Altona Bergthaler Church, wrote a piece for the local paper encouraging people to get vaccinated as an expression of love for their neighbours. He said the majority of people in his congregation are vaccinated and have accepted restrictions. His article was intended more for others: "My goal

was to write for people in churches where pastors are not saying anything, or people who hear church leaders discourage [vaccinations]." He wanted them to have another explicitly Christian view to consider.

Tiessen-Dyck is sensitive to the downsides of pastors taking sides on divisive matters, but he felt this was a time when he needed to be clear on what he believes.



**Kyle Penner, assistant pastor of Grace Mennonite in Steinbach, Man., is also the Mennonite poster boy for vaccinations in the province. Literally. Penner is on the advisory committee for Protect MB, the provincial government's COVID-19 outreach initiative.**

• **Another southern Manitoba pastor** said that members express frustration with inconsistencies in government restrictions, such as exceptions or big-box stores, but are still willing to follow the rules in church. He said he is going with the advice of doctors, although he added that health-care professionals in his church differ on how strenuous restrictions should be. He said there have been disagreements, but

overall he noted a good amount of healthy conversation and understanding. "People recognize their mutual exhaustion and frustration," he said. The isolation has been hard.

• **One pastor** talked of friends who have a toddler with cystic fibrosis. They won't risk public gatherings, so their daughter has never been to church. She is growing up not knowing what church is.

• **Kyle Penner** is another pastor who has made his views public. He is assistant pastor of Grace Mennonite in Steinbach. He is also the Mennonite poster boy for vaccinations. Literally. Penner is on the advisory committee for Protect MB, the provincial government's COVID-19 outreach initiative.

"I think there's a role for the church to save lives, protect the vulnerable, protect the immunocompromised [and] support health-care workers," Penner said.

He has the backing in his congregation of five medical doctors, one emergency-room nurse and two nurses who are leads at the local vaccine clinic. Grace Mennonite still requires masks and distancing.

Still, Penner assumes some people will stay home. He speaks a lot about those people. Who are the ones left out?

His concern is that the most vulnerable people—kids, the immunocompromised, the medically fragile—are the ones staying away from church, while the double vaccinated people who are least at risk can enjoy Sunday morning with others.

He knows of people who stay home every Sunday because medical factors prevent them from getting vaccinated or greatly increase their risk level. "I'm not okay with that," Penner said of these people being left behind.

The congregation has considered the possibility of a service specifically for such people.

Penner takes a long view. "This will end," he said, fully aware that the delta variant is likely to claim its toll in Manitoba before such an end. "In about 12 months, this is going to look very different for us," he said. "How do we plant seeds" for healing and reconciliation? ☸

# The MennoCast

*Grassroots podcast creates connections across nationwide church*

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent

**T**he *MennoCast*, a new podcast aimed at connecting Mennonites across Canada, launched on June 23.

“It’s been a dream for years. I’m just so happy that it’s out!” says Moses Falco, pastor of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg, and one of *The MennoCast* hosts. “It’s like we accomplished the goal! But it’s just the beginning.”

The project originated when the restructuring of Mennonite Church Canada in 2016 shifted the focus of ministry from the nationwide church to local congregations. As opportunities to gather with Mennonites across Canada decreased, Falco started to dream of ways they could stay connected.

If it doesn’t happen at the grassroots level, no one will do it, Falco realized.

There aren’t many Canadian Mennonites in the podcasting world. Some Mennonite organizations produce podcasts and location-specific church programming has popped up here and there, but it’s a niche that remains minimally populated.

Falco saw the opportunity to explore the audio field, and what developed was *The MennoCast*. He hosts it alongside two other pastors: Carrie Lehn, youth and associate pastor of Ottawa Mennonite Church; and Ryan Dueck, pastor of Lethbridge (Alta.) Mennonite Church. The four episodes released thus far have explored such questions as: “Why are young Christians choosing not to be baptized?” and “Is a hymnal a theological book?” and have featured guests like author Meghan Larissa Good and professor Irma Fast Dueck.

Falco’s interest in media started while studying at Canadian Mennonite University. “Studying communications gave me a love of different media, and how that could be integrated into ministry and the life of the church,” he says. He was simultaneously working in MC Canada’s



SCREENSHOT COURTESY OF MOSES FALCO

**The hosts of *The MennoCast*, pictured clockwise from top left, are: Carrie Lehn, pastor of Ottawa Mennonite Church; Moses Falco, pastor of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg; and Ryan Dueck, pastor of Lethbridge (Alta.) Mennonite Church.**

communications department, at that point a sizeable team, and saw how media could work within the church.

*The MennoCast* is different from other podcasts because of its intentional goal of creating nationwide connections.

“We are pastors and leaders in the church and we truly want to see the church flourish,” says Falco of those involved in the project. The hosts hope the podcast gets people talking and sharing ideas across borders, “hearing different perspectives and remembering it’s larger than just us,” he says.

“I think connection matters because Jesus calls us family,” says Lehn. “There’s no need to invent things other folks have already tried out. . . . When other churches have found something that works . . . we can share those ideas rather than being islands who are all trying to figure it out on their own.”

*The MennoCast*’s partnership with CommonWord demonstrates its desire to be a project for the whole church. As the Mennonite church’s main hub for collecting and curating Anabaptist resources,

CommonWord values featuring material produced at the grassroots.

Falco says it was a no-brainer to work together. CommonWord features all of the episodes on its website, and hosts giveaways of books and other products for listeners. *The MennoCast* also has an advisory committee, consisting of representatives from each area church.

Having a network scattered across the country and in different communities will help the hosts identify voices that are often not heard in the church.

“We have so much to learn from voices we haven’t heard and things we haven’t experienced. We don’t know what we don’t know,” Lehn says.

Their conversation about anti-racism, featured in an upcoming episode, stood out for her. “How important it is for us to understand historically we have been a white church and what kind of impact that has on our current church,” she says. “I’m so grateful for the BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, People of Colour] people who were willing to speak with us on the podcast and share a bit of their experience.”

Although *The MennoCast* has partners, the hosts operate independently. It’s this combination of partner and individual that they hope will birth “honest conversations that bring life to the church,” says Falco. “We wanted to be separate enough that we could be ourselves. We’re not speaking on behalf of [MC Canada] or any of our churches, we’re just speaking on behalf of ourselves.” Not representing an organization allows the hosts to be more open and honest with each other and their guests, he says.

This pilot season of *The MennoCast* will run until September, for a total of six episodes. The next season will start in 2022 and will follow a theme. It will run for half the year, releasing episodes every two weeks. The other half of the year they will listen for, “What does the church need to hear at this time?” and plan the next season around that.

“I’m really hoping in the next years that this can be a platform to engage with the nationwide church in an ongoing way that connects and enriches us,” like the other programs the church runs, Falco says.

He wonders if the podcast might also give a wider audience insight into who Mennonites are. “Now there will be something out there that offers insight and

maybe even draws people to Anabaptism. Visit The MennoCast at <https://themennocast.com>, and



on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @themennocast.

