

CANADIAN MENNONITE

October 17, 2022 Volume 26 Number 21



'I expect there may be lots of work'

MDS volunteers begin cleanup work in Nova Scotia
pg. 13

PM40063104 R09613

INSIDE

Planning a people's Bible 4
'We're still just trying to catch up' 14
Focus on Education 23

EDITORIAL

Three questions about content

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive editor



Movies and TV shows about journalism always catch my attention.

How do publishing enterprises work? How do reporters and editors gather information? How are decisions made about the content that the public will see?

Here are questions that readers have about the content you read on the print and web pages of *Canadian Mennonite*.

1. How does the content get selected for publication?

As the editorial team makes decisions about what goes into the magazine and on the website, we are guided by *CM*'s mission statement: "To educate, inspire, inform and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada as it shares the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective."

CM's correspondents write regularly about the people living out their faith in their regions' communities, churches and organizations. The priority is to share news and opinions from within the Mennonite Church Canada family of faith, but we also pay attention to the happenings within the wider Mennonite-Anabaptist world. And articles, photos and story leads sent by individuals and congregations with our church family are always welcome.

The team looks for content that is timely and relevant to many readers. We aim to show a variety of experiences and perspectives. The writing needs to be clear and factually correct. Opinions must be expressed in ways that are

respectful and help further conversation among readers. Some practical aspects also go into the decisions about content, such as the space available, the amount of staff time and budget limitations.

2. How can articles about my community or church appear in the magazine?

There are many interesting stories that have not yet been told! If you know of such stories, feel free to send information to the correspondent in your area or to someone on the editorial staff. You can find contact information in the masthead on page 3 of the magazine and at canadianmennonite.org/contact-us.

3. How do you treat readers' letters and web comments?

When a new issue of the magazine arrives in mailboxes, many subscribers head straight to the Readers Write section. Online readers like to read the most recent web comments. These are places where the voices of readers across Canada are expressed, as part of the communication efforts with the nationwide church community.

These letters and comments might respond to published content, offer additional information or suggest a new topic for readers' consideration. *CM* publishes most of these submissions.

As with the articles, the topics of letters and comments should be relevant to the life of Mennonites in Canada. We look for writing that is clear and concise. A variety of views is welcome, if the writers can express their opinions with respect and courtesy for

the people they disagree with. If space is tight in the print magazine, preference is given to MC Canada congregants and readers who have not previously written about a particular topic in the past year.

For more details on how to write and submit your letter for publication, see the guidelines at the end of every Readers Write section. Potential web commenters can see the posting guidelines at the end of each article.

Welcome to new intern



The *CM* team recently welcomed journalism intern Emma Siemens, who will be contributing to this magazine throughout the school year. She is a

fifth-year student at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, and has an interest in sharpening her writing and reporting skills. She attends Home St. Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, and has been involved in projects like Camps with Meaning and Mennonite Disaster Service. Welcome, Emma!

Clarification

The writer of the letter, "On stoking 'the fires of misinformation and division,'" page 8 in the July 25 issue, objected to the wording in the editorial note that accompanied her letter about the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines. *CM* retracts the use of the word "debunks" but continues to point to the article referenced there, for a fuller picture of the statements by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ❧



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CONTENTS

OCTOBER 17, 2022 / VOL. 26, No. 21

ABOUT THE COVER:

Antigonish, N.S., got hit hard by Hurricane Fiona late last month, prompting Mennonite Disaster Service to spring into action. See more on page 13.

PHOTO BY SHANNON LONG / TOWN OF ANTIGONISH, N.S.

'Music that shaped our Mennonite souls' 15

History and hymns are showcased at the 50th anniversary fundraiser for the Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia.

Growing hope, one acre at a time 18

Alberta correspondent **Jessica Evans** profiles the Gatez family's efforts to decrease world hunger with their participation in the Grow Hope campaign.

The sweet solace of polarization: Part 2 20

Senior writer **Will Braun** sits down with a number of unvaccinated Manitobans to find their humanity behind a stance that is not appreciated by many.

Planning a people's Bible 4

Marking 500 years of Anabaptism, the Anabaptist Bible project seeks 500 study groups to interpret all Scripture in the light of Jesus.



Regular features:

For discussion 6 Readers write 8 Milestones 8
A moment from yesterday 9 Calendar 31 Classifieds 31

Only together can we heal Jeanette Hanson 9

Modelling another way to healing Ed Olfert 10

What is your theory of social change? 11
Randolph Haluza-DeLay

Abandoning the Lord Joshua Penfold 12

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Planning a people's Bible

Marking 500 years of Anabaptism, project seeks 500 study groups to interpret all Scripture in the light of Jesus

By Paul Schrag
Anabaptist World

Anabaptism began in 1525 in Switzerland, when bold young Christians challenged authorities with the radical idea that Scripture spoke clearly to ordinary people who studied the Bible together.

Nearly five centuries later, plans are taking shape for a special Bible to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism and breathe new life into grassroots Bible study.

Forty-five people gathered from Aug. 26 to 28 at Casa Iskali retreat centre in the Chicago suburb of Des Plaines, Ill., for a working conference to launch the Anabaptist Bible, a project that aims to recapture the populist spirit—and Jesus-centred theology—of 16th-century Anabaptism.

It will be a “people’s Bible” that, if recruiting is successful, will draw on the work of 500 small groups of laypeople who will write marginal notes and commentary.

John D. Roth, a historian and former Goshen College professor who directs the project, admits the plan is daunting in its size and speed: The editors want all content submitted by June 15, 2023.

“Gutsy” is how one conference participant, retired filmmaker Elam Stoltzfus of Reading, Pa., described it. “We’ll pray for wisdom,” he said. “I’m excited about this project. I’m honoured to be a part of it.”

A project of MennoMedia, the publishing arm of Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A., the Anabaptist Bible aims to reflect the diversity of many groups while drawing the bulk of its support from these two denominations.

The greatest number of people at the meeting were from MC U.S.A. Besides MC Canada, others came from the Church of the Brethren; LMC (formerly Lancaster Mennonite Conference); Evana, an evangelical Anabaptist body; and the Bruderhof, a Plain communal group.

Organizers hope the project will grow to include the Mennonite Brethren, Brethren in Christ and others.

“We hope ‘Anabaptism at 500’ can be a big tent,” Roth said, referring to the anniversary plans of which the



JACE LONGENECKER PHOTO FOR MENNOMEDIA

In the chapel at Casa Iskali retreat centre in the Chicago suburb of Des Plaines, Ill., 45 people gathered from Aug. 26 to 28 for a working conference to launch the Anabaptist Bible project.

Anabaptist Bible is a part. “There are many streams in the Anabaptist tradition, and we want to hear from each other and learn from each other.”

While open to contributions from the rest of the world, the Anabaptist Bible is a project by North Americans for North Americans, in English. “Our commitment is to the diversity of Anabaptists in North America, which is already a tremendous challenge,” Roth said.

While seeking diverse voices, the Anabaptist Bible will centre on a unifying theme: Christ-centred biblical interpretation. Or, in scholarly terms, a “Christocentric hermeneutic.”

In two presentations, Meghan Larissa Good, pastor of Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz., and author of *The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today* (Herald Press, 2018), described the interpretive method as “putting on our Jesus glasses.”

Reading Scripture through a Jesus lens, Good said, is

not only the Anabaptist way but reflects the theology of the early church.

“The goal of Scripture, according to the early Christians, is to lead people to an encounter with the living Christ,” she said. “We are connected to this living person who is present. If we have a person we are being drawn toward, that becomes our anchor point, and we have space for conversation around it.”

Good said that Jesus is the principle by which biblical differences are mediated, and “the logic of Scripture’s narrative arc.” She cited John 1:1, which says Jesus is the original Word, the logic behind creation; Hebrews 1:1-3, which says God spoke to us through a Son who is “*the exact imprint of God’s very being*”; and Colossians 1:19, which says “*all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell*” in Jesus.

“Jesus is not the softer side of God that gets averaged” with the God of judgment and wrath, Good said. Jesus is the fullness of God, the authoritative interpreter of Scripture.

With this Christ-centred theology in mind, 500 study groups will get a “3-4-5” assignment: read three passages of Scripture (the entire Bible will be divided into 500 sets of three passages and assignments given), meet four times and respond to five discussion prompts:

- **What does the** verse or passage suggest about God?
- **What might/does Jesus** say about it?
- **What does the** verse or passage suggest about humans—our possibilities and mistakes?
- **How are we** called to live differently because of this verse or passage?
- **What additional questions** or comments remain with you (or your group)?

In the spirit of a people’s Bible accessible to readers from diverse backgrounds, the Anabaptist Bible will use the Common English Bible translation. This translation uses simpler language than the New International and New Revised Standard versions. It has become popular with immigrants and is easy to read aloud. Since few Anabaptists own the Common English Bible, reading a

new translation might stimulate interest.

Study groups that sign up to participate can use any version of the Bible they choose.

Conference participants, some with an academic background in biblical scholarship, advised the project organizers, led by Roth and Mollee Moua, managing editor of “Anabaptism at 500,” on matters of theology as they finalized introductory materials for study groups.

Some cautioned that guiding the groups to interpret the Old Testament through a “Jesus lens” must not promote supersessionism. Also known as replacement theology, supersessionism holds that Christians have replaced Jews as God’s people, and this view often aligns with antisemitism.

What the study groups might say about sexuality was cited as a potential problem. Emmy Maendel of Maple Ridge Bruderhof near Kingston, N.Y., who noted that she was the only conference participant from a Plain group, warned about nontraditional views on transgender people and same-sex marriage. “If that comes into this Bible, there are a lot of people who will never buy it,” she said.

Hyejung Yum of Toronto urged that the Anabaptist Bible reflect the global church and contemporary concerns, even though North Americans will produce it and a celebration of history underlies it.

“When we only talk about the 16th century, we maintain a Eurocentric identity,” she said. “Our global identity is more than European descendants, so we need to intentionally work on including that if we want to move forward to the future.” (For more on Hyejung Yum’s thoughts on this issue, visit canadianmennonite.org/hjy.)

Gerald Mast, professor of communication at Bluffton (Ohio) University, affirmed the project and testified that daily Bible reading, through all of Scripture (“I have to read the passages that make me uncomfortable”), made him a more welcoming, enduring and less anxious person.

