

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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EDITORIAL

The feast of grace

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



Recently, I found myself hungering for grace. With the world still entrenched in this pandemic, we witness the complexities around public safety, the angry words, the strained relationships, the exhaustion, and the challenges to everyone's mental well-being. Is there any good news?

I decided to revisit a movie from the 1980s, a parable called *Babette's Feast*. (Spoiler alert: the next four paragraphs reveal the plot.) Based on a short story by author Isak Dinesen, the award-winning film depicts a small Christian community living in an isolated village. There is a bleak religion, preaching glorious visions of heaven but with little on earth to be savoured. Contention and judgmentalism pull the group's members apart. Even their daily meals are meagre: boiled cod and black-bread stew.

A stranger comes to shelter in one of their households and asks to become a servant. She is Babette, fleeing from danger in her home country. One day, Babette wins a large amount of money, enough to provide a secure future for herself. She asks for permission to cook a special meal for the small group, and over the next days, she labours over every detail. The austere Christians begin to fret that the culinary result will be too extravagant. As feast day approaches, they resolve to eat the meal out of courtesy to Babette but to make no mention of its taste or presentation. They would eat the meal out of duty alone.

The multi-course meal is in fact splendid! But, with down-turned eyes, the local guests do not demonstrate any appreciation. Only one—an outsider—recognizes the quality of the feast and notes the care with which it was created.

When the event is over and Babette rests from her efforts, her employers learn that she spent all her money on that feast—a gift given freely, a labour of her love, with no expectation of recognition or thanks.

The word that comes to mind is “grace.” At its simplest, grace is a kindness given freely to someone who may or may not even deserve it. Grace costs something to the giver, and grace invites only an open heart to receive the precious gift.

In his best-selling book, *What's So Amazing about Grace?*, Phil Yancey writes, “Grace means there is nothing I can do to make God love me more, and nothing I can do to make God love me less. It means that I, even I who deserve the opposite, am invited to take my place at the table in God's family.”

God's grace is evident throughout the entire biblical story, to individuals and to entire groups of people. God's grace spared the population of Nineveh from destruction—a grace extended even to its animals! It was grace that rescued the Pharisee Saul from a life persecuting Jesus' followers to a life of nurturing and encouraging them. Saul/Paul understood the depth of God's grace, and his writings to the early church are replete with the gospel of grace.

Christmas invites us to open our hearts to God's grace. Of Jesus, the Gospel of John says, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus, God in human form, revealed through words and actions “the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6).

Living in these times of ungrace, we long for acceptance and blessing. But who of us deserves this feast of love? If we are honest, we acknowledge our wrongful behaviours, our lack of generous actions, and the times when we have been unlovable and undeserving of any favour.

Sometimes grace shows up in big, miraculous ways. But many times grace sneaks up in small acts: a helping hand, a word of kindness, a misdeed forgiven, or even an elaborate meal. At times when grace seem invisible, God is whispering—and sometimes shouting: “You are worthy. And I love you!”

When we are impatient with ourselves and with each other, when harsh words are spoken, when anxieties keep us awake, when decision-making is hard, when we feel unwanted and unloved—God's grace is there. Remembering how the Christ Child entered into our human experience, let us open our hearts to receive, and to share, this feast of wondrous grace.

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” ☯

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FEATURE

Mary's story: Our inheritance

By Anita Retzlaff

Mary's story comes to us this year, maybe in a new way, at a time when we welcome some really good news. We could use an encouraging, empowering and heart-warming story right now.

Year after year in pageant, poetry and hymnody we rehearse Mary's good news story and the angel's message: "Fear not!" I confess that, in the past, I have imagined Mary's song, her statements about God's justice, as exclusively a call to bold action and loud resistance to the inequalities in society. Sometimes I have chastised myself for my nostalgia about the unlikely scene: Mary dressed in blue and white flowing robes, surprised by an angel's sudden appearance yet somewhat meekly submitting to the divine request to birth God-come-among-us.

Yet this year I need the nostalgia, the warmth, the

never know for sure how God will make things right, turn things around.

Mary's story

Once upon a time, there was a teenaged girl who lived in the ancient world of Palestine. She was an ordinary girl and already engaged to a man named Joseph.

Suddenly an angel appears and says, "*Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you. . . . Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.*" The angel continues: "*He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of this kingdom there will be no end.*"

Mary is stunned. "How can this happen? This is not

Mary's gratitude for God's favour and protection is not original to her alone. This theme keeps coming around and around in the story of God's people, Old Testament and New alike.

comfort, the safety that her story inspired in me as a child. Yes, it is the prelude to a dramatic salvation story, but this is also the affirmation, the comfort, that God is near to us, and that God's purposes will be worked out in our lives because of the manger.

So, this year I regard myself a happy and grateful beneficiary of the blue-hued Mary, the bright yellow and white angel, the promises made and the chills of hope that these inspire. For now, we must hold on to the "Fear not" story in a way that both settles us yet also encourages us to take on the challenge that Mary presents.

Mary's gratitude for God's favour and protection is not original to her alone. This theme keeps coming around and around in the story of God's people, Old Testament and New alike. Out of barrenness, trouble, despair or plain old ordinariness, God does a new and radical thing. God restores, upsets, undoes, reverses, creates. You

possible." But the angel assures her that God will make it possible and that her son will be holy, and that he will be called Son of God. With that assurance Mary seems not to hesitate: "*Here am I, the servant of the Lord. I am ready to do what God asks of me.*"

It's a story of possibility and the power of the word of God. It is the story of something new: new life, new relationship, unexpected mercy and whole-hearted trust. Mary confidently, and without hesitation, agrees to become a mother at God's request and will carry to term and nurture the Son of God. Mary trusts that God will be with her through all of this, as she finds courage in the nearness of the Divine.

Mary's story is a sign of encouragement for us also to take heart and be courageous. Yet this is a big ask right now, when there is a general feeling of anxiety in our lives. We're living during a pandemic, with a "me first"



CHRISTMAS ARTWORK BY JUSTIN NEUFELD, A GRADE 11 STUDENT AT UMEI HIGH SCHOOL IN LEAMINGTON, ONT.

The manger can be a uniting force. When we hold the Christmas story close and consider Mary's story to be our inheritance, there is hope just around the corner. . . . This Christmastime, we can wait and anticipate and celebrate all at the same time. In this midst of a worldwide crisis, there is also joy and laughter and hope. The world is about to turn.

mentality spreading through many places. Struggle is in the air. It seems that everywhere you turn, something threatening, frightening and unsettling lurks.

How do we stay safe when there is a raging disease in our midst and throughout the entire world? How do we resist succumbing to fear?

Politics and the manger

Most broadly defined, politics is about how we live together as a society, how we take care of the most vulnerable ones and how we share our resources. The truth is, we are living on a continent that is experiencing overt fearmongering. Conspiracy theories alarm us and make us afraid—on purpose. Anxiety is the order of the day.

At this time of pandemic distress, we

see demonstrations under the guise of personal freedom: “No government can tell me what to do. They are taking away my freedom. Your health is not my responsibility.”

But we need to face some hard facts about the racist systems in our community and about our own racist tendencies. There are many people in our community who do not have the same access to safety because of the colour of their skin. These are some of the perplexing and complex issues dividing us in these anxious times. We have choices to make in response.

Mary's choice would change the entire course of her life and of the world. She took on God's challenge without fear and willingly because the Spirit of God would be present, and she would not be left alone. She trusted God. As her story

continued to unfold, it became blatantly political, connected to the social issues at hand.

In the biblical tradition of making pronouncements about God's “kin-dom,” about a politics that cares for all, Mary gave thanks for God's presence and delivered a manifesto: “*God has and will continue to scatter the proud, bring down the powerful from their thrones, lift up the lowly, fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty*” (Luke 1:51-53).

Here is the justice part of the story: the part that goes along with the warm feelings of safety and security. The blue-hued Mary becomes the spokesperson for a new order, a new politics, a levelled-out society, a fairer way to live.

The political task then, as now, is one of cooperation rather than making

threats and instilling fear in each other. There is such inequality over the face of the earth. God promises to turn things around, to raise the poor from subsistence living and starvation, and to lower the status and decrease the power of those who are thoughtless about the plight of so many. God will fill the stomachs and hearts of those left behind and give a hard stop to those who think that life is just about satisfying every personal desire.

This is part of Mary's story, her call to justice, without fear. This becomes our story too, our inheritance. For the things of which Mary speaks are the very things that we hold dear as people of faith. Ours is the task of turning the world around. It is through us that God's desire for equality is realized. Mary's manifesto is for us to heed and to trust and to live into. And in this season of expectation and joy, it begins with "Fear not!"

We are bequeathed the ministry of calming anxiety instead of fanning flames of distress and division. Although we feel vulnerable, our faith tradition calls us to speak peace in a time of upset. We have Mary's story to embolden us. God's presence and mercy is promised as Luke reminds us, "to the descendants of Abraham forever." The warmth of God's presence, the warmth of the nativity scene is, for us, forever.

I happened upon a Facebook post that illustrates the simplicity of living in a kingdom of peace and mutuality. It is a quote from Pope Francis: "Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is. . . . Life is good when you are happy, but much better when others are happy because of you."

What an eloquent way of imagining a generous world. The idea of making others happy is a less harsh way of talking about levelling society and bringing down dictators. This can be a part of a peace-filled vision of Jesus' birth.

The manger can be a uniting force. When we hold the Christmas story close and consider Mary's story to be our inheritance, there is hope just around the corner. We can see joy and enough

love to go around, even into the smallest corners of our world. There is a way forward without fear. This Christmas-time, we can wait and anticipate and celebrate all at the same time. In this midst of a worldwide crisis, there is also joy and laughter and hope. The world is about to turn.

Prayer

God of the manger, you come to us this day with promises of steadfast love and presence. We come to you and accept that gift with warm hearts. For to the world has been born a Saviour, Jesus, our Lord, friend to all. May your Spirit of goodwill go with us now, carrying us

into our Christmas celebrations, meeting our longing with joy and hope, so that we may be the force of love that turns the world around. Amen. ☩



Anita Retzlaff attends Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. This is adapted from a sermon she preached there on Dec. 20, 2020, based on Luke 1:26-38;46-55.

The art on page 5 came in response to an invitation for students to submit art on the theme: 'The Christmas Story'.