# MDS monitoring wildfires in B.C. and U.S.

*Prayers invited for those caught in the fires*

Mennonite Disaster Service

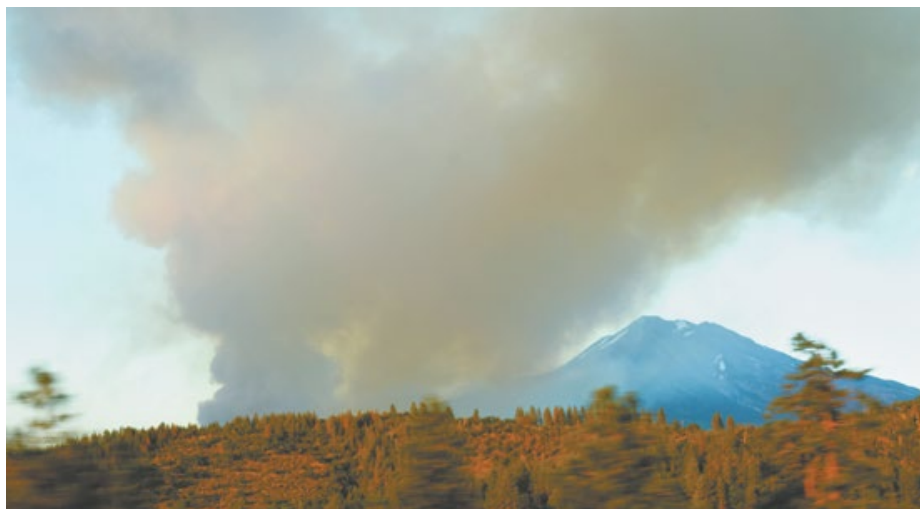
**M**ennonite Disaster Service (MDS) is monitoring the wildfire situation in British Columbia and the western and central United States.

In British Columbia, more than 260 fires have burned 650,000 hectares, compared to an average of 140,000 hectares a year. One fire destroyed about 90 percent of the town of Lytton, killing two people and injuring several others.

Hot temperatures, dry conditions and

Rempel says. “We are willing to assist if requested.”

In California and 14 other states in the western and central U.S., MDS is reaching out in prayer for the thousands of people forced to evacuate, not knowing whether they’ll come back to find anything left. By Aug. 10, the 107 largest blazes in the U.S. had burned through more than 810,000 hectares, according to the National Inter-agency Fire Center.



MDS PHOTO BY STEVE WIEST

**Fire season is in full swing all along the west coast of the United States and in British Columbia.**

high winds are exacerbating the situation, says Mark Rempel of MDS B.C., which is in contact with Mennonite Central Committee B.C. and others about possible responses. “It’s very early days for us in terms of knowing what MDS can do,”

The largest—the Dixie Fire in northern California—destroyed nearly all of the historic Gold Rush town of Greenville on Aug. 4. It is still not contained despite the efforts of more than 5,000 firefighters.

Fire officials also note the high potential

for severe wildfire activity throughout the western United States through the rest of summer and into the fall.

“The drought is the big driver in this right now, and it stretches from Mexico far up into Washington,” says Steve Wiest, operations coordinator for MDS on the west coast.

MDS volunteers are currently building six new homes in Paradise, Calif., nearly three years after Camp Fire—the single most destructive wildfire in California history and the worst in the United States in a century—burned more than more than 11,000 houses to the ground in November 2018.

“The Dixie Fire started about the same place as the Camp Fire, but moved in the opposite direction,” says Wiest. “Green-ville was 75 percent wiped out in one day.” Wildfires are to California and other drought-stricken states what hurricanes are to the eastern seaboard, he says. “There’s a lot of trauma from a fire. For people that live through a fire and had to run from the flames, or run through the flames, they will suffer for the rest of their lives.”

A big part of what MDS does is give people hope and help them heal, says Wiest. “We spend time listening to them tell their story. The rebuilding can’t happen right away.” In fact, rebuilding usually doesn’t get started until more than a year after a wildfire is contained.

But the trauma still feels fresh for many, Wiest says. “As the Dixie Fire burns, the people in Paradise can see the smoke and that causes a traumatic reaction,” he says. “For the school kids, when the lights flicker in the classroom, they start crying.”

In fires this large, there is no partial damage to homes, he says, adding, “The only thing you can do is complete rebuilds.”

Until more information becomes known about what roles MDS could play in the west and central U.S. and B.C. in response to current wildfires, MDS invites people to pray for those in areas affected by these wildfires. ❧



# 'The power of small things'

*Circle of Friends program described as 'transformative'*

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO REGION, ONT.

**C**ircle of Friends is described as a “humble program” with “humble goals.”

Margaret Smart, the program’s coordinator, believes it is “an amazing example of the power of small things.”

Part of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario’s larger Walking With People in Poverty program, Circle of

Friends “supports individuals and families transitioning from homelessness and shelter living into the Kitchener-Waterloo community.”

about people “coming around and sharing life,” she says. A participant insists that this was the best thing that had ever happened in his life.

Current and former participants and volunteers can also take part in monthly gatherings, as well as in workshops lasting from four to six weeks. The workshops

they still experienced isolation. They left behind a community they found on the streets, and they had trouble re-connecting with friends and family they lost touch with when they became homeless.

Smart says even “when you get your stability back, you find yourself isolated. In order to rebuild a life you need a community around you.”

At first, the program was geared to women and was operated out of Mary’s Place, but it expanded to include any adult experiencing homelessness, and now operates out of MCC’s Kitchener office.

Workers at the Kitchener-Waterloo Housing Stability System refer participants.

Smart says that many people experiencing homelessness “have deep levels of traumatization,” and the “frontline workers supporting them . . . are doing the best they can with very little.” She cites the need for a larger infrastructure of support for mental health and addictions, housing and fair employment, to help people “transition into a more stabilized life.”

She admits that the need can feel overwhelming. But a Circle of Friends can provide community and belonging, as other resources become available.

Volunteers, who do not need to be social workers or therapists, go through an orientation and training session before being matched with a participant. Many admit they thought they understood poverty or homelessness, but through the program “their eyes were opened” and they learned so much about the challenges, barriers and “the humanity of really seeing each other.”

Smart says volunteers often “become amazing advocates” by taking that experience and new knowledge into their churches, their communities and their voting. For Smart, it is another example of how “small, humble things



PHOTO COURTESY OF MCC ONTARIO

*Circle of Friends participants connect at their 2019 fall gathering.*

offer different approaches to healing and restoration, using art or narrative therapy, drama, photography and cooking, and they include both hands-on and therapeutic elements.

While the program shrank during the pandemic, a few groups continued to meet through video chats or phone calls. This meant getting tech devices to people who did not have access, and learning “a whole new set of skills,” Smart says.

Circle of Friends began just over 20 years ago, when Margaret Nally, who worked with Mary’s Place, a Kitchener shelter for women, helped to build connections between MCC and the local shelter system. It grew out of a recognition that, even if women were getting housed,

The circle is an important symbol. It’s

are transformative.”

Circle of Friends and its community partners were ready to celebrate the program’s 20th anniversary when COVID-19 hit in 2020.

Smart says it was “very hard to cancel,” but it will celebrate 25 years instead.

In the meantime, staff and volunteers intend to reconnect with people

who lost touch through the pandemic, and strengthen ties with their partners, in keeping with how MCC’s programs emerge out of the needs of, and in partnership with, the community.

Smart sees Jesus as a model for how to do this kind of ministry. “It’s about Jesus going after the one sheep . . . and we bring others around that person,” she says, as

Christ calls people into community, relationship and walking with one another. “That’s what he did and that’s what he invited us to do in his name.”

She says she recalls “all of the conversations that Jesus had and the tables he sat around and how that brought healing. . . . We are inviting people to experience that kind of community.” ❧

## Community outreach successful with summer VBS

By Amy Rinner Waddell  
B.C. Correspondent

In a summer when many public activities, including church services, were curtailed, Living Hope Christian Fellowship of Surrey, B.C., hosted a Vacation Bible School (VBS) program from Aug. 9 to 13. Last year, Living Hope’s VBS had only 10 children attending in person, with seven online. By contrast, this year 38 children came, all in person.