“I am thrilled to be part of a Bible project that will bring the diversity of



JACE LONGENECKER PHOTO FOR MENNOMEDIA

John D. Roth, project director of Anabaptism at 500, receives input on the Anabaptist Bible project from participants at a conference held from Aug. 26 to 28 in Des Plaines, Ill.

the church together with the diversity of the Bible, and that will attend to the familiar and the neglected corners of the Bible with the ordinary and gathered communities of the church,” he said. “I’m convinced that this Bible will encourage not just Anabaptists, but the whole Body of Christ, toward a greater endurance and a greater welcome.” ❧

Paul Schrag is editor of Anabaptist World. Reprinted by permission of Anabaptist World.

For more information and to register a group, visit anabaptismat500.com.



FAQs about the Anabaptist Bible

BY JOHN D. ROTH

What is it?

MennoMedia, the publishing agency of Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A., is producing the first-of-its kind Anabaptist Bible by publishing the Common English Bible version of the Bible

with contributions from Anabaptists embedded as notes, book introductions and more. This project is an effort to help readers understand what it means to read Scripture through the distinctive “Jesus-centred” lens of the Anabaptist tradition.

Why is this Bible needed?

For many Christians today, the Bible has become a battlefield or is regarded as irrelevant. Yet the central story of Scripture—that God has been revealed to the world in the person of Jesus Christ—is good news. Amid the confusion and anxiety over Scripture, Christians need to be reminded that the Bible always puts them into a relationship with a living person. The saving message of Christ’s life, death and resurrection echoes throughout all of Scripture. The gift of this transformative story far exceeds debates over specific verses, and it still has the power to transform lives today.

Who thought of this?

In late 2021, MennoMedia launched an initiative called “Anabaptism at 500” as a way of inviting a wide spectrum of Anabaptist groups to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Anabaptist beginnings (1525-2025). Early in that planning, the idea emerged that an Anabaptist Bible would be a crucial component of that commemoration, especially considering the vital role Scripture played in the emergence of the Anabaptist tradition in the 16th century and its development since then.

How will it work?

The reflections, insights, questions and commentary that are a crucial part of the Anabaptist Bible will be generated largely by ordinary members of the church. The entire Bible has been divided into 500 clusters of texts—each with an Old Testament and a New Testament passage, along with a portion from the Psalms or Proverbs. Interested study groups will be assigned three biblical passages. Each group will meet regularly for conversation. A group representative will then compile and submit the group’s reflections, insights and questions. Those submissions, along with other materials compiled by the editors, will become the core content of the Anabaptist Bible.

Who will contribute to it?

The introductions to the books of the Bible, along with essays and artwork, will be assigned to individuals who bring particular gifts to those tasks. But the primary content of the Anabaptist Bible will be generated by Bible study groups from at least 500 Anabaptist congregations or faith communities, representing a diverse spectrum of contemporary Anabaptists. The expectation is that these participants will be earnest Christians, ready to engage with their assigned texts in thoughtful conversation with each other through the lens of an Anabaptist hermeneutic. Participants are not required to have seminary degrees or to possess unique gifts in biblical interpretation.

What’s the schedule?

Groups interested in participating can register at anabaptismat500.com. They will receive detailed instructions for both the

facilitator of the study group and for each participant. Ideally, groups will complete their work in four to five weeks. Registration closes on March 1, 2023, and all annotations must be submitted by June 15, 2023.

How can I and my congregation help?

The easiest way to help is by participating. If you are intrigued by the idea of helping to create the Anabaptist Bible, share your enthusiasm with your pastor and encourage your Sunday school class or small group to sign up. You can also help by supporting the project with a donation. Watch for other “Anabaptism at 500” items currently in development. ☸



John D. Roth is the project director of “Anabaptism at 500.”

☸ For discussion

1. What is your go-to version or translation of the Bible? How helpful do you find a Bible that includes notes at the bottom or commentary in the margins? What do you find appealing about the idea of an Anabaptist “people’s Bible”?
2. The purpose of the Anabaptist Bible project is to provide a Christ-centred biblical interpretation. What are some examples where Jesus reinterpreted Old Testament passages or ideas? What does it mean to put on your “Jesus glasses”? Are some parts of the Bible more important than others?
3. Hyeung Yum of Toronto expressed concern that this Bible project not concentrate on the 16th century, but reflect the global church and contemporary concerns. What were some of the issues that Anabaptists in the 16th century were concerned about? Do you think they would agree with Yum?
4. The Anabaptist Bible project will have ordinary people think about specific Bible passages, reflecting on the roles of God, Jesus and humans. Would you be interested in studying the Bible this way? How interested are you in reading what other Mennonites have to say about Bible passages?
5. How would you go about trying to “breathe new life into grassroots Bible study”?

—By Barb Draper

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An approach to Scripture that is Jesus-centered, interpreted together, and transforms our lives.



OPINION

/// Readers write

✉ Preaching in a 'maze of postmodern reality'

Say a prayer for pastors, teachers in seminaries and Mennonite schools, bishops and executive ministers, and any others who are tasked with leading the rest of us Anabaptist Christians through the maze of postmodern reality.

It's not so much that the Anabaptist story that should provide a firm, steady footing, doesn't exist. It's more a case of us generally having lost interest in the relevant history, of our having mixed our vague notions of how and why a radical reformation was necessary for Jesus' sake, and having tossed it together with pop-religion around us.

Our leaders, I fear, must watch in horror as people wander off to more comfortable places, precisely because they don't know the story of how they were made, and why. One cohort leaves to get away from the too-progressive dialogue; another seeks the comforting, familiar answer-monologue that defies interpretation, that echoes what they're used to. And who does that leave in the pews, and service projects and discernment groups?

The phenomenon I'm talking about here is not new. The nomadic disposition Anabaptist Mennonites adopted long ago—when military participation, for instance, challenged a firmly held faith tenet—historically disoriented our focus and is haunting us to this day. Among us, the fragmentation of the Gospel has resulted in division into sub-denominations that purport to be Anabaptist Mennonite, but are unable to worship together with their sibling churches over disagreements about dress codes and women's status theologically, for instance. A profligate wastage of a Holy Spirit.

Say a prayer for pastors, teachers in seminaries and Mennonite schools, bishops and executive ministers, and any others who are tasked with leading the rest of us Anabaptist Christians through the maze of post-modern reality. "What must I teach, what must I preach to this motley, postmodernist crew today?"

GEORGE EPP, ROSTHERN, SASK.

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.

✉ Imagining a different world

Re: "Climate imagination" column, Sept. 19, page 11.

This column really gets to the source of our world problems—that "European imperialism and colonialism created a world-system that persists to this day. In this system, certain voices have more power than others."

Columnist Randolph Haluza-DeLay points out the key element of colonialism being the drive to capture the wealth from so-called "natural resources." Under this system, even people became commodities. It persists today, with wars started on the basis of greed and the want of power. But it is exemplified most through the continued opening of new oil/gas fields in the face of horrendous impacts of climate change.

Haluza-Delay points out that our "'fair share' of the causes should translate equitably into a 'fair share' of the money and resources toward solutions," and asks the important question: What would it take for Christians to imagine a different world?

GEOFFREY STRONG (ONLINE COMMENT)

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Gostnikov—Sophie Diana (b. Sept. 9, 2022), to Cassandra and Eugene Gostnikov, Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Luis—Olive Emma-Marie (b. Aug. 8, 2022), to Amy and Andrew Luis, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Stothers—Indi Rae (b. Sept. 27, 2022), to Joseph and Ellen Stothers, Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Deaths

Blackmore—Lorraine Susan, 76 (b. July 20, 1946; d. Sept. 7, 2022), Toronto United Mennonite member, attended Danforth Mennonite, Toronto, in recent years.

Brubacher—Martha, 89 (b. Dec. 8, 1932; d. Aug. 26, 2022), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Douglas—Faye, 70 (b. May 3, 1952; d. Sept. 17, 2022), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Erb—Viola Florence (Lauver), 88 (b. July 2, 1934; d. Sept. 24, 2022), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Schwartzentruber—Martha, 91 (b. March 11, 1931; d. Aug. 28, 2022), Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

Only together can we heal

Jeanette Hanson

A former Maoist rebel, a Muslim corporate lawyer, a conservative Baptist pastor and an Indigenous coffee farmer walk into a coffee shop . . . and sit down for a board meeting for PeaceBuilders Community, Inc.

In Mindanao, Philippines, these people and others are part of the community that works together with Lakan and Lakambini (Witness workers Dan and Joji Pantoja) in peacebuilding and inclusive community development, which includes fair-trade coffee farming. Staff say that this board is more like a family that works together, supports each other and finds ways to build peace in their communities.

While we in Mennonite Church Canada are striving towards equity, diversity and inclusion, there is a constant concern about tokenism. This isn't an issue for PeaceBuilders because they have deep relationships with people from many walks of life—they live life together. They happily use the gifts of all those who want to walk with them in the journey toward peace and reconciliation. These people become friends and even family for each other. They are focused on a common goal,

They gather to eat, to celebrate, to mourn and to work for this common goal: peace, justice and reconciliation

not on the structure of their organization. Their relationships lead them to activity and advocacy. They gather to eat, to celebrate, to mourn and to work for this common goal: peace, justice and reconciliation between Indigenous and settler peoples in the Philippines.

This leads me to think of my friendships. Where does God want me to move based on the relationships with which I have been gifted? In Luke 10, Jesus sends out his disciples with these instructions: *“Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’ And if a person of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon them; but if not, it shall return to you.”* Who are the people of peace in my community, in my city, in my church?

A young coffee entrepreneur serves coffee at this meeting. She is an intern at Coffee for Peace. She tells us her story. She never knew her father and grandfather. They were killed in inter-tribal conflicts. She says that she is learning from her companions at PeaceBuilders to forgive and walk in

peace, but admits it is hard. She also admits that several of the staff and board members supporting her on this journey were from the tribe that killed her father. She says that they were all victims of violence together, and only together can they heal. Relationships are powerful that way.

Sara Wenger Shenk writes in *Tonguetied: Learning the Lost Art of Talking about Faith*: “Humility and a willingness to hold together tension from opposing perspectives must be our starting place, from which we call on the Holy Spirit to bring people closer together in Christ.”