☩ For discussion

1. If you were preparing a Christmas pageant, what scenes would you include? Would you make the scenes feel warm and comfortable or dramatic and unsettling? How would you express comfort and how would you include the political part of Mary's song?
2. Anita Retzlaff writes that Mary's story is one of comfort, but it also calls us to courageously follow God's calling. Why are many of us feeling particularly anxious at this time? What are the calls for justice that are present in our world? If we follow Mary's example, what is our response to God's call?
3. Retzlaff writes, "God restores, upsets, undoes, reverses, creates. You never know for sure how God will make things right, turn things around." Can you think of examples from the last 20 years, or the last century, where God turned things around? How much do you think God influences what happens in the world? Are humans arrogant if they have a plan to solve the world's problems?
4. What are the signs of joy and hope in Mary's story? How does living without fear enable us to be generous and love others? Where do you see joy and hope in your life this Christmas season?

—By Barb Draper

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/// Readers write

✉ 'We are in a climate emergency': MC Canada

Mennonite Church Canada leaders released the following statement on Nov. 4 during the COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow, Scotland:

Climate scientists have been sounding the call for decades, and the urgency of this call is being emphasized again at the COP26 Climate Summit happening in Glasgow, Scotland. Out of devotion to God our Creator, we must hear and respond to the call to urgent action for the sake of God's good creation. Out of love for our neighbour, we must hear and respond, for the sake of our human family, and especially those most vulnerable, to the devastating effects of climate change.

We are encouraged to see that concern for climate action is building within MC Canada. Initiatives such as the "7 Calls for Climate Action for Mennonite Church Canada" reflect an urgent desire for the church to lead in climate action, a desire which we share. These, and similar calls, are extensions of commitments we have made and are making as regional churches and as a nationwide body. From local church advocacy to regional church working groups to our nationwide Sustainability Leadership Group and more, we are demonstrating together our growing commitment to work for climate justice and

a sustainable future for our church and our world.

As leaders within MC Canada, we commit ourselves anew to working for climate justice and a sustainable future for all God's creation and all God's children. We commit to engaging deeply as a nationwide community of faith, inviting congregations and regional churches into discernment regarding the ways we as a church can respond to the climate crisis. We encourage individual members of MC Canada congregations to make this same commitment, and to commit to working in and through their congregations and regional churches to pursue these goals.

Signed by:

CALVIN QUAN,
MC CANADA MODERATOR
DOUG KLASSEN,
MC CANADA EXECUTIVE MINISTER
LEAH REESOR-KELLER,
MC EASTERN CANADA EXECUTIVE MINISTER
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TIM WIEBE-NEUFELD,
MC ALBERTA EXECUTIVE MINISTER
GARRY JANZEN,
MC B.C. EXECUTIVE MINISTER

✉ Congregations need to help their pastors be authentic

Re: "The misplaced pursuit of authenticity," Sept. 27, page 12.

It was sad to read the comments about Troy Watson's experience with pastors as he grows up: "Most ministers we met growing up came across as ego-driven, authoritarian or fake. Sometimes all three." That does not reflect well on the theological/Bible school selection process and training of these people.

One of the causes might be the unrealistic expectations of parishioners. Pastors often are expected to be competent speakers, compassionate visitors of the ill and bereaved, marriage counsellors, serving the church daily, receiving hostile criticism, advocating for social justice, telling great children's stories and dealing appropriately with youth. The list could go on.

Churches, when considering a pastor, should clearly identify the person's strengths and weaknesses. If a person is an excellent speaker but dislikes visiting the sick, hire or appoint someone

else to do the visiting. The same applies to other aspects of a pastor's work. If visiting the elderly or sick is a problem, there is little point in trying to change that; accept it and work with it.

Help the pastor be authentic.
HENRY NEUFELD, DELTA, B.C.

✉ Letters call into question 'Indigenous rights'

Re: "Protesting pipelines in British Columbia," Oct. 25, page 19.

I feel the title of the article does an injustice to the writers of the letter. They are not "protesting pipelines." Rather, the writers are calling for Indigenous rights to be respected and our earth to be protected.

I want to celebrate the writers of the letter quoted in the article! I understand that *Canadian Mennonite* couldn't publish the letter in its entirety, but it's important to highlight this line: "We also recognize that the government and corporations have a

monopoly on the power of the courts, RCMP and private security firms to push the pipelines to completion despite the lack of consent from Indigenous nations and a growing number of concerned citizens.”

Great work by Mennonite Church B.C.'s Indigenous Relations Task Group.

RACHELLE FRIESEN (ONLINE COMMENT)

Still waiting for someone to address the conflict between the elected chiefs and councils who approved these projects and the hereditary chiefs who oppose them.

Seems like the former group, even though they are a construct of the Indian Act, have a clearer mandate, since they were elected by their people. But I'm certainly no expert.

DON JANZEN (ONLINE COMMENT)

(Ed.: This issue was addressed in 2020. Visit <https://canadianmennonite.org/stories/who-do-you-support-when-community-divided/>.)

✉ Is the need housing, homes or caring communities?

Re: “Seeking made-in-Leamington solutions to homelessness,” Oct. 25, page 18.

The questions of the costs related to homelessness that Pastor Ruth Boehm and others in Leamington, Ont., are struggling with have been with the major cities for years. It is now slowly but surely creeping into more and more small towns throughout Canada.

Do people just need housing? No, they need a place where they can feel at home. And then they want to be at home near to and with others. They want homes in communities, as do most people.

Leamington should think outside the box. Planning and discussing with organizations such as Habitat For Humanity for a more practical and beneficial solution that responds to the physical, mental and spiritual needs of this growing demographic of needy people.

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

Churches and parishioners receive huge tax exemptions, both with property taxes and personal income-tax exemptions. Perhaps they should be a little less preoccupied with their elaborate buildings and fancy sanctuaries, and should design more buildings that provide the security of a community. The homeless are not simply house-less, they are community-less. Who is willing to provide space for the community-less?

DAVID SHANTZ (ONLINE COMMENT)

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Froese—Henry Ronald (b. Oct. 23, 2021), to Alex and Melissa Froese, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Pankratz—Palmer (b. Oct. 23, 2021), to Steve and Kim Pankratz, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Yang—Yuna (b. Oct. 23, 2021, to Chan Yang and Stephanie Jeong, Point Grey Inter-Mennonite, Vancouver.

Baptisms

John Lee, Veronica Yang—Point Grey Inter-Mennonite, Vancouver, Oct. 24, 2021.

Riley Koop—Vineland United Mennonite, Ont., Oct. 3, 2021.

Weddings

Dyck/Fisher—Shaun Dyck and Susie Fisher (Altona Mennonite, Man.), at Neuberghal Commons, Man., Sept. 18, 2021.

Rempel/Smith—Kimberly Rempel and Jeremy Smith, Pleasant Point Mennonite, Clavet, Sask., in Winnipeg, April 27, 2021.

Deaths

Bargen—Mary, 98 (b. Oct. 28, 1923; d. Oct. 27, 2021), Carman Mennonite, Man.

Friesen—William (Bill), 93 (b. June 2, 1928; d. Oct. 13, 2021), Olser Mennonite, Sask.

Penner—Jake, 98 (b. Sept. 11, 1923; d. Oct. 7, 2021), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Penner—Kenneth John, 70 (b. May 12, 1951; d. Sept. 25, 2021) Altona Mennonite, Man.

Peters—Jake, 78 (b. Sept. 17, 1943; d. Oct. 24, 2021), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Tiessen—Margaret D. (Froese), 96 (b. Dec. 6, 1924; d. Oct. 23, 2021), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Keeping a kettle out of the landfill

Leah Reesor-Keller

The last time my in-laws came north to visit, they brought us a broken electric kettle. We had gifted it to them at a long-ago Christmas. Now, years later, it stopped working. It was under warranty, but that only applied in Canada. With repair, it could function and stay out of the landfill.

That is why a broken kettle has been on my kitchen counter for more than two months. Every time that I look at it taking up space, and despair about when I'm going to deal with it, I remember that simple living and good stewardship of resources are foundational parts of my Mennonite faith heritage, one that I hold dear even when inconvenient.

In the face of the climate emergency, all of us need to make choices that are inconvenient as we commit to following Jesus with costly discipleship. In true relationship with God, we are transformed by God's grace and love in our lives, and cannot help but share that love with the world.

In Matthew 6:25-30, Jesus talks about God's care for the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, and for us, God's children. Part of sharing God's love is making choices that put the well-being of

the planet and vulnerable people above our own desires for comfort and ease. We do this privately and publicly, taking action and witnessing to God's love for all of creation.

I see our nationwide Mennonite Church Canada community as a living social ecosystem with actors playing different roles. In my role as a decision-maker within MC Canada, the question on my mind is how to invest in and cultivate mutually reinforcing functions and roles in the ecosystem as we respond faithfully to the climate crisis:

- **Can we call** on our Mennonite academics and theologians to provide biblically grounded resources to deepen our faith and guide our climate action?
- **How might church** finance and property committees take on environmental stewardship responsibilities?
- **Will church voting** delegates commit to joyfully approving annual budgets that include carbon offset funds for travel?
- **What part do** our camps, ministries and denominational partners, including Christian Peacemaker Teams and Mennonite Central Committee, have to play?

• **When should regional** or nationwide churches speak publicly on behalf of our faith community, and when do congregations or working groups take the lead?

We all can, and need to, do more to address the climate crisis. The church is all of us together following Jesus, including the intertwining of worship and witness that comes from taking faithful action together. My prayer is that, as the people of MC Canada, we can build a faith-driven movement that inspires meaningful climate action. We need to embrace this as personal discipleship practice and as a public witness of love to the world, as we live into God's *shalom* for all of creation. From repairing broken kettles to marching for climate justice, may we open ourselves to God's transforming love for all of creation. ☞



Leah Reesor-Keller is the executive minister of MC Eastern Canada and a member of the Executive Staff Group of MC Canada.

A moment from yesterday



Herb Wiebe, facing camera, visits with an inmate at the Oakalla Prison Farm in Burnaby, B.C., in 1970. A growing number of British Columbia Mennonite men volunteered to befriend inmates through the M-2 (Man to Man) program, a prison visitation program then in its early days in Canada. Later known as M2/W2 (Man to Man/Woman to Woman), the program matched prisoners with volunteers during incarceration and post-release. Mennonites in other parts of Canada soon also became interested in this work.