Reaching out to the community has always been a priority for Living Hope. The congregation has become increasingly multicultural, reflecting the community of Surrey/North Delta, and has a sizable Karen population. Half of this year’s attendees were community children.

VBS was held in three-hour in-person sessions daily each morning and afternoon, following COVID-19 protocols in place at the time, that did not require the wearing of masks; since then, masks have become mandatory again, following rising COVID-19 numbers in the province.

Living Hope publicized the event by sending registration

forms to the local school before the school year ended and putting registration forms on the church’s front door. A sign was put outside the church advertising the day camp’s theme, dates and cost, along with mentioning that it would be hosted in person.

“Wilderness escape—Where God guides and provides” was the theme for VBS this year.

“In this theme of trusting God, we went through the story of God leading the Israelites to the Promised Land and

how he was faithful in his promises to his people, and how he is that same God to us today,” says Alyssa Hordyk of the church’s children’s ministry program.

“We had 25 enthusiastic volunteers helping throughout the week,” she says. “It is always a highlight of Living Hope’s summer. People are always so ready to pitch in and be a part of it all. I am so grateful to the Lord for his kindness and provision as we serve him in spreading the good news of Christ.” ❧



LIVING HOPE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP PHOTO

*Living Hope Christian Fellowship of Surrey, B.C., hosted a Vacation Bible School program in August, with half the children attending coming from the community.*



## PEOPLE

# 'It's obvious!'

*Retiring Grebel chaplain reflects on why he took the job 23 years ago*

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

**E**d Janzen says, "It's obvious!"

It's obvious why he would want to serve as chaplain of Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., for 23 years. Janzen, who retired at the end of July from a job he loved, names several things that inspired his work.

He says his "most cherished responsibility" was to walk with young adults through what he calls both a thrilling and terrifying time of life when big questions about identity, vocation, relationships and purpose persist. He says that "to be trusted with [the] vulnerability that came with those conversations" was "the best way to express my ordination vows."

As Grebel's chaplain, blending academic teaching with worship planning, community events and pastoral care was a "dream of a lifetime" kind of job. He also taught courses, mostly in sociology, each fall and winter semester, and met regularly with a student committee to plan weekly chapels. He offered pastoral care for students, interviewed students for the residence and contributed to community events and celebrations.

Several events in his past seem to foreshadow his role as chaplain. On a family road trip when he was in Grade 4, he remembers his grandmother turning around and, in German, asking the children in the back of the station wagon, "So, who is going to be the preacher?" Janzen's reply was "Oh, I will!"

In seminary, during a vocation conversation with his supervisor, he stated, "I would like to retire from Conrad Grebel as a chaplain," which was strange since he knew very little about the place at the time. Other signals pointed toward ministry, he says. As a young person he helped to run a church day camp, preached his first sermon and got involved in youth group leadership. He was a pastor for several



PHOTO COURTESY OF CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

**Ed Janzen, right, meets with the Grebel chapel committee members: from left: Rebekah Lindsay, Suomi MacCarthy and Andre Wiederkehr.**

years before coming to Grebel as chaplain.

But it was an experience in university that most profoundly shaped the chaplain he would become. Martin Sawatsky, a conference chaplain stationed in London, Ont., where Janzen attended university, hosted young adults in his home weekly for soup, Bible study and conversations. "It was such a vital piece of learning for me . . . of becoming aware of my own faith and how necessary a community and a group of people are to sustain and support that faith's growth" Janzen recalls.

It was a model he used in his own role as Grebel's chaplain, where he met each week with a student chapel committee. Mostly following the lectionary readings for the church year, they began each meeting by reading the text together to "figure out where the Scripture is going to take us." For him, worship begins in "a community

read of Scripture."

He says, "I have a hard time getting anxious for the church when it comes to young adults. Instead, he asks if older adults have relationships with younger people in the church. "Do they have a relationship with a young adult?" He says, "if adults spend time with young adults, you will discover a vital church." Young adults "will help us find a way to discover what God wants to do next. . . . There will be a resilient movement."

Instead of redesigning worship services in order to attract young adults, "spend more time thinking about who you can invite out for coffee," he says. Invite and nurture them into leadership responsibilities, he suggests, and then recognize and celebrate their successes. He calls it "sacred space" to be a witness to what young adults are doing and "to tell the story back to



them of their past faithfulness.”

In his time as chaplain, Janzen has observed a greater openness to talk about mental-health challenges like anxiety and depression. He says there is “no greater pastoral or professional satisfaction” than to be able to “companion” young adults, as they “recognize that challenge is a necessary part of development” and figure out how to live with their limitations.

To sum up his work as chaplain, Janzen says, “More than anything it’s about doing my part to build the family of God . . . doing what increases love in the world.”

He likes the quote, “God draws straight with crooked lines,” saying, “Grace is discovered through the crookedness of the path. If we would be part of this great project of love that is God’s cosmos, then best to understand that the distance between Point A and Point B is shortest if we follow the crooked line of love.”

He acknowledges that there were stresses and tensions in the job, and times when he could not always neatly manage his self-care, but in times like this he asks, “Can we give ourselves and trust that God will provide past our abilities, past our energy, past our own wisdom?”

Janzen is looking forward to spending more time woodworking, gardening and sailing, as he waits for what comes to him next. “Development transitions don’t stop after retirement,” he says. ✎



PHOTO COURTESY OF CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

**Ed Janzen, middle, meets with students Kenzie Thielmann, left, and Cameron Warren as part of his role as chaplain of Conrad Grebel University College.**

# ‘The frontlines are where history is being made’

*MC Canada/CPT intern enthusiastic about her month at the Unist’ot’en camp in northern B.C.*

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent



**Allegra Friesen Epp**

**A**llegra Friesen Epp is wrapping up a six-month internship with Mennonite Church Canada and Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), but she is already brainstorming ways to continue doing solidarity work.

The internship is the first of its kind, created by MC Canada’s Indigenous-Settler Relations (ISR) office and CPT’s Turtle Island Solidarity Network. From February to July, Friesen Epp immersed herself in peacemaking and solidarity work. She connected with local and national groups organizing around environmental and decolonization issues. She helped plan a rally to protest a legislative bill that she says endangers people’s rights to peaceful protest. She walked with Mama Bear Clan, an Indigenous-led community street patrol in Winnipeg’s inner city.

Friesen Epp attends Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and graduated from Canadian Mennonite University there in 2020. She did her practicum in MC Canada’s ISR office, helping coordinate a two-week walk through Alberta to raise awareness about treaties and a rally in support of Bill C-262, a piece of Indigenous rights legislation.

“I care deeply about justice and the dignity of all peoples, and one of the fundamental injustices in this country that we now call Canada is the treatment of Indigenous peoples,” she says.

It’s an issue Home Street Mennonite has explored over the years, and she hopes other congregations will do the same. To help with this, she created and compiled prayers, sermon ideas, songs, artwork and stories that churches can use to take

action towards reconciliation in their communities.

She says that her time at the Unist’ot’en camp was the most impactful experience of her internship. The camp has been a place of Indigenous “resistance and resurgence” on unceded Wet’suwet’en territory in northern British Columbia for over 12 years. Friesen Epp and four others formed a joint CPT-MC Canada accompaniment team that spent a month at the camp this



PHOTO BY STEVE HEINRICHS

**The CPT-MC Canada accompaniment team spent a month at Unist’ot’en camp in unceded Wet’suwet’en territory in northern B.C., learning from Indigenous land defenders and helping wherever they were needed.**

June, at the invitation of the land defenders there.