May we learn, like this young coffee farmer, that only together can we heal. ✎



Jeanette Hanson is director of International Witness for Mennonite Church Canada and wrote this column while visiting the Philippines in September. She can be reached at jhanson@mennonitechurch.ca.

A moment from yesterday



Text: Conrad Stoesz
Photo: Gerald Loewen

In 1970, the province of Manitoba celebrated its 100th birthday, and celebrations included a visit by the queen and her family. Among the many stops and events in July was a visit to the town of Steinbach, and the Milltown Hutterite Colony, near Elie. When materials come to the archives, sometimes included are mementos, clippings or scrapbooks about the Royal Family. LaVerna Klippenstein (1934-2014) grew up in Steinbach as LaVerna Reimer. In her materials donated to the archives were seven files of clippings about the Royal Family. The materials speak to influences and values in the Mennonite community. Pictured from left to right: Jake Waldner, Queen Elizabeth II, Hutterite minister Mike Waldner and Jake Kleinsasser.



IN THE IMAGE

Modelling another way to healing

Ed Olfert

The past month has been indescribably hard for many here in Saskatchewan. I refer, of course, to the savage happenings on James Smith Cree Nation, and also touching nearby Weldon, which involved the violent deaths of 12 people and injury to another 18.

In this very sad story, a lesson has been about the vibrancy of the spirit of First Nations people.

The words from James Smith Cree Nation that came out of this event were about forgiveness. The prayers have been about hope. The pleas have been about self-policing and for addiction healing supports, but pleas that affix little blame. The words have been spoken, the tears have been shed with dignity, with compassion and with honesty.

I see a man who lost a sister in this mad violence embracing the partner of a suspect. I see another, also a brother, choosing to sit in front of reporters to tell stories of who his sister was. Although savaged by grief, the stories are warm, gentle and touched with humour.

I glimpse a culture that has retained an understanding of healing that has slipped by so many. In our race to make

things black and white, to make something that law books can sort out, judges, lawyers and the innocent go here, and the guilty stand far over there, far apart.

When things get more complicated, we write more law books. Violent happenings are mostly about right or wrong.

Indigenous values, at their best, point in another direction. How can the community be healed? How can individual people be healed? How can the good energy of so many be marshalled to draw folks together? How can reality be shared, be brought into community? How can the destructive power and fear of such savagery be confronted, named and stripped of its strength?

I had a conversation with a neighbour, a Christian man, who pointed to the evil of the people responsible. I find that the word “evil” is not useful for me to process this event. The word “evil” is only applicable if it is inserted into every instance where we choose to stop short of perfection.

When pictures of the suspects, the Sanderson brothers, were circulated in an attempt to locate them, I was deeply struck by the sadness in their eyes. If the

word “evil” is applicable, it is also about me, the opportunities I have been given to address such sadness and have failed to do so. The violence growing out of such sadness does not happen without community failings. That’s about me.

Genesis 1:26 suggests that we are all created in the holy image of God. When lives careen off into wildly other directions, will we step forward, learn what is offered, and work toward change? Will we accept responsibility, as modelled to us by James Smith Cree Nation, to come together, to embrace, to include, to weep and to move forward?

Spiritual author Richard Rohr suggests: “When all is said and done, the gospel comes down to forgiveness.” He quotes those words that we’ve repeated hundreds of times, “*Forgive us as we’ve forgiven our debtors.*” There are responsibilities. It’s on us to live into holy directions. It’s the centre of living faithfully with integrity.

Can we learn something of that from the communities that surround us? ❧



Ed Olfert (p2peho@gmail.com) gives thanks for those who model another way.

Et cetera

EFC fears MAiD changes will harm those with mental illness

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) is encouraging Canadian Christians to interact with their Members of Parliament to share their concerns and grave misgivings about the planned expansion of medical assistance in dying in Canada. As of March 2023, people with mental illness alone will become eligible for assisted dying in Canada. The EFC is gravely concerned about the impact of this change on vulnerable Canadians. “We know two things to be true: many Canadians will experience a mental-health crisis in their lifetime, and many Canadians struggle to access timely, affordable care in times of crisis. Canadians living with mental-health challenges need more supports and treatment options,” says Julia Beazley, director of public policy for the EFC. This expansion of MAiD will greatly increase the risk that Canadians will end their lives via MAiD because they feel they have no other options.

Source: Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.



PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM

MIND AND SOUL

What is your theory of social change?

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

Some years after making a faith commitment, I was drawn by Anabaptism. It seemed to be a movement of the spirit, deeply aligned with the way of Jesus, which had attracted me to the Christian faith. The historic peace churches have had impacts on Christianity in general and the world that far outweigh their limited numbers.

For most of my life, I have also been involved with environmental, peace and anti-racism movements. This activism is driven by my faith beliefs about the values of a society that would be aligned with the desires of God—listening to “the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth,” as the liberation theologian Leonardo Boff put it.

That means my Christian faith is a core part of my involvement with social-change activism. In fact, religion has been an important part of social movements—think Christianity in the peace or civil rights movements—and a movement on its own—like Anabaptism or Christianity itself. As a movement, Christianity has changed the world, often in good ways, although we are right to call out its failures.

What is your theory of social change? For example, is it that personal change eventually leads to societal change? (If so,

that assumes society is merely the collection of individuals, and ignores institutions or the unequal distribution of power.) Where does spirituality fit into your theory of social change? What role for citizens, versus technology, corporate or political leaders?

Social movements, as citizen-driven, non-institutional challengers of authorities, power holders or cultural beliefs and practices, don’t just target governments. We’ve seen women’s movements in the church, a movement advocating for inclusion of LGBTQ+ believers, and internal activists like those in the Palestine and Israel Network (PIN) of Mennonite Church Canada.

Some activists recently asked me about a statistic that had become something of a cultural meme. How many people are needed for a “tipping point” whereupon social change happens? This statistic was being presented as “the percentage to drive forward on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples” and “the percentage needed to get those in the church to pay attention to climate change.”

We look for magic numbers at our peril! In her book *Civil Resistance*, Erica Chenoweth mentions that change comes with about 3.5 percent of the population, but this figure is only for those who are

the most engaged. Social change needs a much larger pool of people who can provide other support or even just tacit agreement. Participation in social change comes in many ways.

Social change, whether in Canadian society or MC Canada, is a difficult process that takes time and persistence. My theory of social change includes people learning new attitudes and practising new behaviours. Such learning usually came via their social interactions (mostly their own significant others), but activist organizations could get new topics and action on the radar—like Orange Shirt Day or peace churches teaching nonviolence even in times of war. Chenoweth tabulates a great deal of data showing nonviolent civil resistance is far more effective than violence in lasting political or regime change.

Changed behaviour, social norms and other entrenched ways of doing things means that social change is broader than political action. While we should not ignore advocacy to governments, we should also advocate with, or “give witness to,” church leaders and each other. One more thing is clear: Helping change happen means working collectively, and we can’t do that alone! ❧



Randy Haluza-DeLay used to teach sociology, and now works and volunteers for faith-based justice and environmental organizations.

Et cetera

Menno Simons Sermon Prize awarded to Peter Stucky

The University of Hamburg’s department of peace church theology has awarded the 2022 Menno Simons Sermon Prize to Peter Stucky, pastor of Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogotá, Colombia, and professor at the Seminario Bíblico Menonita de Colombia. The prize is given in recognition of a sermon that brings “biblical testimony in the light of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition.” Based on 1 Peter 1:9, the winning sermon describes the church as a missionary community, as was first delivered by Stucky last year at his Bogotá church. Stucky delivered the sermon again to the Mennonite Church Hamburg-Altona congregation on Oct. 2.

Source: *Anabaptist World*



MENNONITE MISSION NETWORK PHOTO

Peter Stucky, right, baptizes Juan Esteban Herrera Garzón in 2017 with the assistance of Lilia Aranguren.

TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

Abandoning the Lord

Joshua Penfold

As I read the annals of the kings of Israel in Chronicles, the length of the timeline gets lost on me. Only a few pages before I was reading the account of David, followed by a few pages for Solomon. Then Scripture starts flying through subsequent kings whose reigns are often summed up in a chapter or two. When I can read an entire generation's spiritual well-being through the paragraphed life of their king, I forget how much time has passed. It may just be the next paragraph for me, but these chapters can span decades at a time.

So when I read of spiritually attuned and passionate David, followed by wise and richly blessed by God Solomon, and then read of Solomon's successor and son Rehoboam, *"he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the Lord"* (II Chronicles 12:1), I need to remember the years between.

I'm reminded of my own generation. I'm fully aware that my generation has been a minority in most churches for a while now. I don't know if I can say that they have *"abandoned the law of the Lord,"* as Rehoboam and Israel did, but many have certainly abandoned regular involvement in church.

This is not necessarily a lament,

criticism or guilt trip. I'm fully aware that the church often struggles to be a meaningful place of spiritual growth and community for younger generations. The reasons and solutions are both myriad and elusive; otherwise, the church would have shifted to accommodate, at least I hope so. I also hold hope that Jesus will keep his word that he will build his church and nothing will stand against it.

I look at my present place sandwiched between two other generations and at these early Israelite kings, and see how quickly the spirituality of a generation might slip away. My parents' generation was deeply committed to the life of the church. I, along with a zoo of children, infiltrated every nook and cranny of the place. Now, one generation later, that zoo has escaped, there's been a jailbreak and most of the classrooms are empty or repurposed.

Sometimes I feel like I'm one of the few suckers whose cage didn't get opened, and got left behind. Sometimes I feel like everyone else are the suckers and I alone was able to see the church for the treasure it truly is.

To be honest, I'm not sure why, when so many from my generation vacated, I was compelled to stay. There are differ-

ent reasons, I suppose, and tracking them would require more than this column. I find I'm feeling more sympathetic towards Solomon, Rehoboam, and Israel as a whole. Why would Rehoboam abandon the God who blessed his father with wisdom, riches and power? I need to ask my generation the same question. Is my generation's leaving an act of unfaithfulness or have they abandoned what they felt was an unfaithful faith community?

All I know is that I need to continue to work lovingly and diligently to pass along to my children not just faithful church commitment, but lived out commitment to Christ and the spiritual life in community, whether that continues to be a traditional church or something yet unseen.