Text: Lauren Harder-Gissing

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



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 THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

Every tribe and language

Arli Klassen

I expect everyone has forgotten what I had to say when I spoke at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's chapel a few years ago. But I know some remember that I asked students to read Scripture in their own languages. For a few international students it was the first time they heard the Bible read in their mother tongue. That has not been forgotten.

I've been thinking lately about language use at church. Mennonite Church Eastern Canada is making it a priority to have more material in multiple languages, which takes time, effort and money. Mennonite World Conference (MWC) is considering adding another official language as a commitment to make its materials more accessible.

MWC is preparing for the next assembly in Indonesia in July 2022 by translating a lot of material into the official language of Bahasa Indonesian. Will it continue to provide newsletters and worship resources in Indonesian post-assembly? What about Hindi? Or Swahili? Ironically, the use of the colonial languages of English, French and Spanish means that most people in North America, Europe, Latin America and Africa can manage with those official languages. But not in Asia. It takes time, effort and money.

I lived in southern Africa during the waning of official apartheid, when English and Afrikaans were the only official languages in South Africa. Now there are 11 official languages! National and provincial governments must offer services in at least two of them and must promote use of the relevant official languages in their region. That is complicated, requiring time, effort and money.

Many Mennonite congregations struggle to be bilingual or multilingual. For example, Chinese congregations manage Mandarin and Cantonese, along with English. Ethiopian congregations manage or choose from among Amharic, Oromo and Tigrinya, along with English. English congregations manage multiple generations, as well as members with varying degrees of comfort with English. Along with multiple languages come competing ways of thinking about the political situation in the "home country." It is not easy.

I believe that using multiple languages in worship communicates hospitality, solidarity and identity. The challenge is that a truly intercultural church needs to move beyond hospitality (welcoming the other), to solidarity (as represented by language), and identity (as a multicultural community worshipping God, who

is not limited by language or culture). Worship that comes from the heart requires connection with "heart languages."

There are many ways to include multiple languages. Ensure that people from different language groups are involved in planning worship. Plan for at least one encountering moment with God during worship in each language.

Speak words of welcome or benediction in the languages spoken in your congregation or regional church. Use more than one screen during worship to include content in multiple languages.

Sing songs from all the languages represented in your congregation or regional church. Get comfortable singing a song in multiple languages at the same time. Read Scripture in one language, showing the text in a different language on a screen.

Ensure there are worship leaders and Scripture readers who speak with a variety of accents at every service, to normalize different ways of speaking.

Make sure printed materials, including bulletins, Bible studies and worship resources, are available in the languages used in your congregation or regional church. ☸



Arli Klassen lives in Kitchener, Ont., works for MWC, and uses Google-Translate every day to communicate as effectively as possible with MWC member churches around the world.

Et cetera

Singers collaborate on 'Welcome to Our World'

A new Christmas single has Canadian musician Marc Martel collaborating with Leigh Nash, singer for Christian alt-rock band Sixpence None the Richer. The single is a cover of "Welcome to Our World," a modern hymn/carol originally written and recorded by Christian musician Chris Rice. "Leigh and I have... both loved ['Welcome to Our World'] since it first released in the mid '90s," Martel announced on his social media. Martel first gained prominence as the lead singer in the Christian rock band Downhere, which he formed in 1999 while studying at Briercrest Bible College in Caronport, Sask. Since going solo, Martel—who is known for his vocal likeness to Queen's Freddie Mercury—has released numerous Christmas recordings, including a 2019 rendition of "Silver Bells" featuring Michael W. Smith and Amy Grant.

By Aaron Epp



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

What do I miss about church?

Troy Watson

After a month in the woods by myself, my sabbatical plan is to spend three months listening to people who aren't a part of church culture, to see how they view church and understand why they don't go to church.

My initial sabbatical plan was to do a bunch of typical sabbatical stuff, but COVID-19 changed all that. Plan B was to visit a bunch of churches in the area to see different ways of doing and being church but, upon further reflection, I moved to Plan C. The truth is, I've spent a lot of time in church culture:

Mennonite, Catholic, Pentecostal and everything in between. I'm very in touch with church culture. Drowning in it, you might say. What I'm really out of touch with is non-church culture.

So I wondered what would happen if I didn't do anything "churchy" for four months. What would I miss? What if I didn't miss anything?

Right now, a lot of Christians are asking themselves similar questions. Many people who were faithful church attenders pre-pandemic have stopped attending worship services and church functions. They tuned in to Zoom or YouTube church for a while, and still occasionally check in, but many of them are asking: "Will I go back when all the restrictions are lifted? What is it I really miss about being part of a church?"

For the first time, many faithful churchgoers are understanding why people don't go to church. They are discovering that there isn't a lot they miss themselves. This frightens pastors and denominations. What does it mean if they don't come back?

This pandemic is revealing a number of significant things. For many, it's revealing that being part of a church was not as meaningful as they had assumed it was. Yet, at the same time, this pandemic is providing an

opportunity for churches to stop focusing on things that don't really matter, and start focusing on what brings life, love, transformation and meaning to people and our world.

The truth is, people miss things that make them feel like they belong and are loved. People miss things that help them grow and become better versions of themselves. People miss things that help

For the first time, many faithful churchgoers are understanding why people don't go to church. They are discovering that there isn't a lot they miss themselves. This frightens pastors and denominations. What does it mean if they don't come back?

them experience divine presence. People miss things that make them feel like they are making a difference in the world. Any church that did this, I'm pretty sure people will miss it and come back. But many church attenders are discovering their lives are the same, maybe even better, without church.

Too often, what churches excel at are giving burdened people more burdens: "We know you're busy and broke, but share more of your money, time and energy with us. Join this committee, volunteer, do more, give more."

Unfortunately, instead of energizing and encouraging people, many churches end up draining people or adding stress to those who are already stressed. How many times do you hear about a church "going through stuff"? "Did you hear: so and so church is going through a tough time?"

Usually this tough time is because a few people are in a huff about something, demanding that things change or go back to the way things were before something changed.

Sometimes it's the pastors or leaders in a huff, sometimes it's disgruntled members. It doesn't matter. It stresses everyone in the church community out and makes church exhausting rather than life-giving.

A lot of church members who have not gone back to church have said that what they miss most is catching up with people over coffee in the foyer. In my

opinion, if that is the best church offers, the church is wasting its potential to be what it was intended to be. My understanding is that the church is called to be a Spirit-soaked, life-giving, life-transforming, world-improving community of people who live out the wisdom of Jesus together. However, I'm writing this before I start my sabbatical. Maybe I'll think differently in four months.

So what do I miss about church? That is the question I'm looking forward to answering at the end of my sabbatical. Does the church help me to grow and make a difference in my community and the world? Does it help me to experience God's presence and love others? Or will the primary thing I miss be catching up with people over coffee in the foyer?

Who knows? Maybe I'll discover that's enough. ✎



Troy Watson is away to find perspective on the Way.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Victim or perpetrator: What am I?

Marlene Epp

In the aftermath of an investigation by two Mennonite institutions, that found my late father guilty of sexual misconduct (June 7, 2021, page 24), I am trying to decide whether I am a victim or a perpetrator.

My father, Frank H. Epp, died 35 years ago. I have lived longer without him than with him alive. Nevertheless, as a person with widespread presence and influence in Mennonite and other circles, he continues to generate both sunshine and shadow in my professional and personal life.

I have devoted much of my writing and teaching career to elevating marginalized individuals and groups in the Mennonite past and present, especially women. As a feminist scholar, I am pushed to accept, claim and confront my father's alleged misconduct. It is hard to do that when neither I, nor anyone else, can ask him directly about his actions or feelings of almost 40 years ago.

I am not attempting to redeem his reputation. Or even to refute the investigation's findings. I want to offer insight into what happens to family of a long-ago deceased person convicted of sexual misconduct by Mennonite institutions. These are my opinions alone.

Current protocols for Mennonite church investigations of misconduct are said to be "victim-centred." This approach was necessary to respond to, and redress, past abuses, but it has led, I believe, to an imbalance in fairness, justice and compassion for all involved.

Recent experience with the process made me feel as both victim and perpetrator. I repeatedly wondered which label fit best, as my emotional responses ranged from anger and indignation to shame and guilt.

I am clearly not a victim, in that I am not the person who made allegations against Frank after he died. I am sad for the pain this individual carried. Yet I, and others in my family, were made to feel like the perpetrator when anger was directed towards us, the family of the accused.

Shouldn't I have known what was going on? Shouldn't I have stopped him? No to both questions. Yet I feel guilty, somehow. Like the perpetrator.

family, of either the accuser or the deceased accused, are not forced to carry the burden of accusation or defence.

Church agencies must develop alternate policies and procedures for trying and convicting the dead—principles and steps that are now absent. The dead should have advocacy and representation. As should the living. Both the accuser and the accused must be directly involved in an investigation and its outcomes.

I realize that I need healing from the pain inflicted by church institutions themselves. I am grateful that at least one leader acknowledged that 'gaps' in policy created new victims.

Church leaders and others offer prayers for my "healing," as if I am a victim. When I see this, I ask myself from what exactly am I healing? The pain of learning about my father's behaviour in this case left me long ago.

I realize that I need healing from the pain inflicted by church institutions themselves. I am grateful that at least one leader acknowledged that "gaps" in policy created new victims.

Those institutions—Mennonite Central Committee Canada and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, in this case—have yet to create policies and procedures imbued with fair process, natural justice, transparency and compassion for both accuser and accused. Not to mention all the friends and families of those involved. This applies whether the accused is alive or dead.

Some key elements of institutional policy and process need to change so that

The accuser has the right to safety and protection. The accused has the right to a voice, whether that expresses denial and defiance or regret and confession. The accused, or a representative if they are deceased, should know precisely what they are accused of and by whom.

Natural justice assumes that investigations are imbued with fairness, absence of bias and willingness to listen to all sides. There should be openness, clarity and accountability on the part of everyone involved. Confidentiality should not be used to protect institutions and their policies from scrutiny and accountability. Victims are brave to come forward and need to be protected, but the level of opacity and secrecy that now exists only leads to misplaced and damaging speculation.

My family was told to maintain confidentiality about the investigation within our "small circle." In other words, we were told to be quiet, despite our

possible need for professional, spiritual or friendship support. This directive only reinforced for me the feeling that we were taking the place of the perpetrator.