As guests on the territory, they listened, learned and helped out in whatever ways possible. They built tiny houses, chopped firewood, cooked meals, washed dishes, and shared food and stories.

It’s a beautiful place, she says, adding

that there is so much more going on there than just pipeline resistance, which was well documented in the media in 2020, including *Canadian Mennonite*. A central feature of the camp is the healing centre, which provides cultural teachings, runs youth camps and reconnects people with the land.

Life at the camp is a decades-long effort to rectify land-rights violations and protect a whole way of life inseparable from creation, she says.

“A major learning for me was realizing that if we, as a church, can be present in these places, we would learn so much about what it means to care for creation,” she says. “It became really apparent to me

that the frontline struggles are the places to be right now. As we reach unprecedented heat waves, and as climate change increases, and as the call for land back and Indigenous sovereignty is stronger than ever, the frontlines are where history is being made.”

Friesen Epp says that MC Canada and CPT’s partnership is exciting because both organizations can learn from each other: the church from CPT’s frontline work and CPT from the church’s strong faith focus. She hopes more people will consider getting involved with opportunities like these.

“Allegra is an incredible young leader, with so many gifts and passions to add

to the work of the circle,” says Steve Heinrichs, director of Indigenous-Settler Relations for MC Canada, co-chair of CPT’s steering committee, and a member of the accompaniment team. “And there are others like Allegra in our constituency, who care deeply about reconciliation, decolonization and climate justice. Internships like this create space, not only for Allegra to grow in faith and hone her skill, but to help me and the institution do the same.

“When we link arms, we are not only stronger together, but we’re often more creative and courageous,” he says. “I’m praying that we can do this again!” ❧

## ‘What choice did I have?’

*Social entrepreneur takes leaps of faith to become a  
‘Mennonite called into business’*

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
FLORADALE, ONT.

It has happened more than once. Someone approaches social entrepreneur Leon Kehl with the name of a highly qualified person who needs help getting a start in Canada. Kehl has learned these nudges often have “God’s fingerprint all over them,” so he takes a “leap of faith” and hires the person. “People come into my life. . . . How do you not see God in that?” he asks. “What choice did I have?”

This is just one way that faith impacts Kehl and Boxbrite Technologies, the tech start-up business he founded. Of the 20 people he employs, 11 were refugees and several others are skilled immigrants. Kehl believes their diversity makes them a better workforce. “Homogeneity limits us,” he says.

Boxbrite develops the technology to automate the process of monitoring solar power systems remotely, using software to detect malfunctions much more efficiently than individuals onsite could do.

Kehl is intentional about hiring



newcomers to Canada. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in 2001, he realized the importance of people from different backgrounds getting to know one another, so he visited Israel, Palestine and Turkey, and participated in Muslim-Mennonite dialogues. He worked with his congregation, Floradale Mennonite Church, to sponsor refugees stranded in Syria, and with other groups in the community to sponsor additional families. By the time he started Boxbrite, he had already helped five newcomers get established in Canada, and he wanted to keep helping others as part of living out his Mennonite faith.

He employs people from countries and

faith traditions who might ordinarily see each other as enemies. “Bringing people together like that,” he says, “how do you not see God in that?”

Recently, Boxbrite employees attended a rally against Islamophobia in Kitchener, Ont., after a Muslim family in London, Ont., was run down with a vehicle in an incident being treated as a hate crime. Kehl describes attending that rally together as a real “God moment.”

The team also has virtual coffee and tea breaks, and meets outdoors occasionally for a hike or a picnic as ways of staying connected.

Kehl also sees entrepreneurial work in the alternative energy sector as a way to put faith into action. He says people “need to transfer to green energy” because they “cannot keep going” the way things are.

But just because the solar industry is “green” does not make all of its players good. Companies that install panels do not always provide customers with





PHOTO BY AARON NEUFELD

**Employees of Boxbrite Technologies—pictured from left to right: Aaron Neufeld, Enes Demirsoz, Joseph Olmez, Lori-Ann Livingston, Niloofar Abbasvandi, Alina Kehl, Shirin Talaei, Seyma Nur Ozcan and Leon Kehl—attend a rally against Islamophobia. Kehl, who started the company, intentionally hires newcomers to Canada, and fosters a sense of community among his employees who work from home.**

information on potential faults or failures, or on how to monitor a system to ensure it is working properly. Boxbrite wants to ensure that solar panels and inverters work efficiently for decades.

In a recent article about his business venture in *Marketplace*, the publication of Mennonite Economic Development Associates, Kehl cited an example from South Africa where, out of six village solar panel projects funded by European agencies, none of the systems were working after five years, and in one village the disconnected solar panels were being used as roofing for a latrine.

Kehl says Boxbrite can offer cost-effective monitoring that would avoid such failures. He sees this as “necessary work” that is “no different than feeding people.” As someone who began commuter programming as a teen, he likes to use software to solve problems.

Kehl only recently started to embrace the label “businessman,” avoiding it for years because of negative stereotypes that link business people with the love of money, something Jesus critiqued often. Over and over again, Kehl finds himself wrestling with God, only to find himself, like a reluctant Moses after his burning bush experience, stepping out in faith.

“I didn’t choose this path,” Kehl says. “I can’t make my business succeed. I can only be faithful.” It has taken him a couple of years of wrestling with God to be able to say he is a “Mennonite called into business.”

Several books that came into his life at the right time shaped how he approaches business. Titles like *Why Business Matters to God*, *The Soul of an Entrepreneur: Work and Life Beyond the Startup Myth* and *Good Work* helped him understand the purpose of business from

a faith perspective, and the importance of creating meaningful work opportunities for people. Many humble Mennonite business leaders have also inspired him.

Kehl has two master’s degrees, in business administration and spiritual direction. He finds himself “taking the tools [he] learned as a spiritual director and applying them in a business context.”

Listening to the stories of those he employs has led to many powerful conversations about faith, he says, allowing him to see a broader view of God. Being attentive to God’s leading also helps him turn over control to God. “I couldn’t do it without a faith orientation . . . because I would assume it is up to me,” he says. “Control and faith are mutually exclusive.” ❧



## /// Staff change

### Pastoral transition in British Columbia



**Dan Forest** is the new pastor of United Mennonite Church of Black Creek, B.C. He was previously development manager at Camp Luther in Mission, B.C., and has also served as associate pastor of Blockhouse Bay Community Church in Auckland, New Zealand. Forest, who started at United Mennonite on July 1, is married to Amy Forest, and they have two young daughters.

—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

### Mennonite Church Manitoba pastoral transitions



**Harold Peters-Fransen** has retired from pastoral ministry after 43 years of service. On June 30, he finished as pastor of Elim Mennonite Church in Grunthal, Man., a position he held for eight years. He began his career in ministry as a youth worker

for the United Mennonite Conference of Ontario, then proceeded to pastor in 11 churches across Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Many of these positions—the ones held from 2000-2013—were as intentional interim pastor. He also worked for a period as interim director of leadership ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba. He holds a master of divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.



**Norm Voth** will begin serving as intentional interim pastor of Elim Mennonite Church in Grunthal, Man., on Sept. 1. He will be walking with the church through this transitional period in a full-time two-year term. Voth earned a bachelor of theology degree from Canadian Mennonite Bible College, a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University, in Winnipeg. He most recently retired from work at Manitoba Hydro, but he previously worked for MC Manitoba and pastored for 32 years in three congregations.

—NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

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# Making a 'beautiful purpose statement' tangible

*Kindred Credit Union offers financial literacy workshops*

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

Recent research shows a “high percentage of people . . . find personal financing incredibly intimidating,” says Frank Chisholm, director of brand and marketing for Kindred Credit Union. Some people feel guilty for starting financial planning too late in life. Others experience barriers when it comes to accessing financial products and services. Throw in a pandemic causing people to re-evaluate their priorities, and there is an appetite for help to manage one’s finances.

