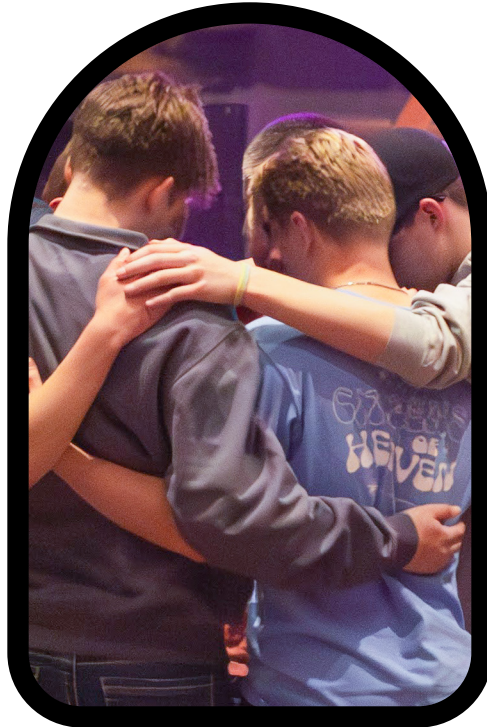


The Messenger

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the appeal of the **EMC**

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PUBLICATION AND PURPOSE

The Messenger is the publication of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 440 Main Street, Steinbach, MB R5G 1Z5. Its purpose is to inform concerning events and activities in the denomination, to instruct in godliness and victorious living, and to inspire to earnestly contend for the faith.

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Editor's Note

Following the God who goes first

AS I WRITE this note, I'm ending my third week working as the EMC's new communications director. Starting a new job, in many ways, is the beginning of new stress. The introduction to co-workers, office procedures, and technology, coupled with the desire to look competent, feels like falling into an avalanche. In my case, knowing that my predecessor, Erica Fehr, left such a wonderful legacy increases my stress. Erica, in her role as managing editor of *The Messenger* and communications director for the EMC, embodied faithfulness, wisdom, and fidelity to the Conference. As I learn each facet of my job, I see her fingerprints. I pray I can emulate Erica's legacy as I attempt to fill her shoes.

Moses, the Old Testament leader in Exodus to Deuteronomy, comes to mind in these times. Moses had a rocky start to his job as shepherd of Israel. For one, when Moses initially heard the Lord's call, he repeatedly denied his assignment. When he finally accepted God's mission, he fumbled frequently as a leader. There were times when he thought it was best to judge Israel alone, until Jethro, his father-in-law, offered counsel. There's the time he failed to circumcise his son in accordance with the Torah. Thankfully, his wife, Zipporah, stepped in, saving him and ultimately their family. Then there's the event Moses is most famous for: striking a rock with his staff instead of speaking to it, resulting in him being barred from the Promised Land. Despite being such a tremendous leader, Moses' legacy was stippled with errors.

On the flip side, reading Moses' story—along with the stories of most Old Testament figures—reminds us of the God we love. God is gracious and compassionate, caring less about our reaching an untouchable perfection and more about doing wonders through

As we begin our work, what does it look like to know that God is already present?

our weaknesses. I've repeatedly turned to what A. W. Tozer wrote, "We cannot think rightly of God until we begin to think of Him as always being *there*, and *there first*" (*The Knowledge of the Holy*). God always goes first because his sovereign nature is to lead his creations.

As we begin our work, what does it look like to know that God is already present? What if we knew God had already worked out our emails, sales pitches, pastoral appointments, mail routes, or payroll reports before we ever arrived? What if, in all things, we understood God goes before his people, rather than vice versa? I believe it results in a life lived in the shelter of God's safekeeping. It's like what the Apostle Paul speaks to the people of Athens in the Areopagus: "[God] is not far from any one of us" (Acts 17:27).

What the stories of the Old Testament teach us is that God loves to use the kind of people we'd least expect. People like you, me, and a guy named Moses, who, despite his colossal failures, is commended for tremendous faith in Hebrews 11.