During, and even more so in the aftermath of, a church investigation and public statements, the shaming and erasure of individuals found guilty appear to be primary goals. Anabaptists have a long history of shunning members not without “spot or wrinkle.” While a minority of orthodox Anabaptist groups continue the doctrinal practice of shunning, so-called progressive Mennonites often lean toward shaming and erasure as ways to maintain purity within the fold.

Philosopher Martha Nussbaum suggests something similar. In her analysis of the #MeToo movement, Nussbaum says, “#MeToo has helped win accountability. But the fact that so much of the #MeToo movement is social rather than legal creates a problem: how to secure justice and protect equal dignity when punishment is meted out not by impartial legal institutions but by shaming and stigmatization” (quoted in *The New Yorker*, 2021).

The legal system is not perfect, especially with regard to sexual misconduct, and has a long journey to incorporate restorative justice into its systems. Yet, I fear that retribution and shaming are becoming norms in church investigations and findings, rather than restorative processes that lead to dignity for all.

As the daughter of a man posthumously found guilty of sexual misconduct, I feel like both victim and perpetrator. I call on church institutions with responsibility for these life-changing policies and procedures, to review and revise them with compassion and justice for all as a foundation. ❧



Marlene Epp is author of Mennonite Women in Canada: A History (2008), and Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War (2000). She lives in Waterloo, Ont.



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COP26 a chance to cultivate a garden

Winnipegger Kari Miller reflects on the COP26 summit and a children’s book that helps her understand the climate emergency.

canadianmennonite.org/blog/curiousgarden



Many languages, but one in Christ

Read about the history behind Mennonite World Conference’s logo, which wraps the globe with a cross as bands stretch around, uniting the edges.

canadianmennonite.org/mwclgo



Six reasons to attend the 2022 MWC Assembly

Wondering whether to attend the upcoming Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Indonesia? Here are six reasons why you should consider participating.

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VIEWPOINT

‘Remember the poor’

Michael Pahl

“Remember the poor.” Those are the words of the Jerusalem apostles—Simon Peter, James the brother of Jesus, and John—to the Apostle Paul (Galatians 2:10). In his preaching of his gospel to the Gentiles, these first witnesses to Jesus wanted an assurance from Paul that he would do this one thing: *“Remember the poor.”*

Theologians speak of God’s “preferential option for the poor.” This is not that God loves the poor more than the rich, but that, because God is love, God pays particular attention to the poor. God acts especially on behalf of the poor, because they especially need God’s help. We see this emphasis throughout the Bible. The Torah, the Prophets and the Psalms all highlight concern for “the poor” alongside “widows and orphans,” often also including “the alien” or “the stranger.”

All this means it is critical for us, in any given situation, to be aware of how we hold power, what gives us this power, and how our use of this social power affects others—especially those who are powerless.

The apostles’ appeal to Paul to *“remember the poor”* is likely a specific reference to the poor in Jerusalem, a group that included a high proportion of widows (Acts 6:1). In the gospels, Jesus focuses his ministry on “the last,” “the least,” and “the lost,” groups that include people who were sick, outcast, indebted and imprisoned.

These descriptions suggest that “the poor” does not simply refer to the financially destitute. Or we might better say that various forms of poverty—a poverty of belonging, of support, of health, of respect, of purpose, really a poverty of power—intersect with economic pover-

ty in significant ways. And so the God who is love pursues economic and social justice for the poor, seeking the empowerment of all who are impoverished.

“Remember the poor.”

This is a vital instruction for us in our evangelism or outreach, a necessary reminder that we cannot separate “evangelism” from “social justice,” as some Christians attempt to do. It is also an important guide for us as we navigate group dynamics in our churches and communities.

If God is on the side of the powerless (Luke 1:46-55), if the gospel of Jesus Christ is *“good news to the poor”* (Luke 4:18-19), if the poor hold God’s blessing and God’s kingdom (Luke 6:20), if in the impoverished in power we see the face of Jesus (Matthew 25:34-40), then it is vital for us as Christians to pay attention to power dynamics among us. In every situation we face, in every decision be-

fore us, we should ask ourselves, “Who holds power here? Who has less power here, or is even powerless?”

Power, in this sense, is one’s ability to shape circumstances to meet one’s basic human needs and the needs of others; physical needs like food and water, clothing and housing, health and safety and security; social needs related to belonging, loving and being loved; and spiritual needs like making sense of the world and one’s place in it, connecting to a purpose larger than oneself.

We acquire this social power in many ways, often simply because of who we are. In most Canadian social contexts,

men have greater social power than women, white people have greater power than BIPOC, cisgender heterosexual people have more than LGBTQ+ people, adults have more than children, the middle-aged more than the elderly, the non-disabled more than persons with disabilities, the neurotypical person more than the neurodivergent, the wealthy more than the poor, those with approved pedigrees more than those without.

Our social power—the ability to shape circumstances to meet our needs and the needs of others—is a function of where we sit at the intersection of these diverse factors, and our power can vary depending on the particular situation.

All this means it is critical for us, in any given situation, to be aware of how we hold power, what gives us this power, and how our use of this social power affects others, especially those who are powerless. And then, following the way of God, we need to empower these who are impoverished in power. This is God’s kingdom way of justice, which we are to seek first before our own material needs (Matthew 6:33).

“Remember the poor”:

- **In our council** and board meetings, in each decision we make.
- **In our congregational** care meetings, our mission discussions and our visioning processes.
- **In our worship** and communion, our preaching and teaching, and our fellowship and service.
- **In our discerning** of what love demands from us this day.
- **When we attend** to those who are impoverished in power.

May our lives echo Paul’s own response to this challenge: *“This is the very thing we are eager to do”* (Galatians 2:10). ☿



Michael Pahl is executive minister of Mennonite Church Manitoba.

'The way of Jesus'

MC B.C. posts land acknowledgment statement

Story and Photo by Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

In the spirit of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples of British Columbia, a statement of land acknowledgment has been adopted by Mennonite Church British Columbia. It states: "We respectfully and gratefully acknowledge that we gather on the unceded, traditional and ancestral lands of Indigenous First Nations."

Earlier this year, the MC B.C. Indigenous Relations Task Group began working on such a statement. It was presented to the regional church's Leadership Board and accepted on Oct. 21, and is now posted on the MC B.C. website and on its letterhead.

Given that MC B.C. churches are in different locations in the province, the statement is geographically general. "Once it is determined which First Nations traditional lands all our congregations are located on, the MC B.C. website's list of congregations will also include this information," says Henry Krause, chair of the Indigenous Relations Task Group.

MC B.C. land acknowledgment dates back to 2014, when Brander McDonald, an Indigenous Relations worker at the time, challenged the regional church to recognize First Nations on whose land their buildings are located. Some individual congregations have done so, including Langley, Peace and Emmanuel Mennonite congregations.

"Since MC B.C. started the 'Partners in Reconciliation' project with [Mennonite Central Committee B.C.] two-and-a-half years ago, Bridget Findlay [MCC B.C. Indigenous Neighbours coordinator] became part of the MC B.C. Indigenous Relations Task Group and has been working with our MC B.C. congregations," says Krause. "She has worked with a number of our congregations as they have thought through what a statement could look like for them."

Findlay, who had been consulting with Indigenous communities, also gave input to the Indigenous Relations Task Group, as it worked on the statement for the regional church.

"The plan is to determine how best to use the statement for various situations, such as annual meetings and other gatherings," says Krause. "The intention is to recognize our responsibilities as guests on the traditional, unceded and ancestral lands we meet on, in order to pay respect to those on whose territories we are on."



Members of Mennonite Church B.C. congregations were among those who heard First Nations drummers on Orange Shirt Day in Abbotsford in 2018, supporting children who survived residential schools in the past. MC B.C. continues to support relations with First Nations of B.C. through a statement of land acknowledgment now posted on its website.

The Indigenous Relations Task Group's web page on the MC B.C. website has a section on land acknowledgement statements and why they are important to have, how to write one and what should be included in a statement. The statement on MC B.C.'s website explains that the purpose of a land acknowledgment is: "To create a safe space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to share. In a way, a land acknowledgement is an expression

of friendship based on honesty, respect, grace and trust. The land acknowledgement is therefore for both the Indigenous peoples and the settlers. In doing a land acknowledgement, you are committing to respecting and honouring the land and its history; those who lived there before you, and the One who created it. This commitment is a commitment to work as a community to fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. This commitment is another step in doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly (Micah 6:8)."

Mary Berg of the MC B.C. Leadership Board says her journey with the topic of reconciliation began in 2013, when she and her husband attended a day of Truth and Reconciliation meetings in Vancouver. Hearing the stories of residential school survivors was unsettling for her and was the beginning of finding her place in the story.

"Horrible things were done by the

church; I am part of the church," says Berg. "I believe that we need to listen to the voices of the people who were harmed, and many Indigenous people have identified land acknowledgement statements as a simple but important step toward reconciliation. I want to be part of a church who chooses to engage with the ugly parts of our history in order to be part of a process that moves toward reconciliation. I see this as the way of Jesus." ❧

'It is too late not to act' on climate emergency

MC Canada urged to act for climate justice through seven calls

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

At the beginning of November, thousands of people from across the globe gathered at the COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow, Scotland, to address the climate crisis.

Meanwhile, there was also action happening closer to home. A committee of Mennonites from across Canada launched "7 Calls to Climate Action for Mennonite Church Canada," which urges the denomination's leaders to act immediately for climate justice.

The "7 Calls" implore the nationwide church to designate funds toward climate refugees and Indigenous land defenders, divest from fossil fuel-connected investments, create a Climate Emergency Mobilization Ministry and affirm nonviolent civil disobedience to defend creation.

"This good world that God so loves is in a climate emergency. And it is too late not to act," states the "7 Calls" document.

"The people in power, the people who make decisions, don't seem to be listening to the science that is so clear and so essential, saying this impacts all of us," says Mona Neufeld, a "7 Calls" committee member who attends Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. She believes the church cares about the things represented in the calls, but that they need to move beyond talk and act on them.

The "7 Calls" initiative came together swiftly, in roughly a week.

"I think a lot of times we don't want to act until we have the right words to support our actions. . . . [W]ho cares what we call it, let us go out there and do something about it," Neufeld says, of the climate crisis. "Species are dying, people are dying, our earth is being destroyed. . . . [W]e don't have the luxury of waiting

for perfection."

It is clear that others share the same conviction. The committee is encouraging people to support the calls through four actions:

- **Signing the document;**
- **Fasting;**
- **Spreading the word;** and
- **Pledging money** to the creation of a Climate Emergency Mobilization Ministry.