Ben Janzen, director of values integration at Kindred, points to what he calls the “beautiful purpose statement” of Kindred as a starting point; it provides “cooperative banking that connects values and faith with finances inspiring peaceful, just and prosperous communities.”

Offering workshops in financial literacy is one way Kindred lives out that vision.

Staff volunteer their time to offer Each One Teach One (EOTO), a program of the Canadian Credit Union Association. “Delivered in plain language in schools, church basements . . . and community centres,” the approach of EOTO is “meeting people where they are at with the literacy that they need at the time.”

The program is open to members and non-members of Kindred. During the pandemic, it moved online, and already this year more than 20 of the interactive workshops have been offered to a few hundred people.

Designed for adults, they last between 60 and 90 minutes and cover 17 topics, including: basic banking, budgeting, credit cards, loans, home ownership and retirement savings. They can be tailored for a variety of community groups.

Janzen says the “financial system is not built for marginalized groups,” but they need this information. Barriers might include

language, systemic racism or lack of access to technology. Janzen wants to modify or translate content in order to address and try to overcome some of the barriers.

For Kindred staff, financial literacy is part of a larger context. In consultation with their community and staff, they have developed a Community Inspiration Framework, made up of 10 themes, to guide how they make their purpose statement tangible.

Amy Zavitz, community engagement specialist at Kindred, describes “financial empowerment” as one relevant theme with four pillars:

- **Inclusion:** Who can access products and services? What are the barriers, and why?
- **Financial literacy:** Building skills and knowledge.
- **Capability building:** Feeling empowered to take control of your finances and make a plan.
- **Celebration:** Marking goals and milestones, like graduation, vacation and home ownership.

Janzen says that being literate is not enough in order to fully participate. In addition, people “need to feel included, see themselves in what is happening, and have access to products and services” that can “meet unique population needs.”

They also need what he calls “values literacy” in order to choose financial products and services. Branch staff educate members, ask about their values, and try to meet them where they are.

“We would never sell a product to a member who didn’t know what it was and how it works,” Janzen says. “Our value system is not about accumulation of wealth.” One unique thing Kindred members want is education on socially responsible investing.

Max Bentz, vice-president of member

relations, says mutual aid is a founding value of Kindred, and topics such as tithing and charitable giving are part of the conversation.

Chisholm says that being a good steward of what God has provided is a “core value” that is “part of our DNA.” He adds that, when members are in financial difficulty, there are some crisis-care services Kindred can offer because other members have put money on deposit at low interest.

Kindred is also a “living wage champion,” affirming that “paying a living wage aligns with our values and it’s a critical investment in our collective prosperity.”

Chisholm sees financial literacy as something that has happened naturally, in the day-to-day conversations staff have with members since Kindred began in 1964.

Bentz says, “It’s all about relationships . . . being able to walk with the members no matter if they’ve got a million dollars to invest or a hundred dollars to invest.”

Beyond EOTO, there are more advanced workshops on topics like how to start a registered education savings plan or get an appraiser.

Janzen says financial literacy can be important at any stage of life, and it can benefit individuals, businesses and non-profit organizations.

Chisholm says Kindred offers a free resource that helps churches do a “spring cleaning” of their finances, as they try to maintain viability through the pandemic.

Janzen sees financial literacy as part of a commitment to walk with people through all the stages of their lives. We are “in it for the long haul—the long-term health of our members.”



IMAGE BY MAYA MORTON NINOMIYA

*An image from Kindred Credit Union’s Community Inspiration Framework illustrates one of the 10 themes—financial empowerment—that guides how Kindred makes its purpose statement tangible.*

## FOCUS ON MONEY

# 'Numbers people' are worth their weight in gold

Story and Photos by Charleen Jongejan Harder

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
Leamington, Ont.

Every church has a plethora of creative ministries, but a couple roles will show up everywhere.

Tallying up deposits and withdrawals, monitoring budgets and submitting forms, the “numbers people”—treasurers and bookkeepers—toil in basement corners and home offices, month in and month out. Without these roles being faithfully administered, a church will be financially unviable, and risk its charitable status with the Canadian government.

A small church might have one volunteer serving both roles; another congregation might give the bookkeeping portion of the role to a paid staff member. In some contexts, the treasurer role is very signifi-

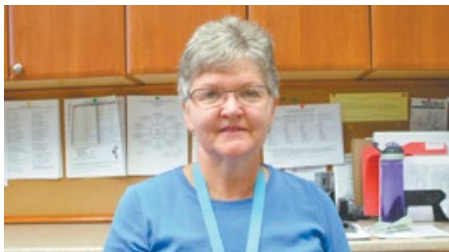


PHOTO BY DEBBIE SRIGLEY

**At North Leamington United Mennonite Church, the day-to-day ‘numbers’ work is handled by Susan Klassen, the church administrator.**

cant, in others it is smaller.

In most instances, these roles are faithfully executed behind the scenes, with little pomp and circumstance. In all cases, they are worth their weight in gold, whether the limelight is on them or not.

Brenda Klassen took over the treasurer role at North Leamington United Mennonite Church in January. She had previously held the treasurer’s role 10 years ago, when her children were still at home.

“There aren’t that many people in the congregation who can do it,” she says. “Many people have no interest in the financial part. For me, when we’re done with the financial part at the [annual general meeting], I can go home. My daughters don’t like math. They don’t want to deal with it.”

David Papke of Harrow (Ont.) Mennonite Church, has been the volunteer bookkeeper and treasurer for more than two decades, and it is unlikely that anyone is stepping up anytime soon to fill his shoes. He understates the value of his role, saying, “It’s not that big a deal, really.”

Brenda, an experienced bookkeeper in private business, estimates the treasurer’s role takes less than an hour in a typical week, but there is a surge every now and then, especially at year-end and in tax season. “If I work at keeping up to date during the year, the year end should be easier,” she says.

At North Leamington, the day-to-day work is handled by Susan Klassen, the church administrator, who probably puts in half her time towards the numbers work. Susan and Brenda are confident in each other’s work.

Treasurers typically also sit on a church council, attending monthly meetings and giving leadership at the annual general meeting, staying in the loop on what’s happening in the congregation.

Brenda’s least favourite part is giving the presentations. “I’m a numbers person, not a word person,” she says.

Susan has been the administrator at North Leamington for more than 16 years. “It’s my job to keep a close eye on the accounts,” she says. “It’s my job to see it, to know what’s coming up, and if we’re going to be okay.”

The most stressful elements, particularly post-COVID-19, is keeping track of the



PHOTO BY SUSAN KLASSEN

**Tallying up deposits and withdrawals, monitoring budgets and submitting forms, the ‘numbers people’—treasurers and bookkeepers—toil in basement corners and home offices, month in and month out.**

many varied ways that donations come: e-transfers, pre-authorized debit, cheques mailed to the church or deposited at the credit union, in addition to what may be left in the collection plate in the sanctuary, now that some people are meeting in person.

For Marlene Schmidtgall, who recently assumed the role of bookkeeper at Leamington United Mennonite, there’s a lot to learn, but numbers work is relaxing in its structure. The role has opened her eyes to what’s going on everywhere in the church. “A lot of people put a lot of hours and a lot of thought into the work of the church,” she says, noting, “A good treasurer is gold.”

Some can carry stress about the financial health of the congregation, but a healthy perspective develops over time.