I see and hear the lament of the older generation as they witness their children's and grandchildren's disinterest in church—but not necessarily in the spiritual—and I pray that we might find meaningful ways to share our faith, but also be open to the likely different ways that younger generations will see, understand and express their faith journey, and not necessarily view it as *"abandoning the Lord."* ❧



Joshua Penfold (penfoldjoshua@gmail.com) is thankful for the tricky, trustworthy and transformative text of the Bible.

Et cetera

MC U.S.A. signs letter in support of nuclear-arms control

Glen Guyton, executive director of Mennonite Church U.S.A., joined 33 other faith-based organization leaders in signing a letter to President Joe Biden in support of his recent efforts to pursue negotiations on nuclear-arms control. The letter recognizes that exposing the planet to the threat of nuclear weapons violates international law and is "an affront to human decency and the values of the world's religious traditions." To read the letter, visit <https://bit.ly/3EeSPyl>.

Source: Mennonite Church U.S.A.



PHOTO BY RUTH BERGEN BRAUN

Glen Guyton, MC U.S.A.'s executive minister, was the guest speaker at Mennonite Church Canada's Gathering 2022 in Edmonton earlier this year

COVER STORY

'I expect there may be lots of work'

MDS volunteers begin cleanup work in Nova Scotia

By John Longhurst
Mennonite Disaster Service Canada

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) Canada began cleanup work in Antigonish, N.S., on Sept. 30 in response to Hurricane Fiona.

That's when volunteers from the Bethel Mennonite Church in Waterville, N.S., about a three-and-a-half hour drive from Antigonish, arrived to start cutting down fallen trees in the coastal town of 4,300 in the northeast part of the province.



PHOTO BY JOHN PELLERIN / TOWN OF ANTIGONISH

Volunteers from Bethel Mennonite Church in Waterville, N.S., drove three-and-a-half hours to Antigonish, to cut down fallen trees in the coastal town of 4,300 in the northeast part of the province.

"The town saw lots of damage from high winds and rain," says Nick Hamm of the MDS Ontario Unit, who was sent to Atlantic Canada to support MDS's Atlantic Canada Unit.

Hamm and Benny Penner, MDS Atlantic Canada's unit chair, met with the Antigonish Emergency Management Team

and took a tour of the town to assess the damage and determine how MDS could help.

Although many residents have already taken care of fallen trees, MDS has been asked to help about 50 homeowners with their trees.

"I expect more will ask for help once the word gets out," says Hamm.

MDS's priority will be to help vulnerable residents, including those experiencing economic challenges, seniors, accessibility and health concerns, says Shannon Long, marketing and communications officer for the Town of Antigonish. "We so appreciate the support of MDS," she says.

After getting things set up in Antigonish, Hamm and Penner will go to Cape Breton to see how MDS can help in that area; additional volunteers from Elmira, Ont., are expected to start working in Cape Breton in early October.

At this time, it is not known how many volunteers will be needed, or what work MDS might be asked to do. "I know there is lots of damage in many parts of Atlantic Canada," Hamm says. "Based on what I know right now, I expect there may be lots of work for us there." ❧

Those who want to volunteer to help with MDS's Hurricane Fiona response can sign up for a volunteer wait list by contacting Clara Flores at cflores@mds.org or by calling toll-free 1-800-261-1274.

News brief

MDS Canada accepting donations for Hurricane Fiona response



MDS WEBSITE PHOTO

Houses were swept into the sea, trees were uprooted, telephone poles snapped and roads were washed away in Eastern Canada in the wake of Hurricane Fiona last month.

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) Canada is accepting donations for Hurricane Fiona response in Atlantic Canada. The most powerful tropical storm recorded in Canada, Fiona left a swath of destruction across southwestern Newfoundland, eastern mainland Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, southeastern New Brunswick and the Magdalen Islands in eastern Quebec. Houses were swept into the sea, trees were uprooted, telephone poles snapped and roads were washed away. Hundreds of thousands of people in the region were without power as crews work to clear downed electrical lines. Multiple communities declared states of emergency and the Atlantic premiers requested federal disaster assistance. "Our Atlantic Canada unit is monitoring the situation and we will be sending people ... to look for ways we can be of assistance," said Ross Penner, director of Canadian operations. The organization, which specializes in long-term recovery by repairing and rebuilding homes damaged or destroyed by natural disasters, is currently active in Monte Lake, B.C., where volunteers are working on homes lost to wildfires in 2021. To donate, visit mds.org/donate-canada/.



—MDS

'We're still just trying to catch up'

Participants pedal, dash, paddle for Manitoba camps' future

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

The first adventure race fundraiser for Camps with Meaning (CwM) brought more than a hundred people to Camp Assiniboia, on Sept. 18 to celebrate another summer of camp and to support its future.

The Pedal, Dash, Paddle fundraiser raised \$5,100 for the camp's Covid Recovery Campaign, which will put the money towards camp operations.

"We're still just trying to catch up," says, Dorothy Fontaine, CwM's director, referring to pandemic-induced financial hardships and the slow return of rental groups, which has set it back significantly.

A small group of participants raced through a course of off-road bicycling, canoeing and kayaking around Assiniboia's new lake and through the forest.

"The lovely thing about an adventure race is that people see all corners of the camp, and get to know it very well," Fontaine says.

In addition to the race, people enjoyed touring the grounds, visiting the pigs at the camp farm, and eating chili cooked over the fire while listening to music by camp staff. The day ended with a performance played on a burning piano.

Fontaine says that camp this summer was an overall success, running its full schedule, including overnight programming and camp for adults with disabilities for the first time since COVID-19 hit Manitoba. Camper numbers were at 85 percent of pre-pandemic attendance in 2019, which exceeded her expectations.

While there were fewer staff and volunteers than most summers, their energy was phenomenal, Fontaine said, adding, "Everyone was so excited to be back and do what camp does best: be outside in nature, show love and care for one another and learn about the Bible."

It's one of the many reasons supporters want to help CwM recover and carry on

long into the future.

Mennonite Church Manitoba's camping ministry consists of two locations: Camp

Assiniboia, near Headingley; and Camp Koinonia, near Boissevain. ✎



PHOTOS BY DARRYL NEUSTAEDTER BARG

A small group of participants race through a course of off-road bicycling, canoeing and kayaking around Camp Assiniboia's new lake and running through the forest.



The CwM fundraising day ended with a performance played on a burning piano.

‘Music that shaped our Mennonite souls’

History, hymns showcased at anniversary fundraiser

By Robert Martens
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

“What we have heard and known we will tell the next generation,” says the watchword of the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C., and on Oct. 2 at South Abbotsford MB Church, the society marked its 50th anniversary with a celebratory afternoon of music in the Mennonite tradition.

The Mennonite Educational Institute Concert Choir, directed by Dean Wedel, opened the show, which was perhaps a bit more Menno-contemporary, with music from diverse cultures and syncopated beats.

In her introductory talk, Maryann Jantzen, the society’s director, affirmed that the audience would be hearing “music that has shaped and inspired many of us.” Music, she said, “has the power to calm our hearts and ease our pain.”

It can also lead to change, as in the Baltic states’ “Singing Revolution.” Further, “music can shape a culture’s self-understanding,” she noted. Possibly, although the evidence is scanty at this point, early Prussian Mennonites may not have permitted any singing in their churches, “so as not to draw attention to themselves.”

Music became a vital part of Mennonite life after their migration to Russia, and especially under the influence of gospel-oriented Pietism that developed in the German Lutheran church, and then extended into Mennonite colonies in Russia as well. From then on, four-part-harmony choral music became a passion for Russian Mennonites, who published a series of hymnbooks.

A handful of hymns were performed through the afternoon, and the stories behind them were told.

Long-time pastor Harry Heidebrecht said that “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (*Lobe den Herrn*) had Pietist origins. “Now Thank We All Our God” (*Nun danket alle*

Gott), a song of praise, was written by a pastor during the horrors of the Thirty-Years War, in which millions died. The hymn eventually developed into a “freedom song” for Mennonites fleeing the Soviet Union; they would sing it upon crossing the border into the West. Heidebrecht has in his possession a hymnbook originating in the Mennonite colony of Terek in the Caucasus, and passed down to him by his family.

“*Wehrlos und verlassen*,” or “When I’m Lonely and Defenceless” is not the same hymn, as “In the Rifted Rock,” although

the afternoon was the performance of “Welcome Back,” or “*Willkommen uns*.” Julia Toews, an expert musician and volunteer at the historical society, told the story: A frail song manuscript dating from Russian Mennonite days was sent to the society. It was Toews’s task to decipher the lines and squiggles, since the music was written in *Ziffern*, a numbering system that replaced notes on a staff for Russian Mennonites. She managed, and the song was performed that afternoon by the Archival Singers, a group of skilled local vocalists.



PHOTO BY JENNIFER MARTENS

An ensemble of singers, accompanied by Julia Toews on violin, performs traditional Mennonite hymns at the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. fundraiser on Oct. 2. The theme for the afternoon was ‘Music that shaped our Mennonite souls.’

they share the same melody, Jantzen said. The song is based on Psalm 91:4: “*He will cover you with his feathers.*”

Louise Price told the story behind the moving hymn, “*So nimm denn meine Hände*,” or “Take Thou my Hand, O Father.” The song was sung by Mennonites boarding trains in the burgeoning Soviet Union, when the destination might have been unknown: freedom or labour camps.

Perhaps the most historical part of

The afternoon neared its conclusion with the congregational singing of “Bringing in the Sheaves,” in order “to acknowledge the influence of American evangelicalism” of the 19th century on Mennonite music, said Heidebrecht.

A video of Brian Doerksen’s pandemic recording of “To the River I am Going,” with a virtual choir, ended the presentation, followed by a singing of the Doxology, which was followed by a *faspa* meal. ☼

Joint Council approves addendum to policy on ministerial misconduct

Addendum offers clarity around non-sexual complaints, acts as stop-gap until binational policy is approved

Mennonite Church Canada

Mennonite Church Canada has approved an addendum to the Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure (MSMPP) manual that clarifies terms, policy and procedures regarding non-sexual misconduct incidents—what it terms “ministry conflict.”

The addendum was approved by Joint Council on Aug. 1, and addresses the inefficiency of using the the manual to address non-sexual misconduct conflicts. It was drafted by MC Canada executive minister Doug Klassen, in consultation with regional church leadership and a human-resources consultant.