When this article was written, more than 200 people had signed on and more than \$12,000 had been pledged.

When considering how slow Mennonites can be with change and decision-making processes, "the response that we've had so quickly speaks to this being close to people's hearts," Neufeld says.

Mark Bigland-Pritchard, a member of Osler (Sask.) Mennonite Church and of the "7 Calls" committee, is passionate about climate justice because of his faith. "Whose world is this? It's not ours," he says. "It's God's, and it's our job to look

after it properly."

Bigland-Pritchard has been fighting climate change for years, formerly working in physics and energy and, now as migration and refugee resettlement coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee, where he hears about the extreme impacts of climate change from the people he works with.

"People all over the world are suffering as a result of climate change and, for the most part, it's the people who have done next to nothing to generate the problem."

"In that context, I expect the church to be saying something, and it hasn't been, or it hasn't been saying enough," he says. "We need to be speaking out more clearly about the needs of the people who are suffering, the needs of the earth and the ecosystems."

"What I really value in the calls to action is how it demonstrates passion and real concern for the climate, that is there in our Mennonite church family," says Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, the executive minister of MC Alberta and chair of MC Canada's Sustainability Leadership Group (SLG).

The SLG recently created a resource, "God's Green Church," to help congregations address their environmental impacts. It is also working on environmental recommendations for nationwide gatherings, exploring an environmental certification process and greening office renovation efforts.

Doug Klassen, executive minister of MC Canada, acknowledges constituents' frustrations that past resolutions and movements have still not generated enough change. "We have taken action, and created some really good things . . . but it isn't enough," he says.



The organizers of the “7 Calls to Climate Action for Mennonite Church Canada,” from top to bottom, left to right: Steve Heinrichs, Mona Neufeld and Josiah Neufeld, Mark Bigland-Pritchard, Anna Bigland-Pritchard, Katie Goerzen-Sheard, Justin Sun and Will Braun.

MC Canada leaders responded to the “7 calls” in an initial statement published on Nov. 4.

“We are in a climate emergency,” it read. “Out of devotion to God our Creator, we must hear and respond to the call to urgent action for the sake of God’s good creation. Out of love for our neighbour, we must hear and respond for the sake of our human family, especially those most vulnerable to the devastating effects of climate change. . . . As leaders within Mennonite Church Canada, we commit ourselves anew to working for climate justice and a sustainable future for all God’s creation and all God’s children.” (See the full statement on page 7.)

They have had further meetings to discuss next steps, the outline of which will be forthcoming, but Klassen hopes their responses will be “action-oriented and have accompanying timelines.” He is in conversation with the “7 Calls” committee.

Wiebe-Neufeld’s prayer is that “we could approach this in a spirit of mutual discernment and collaboration, and not see discernment as delay, but see discernment as a commitment to move forward together.”

Neufeld recognizes that people will have concerns and critiques of the movement, and she appreciates those contributions to the process, too. “What we want to put out there is this strong invitation to join us in this messy middle that we find ourselves in, and to be willing to make mistakes and to take risks,” she says. ☞

New creation care resource a timely tool for congregations

“God’s Green Church” suggests steps to take amid climate crises

Mennonite Church Canada

Senior environmental studies students from The King’s University in Edmonton have compiled a creation-care resource for Mennonite Church Canada congregations.

“God’s Green Church: Becoming a Creation Care Congregation” is a 22-page document, sponsored by MC Canada’s Sustainability Leadership Group (SLG), that outlines practical steps churches can take to become more environmentally sustainable.

“This resource provides practical guidance for congregations wishing to take next steps, whether they are beginning to take action or are well along the creation-care journey,” says Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, executive minister of MC Alberta and SLG chair.

Joanne Moyer, director of environmental studies at the university and a council member for the Mennonite Creation Care Network, supervised the student-led project. She is also an SLG member.

“Given the growing urgency of environmental problems around the world, all members of society need to contribute to building solutions, including churches,”

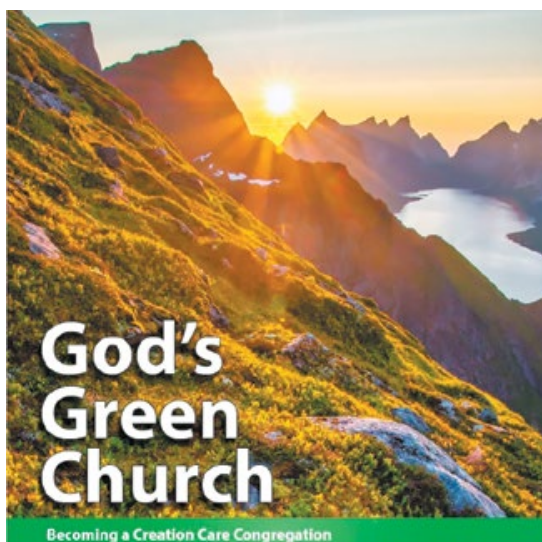
she says. “We offer this resource as a starting point or an opportunity for congregations to explore deeper commitment in their sustainability journey.”

The project was an opportunity for students to “do work that will make a real impact in the world beyond the classroom,” Moyer says.

“For me what stood out the most was the variety of resources that already exist,” says student Michelle Roseboom. “It was very evident that there are congregations in Canada and around the world that are thinking about creation care and clearly have a desire to live more sustainably. Hopefully, this resource provides Mennonite Church Canada congregations with a good starting point and access to other great resources!”

Reaffirming MC Canada’s 2007 commitment to creation care, the document offers suggestions for how to incorporate love of creation in different aspects of church-centered community. It is divided into four sections: Getting Started, Community, Worship and Sustainability.

As national leaders gathered in Glasgow, Scotland, for the United Nations Climate Change COP26 earlier this month, at a time of climate crises, Moyer says the “God’s Green Church” resource suggests practical steps congregations can take in a time of uncertainty. ☞



“God’s Green Church: Becoming a Creation Care Congregation” is available online at www.commonword.ca/go/2610. For more information about Mennonite Church Canada’s Sustainability Leadership Group, visit www.mennonitechurch.ca/sustainability.



Anabaptists in Nepal witness climate impacts

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

As scientists and world leaders met at the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland, Anabaptists in Nepal were helping to address the immediate and deadly impacts of the climate emergency.

Last month, unusually hot weather was followed by torrential rain, causing massive flooding in the southern lowland Terai region of Nepal and neighbouring parts of India. CNN cited reports that more than 200 people were killed.

Shemlal Hembrom, chair of the Brethren in Christ (BIC) Church Nepal, said via email that more than one million people have been affected, and at least 80 percent of the arable land in the region has been destroyed.

“Thousands of houses were inundated,” he said.

Hembrom said of the church response, “Some flood victims were given shelter in the church and some believers who have space surrounding their home in a high



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHEMLAL HEMBROM

A house damaged by recent flooding in rural Nepal.

place” provided temporary shelter and food to displaced families.

According to Mennonite World Conference (MWC), there are more than 1,000 baptized members and 22 BIC congregations, as well as some house fellowships,

in Nepal. Shemlal Hembrom’s wife, Hanna Soren, serves on the MWC Deacon’s Commission.

The BIC church in Nepal dates back to the 1950s, when a missionary from India went to Nepal. Early converts to



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHEMLAL HEMBROM

A house destroyed by recent flooding in rural Nepal.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHEMLAL HEMBROM

A paddy field destroyed by recent flooding in Nepal.

Christianity faced three to five years in prison under the laws of the time.

Like all Nepalese people, church members face increasingly extreme and unpredictable weather.

When asked if he sees a link between climate change and the flooding, Hembrom said, “Yes, it is very true that the climate change is increasing severe weather,” noting that the monsoon season came late, hitting during the harvest. He also links landslides in hilly areas and drought to climate change.

Nepal ranks 10th on the 2021 Long-Term Climate Risk Index put out by the non-governmental organization Germanwatch. The index looks at “loss events” caused by extreme weather between 2000 and 2019.

A 2021 report from the International Red Cross Climate Centre predicts continued significant climate impacts for Nepal: “The already dry winters will be drier, and the wet summer monsoon season will be wetter by a staggering threefold increase (likely). Strong glacial melt will trigger landslides, mud flows and flash floods with increased runoff.”

Poverty in Nepal exacerbates its vulnerability. The country ranks 142 out of 189 nations on the 2020 UN Human Development Index.

Famous as home of the highest peak in

the world, Nepal also has low-lying plains to the south. According to the World Bank, roughly 80 percent of Nepal’s 28 million people live in rural areas and nearly 70 percent of the workforce is involved in subsistence agriculture.

Hembrom said that people displaced by the recent flooding are suffering from illnesses due to contaminated drinking water.

“Children, women, older people and people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to disease and food shortages,” he said. The pandemic lockdown compounds the suffering.

Hembrom added that “landless Indigenous people of Nepal are the most vulnerable to the disasters caused by climate change.” He said these communities are often close to the jungle, on riverbanks or roadsides.

“Often they build temporary houses made of mud and bamboo with thatched roofs that are vulnerable to disasters such as flood, landslide, storm and fire,” he said. “So very often they are dislocated from one place to different places every three to five years.”

Hembrom said that “supporting such communities can minimize the destruction and also protect the lives of these vulnerable Indigenous, landless people.”



MWC PHOTO BY HENK STENVERS

Shemlal Hembrom, chair of Brethren in Christ Church Nepal, with his wife, Hanna Soren, a member of the Mennonite World Conference’s Deacon’s Commission.

'If you see someone in need, you lend a hand'

First loads of hay from MDS Hay West arrive in Saskatchewan

By John Longhurst
Mennonite Disaster Service

For Bradley and Virginia Walker, livestock farmers in Endeavour, Sask., this year's weather was a disaster.

"The rain was so patchy," says Bradley. "Some places got good rain; we got nothing."

The lack of rain meant they couldn't grow enough hay to feed the 350 head of cattle on their organic beef farm.

"Normally we grow enough," he says, noting that wasn't the case this year—there isn't enough hay to get the herd through the winter months.

That scenario is being repeated across the province. And now, with hay prices having increased from \$70 a bale before the drought to as much as \$300 as of late October, farmers like the Walkers are in trouble.

"At that price, we can't make a go of it," he says, adding that lots of farmers are selling off their cattle because they can't afford to feed them.