“It took me a long time to realize,” says Brenda, “but I can do only so much. I can’t give all the money. I can’t fix it.”

In a farming community in Essex County, the treasurer monitors the lean months early in the financial year, anticipating the richer season of giving at the end of the year, when the harvest comes in.

“I’ve grown up knowing that’s how it works,” Brenda says. “So many were farmers, and you gave in fall, because that’s when you have the money.”

If anything, the bookkeepers’ and treasurers’ time with the numbers has taught them to trust in God. “God provides,” they say.



## FOCUS ON MONEY

Susan confesses: “In 16 years, I have seen God provide over and above. I am concerned, but I have seen it time after time. Sometimes it’s the last day of the fiscal year, and cheque after cheque after cheque comes in. It’s amazing.”

“Numbers people” have access to the giving patterns of the congregation, but they don’t let it affect their perspective on members of the congregation.

“I try not to remember and just stick to the numbers,” says Schmidt Gall. “Honestly, there’s just too many numbers to keep track.”

One way that the churches give back to their “numbers people,” particularly the bookkeepers and administrators, is through Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s annual Administrator’s Day, a highlight for Schmidt Gall in her first year.

Says Susan: “They understand and realize what we do for the church, and give us support. We are a singular sort of people in the church setting. Many times we work unnoticed and alone, sometimes in a corner of the church basement. We don’t necessarily get to work with a team. Here, we can learn from each other. . . . There are experienced people helping the new ones.”

## ‘Are ethical funds really ethical?’

*One Edmonton Mennonite searches for investment opportunities she can believe in*

By Joanne De Jong  
Alberta Correspondent  
EDMONTON

“I don’t want to support banks,” says Natasha Wiebe, statistician at the University of Alberta and a member of Edmonton First Mennonite Church. “For me, banks are primarily about greed and are heavily invested in mining and fossil fuels.”



**Natasha  
Wiebe**

For her personal banking needs, she has chosen to be part of her local credit union, but when she found herself in a position to invest, she was disappointed to discover that the ethical funds available did not match her values. She learned that ethical funds exclude things like pornography and tobacco, but they include banks, which are among the biggest investors in companies that pollute.

Although Wiebe says she sees the act of investing as “a pyramid scheme where eventually capitalism will collapse due to societal greed,” she also doesn’t want to lose money by leaving it in a high-interest savings account while the cost-of-living increases are higher than the savings account interest income. She wants the investments she does make to at least reflect her faith and benefit the community.

One resource she has found beneficial is the Good Investing website ([goodinvesting.com](http://goodinvesting.com)).

She took a course from Good Investing, which strives to encourage socially responsible investing. She is now currently investing on her own. “Doing your

own investing is scary,” she says. But she has found it rewarding, and it has given her a more ethical option than the funds initially presented to her.

Wiebe recognizes that different people have different ethical priorities, and she hopes Mennonites will be intentional about their investments. She likes the model of using personal values to choose companies people are comfortable with, by screening their investment choices to exclude things like fossil fuels, weapons manufacturing, nuclear energy, oppressive regimes or gambling, or by screening their investments to include things like poverty reduction, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, affordable housing or women-led companies. The options are extensive.

She also focuses on “decade trading” as opposed to “day trading,” which she

believes is more ethical. This means she is committed to investing in a company for at least a decade, as opposed to changing and manipulating her investments daily. She mentions how “day trading” can hurt countries and their citizens, plummeting them into poverty.

One example given by Wiebe is Lebanon, which experienced an economic crisis this year. “Western ‘day traders’ all suddenly pulled out of Lebanon, and the currency dropped massively, causing the economy there to collapse,” she says. “Now people with education are leaving the country. ‘Decade trading’ stops that from happening.”

“As a first-generation Russian Mennonite settler, I know life can throw you into the nastiest situations,” she says of her upbringing and how she was taught that life is not fair and that people have an obligation to take care of each other. She expresses care by investing ethically to the best of her ability, living simply and participating in social-justice activities such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Palestine-Israeli Network and a diversity action group.

Wiebe hopes that more Mennonites will take ethical investing seriously. She is part of a breakfast club at her church that gets together regularly over breakfast, sharing their lives and passions. She has found that there is a lot of openness on investing from a faith perspective. She challenges others to dig deeper and make choices on their values.

She says her faith “has everything to do” with your investment practices,” adding, “We are rich, and with that come responsibilities.”

## FOCUS ON MONEY

# 2020 surpluses help regional churches face 2021

*Pandemic brings new realities to church funding*

By Tobi Thiessen  
Publisher

**F**inancial giving from Mennonite Church Canada congregations and individuals was stable in 2020 despite pandemic economic uncertainty. By year-end, the regional church bodies and MC Canada had strongly positive financial results, based on better-than-expected revenue and lower-than-expected costs.

In planning for 2021, the regional churches acknowledged continued pandemic uncertainty and directed their 2020 surpluses into support for 2021 programs.

The 2020 year-end good news skips over the turmoil faced by regional churches in the spring, when congregations closed to in-person worship. Giving patterns faltered while congregations reorganized to offer virtual services. To deal with the uncertainty, the regional

churches accessed federal and provincial emergency wage-support programs such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) or the Temporary Wage Subsidy (TWS).

Gerry Grunau, moderator of MC B.C., recalled in an interview, “Back in March, we wondered how things were going to go. Would our congregations survive if they didn’t meet in person? . . . But our biggest concern was for the summer camp program.” MC B.C. owns Camp Squeah in Hope. In 2019, Squeah reported revenue of \$1.4 million but, in spring 2020, the camp was possibly facing zero revenue for the summer. “In the absence of a summer camping program,” said Grunau, “[we] applied to CEWS to provide income supplements for specific Camp Squeah staff, to address continual program

adjustments, long-term pandemic planning and opportunities for capital and maintenance improvements.”

MC Alberta, which owns Camp Valaqua, and MC Manitoba, which owns Camps with Meaning, dealt with the same concern.

In MC Alberta’s 2020 annual report, finance chair Wayne Janz wrote: “Our federal and provincial governments had a role in supporting us . . . to help keep all our regular staff employed and . . . to help us cover the expected higher costs to restart the summer camp program in 2021.”

MC Saskatchewan and MC Eastern Canada do not own camps, but financially support several summer camps in their constituencies. They also accessed federal grants to offset drops in their revenue streams.

MC Manitoba summarized the situation

## Regional Church Operating Funds in the pandemic

	MCBC 29 congregations year ended December 31, 2020			MCEC 97 congregations year ended January 31, 2021		
	Budget	Actual	% chg	Budget	Actual	% chg
Congregational giving	\$208,450	\$215,757	4%	\$1,726,183	\$1,645,630	-5%
Individual giving	\$112,000	\$143,776	28%	\$100,000	\$104,287	4%
Wage subsidies/grants		\$81,192			\$167,367	
Operating expenses	\$609,445	\$606,642	0%	\$1,226,929	\$1,205,420	-2%
Yr end deficit (see notes)	(\$176,570)	(\$60,468)		(\$162,959)	(\$68,015)	

Source: 2020 MCBC Annual Report; MCEC 2020-21 Statement of Operating Fund Revenue and Expenditures.

### Notes:

1. Full financial statements include other revenue and expense lines not shown here.
2. MC B.C. Congregational giving line includes donations that were not originally budgeted.
3. Both MC B.C. and MCEC intentionally plan operating deficits because they draw funding each year from reserve funds created previously by large, non-standard gifts (ie. sale of a former church property or estate bequests). Their reserve fund policy determines the maximum annual draw from the reserve that the church may use. If operating revenue is higher than budgeted, the full amount budgeted for the draw does not need to be made.