Doug Klassen

“In most instances, the denominational representative will apply the MSMPP with necessary adaptations when there is a description of events that

appear to be discrimination, harassment or violence. . . . In circumstances where the description of events aligns more with ‘ministry conflict,’ an alternative process may be pursued at the discretion of the denominational representative in consultation with the leader of another part of the MC Canada system,” the document reads.

The addendum is intended to be used as a stop-gap measure until the Binational Prevention and Accountability Policy is ratified by the regional churches of Mennonite Church Canada in 2023.

The document outlines factors used to discern the nature of ministry conflict, provides definitions of pertinent terms, and details an alternative process for the

handling of ministry conflict that does not trigger the MSMPP process.

Joint Council also approved, by consensus, at the Aug. 1 meeting, a moratorium on investigations of accusations against someone who is deceased. ❧

To download the addendum from CommonWord, visit bit.ly/3qPmOWd.



❧ News brief

Final motorcycle ride in B.C.

Five bikes with seven riders embarked on this year’s annual Mennonite Church B.C. motorcycle ride over a weekend in late August. Meeting in Chilliwack on the morning of Aug. 20, the group took Highway 1 to Cache Creek, then Highway 99 to Lillooet for the night. The next morning they returned to the Fraser Valley by two different routes. “I am very thankful for the friendships made over the 15 years of the MC B.C. motorcycle ride,” said organizer Garry Janzen, MC B.C.’s executive minister. “This was the last MC B.C. ride, as I am retiring by the end of this year. I am hoping to extend invitations to ride as friends in the future, but it will no longer be considered an MC B.C. ride. There are many good memories of rides to many cool places in B.C. and in northwest Washington, with groups of all sizes, from as low as four or five bikes to as many as 25.”

—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL



PHOTO COURTESY OF GARRY JANZEN

Five riders completed the final MC B.C. motorcycle ride, held this year on Aug. 21 and 22; one couple had to return early due to a blown tire. Pictured from left to right: Belinda Luxton and Lars Schwanebeck, Rick Smith, and Garry and Diane Janzen.

Executive servants serve the global church

Mennonite World Conference

“As a worldwide community of faith in the Anabaptist tradition, people in ministry are key to Mennonite World Conference [MWC],” says César García, MWC’s general secretary. After Assembly 17 and associated meetings, there are new people serving this global family of churches.

The General Council selected new continental representatives for the Executive Committee for 2022 to 2028:

- **Sindah Ngulube**, a bishop from Brethren in Christ Church of Zimbabwe—Africa.
- **Amos Chin**, a leader from Bible Missionary Church in Myanmar—Asia.
- **Francis Pérez de León**, a leader from Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Boliviana—Latin America.
- **Doug Klassen**, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada—North America.
- **Linda Dibble**, moderator of MC U.S.A., will serve until 2025, finishing a term that was vacated. A representative for Europe will be appointed at the Executive Committee meetings in December, which will be held in Kitchener, Ont.

The Executive Committee is elected from the General Council (GC) and meets annually. (During the coronavirus pandemic, these meetings took place over Zoom. Instead of several days in person, the Executive Committee met over two days several times throughout the year.)

Two members from each continental region are elected from the GC; a president and vice-president are also elected by the GC. The treasurer and general secretary are also members of the Executive Committee.



MWC PHOTO COLLAGE

Pictured from left to right, top row: Sindah Ngulube, Amos Chin and Francis Pérez de León; and bottom row: Doug Klassen, Andi Santoso and James Krabill.

At Assembly 2022 in Indonesia, the presidency of MWC transferred from J. Nelson Kraybill to president-elect Henk Stenvers from the Netherlands (2022 to 2028). Lisa Carr-Pries of Canada became vice-president (2022-2025), to complete the term of Rebecca Osiro of Kenya, who stepped down for family reasons.

New chairs were appointed to two Commissions:

- **Andi O. Santoso** (GKMI—Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia), a pastor from Indonesia and now regional administrator for Asia with Mennonite Mission Network, becomes Deacons Commission chair.
- **James Krabill** (retired from Mennonite Mission Network) steps into the role of Mission Commission chair, having served as a member from 2009 to 2015.

At December meetings, the Executive Committee will confirm the following

appointments: chair of the Peace Commission, new General Council appointments to the commissions, and new Young Anabaptists Committee members.

“MWC is called to be a global communion,” declares the Mennonite World Conference Reference Notebook. “This implies that our focus is not only on the goals we want to achieve, but also on how we achieve them and what type of community we are as we move toward them.” ☸

☸ Staff change

April Yamasaki named editor of *Rejoice!*

April Yamasaki has been named by MennoMedia as the new editor of the quarterly devotional magazine, *Rejoice!*. She replaces Leslie Hawthorne Klingler, who was the editor since 2013. Yamasaki is well known in both Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. for her writing and insight. Previously the editor of *Purpose*, her published books include *Sacred Pauses*, *Four Gifts*, *Christ is for Us*, and *On the Way with Jesus*. She is working on her fourth collection of sermons for publication in 2023. “I love engaging with readers and writers, and look forward to doing that on behalf of *Rejoice!*,” she says. “I’ve read and written for *Rejoice!* for years and am now eager to learn more about the publishing side as editor. . . . I pray that, by reading *Rejoice!*, people will grow as followers of Jesus—deepening their faith in God, developing a closer connection with Christian community, and finding inspiration to pray and live out their faith in daily life.” After 25 years of pastoral ministry at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., Yamasaki is now a resident author with Valley CrossWay Church, a liturgical worship community also in Abbotsford. MennoMedia, the publishing arm of MC U.S.A. and MC Canada, began publishing *Rejoice!* in 1972.



—MENNOMEDIA

Growing hope, one acre at a time

By Jessica Evans
Alberta Correspondent

“We all believe that in our core values it’s important that if there is something that you can do, you do it,” says Emily Lappage of Gatez Farms. She is the eldest daughter of Blaine and Laura Gatez, and has grown up surrounded by farm life and family values.

Gatez Farms is a third-generation family farm situated over two geographically diverse locations in Alberta. The south farm is located along the No. 2 corridor near Calgary, with the northern farm located by the Peace River Valley, north of Spirit River.

For the fourth consecutive year, they are partnering with Grow Hope, after being inspired by their neighbours Richard and Esther Goertzen, who told them about the giving project.

“We had learned about it through neighbours, fellow farmers who had worked with Grow Hope,” says Lappage. “We thought it was really interesting, and with the 4:1 government match [to individual funding], there aren’t very many charities that you can work with that make quite an impact like this one. So it was something that we were really passionate about and were excited to try.”

This year, the Gatez’s team planted 60 acres of canola that will be going to Grow Hope, a non-profit organization run by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in partnership with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

“We are really excited this year because, for the last three years, we have done 50 acres, and this year the donors were bumped up a bit, so we were able to do 60 acres that are sponsored, which felt really good,” says Lappage. “We are so humbled to be a part of such a wonderful organization that is working with fellow Canadians to help end world hunger.”

Through the project, when someone sponsors an acre of land for \$300, the farmers will grow that acre and donate the proceeds to MCC. After harvest, that acre will be worth as much as \$500. That

money will be matched by the government four to one, which means the \$300 spent to sponsor an acre will turn into as much as \$2,500. The result is 100 percent of all proceeds go to help end hunger through MCC and the Foodgrains Bank.

Lappage points out that it wasn’t only farmers, or those living in rural areas, taking part, but city dwellers as well: “I think it helps connect the urban to the rural, and it gives people in the urban setting, who don’t have anything to do with the farm, a sense of accomplishment. They are getting to do something on the

of their family business being honesty, integrity and respect, joining Grow Hope was a simple decision to make.

The projection for the 2022 year is \$240,000 of revenue from their 60-acre canola field that will be donated.

“We are three quarters of the way through,” says Lappage. “When we started off the season, we were anticipating drought, then we were blessed with some amazing rains this year and, so far, we are definitely satisfied with how things are going. . . . Definitely a win of a year.”

The gifts through Grow Hope transform



SELFIE BY BLAINE GATEZ

Blaine Gatez is pictured with his team at the Grow Hope harvest.

farm while making a difference at the same time.”

The Gatez family is not new to the idea of giving back to the community, whether it is travelling abroad to help install water filters and electricity to people in need, or working with fundraisers through their church. With the cornerstone principles

lives by supporting MCC’s food projects around the world, from improving nutrition and building resistance against climate change to increasing yields and improving family well-being.

“It’s something that we are very proud of. We jump at the gun to tell anyone we know about it,” says Lappage. ☘

MC Eastern Canada executive minister resigns

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
Kitchener, Ont.

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's Executive Council regretfully announced the resignation of Leah Reesor-Keller, executive minister on Sept. 28.

"We are grateful for Leah's service and leadership over the last two years," says Arli Klassen, chair of the Executive Council.

"We remain committed to the identity, purpose, values, vision and priorities that were heartily approved at the annual church gathering earlier this year in April."

In spite of the pandemic, Reesor-Keller strengthened relationships across the regional church's diverse family of faith, listening and connecting with leaders from many different communities, as well as with Mennonite church leaders across



**Leah
Reesor-Keller**

Canada. As the world tilts and changes with church playing a different role in Canadian society, she led MC Eastern Canada in a "Courageous Imagination" strategic visioning process, encouraging reflection about who God is calling the regional church to be as a movement instead of as an institution.

"It has been an honour to serve in this role through many joyful and challenging experiences over the past two years," writes Reesor-Keller in her recent letter to MC Eastern Canada's family of faith. "Though I am finishing my leg of the race and passing along the baton of leadership, I continue to believe deeply in the church and in the gifted and passionate

leaders on . . . Executive Council and staff. I have confidence that the Spirit is up to something among us, moving in visible and invisible ways."

John Reimer, MC Eastern Canada's operations director, will become the acting executive minister as the regional church seeks an intentional interim executive minister.

"We have confidence in John's steady presence as we move through this leadership transition," says Klassen.

Over the next year or so, the intentional interim executive minister will continue to work with MC Eastern Canada's strategic planning process.

Reesor-Keller concluded her ministry on Oct. 14. A farewell event will be held in October.