"I don't want to do that," he says, noting that it has taken 35 years to build up their herd.

In early October, the Walkers got some help from Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) Canada through the MDS Hay West project, which involves farmers in Ontario donating hay to help farmers in Saskatchewan.

"We heard about the project on the news,

so we applied and were accepted," he says.

The truckload of 36 bales of donated hay, among the first to arrive in the province, is "greatly appreciated," he adds. Although it will just last a short time, "every load makes a difference," he says, noting that it is also encouraging for local farmers to know farmers in Ontario aren't forgetting them.

That knowledge "helps everyone out," he says, whether they need hay or not.

Jacob and Roger Peliero are two Ontario farmers who are remembering those in Saskatchewan struggling due to the drought. "It's quite sad to see what happened there with the lack of rain," says Jacob, who raises hens and replacement pullets with his father, Roger, near Smithville in the Niagara Peninsula. "We had way more hay than we needed, so we decided to donate some."

The Pelieros donated 51 bales—a truckload—after seeing the appeal for hay on social media.

For Jacob, who attends Bethany Community Church in St. Catharines, it's just about "farmers helping farmers. . . . If you see someone in need, you lend a hand."

For Lester Weber of MDS Ontario, who is helping to coordinate the project, seeing those donations come in is gratifying. "It's a great way for farmers in Ontario to help farmers out west," he says, adding that



PHOTO BY LESTER WEBER

Donated hay about to be loaded in Ontario for farmers in Saskatchewan.

when donors call they say they want to do something to help other farmers who are struggling.

The goal of MDS Hay West, which started in September, is to send 50 truckloads of donated hay from Ontario to Saskatchewan. To date, 10 truckloads of hay have been donated and six have been shipped.

A total of 35 farmers in Saskatchewan have applied for donated hay, which they can purchase at pre-drought prices to help with transportation costs.

"We could use more donations of hay to meet the need," says Weber, noting that he has heard from some farmers who plan to donate but are too busy now harvesting crops. "There are lots of farmers needing hay." ❧

To donate hay in Ontario, call Lester Weber at 519-584-4171. Saskatchewan farmers who need hay can call Daryl Bueckert at 306-717-3987; for an application form for hay, visit <https://bit.ly/mds-hay-west>. To donate towards the cost of transporting the hay, visit www.mds.org.



U.S. border opens to Canadian volunteers

Mennonite Disaster Service

The U.S. border is opening!

That is news Kelsey Friesen, volunteer manager for Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) Canada, has waited a long time to hear.

The border between the United States and Canada closed to non-essential travel in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada opened its border to fully vaccinated Americans in August, and

on Nov. 8 the U.S. did the same, allowing vaccinated Canadians to come in again.

This includes those who want to volunteer with MDS in that country.

"Every year about 600 Canadians

go south to volunteer with MDS,” says Friesen. “Some go longer, combining it with winter vacations, others go for shorter times to help people impacted by disasters.”

Among them are a key group of leadership volunteers, people who serve for a month or more as project directors, crew leaders, administrators and cooks.

“The pandemic has created a challenge for MDS, since we depend on Canadian leadership volunteers to help run so many projects,” she says.

Together with other impacts from the pandemic, MDS in the U.S. has had to reduce the number of projects in that country—even though there are many needs due to disasters like hurricanes, flooding and wildfires.

“It will be great when Canadians can once again go to the U.S., since that’s where most of the disasters occur each

wear masks and take a COVID test upon arrival at project sites.

For Kevin King, MDS’s executive director, news about the border is a cause for celebration. “I receive the news with joy and elation to hear that Canadian volunteers will once again be travelling south to our MDS projects,” he says.

Natural disasters did not take a break during the pandemic, he says, noting there were more than 20 named storms, along with fires and floods throughout the U.S., over the past 19 months.

“Our partners in Louisiana and Washington State have asked, “When are they coming?” he says of how they are waiting for help from MDS. “Our shared commitment of volunteers from two countries speaks hope to these communities, along with our common vision as Americans and Canadians to work together to help those affected by disasters.”

Before Canadians volunteer

Before Canadians sign up to volunteer with MDS in the U.S., Friesen wants to remind them of a few things that are currently governing travel:

- **Due to U.S. travel requirements**, everyone needs to be vaccinated to enter that country.
- **People travelling by air** need to provide a negative COVID-19 test to enter the U.S. and a negative COVID-19 test to re-enter Canada.
- **People travelling by land** do not need a COVID-19 test to get into the U.S., but currently they still need one to return to Canada.
- **Travel insurance** is available for COVID-19, but volunteers should call and confirm with their health insurance provider.
- **Before going**, Canadians should check COVID-19 infection rates in the places they wish to serve, to ensure they are comfortable with going to those places. ☘

For more information about volunteering, contact MDS Canada toll-free at 1-866-261-1274 or mdscanada@mds.org.



News brief

Author launches her new children’s book



At the Abbotsford, B.C., book launch, Barbara Nickel reads selections from her new children’s novel, accompanied by appropriate piano music.

Mennonite author Barbara Nickel of Yarrow, B.C., launched her new children’s historical novel, *Dear Peter, Dear Ulla* at the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford on Nov. 6, following a virtual book launch in October from her home province of Saskatchewan. The book tells the story of two 12-year-old cousins at the start of the Second World War, Peter in a Mennonite farming community in Saskatchewan, and Ulla in Danzig, Germany. The two have never met but develop a relationship through letters as pen pals. When the war breaks out, both youngsters must deal with such issues as bullying and prejudice in their individual lives, as they question whether they are now supposed to be enemies because their two nations are at war. At the Abbotsford event, Nickel read selections from the book, accompanied by appropriate piano music (the character Peter is a talented pianist). Desserts were provided afterward in the museum’s café while Nickel signed copies of the book. *Dear Peter, Dear Ulla* is published by Thistle-down Press.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY RINNER
WADELL



MDS FILE PHOTO

Kevin and Teresa Bueckert of Neuanlage, Sask., are pictured serving with MDS in Texas in 2019.

year and where MDS is most active,” Friesen says. “We are all anxious to get back to normal.”

To gauge interest in when Canadians are prepared to return to service, MDS Canada sent out a survey in October to leadership and weekly volunteers. Most indicated they would be ready to return no earlier than January 2022. Many indicated they appreciate MDS’s efforts to keep people safe by requiring all volunteers to

Friendships flourish at Hidden Acres inclusion camp

Life-skills program proves to be one of the 'hidden blessings' of COVID-19

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

Like many other organizations, Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp and Retreat Centre was forced to rethink its programs and services when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down normal operations last year.

It “forced us into creatively brainstorming and dreaming about how we could use our facilities,” says program director Chris Pot.

In 2020, when no overnight camps could run, Hidden Acres staff offered a “camp-in-a-bag” program that was sent out to participants, and they made space for families to come and camp on the site near New Hamburg, Ont.

And they continued to ask, “If we can’t have this, what can we have?” That creative thinking led to what Pot is calling one of the “hidden blessings of COVID.” It’s a new program built on inclusion, which has long been part of the philosophy at Hidden Acres.

The Community Life and Skills Program (CLASP) for young adults with special needs, aged 18 to 35, ran last fall and this spring, with fairly tight health and safety regulations, and it is running again on Mondays through this fall with a few more freedoms. The acronym fits well, since a clasp is a device that holds things together and this program is described as “a connecting point for young adults with special needs” and a “safe community where friendships will flourish.” Campers need to be fully vaccinated and fairly independent, as the program operates with a 4-1 camper-to-staff ratio.

Pot is running the program this fall for five to six regulars, most of them in their early 20’s; three of them participated last year. They work together on developing life skills like meal planning, cooking and

baking. They even tried knitting. They also do some service projects, like comforter knotting and kit packing for Mennonite Central Committee. They enjoy fun camp activities and getting outside regularly to hike or do a scavenger hunt. They also enjoy

“sitting at home . . . doing nothing.”

CLASP started with three participants last fall, when Cassie Zehr ran the program. Lydia Herrle, who had been a regular summer volunteer for a few years at Hidden Acres, volunteered to help, using



PHOTO BY CHRIS POT

Participants in CLASP, an inclusion camp experience, enjoy a hike at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp and Retreat Centre near New Hamburg, Ont.

puzzles and games, the card game UNO having become a favourite.

CLASP started as a way to use the space at the camp and retreat centre when the facility was empty because of the pandemic. It also spoke to a need among families who were frustrated and concerned that there was nothing for their members with special needs, since all their programs shut down during the pandemic, and they were just

it as a practical learning experience.

Hidden Acres has been offering inclusion programs for a long time. Summer camp, which ran as day programs this past summer, is designed to include campers with special needs, and children otherwise on the margins, who do not have equal opportunities and access to the resources that make attending summer camp possible. Some campers are referred to

Hidden Acres from a community-support agency or from the House of Friendship in Kitchener.

“We have the infrastructure to provide the support and care that they need in order for them to successfully be a part of what is happening,” says Pot. They are “in a cabin, and in activities with a group of campers” with 1-on-1 support as they need it. The goal, Pot says, is always to “build relationships.”

Hidden Acres just celebrated 40 years of running a week-long single moms camp, for women living on a low income and their

children.

And for at least a decade now, the camp has offered Supported Young Adult Camp (SYAC) for two weeks in the summer. This past summer SYAC ran as a day program with 15 to 20 participants each week, and a 2-1 camper-to-staff ratio. SYAC is a fully supported program for young adults with special needs.

Running the CLASP program has allowed Hidden Acres staff to maintain relationships with families throughout the year. Pot says he appreciates the weekly opportunity to get to know the young

adults “on a deeper level,” and to “discover things they can do that I wouldn’t have known.” To provide a safe place for these young adults to be part of a community also means some respite time for their families.

“God has been faithful,” Pot says, as he reflects on the disruption of the pandemic, the resiliency of staff and the creative endeavour called CLASP.

Pot intends to offer the program again in the spring, hoping he can find someone else to run it, while he ramps up the planning for the summer camp season. ❧

New book recaptures God’s vision for church

Story and Photo by Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
WINNIPEG

People from all over the world tuned in for the launch of Robert J. Suderman’s new book on Oct. 28. *The Baby and the Bathwater* recaptures the vision God has for the church that is detailed in scripture.

Suderman said he created the publication in response to his conversations with church leaders who were discouraged by the church’s harmful actions and oppressive legacies. Many Christians are rejecting the church and questioning the foundational aspects of Christian faith, Suderman said, but he encourages them not to “throw the baby out with the bathwater.”