## FOCUS ON MONEY

	MCA 12 congregations year ended December 31, 2020			MC Sask 25 congregations year ended December 31, 2020			MCM 39 congregations year ended December 31, 2020		
	Budget	Actual	% chg	Budget	Actual	% chg	Budget	Actual	% chg
Congregational giving	\$319,400	\$324,135	1%	\$399,000	\$405,865	2%	\$975,000	\$916,046	-6%
Individual giving	\$69,500	\$68,854	-1%	\$70,200	\$66,005	-22%	\$75,000	\$60,905	-30%
Wage subsidies/grants		\$56,921			\$31,609			\$87,713	
Operating expenses	\$421,200	\$405,413	-4%	\$262,914	\$217,863	-17%	\$433,648	\$395,679	-9%
Yr end surplus (deficit)	(\$34,500)	\$94,994		(\$2,368)	\$30,836		\$18,452	\$120,700	

**Source:** MCA 2021 ADS Annual Report Book; MC Sask 2021 ADS Report Book; MCM Gathering 2021 Report Addendum  
**Note:** Full financial statements include other revenue and expense lines not shown here.

in the notes on its Statement of Operations: “This surplus was unexpected . . . [it] was generated by lower than expected expenses, greater than expected government COVID-19 subsidies, and the much lower amount forwarded to MC Canada than budgeted.”

### Funding model changing

Across MC Canada, individuals contribute to the church they attend. Their congregations send a portion of those offerings to the five regional churches. In turn, the regional churches pass on a portion of their receipts on to MC Canada. On top of these contributions, some individuals also donate directly to the regional church or nationwide church office.

Congregational giving to the larger church has been declining for years. Two common reasons cited for the trend include: lower church attendance means fewer people giving, and more support for local missions means less gets passed on to the larger church. In response, the regional churches have hired, or are hiring, engagement ministers to strengthen relationships with the congregations and attract individual donations on top of congregational commitments.

The Shared Revenue Agreement for MC Canada is also under review. MC Canada recorded a surplus of \$144,259 at its year end on Jan. 31, 2021. The budget was based on amounts pledged by each regional church, a system in place since 2018. In addition to contributions from the regional churches, donations to the MC Canada Witness program were higher than expected, and expenses for travel and in-person events were low.

Since MC Manitoba historically passed on proportionately more to MC Canada than the other regional churches, it reduced its contribution in 2020. When MC Canada still recorded a surplus, Joint Council approved a return of \$68,174 of the surplus to all the regional churches in proportion to what each had contributed. Another \$68,000 was transferred to the Capital Reserve Fund in anticipation of upcoming building repairs.

Canada to harmonize the presentation of their financial reports.

### Using 2020 surplus to benefit 2021

In budgeting for 2021, all regional churches pointed out at their annual meetings that the ongoing uncertainty made it difficult to plan with accuracy. They do not intend to apply for further government assistance, but planned to use 2020 surpluses for 2021 programming.

MC Saskatchewan proposed a deficit

MC Canada Overview			
5 regional churches   year ended January 31, 2021			
	Budget	Actual	% chg
Regional church giving	\$1,159,500	\$1,093,840	-6%
Individual giving	\$20,000	\$43,149	116%
Wage subsidies/grants		\$33,160	
Operating expenses	\$1,543,826	\$1,420,790	-8%
Yr end surplus (deficit)	\$489	\$144,259	
Returned to regional churches		\$68,174	

**Source:** MC Canada Operating Fund Revenue and Expenditures draft 2021-22 budget  
**Note:** Full financial statement includes other revenue and expense lines not shown here.

According to Joint Council minutes of Jan. 30, 2021, regional churches are looking at a new funding model in which each regional church sets a percentage of its donations to pass on to MC Canada instead of a set dollar amount. Discussions are on-going.

Regional churches are also working towards standardized financial reporting to make side-by-side comparisons easier. In 2020, Sean East, MC Eastern Canada’s financial manager, worked with Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Eastern Canada and MC

of \$28,000, which offsets the 2020 surplus of \$30,000.

In MC Alberta, the 2020 budget calls for a \$72,000 deficit. Treasurer Wayne Janz wrote: “It is not typical to propose such a large deficit budget. . . . We had an unexpected \$95,000 surplus in 2020. . . . This gives us the means to restart our summer camp program and proceed with filling a church engagement position.”



## PROMOTIONAL SUPPLEMENT

# Tax Efficient Generosity

By Susan Yakabowich

The recent surge in real estate prices has inspired many Canadians to put property on the market. For those selling a property that does not qualify for the principal residence exemption, the resulting capital gain can mean a hefty tax bill.

Making a donation to charity can help offset the capital gains tax, but did you know choosing the right way to give can make a big difference?

When Anne's husband passed away, she sold their cottage for \$300,000. Anne wanted to make a significant donation to their favourite charities from the proceeds, in honour of the wonderful memories spent there with her husband. Her accountant suggested she meet with Abundance Canada to develop a Generosity Plan™.

Anne discussed her charitable ambitions and her financial position with Abundance Canada. In addition to a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the cottage, Anne held significant publicly traded securities, which she planned to use to finance her donation. We quickly sketched out her options to determine the most tax-efficient solution.

In Option 1, we calculated what would happen if Anne were to keep the \$300,000 from the sale of the cottage and sell \$100,000 in publicly traded securities without donating anything to charity. In this scenario, she would owe \$50,000 in capital gains tax on the sale of the cottage and \$20,000 on the sale of her securities, leaving her with a net after tax position of \$330,000.

In Option 2, we looked at what would happen if Anne proceeded with her original plan to sell the securities and donate the cash. It soon became clear this was not a

tax-efficient option. Even though she would receive a donation receipt for \$100,000, Anne would still owe capital gains tax on the sale of the cottage as well as incurring \$20,000 of tax liability on the sale of the publicly traded securities. Her net after tax position would be \$280,000. This was her least tax-efficient option.

In option 3, we explained how Anne could donate the publicly traded securities in-kind to charity. She would still receive \$300,000 in cash from the sale of the cottage, and the tax owing would be eliminated. Her net after tax position would be \$300,000—\$20,000 higher than if she were to donate cash.

Anne decided to proceed with Option 3: donating the securities in-kind. She was happy she took the time to investigate the best way to give.

Are you looking to make a donation to offset taxes owing? Have you considered donating publicly traded securities in-kind? Abundance Canada can help you

achieve your philanthropic goals in the most tax efficient manner.

*Pseudonym used to protect the privacy of Abundance Canada client.*



*Susan Yakabowich is a Gift Planning Consultant with Abundance Canada. Since 1974, Abundance Canada*

*has helped people to create and implement a customized Generosity Plan™—a flexible approach to charitable giving, which maps out the best strategic options for giving today, tomorrow and well into the future. To learn more visit [abundance.ca](http://abundance.ca) or call 1.800.772.3257.*

	Option 1: No donation to Charity	Option 2: Donate cash from cottage sale to Charity	Option 3: Donate publicly traded securities to Charity
Proceeds From Sale of Cottage	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Market Value of Publicly Traded Securities	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Capital Gains Tax* Owing on Sale of Cottage	(\$50,000)	(\$50,000)	(\$50,000)
Capital Gains Tax* Owing on Securities	(\$20,000)	(\$20,000)	\$ 0.00
Donation to Charity	\$ 0.00	(\$100,000)	(\$100,000)
Donation Tax Credit	\$0.00	\$50,000	\$50,000
Net Balance (After Tax Cash Position)	\$330,000	\$280,000	\$300,000

\*50% Marginal Tax Base

## Rising Together

MEDA CONVENTION 2021

Partner with us as we work towards a future where entrepreneurs everywhere are equipped to thrive in business.