"We offer to Leah our deep appreciation for her leadership over the last two years and our best wishes for wherever she will share her considerable gifts and talents," says Klassen. "We ask for your prayers and your support . . . as we navigate our way forward through these leadership transitions in the coming months." ❧



PHOTO BY EMILY SUMMACH

Rachel Wallace, pastor of Eigenheim Mennonite Church, located near Rosthern, Sask., was ordained on Sept. 24. She began pastoring at Eigenheim in October 2019. Wallace received her master of theological studies degree in 2019 from Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont. Wallace is pictured, kneeling in the centre of the photo, as family, members of Eigenheim Mennonite and the broader Mennonite Church Saskatchewan community surround her in prayer.

The sweet solace of polarization

Part 2: Talking to the unvaccinated

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

Caleb Brown was a lead organizer of the Freedom Convoy protest outside the Manitoba legislative building last winter. I asked how he responds to people who dismiss all protesters as white nationalists. I asked how he felt about people who drove by and gave him the finger, as one of my friends did.

To back up, this started with me—a triple-vaxxed, “we’re-all-in-this-together” resident of the most mandate-resistant part of the country (the Rural Municipality of Stanley, in southern Manitoba)—choosing to put aside animosity toward my maskless neighbours and try to understand them. I told this story in Part I of this series.

I began my quest with Dean and Tiina Hildebrand, my favourite mandate resisters. The Hildebrands were organic beef farmers a few miles south of my family’s farm. They have been warm and generous neighbours. Tiina had been active online in support of the People’s Party of Canada and the trucker convoy, but we’d never talked politics. Until last March, when I spent two hours at their kitchen table discussing masks, media, Trump, Trudeau, health and how to discern truth.

Sadly, in July, Tiina died as a result of cancer at age 57. This is not the time to report on our conversation other than to say we had a candid, respectful, congenial and relatively relaxed exchange. We got to know each other better. I’m glad I got to a point where I could listen to them. And I am grateful they were willing to talk.

Tiina suggested I also talk to farmer Debbie Chikousky, firefighter Pete Evans and convoy organizer Caleb Brown.

I spoke with Brown, a Winnipeg carpenter, by phone in March. Given the uncertainty around long-term impacts of vaccines, he felt people should have been free from repercussions if they opted out. “We’ve seen nothing short of coercion,” he said.

Brown felt there was no room in society for the questions and concerns he had. “The landscape was looking pretty hostile to anyone asking questions counter to the mainstream narrative,” he said.

His tone was not sharp. He lamented added screen time for his kids and the isolation they, like others, endured. He recounted his 14-year-old son’s successful tryout for a club sports team. He was told he could not play unless he was vaccinated and could not practise unless he tested regularly. The Browns agreed to the testing, but the team doubled down and insisted on vaccination. “Loving your neighbour is getting vaccinated,” team officials said.

“Given the situation, they did what they felt was best,” he said of the team.

He calmly mentioned people who drove by the Winnipeg protest and gave protesters the finger. “I wish they could understand

why we were there,” he said. He expressed appreciation for the people who did engage in conversation.

“I admire their courage,” he said. Although such conversations do not necessarily change people’s overall beliefs, Brown said they are “rarely not transformative.”

That’s why I was talking to him. I wanted to transform my enmity toward the mandate-resistant.

And what about people who dismiss all convoy participants as white nationalists, as I had been tempted to do?

“I would ask those people if they actually came downtown and talked to a single person,” he said. “Do they know any of these [protesters] personally?”

Brown, who spent six days in Ottawa at the beginning of that protest, said he felt the Winnipeg protest did a good job of respecting the rights of others. Honking



PHOTO BY RICK WALL

Trucks at the Manitoba legislative building.

was controlled. They moved when the police asked. Winnipeg police spoke well of the organizers.

Brown and his co-organizers sent a letter to Manitoba church bodies—including Mennonites—in which they said, among other things: “We condemn all manifestations of hate, racism, misogyny and disrespect.”

Brown’s fellow protester, Paul Bigras, was listening in on our call. Both men speak freely of their faith. And both are concerned about division in society. Bigras shared about the value of “seeking to understand before being understood.”

“If you dismiss, you divide,” he added.

Bigras, who has two kids who did get vaccinated, also said: “I spent a year being frustrated and upset, and it did nothing.”

This all resonated.

Like Brown and Bigras, Winnipeg firefighter Bob Evans—whose real name *Canadian Mennonite* has agreed not to use because of potential ramifications for family and work relations—is a man of conviction but not dogma.

“I understand that most people are willing to take the chance on the currently available vaccines . . .,” he wrote in a statement to his employer. “My experience has led me to choose otherwise. . . . I am more comfortable waiting for a traditional attenuated vaccine.”

Like Brown, Evans had questions: Who created the vaccine? Who profits from it? Where are the long-term study results? Didn’t the pace of vaccine development seem too fast?

He noted that Pfizer was guilty of the largest health-care fraud in U.S. history, paying US\$2.3 billion in 2009.

He also knew numerous people who had disturbingly negative reactions to COVID vaccines. His own kids had dangerous reactions to childhood vaccines.

He also believes he contracted COVID in January 2020, prior to testing regimes, and is confident he developed natural immunity.

Rooted in his experience and faith, he took a “wait and see approach” to vaccines.

As vaccination became increasingly “socially prescribed,” Evans said the federal government “overstepped.”

When asked about the convoy, he was

hesitant. “I would just say I was in support of removing all mandates,” adding that he would never want to be associated with the “F--- Trudeau” signs that were prominent in Ottawa.

Similarly, Brown said those signs “are not going to heal any divide.”

I confess that Brown, Bigras and Evans were more reasonable and open than I expected. As was Debbie Chikousky, who farms with her family about 100 kilometres north of Winnipeg.

The Chikouskys were all in at the beginning of the pandemic. “We listened to Trudeau every day,” she said of the prime ministerial briefings. “We were proud to be Canadians.”

Chikousky’s husband and child have significant health concerns, including auto-immune issues. She knows the health system and the alternative-health scene. She talks to nurses, immunologists and virologists.

“Our medical freedom is extremely important to our family,” she said. “A person should never be denied, or forced into, a medical procedure.”

She means it. “I support people 110 percent who chose to get the vaccine,” she said. “I’m not an anti-vaxxer.”

But she is someone who has seen a lot of negative vaccine side effects. She lost faith in government information.

And she became “disgusted” at how government “started to stomp all over” people’s rights, and how people “got turned into two classes.” She says of the oversimplified divisions: “It was never true.”

In her community and beyond she saw people “thinking they’re better than everyone else because they got the vaccine.”

I know that feeling.

She also talked of someone who needs to wear a mask due to severe allergies getting shamed. It goes both ways.

“How do we get [people] to love each other again?” she asked.

“Forgiveness is going to be needed,” she said, “on both sides.” And maybe some people will have to “forgive themselves” for the thoughts they had about their neighbours.

That’s me.

Talking to these four fellow-Manitobans made that easier. ❧

❧ Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Manitoba



Marla Langelotz

concluded 23 years of ministry at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg on July 31. She started as a part-time associate pastor, focusing initially on children’s and family ministry and Christian education, and was the congregation’s lead pastor for the last 12 years. Undecided on whether this will be a full or partial retirement, Langelotz is currently caring for family members and volunteering. She earned a master of Christian formation degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.



Ben Pauls

concluded a 10-month interim pastoral position at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg in June. On Sept. 1, he began a six-month term as interim pastor of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church. In this half-time position, he will help guide the church in discerning the future of its pastoral leadership. Pauls previously pastored for 26 years in various congregations, primarily in the areas of worship and music ministry and, more recently, in interim ministry. He also taught for 17 years at Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Man.; Elim Bible Institute in Altona, Man.; and the Evangelical Mennonite Centre of Theology in Asunción, Paraguay. He earned a master of music degree in choral conducting from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, N.J.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

In the final part of this series in the following issue of CM, I will report on conversations with people who seek to bridge the COVID-19 divide.

Sparking community life again at Nutana Park

By Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

“How can we bring people back to church?”

It’s a familiar question for churches across the country and across the denominational spectrum. The arrival of COVID-19 in March 2020, and the ensuing public health restrictions kept many people home on Sunday mornings for months.

Now, as the pandemic moves into endemic status, churches are wondering how to jumpstart in-person church life once again. This was the big question that Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon was wrestling with.

“We talked about ways going forward and about our vision,” said Fast. “How could we get people interested again? How could we get people involved in in-person activities? We wanted to make the best of what’s happened to many churches, and to try creating community again.”

An ad-hoc creating community committee was formed, and included members of the church who were passionate about church vibrancy.

“The first question we asked as a committee was, ‘Does Nutana Park have a future?’ Fast said. “The answer all around

the table was a resounding yes! From there, we jumped into talking about ideas. We had wonderful discussions about our vision of what the church looks like going forward. We asked philosophical and pragmatic questions. Really, what do we want?”

One idea rose to the surface of the discussion: a party.

“We hosted a Parking Lot Party; that’s the name we settled on,” said Fast. “It really rolls off the tongue.”

The committee sent out postcard invitations to everyone in the church directory. The party, which was held immediately following the Sunday morning worship service on Aug. 28, had a barbecue lunch, musical performers, a bouncy castle and other activities for children. In true Mennonite

fashion, watermelon and *roll kuchen* was served.

Edith Krahn was one of the members involved in the *roll kuchen* and watermelon operation. “We had four volunteers in the kitchen doing the rolling and cutting, two

men doing the frying, one man carrying the trays in and out” said Krahn. “Nothing better than eating them right out of the fryer! Absolutely the best way!”

The event was a rousing success. Attendance that Sunday morning was the highest it had been since before the start of the pandemic.

“We heard nothing but such positive feedback from people saying things like, ‘Oh my goodness, such a good day!’” said Fast. “Many people stayed the whole afternoon. There was lots of connecting and visiting between people of all generations. Even though the event was just for our church family, it was also about the community. I really feel you have to have a strong base in a church to help others join in and to make it good.”

Nutana Park took advantage of the renewed sense of community as an opportunity to relaunch its children’s programming. Marie Guenther, along with her husband Brent, have led an effort to start up an Adventure Club kids program as well as a children’s choir at the church.

“Nutana Park’s young families, which includes our own, have hopes of how we want them to grow up in the church,” said Guenther. “Brent and his siblings have all these heartwarming stories of growing up in the church, and we wanted the same for our own kids. Nutana Park has all these kiddos getting into school, and we knew it would be a missed opportunity not to start something up again.”