They should not examine the church based only on what it has become, but on what it was designed to be: a community of justice, peace and anti-oppression, depicted through 96 different images of the church in the New Testament, of which most people use only a few. Suderman’s book calls for the restoration of the church to this vision.

Leaders and scholars from Italy to India and the Philippines have endorsed the 100-page book that is illustrated by Ray Dirks and published by Mennonite Church Canada.

“This is the kind of book that can radically change and inform and instruct

us as we actually do the work, the hard, the heartbreaking, but also the exciting and invigorating work, of being the church,” said Moses Falco, pastor of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg and one writer of the book’s afterword.

He spoke at the launch event, which

drew 30 people to Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg while many internationals attended via livestream.

Suderman has served the church for over five decades, working in education, administration, international witness and pastoral training in more than 30 countries. He is also the former general secretary of MC Canada and holds a doctor of theology degree. He attends First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont. ❧

The *Baby and the Bathwater* is available to buy or borrow from CommonWord.ca.



Author Robert J. Suderman, left, and Arlyn Friesen Epp, the director of CommonWord, are pictured at the launch of Suderman’s latest book, *The Baby and the Bathwater*, at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, on Oct. 28. The event was also livestreamed around the world.

Ongoing conflict cuts off congregations

Meserete Kristos Church leaders visit Ethiopia's conflict region

Mennonite World Conference

"MKC has been trying to help MKC members who were seriously affected in parts of Ethiopia that are not currently under the Tigray People's Liberation Front," says Desalegn Abebe, president of the Mennonite church in Ethiopia, Meserete Kristos Church (MKC).

In November 2020, fighting broke out between Ethiopian government forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front. Although a June 28 ceasefire halted overt fighting, in October the UN General Secretary warned of a humanitarian crisis, with some 400,000 people living in famine-like conditions.

21 church gatherings affected

Six local MKC congregations and 15 church-planting centres in the region have been affected, with members displaced, buildings burned, people disoriented by the conflict.

"When the communication network was working, we were informed that a church worker at Wukro MKC died in the conflict," says Abebe. Now, he says that there is no direct way to hear about the conditions for believers in Tigray.

The MKC Relief and Development Association has carried out relief activities in northern Ethiopia, but has not been able to access the Tigray state.

A team of MKC leaders visited the northwest region of Ethiopia in early June to encourage believers, bring aid from the Evangelium Mission and carry out leadership training.

"People moved from place to place carrying guns even in public transport," says Abayneh Anjulo, MKC's evangelism and church-planting director. "We trusted in the Lord and visited our brothers and sisters."

These regions currently affected by



Pictured from left to right, MKC church leaders Gelagay Himiru, Tilahun Wase, Desalegn Abebe, Abayneh Anjulo and Addisu Legesse visited the conflict region in Ethiopia in June of this year.

violence are strategic for spreading the gospel and planting churches in neighbouring Sudan.

"I was moved to see these faithful believers who joyfully worship and serve Christ [despite persecution]," says Abebe.

Prayers for peace

MKC participates in a peacebuilding initiative that gathers leaders from other Christian traditions in Ethiopia for a unified response to violence within the country.

"MKC does not support or oppose any political parties or warring factions," says Abebe. "The church preaches and teaches peace; encourages church leaders to mobilize members to engage in fervent prayers for peace; supports members in conflict zones by sharing their resources; and undertakes peacebuilding activities in conflict zones, particularly in Metekel zone of Benishangul Gumuz regional state.

"Pray for MKC to continue [to] engage

in peacebuilding activities, pray for the church to get resources to share with the most affected people in conflict areas, and undertake more peace activities in conflict areas," he says. ☸

☸ News brief

Kindred Credit Union among 'Best for the World'

KITCHENER, ONT.—Kindred Credit has been recognized among the "Best for the World" B Corps of 2021, ranking in the Top 5 in its size group in the "Customers" impact area. This "Best for Customers" honour recognizes Kindred's focus on the member experience. Plus, it acknowledges the ways the credit union has made it easier for people across the province of Ontario to experience "Banking with purpose" wherever they're at." Ian Thomas, Kindred's chief executive officer, says that "Kindred is honoured and humbled to be included once again on the 'Best for the World' list. . . . We're dedicated to our members and our purpose, which is to inspire peaceful, just and prosperous communities." He adds, "It's affirming to gain recognition from B Lab, as we seek to more fully live into our purpose." When COVID-19 restrictions took hold, Kindred's plans to open access through alternate channels were prioritized. From digital membership opening and e-signature to video meetings, extended member contact centre hours and contactless banking solutions, the credit union worked to maintain the connection to its members, and build relationships with new members, while improving digital access. Kindred became a Certified B Corp in 2017.

—KINDRED CREDIT UNION



Time well spent with MCC

By Melody Steinman
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

It has been well over half of their lifetime ago—“38 years to be exact,” said one of the six women who gathered on a warm August evening with their spouses to reminisce about their year of living in an intentional community doing voluntary service. One couldn’t attend the gathering.

And now, even though they are scattered vocationally, geographically, theologically and relationally, their time spent together from September 1983 to August 1984 still has ripple effects in their lives.

At that time, they participated in Mennonite Central Committee’s Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program, whose principles were taken from Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:13: “You are the salt of the earth.” At the time, this Canadian discipleship program was 11 months long, for young adults in their late teens to early 20s, with three locations across Canada: Markham, Ont., Winnipeg and Vancouver.

The Manitoba unit consisted of seven women, who lived together in a duplex in the North End of Winnipeg. Each had a full-time voluntary service assignment and received a monthly stipend.

All members attended Aberdeen Evangelical Mennonite Church on Sunday morning and helped out by teaching Sunday school, assisting with its girls program or working in the church office. All took part in biweekly Bible studies with other church members.

Thom Braun, the unit’s leader and a student at Mennonite Brethren Bible College at the time, led a weekly Bible course as well. He is now the senior pastor at New Hope Church Niagara in St. Catharines, Ont.

Those who could re-unite met for supper at the home of Martha (Kropf) and Brent Kuehl



PHOTO COURTESY OF NADINE MOYER

The Winnipeg SALT unit circa 1983-84. Pictured from left to right, front row: Melody Steinman, Nadine Moyer, Annette Reesor, Vi Martin and Martha Kuehl; and back row: Marlene Letkeman-Holst, Thom Braun, Ruth Braun and Lorie Yantzi.

in Baden, Ont. They reminisced about their time spent together years ago and shared about what has happened in their lives since then. For some, time was spent pursuing further education and traveling. Most got married and had children of their own. Some have even become grandparents.

Currently, the former SALTERs are

running their own home day-care, teaching school, carrying out food supervision, working in offices, enjoying retirement and being a grandparent, and spending many hot days in a chicken hatchery.

Regardless of what they have done and are doing now, each woman agrees that their time together was foundational to her faith formation and adult development. SALT offered a place to learn more about Jesus, his ways and teachings. It showed them ways to establish a relationship with Jesus and to influence each other, as well as the world. It also provided a chance to carry out a simplified life with limited material possessions. And it gave them a safe and enjoyable transition from their parents’ home.

But probably the most practical results of the program was presenting opportunities to deal with conflicts and differences with each other.

Vi (Penner) Martin still laughs over what happened. For example, sour cream was considered a luxury grocery item in one of the women’s home growing up, even though it was a weekly mainstay for another one. This difference provided many lively discussions.

This was not the first time for SALTERs to see each other. Some members of the group have had close contact and see each other regularly. For others, it is a rare occurrence. Yet all appreciate the time spent together back then. SALT gave them lenses to see the world, to interpret their experiences and to determine their own hopes for the future. And it probably always will. ☸



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTHA KUEHL

The SALTERs reunited at Martha and Brent Kuehl’s home on Aug. 19, 2021. Pictured from left to right, front row: Melody Steinman, Martha Kuehl and Lorie Yantzi; and back row: Nadine Moyer, Vi Martin and Marlene Letkeman-Holst.

Melody Steinman was one of the seven SALTERs. She attends Steinmann Mennonite Church, in Baden Ont.

A case for hope and joy

Engineer seeks to unite all beliefs in climate-change care

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Nelson Lee has a heart for creation and he believes that Christians have a mandate to care for God's earth. But many non-believers also care about the Earth. As a climate action engineer, Lee asked, "How do I do the work together side by side with these people, empowered by God?"

Lee, now a member of Vancouver's Chinatown Peace Church, had been an unemployed oil-industry engineer, who says he trusted in science but did not believe in a creator.

"While touring the rice terraces of Asia, [I now believe] God told me to leave the oil business and get into environmental protection," he says. "I did that and, then a dozen years later, I accepted Christ as my Lord."

He had an epiphany that his work, whatever it was, mattered to God. "I thought you had to be a pastor or missionary [to do God's work]. Then I realized I'm actually doing God's work now."

Ten years later, and believing that climate change is very real, serious and caused by humans, Lee committed the rest of life to doing what he could to make a difference. Caring for the planet is a sacred gift that honours God, he believes.

"I think people misunderstand what it means, God giving us dominion over the earth. I think God meant, 'You're going to take care of the earth the way I take care of the earth.'"

For the past 15 years, Lee has called himself a climate-action engineer, working in the secular world where most of the effort is being made. He noted that, at demonstrations and protests to do with climate change, other faith-based groups were also present.

"As far as I know, these groups [Sikhs, Muslims] all believe in a creator God," he says. Often, Indigenous people will talk

about that: a power greater than people. The way I see it, if we get together and cooperate, God will honour our work. You give me five loaves and two fish, I will feed thousands."

Lee says, "My two hopes are that I can help Christ's church do their part, and secular folks find hope in their creator. A majority of our neighbours, who we in the church refer to as secular, have a real burden for caring for creation, and they mourn its worsening degradation and climate, change as they hear it groaning to the point of despair. In this context, I thought of what gives me hope and joy, that they might consider the existence of a creator as a possibility that they have so far rejected."

Lee believes there is something Christians could bring to the conversation, partly evangelical but partly practical too. "A lot of people I work with don't believe in God," he says. But who do you turn to when things don't go well? I try to write these short little things that give people hope."

He put some thoughts down logically that he thought might speak to people who don't identify as Christian but who also feel a calling to care for the earth. He calls it a case of "what if":

- **It is** at least possible that a creator—the source of everything—exists.