**November 4-7**  
Grand Hyatt Atlanta in Buckhead  
Atlanta, Georgia



The right tools and training to help farmers combat the effects of climate change exist. And you can provide access to it.

**Give today at [www.meda.org/gift](http://www.meda.org/gift)**

**MEDA** *Creating business solutions to poverty*

## Rooted & Grounded



A Conference on Land and Christian Discipleship



### Land: Loss, Connection and Imagination

**Oct. 14-16, 2021**

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana

Join us in person or online!

[ambs.ca/rootedandgrounded](http://ambs.ca/rootedandgrounded)

**NIH RESEARCH STUDY**

**bipolar genetics**

- Study participation includes an interview (2-4 hours) and a blood sample.
- Participants must be 18 or older and may be eligible if they have either a bipolar diagnosis or a family member with bipolar disorder.
- No travel necessary. No cost to participate. Financial compensation provided.

**Join A Study!**

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Call **1-866-644-4363** or TTY: 1-866-411-1010  
Email [bipolargenes@mail.nih.gov](mailto:bipolargenes@mail.nih.gov), [www.nimh.nih.gov/JoinAStudy](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/JoinAStudy)

**Write to National Institute of Mental Health**  
10 Center Drive, MSC 1264, Bethesda, Maryland 20892-1264

Department of Health & Human Services  
National Institutes of Health

**NIH** National Institute of Mental Health  
[www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) Protocol No. 80-M-0083





## ONLINE NOW!

at [canadianmennonite.org](http://canadianmennonite.org)



### Anabaptists encouraged to donate to vaccination efforts

Mennonite World Conference is calling on its members to donate to UNICEF's campaign to share coronavirus vaccinations around the world. [canadianmennonite.org/vaccinecampaign](http://canadianmennonite.org/vaccinecampaign)



### Fire destroys church and five homes in Iquitos, Peru

At the end of August, a fire raged through a Mennonite church building and five neighbouring wooden houses on Isla Iquitos, Peru. [canadianmennonite.org/iquitos](http://canadianmennonite.org/iquitos)



### Students in Burkina Faso write African church history

Anicka Fast, an MCC/Mennonite Mission Network worker in Burkina Faso, reflects on teaching courses that help students hone skills in writing oral history. [canadianmennonite.org/historians](http://canadianmennonite.org/historians)



### But not that long ago...

On the blog, MaryLou Driedger reflects on how men and women have been treated in different and distinct ways in the Mennonite church. [canadianmennonite.org/blog/notlong](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/notlong)

## Coming up

in the October 11, 2021 issue  
of *Canadian Mennonite*

# FOCUS ON EDUCATION

CANADIAN  
MENNONITE

## Calendar

### Nationwide

**July 29-Aug. 1, 2022:** MC Canada Gathering 2022, in Edmonton. Theme: "We declare what we have seen and heard." Information about Gathering 2022 will be regularly updated at [mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022](http://mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022).

### British Columbia

**Oct. 15-17:** MC B.C. women's retreat, at Camp Squeah, Hope. Theme: "Our God, our healer." Details to be announced.  
**Ongoing:** Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. is calling on local Anabaptists to participate in a collaborative storytelling project. Share your COVID-19 story/artwork/experiences for this first of its kind collaborative project at <http://aht.libraryhost.com/>. Take a look at the submissions! Still shy about uploading? Send your submission via email to [archives@mhsbc.com](mailto:archives@mhsbc.com) and it can be added to the project on your behalf.

### Alberta

**July 31-Aug 4, 2022:** MC Canada National Youth Gathering at Camp Valaqua, Alta. Theme: "Amplify! Giving voice to what we have seen and heard." Information will be regularly updated at [mennonitechurch.ca/amplify](http://mennonitechurch.ca/amplify).

### Saskatchewan

**Oct. 15-16:** Mennonite Church Saskatchewan "Songfest of Thanks," at Rosthern Mennonite Church, with Duff Warkentin as conductor and Glenn Sawatzky as accompanist. All COVID-19 regulations will be followed. For updates and registration information, visit [www.mcsask.ca/events](http://www.mcsask.ca/events).

### Ontario

**May 13-15, 2022:** "Indigenous-Mennonite encounters in time and place" academic conference and community education event, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. The event will include academic presentations, community storytelling, artistic offerings, and both Indigenous and Mennonite ceremonies. Programming proposals must be submitted by Sept. 30. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2UhmNHu>.

### International

**Oct. 14-16:** "Land: Loss, connection and imagination," the fifth "Rooted and grounded" conference on land and Christian discipleship,"



at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. Keynote speakers: Laura Meitzner and Timothy R. Eberhart. For more information, or to register, visit <https://bit.ly/3sbgkRi>.

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



**Online**

**Sept. 30-Oct. 2:** "MCC at 100: Mennonites, service, and the humanitarian impulse," a virtual Mennonite Studies conference at the University of Winnipeg. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2Ti5PPa>.

**Classifieds**

**Announcement**

**ABNER MARTIN MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP**

This annual scholarship is awarded by Menno Singers to a student who is affiliated with a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation and is, or will be, in a full-time program of music study, graduate or undergraduate, during 2021-2022.

Applications must be mailed by **October 1, 2021**. For application documents or further information, contact Linda Janzen at [lindajanzen@sympatico.ca](mailto:lindajanzen@sympatico.ca)

**Employment Opportunity**

Employment Opportunity

**Associate Pastor of Children and Youth Ministry**  
Steinbach, Manitoba

Steinbach Mennonite Church (SMC) is hiring an Associate Pastor of Children and Youth Ministry. This position will begin as soon as a successful candidate is found and could be anywhere between 0.5 FTE and 1.0 FTE depending on the candidate's availability and specific skills. We are looking for an energetic and outgoing person able to cultivate relationships with SMC's children and youth, their families and build community beyond the SMC congregation.

Please send your resume and cover letter to [steinbachmennonite@gmail.com](mailto:steinbachmennonite@gmail.com). For more information, visit [www.steinbachmennonite.ca](http://www.steinbachmennonite.ca).

**Upcoming Advertising Dates**

Issue	Ads due
Oct. 11 Focus on Education	Sept. 27
Oct. 25	Oct. 8 (Early Deadline)
Nov. 8 Focus on Books Resources	Oct. 25
Nov. 22	Nov. 8
Dec. 6	Nov. 22

*"You don't need special skills to become an MDS volunteer — just willing hands . . . We tell our friends that we have so much fun, that we meet the most interesting people."*

— **HEATHER FUNK**  
of Winkler, Man.  
MDS volunteer

**2020 IMPACT:**

6,048 VOLUNTEERS	487 HOUSES RECOVERED	79 NEW HOMES	280 REPAIRS	91 CLEANUPS
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You can be the hands and feet of Jesus for disaster survivors by volunteering or donating to MDS!

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**Advertising Information**

Contact 1-800-378-2524 x.224  
[advert@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:advert@canadianmennonite.org)



*John Grundner throws a water-filled balloon while Sydney Hildebrandt cheers him on.*



*Sydney Hildebrandt admires Elsa Dueckman's aim.*



*Sydney Hildebrandt watches as Molly Neufeld's toss splashes down just short of the target.*



*Johan Penner tries an underhand toss while Jeannine Bernard awaits her turn.*

# Photo finish



*Elizabeth DenBoer watches as Dorothy Sinasac sends her balloon towards the target.*



*Lawrence Woelk gives it his best shot while Sydney Hildebrandt and Jeannine Bernard look on.*