The church now has 16 children from three Mennonite churches in Saskatoon participating in crafting, baking and Christian education, as well as the choir program.

“Music is such an important part of the Mennonite tradition, so there was a desire for our own kids to experience that as well,” Guenther said.

Other churches facing similar circumstances should “just start the conversation,” said Fast. “Do you want to go to a church that’s going through the motions? We all want a liveliness, and vibrancy. We asked, ‘Who were we?’ ‘Who are we now?’ ‘Who do we want to be going forward?’ I’d encourage other churches to start with those three questions. It sparked an amazing conversation for us.” ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIE GUENTHER

Children make their own pizzas, one of many activities offered in Nutana Park Mennonite Church’s Adventure Club.

Denelda Fast, the Nutana Park community life deacon, and Anita Ratzlaff, a member of the congregation, connected over the summer. They quickly realized that the problem wasn’t going to resolve itself; something had to happen.

FOCUS ON

Education

Rockway—strong as ever

By Elaine Ranney
Rockway Mennonite Collegiate
KITCHENER, ONT.

Joyful! This is how I felt when I joined the exceptional team of faculty and staff at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate. Since assuming the role of principal in January, I have been impressed with the welcoming and caring learning and working environment. With the return to our pre-COVID-19 activities this September—chapel twice-weekly, music, athletics and clubs—I have observed a renewed sense of energy and happiness schoolwide.

One of the most important jobs I've had since coming to Rockway has been to hire a new administrative team—openings resulting from retirement or changing career directions.

In August, we welcomed three new members to our administrative team: Steven Reesor Rempel, director of finance and human resources; Chris Ainsworth, director of advancement; and Josh Hill, vice-principal.

Alongside Stacey VanderMeer, director of admissions, our new team is off to a strong start! Each brings great capacity,



PHOTO BY MICHLYNN SCHWEITZER

Rockway's administrative team, pictured from left to right, front row: Stacey VanderMeer, director of admissions; and Elaine Ranney, principal; and back row: Josh Hill, vice-principal; Chris Ainsworth, director of advancement; and Steven Reesor Rempel, director of finance and human resources.

vision and commitment to realizing the mission of Rockway. Fresh perspectives can often revitalize organizations and, after two months of working together, it's clear that Rockway is in good hands.

Rockway administration, faculty and staff spent time together in August exploring how our respective roles and collaborative efforts would support our students this school year. We were

energized by our conversations, and articulated a renewed commitment to our mission to “integrate sound academic learning with growth in character and faith, together with a passion for peace-making and service to God and all creation.”

Inspired by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's priority statements, Rockway has developed five priorities that will help to guide our community life: racial justice, reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, climate justice, full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons, and positive mental health. We look forward to student-led campaigns, chapels and other events focusing on these priorities.

Our 2022-23 chapel theme, “Compassion: Drawing the circle wide,” enables us to explore our connection with others and develop deeper understandings of, and appreciation for, the experiences of others. We seek to encourage compassion for those in our school, for our wider community and for ourselves. Our chapel theme is intimately tied to our commitment as Mennonites to actively work for peace and restorative justice.

As the year unfolds, it is clear to me that the enthusiasm of our growing student body (now more than 300), the dedication of our faculty and staff, and the ongoing support of our Rockway community, will continue to bring that joyful feeling I had when I first stepped through Rockway's doors to all who enter. ❧

Mission field: MSCS

Menno Simons Christian School
CALGARY

Marvin Grasmeyer has a passion for the students, which is evident in everything that he does at Menno.

As director of the athletic program, he has ensured that Menno keeps an all-inclusive approach because he sees the value in every student having the opportunity to be a part of a team.

As a teacher, he takes the time to get to know his students and their individual gifts, and can often be seen

working with students one-on-one in his classroom or study space, not only helping them solve math problems and algorithms, but speaking truth into their lives. He invests in the spiritual growth and character development of our students by challenging them to work as PEACEMAKERS (Participants-Enthusiastic-Accepting-Christlike-Encouraging-Mentors-Aspiring-Kind-Excellent-Responsible-Servants) in all areas of their

lives, even during basketball playoffs.

As he approaches his 30th year of teaching at Menno, he answered questions about what inspires him, what drives him, and what the future holds for him at his designated mission field: Menno Simons Christian.

What were the early years at Menno like?

It was hard in the early years. We were like the Israelites wandering the desert. We were always moving from school to school, and always wondering where our finances would be coming from. But the community treated us so well; they appreciated what we did and were so generous

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

with their time and resources. The small school size forced us to work together and do everything. I taught everything from Kindergarten to Grade 9; the first gym was the size of a volleyball court! We all worked together—teachers and parents.

What are some memorable moments?

A lot of my memories are around track and field, and sports. I really enjoyed all the excursions. I remember one of our fundraisers was delivering phone books, in an effort to raise money for the Sail and Life Training Society (SALTS). The entire junior high would take Friday off and then meet back on Saturday to deliver phone

books; 90 percent of the parents would come out to participate as well.

What is your prayer for Menno?

That Menno will remain faithful to Jesus' teaching, and will continue to be a place where children feel safe and loved, and know that they are God's beloved. ✎



PHOTO BY ANN PAM

Marvin Grasmeyer, the director of athletics at Mennonite Simons Christian School, challenges students to be 'peacemakers' even in sports.

Stepping stones toward independence

Submitted by Kieran Reynolds
Mennonite Collegiate Institute
GRETNA, MAN.

We want our children to be set up for success. As we look at life after high school, one way we see success is being able to live independently. As I step into my ninth year of working with dormitory programs, I believe that a good dormitory program can provide this opportunity to live independently.

At Mennonite Collegiate Institute, we work alongside our school parents to offer this opportunity. We view our dorm program as a stepping stone towards that independence we want for our children.

We see our dorm as a space where life skills are matured and developed under the watchful eye of staff who are their mentors. It allows students to learn how to cope with life and its many high and low points, all while living within a community of their peers who are going through the same things. We work hard to create a safe space to allow the exploration of life skills, from interpersonal skills to self-care to leadership skills.

For example: opportunities to cope with stress and regulate emotions; time management; building relationships with adults, peers and roommates; growing listening skills and understanding verbal

and non-verbal communication; conflict management; role modelling and building community; learning how to take initiative and be proactive; and understanding teamwork.

We can often think back to specific times where we learned parts of these different skills. We didn't develop these from someone else's experience, but from our own experiences. Usually, these weren't matured from things going right, but from times they went wrong.

Walking through all of this with your faith should feel easier, but sometimes, as we become overwhelmed with new experiences, falling back on God gets forgotten. We want our students to continue to rely on God and remember that they always have a mentor with them. This journey isn't about finding ourselves, it's about finding ourselves in God's story.

We get excited that our students are on this journey. Along the way, they may stumble. Our staff appreciate

the opportunity to walk alongside them, to listen and encourage them. We pray that our students continue to add tools to their toolbox that allow them to continue to assess, develop and mature into godly people ready for the next chapter in God's story. ✎



PHOTO BY KAYLA GIESBRECHT

Keeley and Natalya relax outdoors during MCI's get acquainted social.

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Grebel's community gathers for the new term

By Jen Konkle
Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO, ONT.

The air was buzzing at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo on Sept. 3, as new students moved into the residence, accompanied by their parents and welcomed by enthusiastic upper-year students. The energy that comes with starting something new continued all week and was evident across the entire University of Waterloo campus, with groups of new students—many on campus for the first time—navigating new friendships, locating classrooms and adjusting to life on their own.

This year was an opportunity to revive treasured traditions and to create new ones during Orientation Week. The fun included a scavenger hunt, outdoor games, a University College mixer, and the faculty/staff/student volleyball game. Students also

offered their service to the local community with a free car wash, and tied quilts for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Each year at the opening celebration, everyone at Grebel is invited to participate in an act of community; this year, assembling school kits to be distributed by MCC.

For the first time since before the pandemic, Grebel's residence is completely occupied, with 140 students, and 32 students in the apartments. With more than 70 other students connecting to Grebel as associates, almost 250 students consider Grebel their home base at the University of Waterloo.

"We who make up the Grebel community today represent a wide range of cultures, traditions, and backgrounds," remarked president Marcus Shantz at the opening

celebration. "My view is that a community that values complexity is likely to be a good one. A good community honours, celebrates and respects that the individuals within it are unique."

Graduate students, too, come to study at Grebel with a mix of complex backgrounds and experiences. Grebel offers a master's degree in peace and conflict studies (MPACS) and in theological studies (MTS). With a total of 37 students currently in the program, the MPACS program welcomed 13 new students this term. The MTS program oriented nine new students, bringing the total to 30 students currently in the program.

Undergraduate enrolment numbers are holding steady at around 1,600 course enrolments for the fall. Grebel professors teach undergraduate courses in peace and conflict studies, music, church music and worship, history, Mennonite studies, religious studies, and sociology, all open to University of Waterloo students across all six faculties.

This school year promises to be a year of connection and community, as Grebel explores new pathways for learning together. ☘



PHOTO BY MARGARET GISSING

Grebel's yearly faculty/staff/student volleyball game resulted in a triumphant win by the students. Orientation Week activities at Grebel are designed to build community and inspire interaction between students, faculty, and staff.

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Graduate certificates offer flexible learning at a distance

By Annette Brill Bergstresser
Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
ELKHART, IND.

Adela Friesen Wedler of Edmonton had recently retired from teaching when an ad in the church news caught her eye.

“The ad said that students could take two courses at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) before applying for admission to a program,” she said. “Having recently retired, this intrigued me.”

Wedler noted that she had always been interested in Christian theology, Christian and specifically Anabaptist history, and Christian worship, and that she had studied on her own through working with the church, reading and attending workshops. So she seized the opportunity to try out an online course in fall 2019 through AMBS.

The next year, she was admitted into



**Adela Friesen
Wedler**

the seminary’s graduate certificate in theological studies program, and she graduated in April 2022. She’s now applying what she learned by continuing to volunteer in her home congregation, First Mennonite Church of Edmonton, and in area churches.

Wedler said she planned to take most of her seminary courses online and to come to campus for a semester or short-term course but, due to COVID-19, she had to do all of her coursework online.