- a. Science tells us we cannot prove that something does not exist.

- b. None of you know, or have met, my father; yet none of you believe I self exist. You all believe there was a male from whom I descended; likewise, perhaps you have simply not yet met the Creator?

- c. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and most Indigenous peoples, accounting for more than half the earth's population, believe in a creator God.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NELSON LEE

Climate-action engineer Nelson Lee believes God has called him to be an agent for education in care for the earth.

- **If the Creator exists**, it is possible that the Creator made people to be earth keepers to care for, and harmoniously nurture, the earth and all living creatures, as described in the Judeo-Christian, Muslim and Sikh scriptures, and taught in most Indigenous traditions.

- **If the Creator's teachings to people are true**, as described in the Judeo-Christian, Muslim and Sikh scriptures, then:

- a. We have to make a major course correction in our development to halt eco-destruction and injustice, and to work to restore biodiversity and equity.

- b. We can undertake this work with hope and joy, because we know that the Creator will enable and even multiply our efforts.

Although Lee's profession is to help others be aware of what they can do to care for the earth, he is open to educating others on the subject in his free time.

"I just try to be obedient, try to be a good listener, and God's honoured that," he says. Whether I'm doing that for pay or as a volunteer is all the same. God is blessing me as I go, opening doors. I really believe it's God's calling for me." ❧

/// News brief

Interim position to discern future of North Edmonton Ministry



Mennonite Church Alberta is pleased to announce the appointment of **Suzanne Gross** as interim worker for their North Edmonton Ministry (NEM). She will be working to maintain momentum in relationships that have been established over the first ten years of this ministry and will work with the Mission and Service Committee and the executive of MC Alberta in discerning, re-focusing and exploring future directions for the ministry. This will include connecting with congregations to explore ministry opportunities in locations beyond Edmonton. Gross is a member of Edmonton First Mennonite Church and comes to this position with a long history of working with newcomers. For the past two years, she has led the NEM Scriptural Reasoning Group, which explores scriptural texts with people from the three Abrahamic faith traditions. Her six-month term began on Sept. 15.

—MENNONITE CHURCH ALBERTA

/// Staff change

Rockway announces next principal



Elaine Ranney has been named as Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's next principal. Betty Pries, the board chair of the Kitchener, Ont., school for students from grades 7 to 12, describes Ranney as someone who brings "tremendous energy, a compassionate spirit and depth of experience to the role." Ranney comes to Rockway with "significant experience," most recently as superintendent at the Waterloo Region District School Board with a focus on student achievement and well-being. Prior to that she was an assistant superintendent, a system administrator for special education, a principal, vice-principal and teacher. Ranney is further described by Pries as an "excellent communicator" with "a heart for students . . . [and] a collaborative spirit." She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Waterloo in 1986, a bachelor of education degree from the University of Ottawa in 1988, and master of education degree University of Toronto in 1997, plus other additional certifications and training. Ranney is an active member of Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont. She will begin at Rockway on Dec. 1, which allows for a one-month overlap with current principal Ann L. Schultz, who is retiring after 30 years at Rockway as teacher, music-department head and principal.

—BY JANET BAUMAN

/// Staff change

John Reimer appointed MC Eastern Canada operations director



John Reimer has been appointed the operations director of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, as of Oct. 18. As a member of the executive staff team, he will give leadership to operational systems and processes to strengthen the regional church's ministry supporting pastors and congregations to thrive. He will lead the development and implementation of the physical, technological, communications, financial and human resources needed to operate MC Eastern Canada. Previously, he worked in management with cause-related or faith-based organizations. He served with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for eight years as maritime director with Ten Thousand Villages in Petitcodiac, N.B. Most recently, he maintained a group of 150 volunteers and provided support to the business management of MCC Thrift and Gift in Elmira, Ont., as volunteer and business manager. He has also worked in the technology sector as CEO, manager and technician at PeaceWorks Computer Consulting Inc. in Waterloo, Ont. Reimer is a member at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., and he, his wife, Lori Yantzi, and family live in New Hamburg.


—MC EASTERN CANADA

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Schools Directory featuring Canadian Mennonite University

Think university is expensive?

CMU makes it easy to receive financial aid

By Myles Tiessen

Canadian Mennonite University offers bursaries and scholarships to roughly 50 percent of its student body every year, making it accessible for students to join a deep and enriching scholastic experience.

Scholarships traditionally range from \$1,000 to \$3,500 per year, but some will provide students up to \$14,000 over the duration their studies.

"Being able to award scholarships and bursaries to such a large percentage of our student body helps reduce the students' financial stress and [let them] focus on their studies and the community at CMU," says Sarah Klassen Bartel, CMU's financial and student services advisor.

CMU provides many different avenues for students to receive financial aid. Through scholarships, bursaries, church matching grants and more, CMU works with students and the community to ensure every student can access financial aid. All bursaries, grants

and scholarships are money students will not have to pay back.

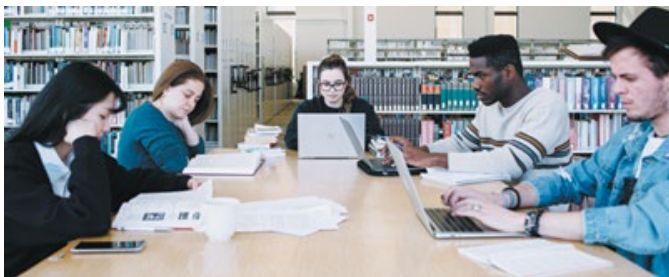
"We understand that seeking funding can be confusing, difficult and a barrier for students who may not be able to afford post-secondary education," says Klassen Bartel.

Providing financial aid represents CMU's commitment to helping a wide variety of students engage in diverse programs of study. There are many specific scholarships available for international, Indigenous and domestic students.

Dedicated staff help make applying for the right financial aid option for students as easy as possible.

To learn more about CMU's financial aid opportunities, visit cmu.ca/admissions. Apply for scholarships and bursaries by Feb. 28, 2022, for fall 2022 classes.

Roughly 50 percent of CMU students receive some form of financial aid from more than 300 unique scholarship and bursary opportunities.



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mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022



Mennonite Church Canada
Our nationwide community of faith



!Explore: A Theological Program for Youth

In July 2022, participants (**grades 10 to 12**) can attend Mennonite World Conference in Indonesia with other Indonesian youth, explore theological questions and lived faith together, and visit parts of beautiful Java Island.

Sign up by Dec. 31!

Learn more: ambs.ca/explore

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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.

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

Saskatchewan

Dec. 3: Mega Menno Christmas

in China, a free event for youth in grades 6 to 12, at 7 p.m. local time; featuring George and Tobia Veith. For more information, email youthminister@mcsask.ca.

Jan. 22, 2022: Mega Menno one-day winter retreat, at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim, Sask. For more information, email youthminister@mcsask.ca.

Manitoba

Ongoing: Join an MC Manitoba gratitude group every second week for six weeks on Zoom, for 40 minutes of gathering with others in encouragement and sharing gratitude. Leader: Laura Funk, MC Manitoba's spiritual director-in-residence. For more information,

visit <https://bit.ly/2YbxzRf>.

Ontario

April 19, 2022: "Diverse paths: An exploration of Low German Mennonite experiences," at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. The conference will bring together members of Low German-speaking communities and those who work within those communities, including service providers, educators and academics. To learn more, visit <https://bit.ly/3vvNaOx>.

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.

Until March 7, 2022: "Not Traumatic Enough for a Shock Blanket" exhibit at the Grebel Gallery, Conrad Grebel University College. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3G4MBjD>.

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



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



Employment Opportunity Principal

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate is seeking a **Principal** to join our dynamic and dedicated team to lead our Mennonite faith-based independent school, to replace our current Principal who is retiring at the end of the year. Westgate provides the requisite Manitoba curriculum to grades 6 through 12 with an emphasis on nurturing students' spiritual growth in a Mennonite context.

Reporting directly to the Board, the Principal is responsible for providing overall leadership and direction to the staff in carrying out the mission of the school. This includes communicating the school's vision to the church community and beyond, maintaining support from the church constituency, supervising staff, and overall fiscal planning and management. The successful candidate must be a certified teacher in Manitoba and a person committed to Christ and active in a Mennonite congregation. A Master's degree in education or related field is preferred.

Full job description at westgatemennonite.ca.

Applications must be submitted by **November 30, 2021** to pknyoman@shaw.ca. Anticipated start date is **September 6, 2022**.

Employment Opportunity Co-Pastor (1.0 FTE)

Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler, Manitoba, is searching for a full-time **Co-pastor** whose primary responsibilities will be in the areas of worship and community life. Emmanuel Mennonite Church is grounded in an Anabaptist tradition and is a member of Mennonite Church Manitoba.

Interested candidates are asked to please contact **Rick Neufeld**, director of leadership Ministry at Mennonite Church Manitoba (rneufeld@mennochurch.mb.ca), for further information and to apply. This position is open until filled.



Employment opportunity Lead Pastor Calgary, Alberta

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

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

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

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



PHOTO BY JULIA REESOR

The Toronto Mennonite Festival was held for the first time at the Willowgrove outdoor education and farm centre in Stouffville

Mennonite festival moves to Stouffville

By Christen Kong
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

For the first time in the history of the annual Toronto Mennonite Festival, families circulated around the lively outdoor space of Willowgrove outdoor education and farm centre near Stouffville, Ont., instead of Black Creek Pioneer Village in Toronto, where the festival began in 1967.

Karen Heese, board member and chair, said, “It was important for us to host something in person because, if you leave things too long, people get out of the habit of going to things.”

With the help of 53 volunteers, this year’s festival, held on Sept. 18, greeted more than 300 visitors, 55 of them children under the age of 5.

Heese said people enjoyed coming to Willowgrove, as they were able to support two organizations they both loved, the other being Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

The first festival was organized after the director of Black Creek Pioneer Village visited an MCC relief sale and was inspired to bring the fundraising event to Toronto, where it offered demonstrations of how to quilt, cook chilli and make apple butter. The tradition continued this year with Marcus Heinrichs’s hand-churned ice cream machine alongside other food stalls, a silent auction and MCC thrift booth.

The 2021 festival raised more than \$17,000 to support relief, development and peace in Ontario and around the world through MCC. ❧



PHOTO BY JULIA REESOR

Bob Wideman helped Marcus Heinrichs, not pictured, make hand-churned ice cream at the Toronto Mennonite Festival.