“It was so interesting getting to know others from around the world as we studied and discussed together,” she said. “The courses reinforced what I knew but, more importantly, they led me to look at things in a new way, and made me realize how much more there was to learn.”

Wedler sees the program as good

for people like her, who are, or want to be, involved in lay leadership in their congregations.

“The program is a great way of exploring one’s own passions or interests, as it is self-directed,” she said. “It’s a great way to test out what the future may hold, or a good stepping stone for those who are considering ministry.”

As Wedler noted, students may take up to two courses for credit at AMBS without having been admitted to a degree or certificate program. Non-admitted students get 50 percent off tuition for their first three credit hours. Students in master’s-level programs at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg or Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., receive 50 percent off tuition for all AMBS courses. ✎

Learn more or apply online at ams.edu/certificate.



God moving in the intersection

Submitted by Chani Wiens
UMEI
LEAMINGTON, ONT.

UMEI seeks to educate the whole person in order to make young people “doers of the Word.” We believe deeply in our mission and see the wonderful things that our graduates are doing around the world as servant leaders. So, in periods of low enrolment, we ask ourselves, “Why is this happening?”

UMEI is a community of belonging that strives to find God’s calling. Around us, however, there is division among Christians on many topics and a desire to find the “right” way to live. How do we navigate

this division?

As we seek to increase enrolment, we see evidence of this division. We hear from “opposing” sides, demanding the school take their viewpoint in order to earn the name Christian or Mennonite.

As a math teacher, I picture a Venn diagram. Imagine two overlapping circles as both containing Christians, but on any number of issues we get pulled into separate circles. Where the circles overlap, that is the intersection—the things on which we agree. This example is overly

simplistic, but I invite you into the interpretation that God’s kingdom thrives in that intersection.

I’ve thought for many years that living in this intersection is cowardly, that taking a stand and earning a whole circle and losing the other is what is better in the long run. But what if God is moving in this intersection?

In the past few years, the circles have been pulled apart. The intersection feels smaller, and we feel that pinch at UMEI. Maybe if we gave up being Christian and

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

focused on being “good people,” more students would enrol. Maybe if we aligned with more conservative Christian views and had hard stances on controversial topics, more students would enrol. We are living in this sliver.

UMEI wants to increase the intersection. Scripture calls us not to conformity, but to unity. We look to the example of Jesus and try to live that out, even while admitting that we don’t always know what that means. Mennonite education isn’t one-size-fits-all; it challenges and inspires, raises more questions than it gives answers, and creates thinkers and doers.

Mennonite schools are places where all belong, not because we agree but because we decide to love one another as Christ loved us. We know that God’s love is beyond our understanding, and that God’s love is enough to hold all of us. We hope you join us in the vision that God’s love is for everyone. ☸



UMEI PHOTO

Delaney Dault, Meghan Recker, Vivienne Fittler, Emma Brown and Elyse Couto are pictured at UMEI’s all-school retreat.

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FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate forms BIPOC Alliance

By Emma Siemens
CM Intern

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate students can now participate in a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) Alliance, thanks to Lia Campbell-Enns and Aliya Penner.

They founded the group as seniors last year to address the racism they were encountering at school as Chinese students. They figured their peers and teachers did not understand their comments were racist.

“We wanted to make it clear that you shouldn’t say racist things,” said Campbell-Enns. “We wanted to educate rather than get upset over it.”



PHOTO BY OLIVIA LU

Aliya Penner, left, and Lia Campbell-Enns co-founded Westgate’s BIPOC Alliance group as Grade 12 students last year.

And so the BIPOC Alliance was formed using the same principles. Campbell-Enns and Penner assembled 10 other BIPOC students in Grade 12 wanting to assume a leadership role within the group, along with staff members Julia Thiessen and Raya Cornelsen, to form their group’s leadership team. While researching and planning for their group meetings, these meetings became a safe space for members to share and discuss their experiences of

racism at school.

“It was a little more than a research group,” said Campbell-Enns. It was “a community.”

After establishing the community, the leadership team was ready to meet with the rest of the student body as the BIPOC Alliance.

The union of BIPOC and white students was the “big focus” all along, said Campbell-Enns. Fifty students were in attendance at the group’s first meeting.

“That was really cool to see,” Campbell-Enns said, noting that turnout was a sizeable one for Westgate’s 315 students.

The monthly meetings included presentations on specific topics prepared by the leadership team beforehand, such as stereotypes, micro-aggressions and cultural appropriation. Campbell-Enns said that those who attended the meetings were ready to learn from their peers which, for some, involved a need to right past wrongs.

While students asking the leadership team for forgiveness for something they said long ago was something they didn’t really expect, this nevertheless indicated that the team had achieved its primary goal of generating a schoolwide awareness of racism.

For Campbell-Enns, the group is an opportunity for BIPOC students, who may feel “out of place” and “alone” within Westgate’s predominantly white student body, to feel “more respected and safe,” and that “everyone around them is on the same page.”

Fostering a safe space for minority groups is worthwhile in big groups and communities in general, she said.

The Westgate Mennonite Collegiate BIPOC Alliance is now under the leadership of Grade 11 student Jules Enns. ❧

News brief

Graphic novel chosen as EMU’s Common Read



The national bestselling graphic novel, *The Best We Could Do*, written and illustrated by Thi Bui, has been chosen as the Common Read for the 2022-23 academic year at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Harrisonburg, Va. Since 2013, EMU has selected a book to be read by the entire university campus and discussed in relevant classes and forums throughout the school year. This year marks the first time a graphic novel has been chosen as the Common Read. *The Best We Could Do* is based on Bui’s family’s experiences in the Vietnam War and their subsequent immigration to the United States. According to Jennifer Ulrich, EMU’s technical services librarian and a member of the Intellectual Life Committee, the committee “wanted to feature the issues, history and culture of Asian Americans in this year’s Common Read.” As a graphic novel, Ulrich says the book offers “another way to interact with the story through the artwork.” EMU professors from a variety of disciplines have included *The Best We Could Do* in their course syllabi this year, and an upcoming colloquium event at the university, “Storytelling through graphic novels and memoirs,” will explore the graphic-novel medium.

—EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

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 Thursday, November 10, 2022 | 7 pm

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Ruby Dyck Steinmann – Class of 2022
 University of British Columbia, Faculty of Arts – Sociology



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Department of Health & Human Services
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National Institute of Mental Health
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/// Calendar

British Columbia

Oct. 29: Arts festival fundraiser for MC B.C.'s Indigenous relations ministry, featuring MC B.C. and Emily Carr student artists, in Vancouver, at 2 p.m., location TBA.

Manitoba

Until Nov. 12: MHC Gallery, Winnipeg, presents "In the world, but not of it," a photo exhibition of Hutterites by Tim Smith. Masks recommended.

Oct. 29, 30: Canadian Foodgrains Bank hosts its "Singin' in the Grain" fundraising events featuring CMU singers and the Faith and Life Women's Choir. (29) at Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.; (30) at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler, at 3 p.m. All funds raised go to addressing food insecurity where presently needed.

Nov. 4: CMU campus visit day, at 1 p.m.

Nov. 20: Mennonite Community Orchestra, in collaboration with goodwill partner Mennonite Disaster Service, presents a concert reflecting on the power of love; at Lutheran Church of the Cross, Winnipeg, at 3 p.m..

Nov. 25: CMU campus visit day, from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Nov. 30: CMU hosts a virtual open house, at 6 p.m. For more information, visit www.cmu.ca/virtual-open-house.

Feb. 3, 2023: CMU campus visit day, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

March 10, 2023: CMU campus visit day, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

July 14-15, 2023: The Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies and the University of Winnipeg present "The Russlander Mennonites: War dislocation and new beginnings" centenary conference. The event will mark the centenary of the arrival Russlander from the Soviet Union to Canada.

Ontario

Until Dec. 16: The Grebel Gallery, Waterloo, presents "Unmasking, breathing, moving forward," an exhibit of 17 Indigenous, Black and racialized

artists responding to their experiences of COVID-19. Gallery hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Oct. 22: Menno Singers presents "Messe de Saint Anne" by Justin LaPierre, at St. Matthews Lutheran Church, Kitchener, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.mennosingers.com.

Oct. 25: "Pastoral conversations: Compassion fatigue," with speaker Wanda Wagler-Martin, on Zoom, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. For more information, or to register, visit <https://bit.ly/3KBcs5k>.

Oct. 27: MCC hosts "The power of partnership: An evening with Malcolm Gladwell," at Bingemans Conference Centre, Kitchener, at 6 p.m. Visit mcccanada.ca/get-involved/ events for more information. Tickets can be purchased online at powerofpartnership.ca.

Nov. 5: Conrad Grebel University College and University of Waterloo open house, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Nov. 25-26: Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig, hosts its annual Christmas event featuring live music, crafts and a tea room. (25) from 6:30 to 9 p.m.; (26) 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Dec. 11: Menno Singers presents "Lessons and Carols" at Trillium Lutheran, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.mennosingers.com.

April 1, 2023: Menno Singers presents "Rachmaninov's Vespers," at Trillium Lutheran, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.mennosingers.com.

May 5, 2023: Menno Singers presents its "Spring Concert," at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.mennosingers.com.

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.



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PHOTO BY THEO EPP

Twenty-three paddlers gathered at Harrison Hot Springs on Sept. 24—B.C. Rivers Day—to paddle in support of Camp Squeah’s summer staff bursary fund. At the closing program it was announced that funds raised up to that point tallied just over \$41,000. Rob Tiessen, the camp’s executive director, noted that opportunities to support the bursary fund are still open online or by contacting the camp. The goal is to raise a total of \$50,000 before year’s end. The staff at Camp Squeah extend their heartfelt thanks to all who have shown their support this season.

Photo finish



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MESERETE KRISTOS CHURCH
Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) pastors in Ethiopia baptized 120 new believers in the drought-prone Borena region in August after believers hauled water in 20-litre containers for 10 kilometres for the immersion baptisms. Abebe Seyoum, lead pastor of Misrak Addis Ababa Meserete Kristos Church, presided over the baptisms. ‘The harvest is plenty, and we need to send more missionaries to evangelize the people and plant more churches in the area,’ says Abayneh Anjulo, director of the MKC evangelism and church planting department.