Whatever your occupation, as you start this week, remember the God who makes paths straight, opens blind eyes, never fails in love, and brings life from death. Not only does he do that for the world, but also for you.

— Scott Marble

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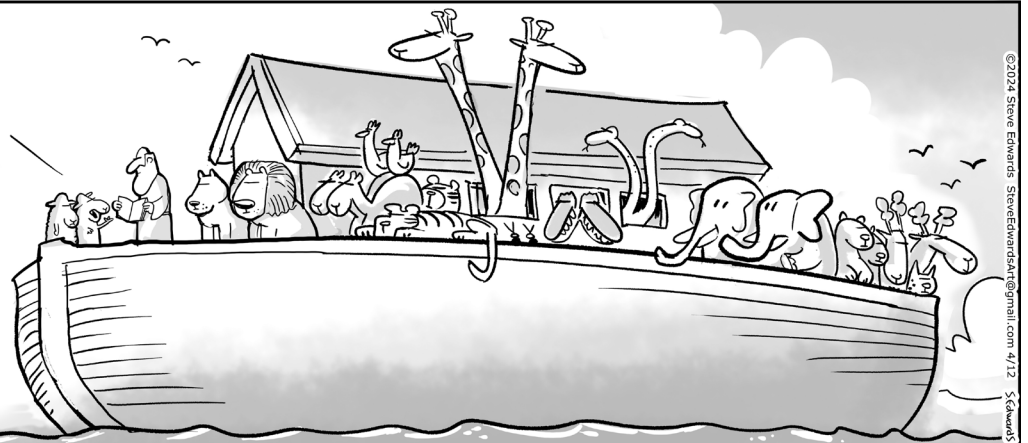
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...BECAUSE THEY FALL ASLEEP COUNTING SHEEP, THEY SMACK THEIR LIPS WHEN THEY SNORE, AND THEY TALK IN THEIR SLEEP ABOUT MUTTON CHOPS, THAT’S WHY!



The gospel is revealed in community

the appeal of the EMC

By Samuel Pauls



Editors' note: This is the sixth in a series of six articles exploring some of the theological variation we find in the EMC. Our goal is to grow in our understanding of why certain theological positions are attractive to people in our churches, with the hope that this will help us have more informed conversations.

In our next issue, EMC Conference Pastor Andy Woodworth will write an article that guides us in moving forward.

IT WAS PROBABLY the most pickles I had seen in my life. Whole dishes, in fact, were dedicated to containing vast quantities of the canned cucumbers. And not only pickles were in supply that day. Large amounts of cheese, meat, and bread rolls had been carefully placed on serving trays and arranged on long rectangular tables in the church's basement. Soon, hundreds of people would file down the stairs, past the luncheon spread, to the dozens of other tables prepared with napkins and white porcelain mugs.

This was one of my first experiences with an Anabaptist congregation outside of the Sunday morning service: a funeral for a beloved member of the church. For this funeral I had the opportunity to serve tea during the meal after the service, allowing me to observe the room. What I saw was not only a sense of sadness at the loss of a loved one or joy in celebrating a life well lived, but the room was filled with a deeper familial character. In other words, this was not only a funeral, but a family meal.

This is not to say that other Christian denominations lack the

ability to care well for people in their funerals, but this funeral seemed to capture the essence of the Anabaptist vision for church: it happens in community. Anabaptists do things in community. Scripture is read in community. Discipleship is done in community. Transformation happens in community. And Jesus is the undisputed rock of that community.

The Anabaptist vision is that Christian mission is carried out with people who hold a mutual love, passion, and conviction for Christ. These may be seen as common ideas in the evangelical movement, but history shows that Anabaptists predate evangelicals. It is Anabaptism's aspiration to place faith within the context of a specific congregation that makes it such an attractive tradition.

A grounded theology

One of the often-overlooked merits of Christianity in the contemporary Christian culture is its value as a worldview. Perhaps it's not in our wheelhouse to dabble in questions of philosophy; it isn't my expertise either.

However, all people for all time have held a worldview. A worldview, simply put, is a set of ideas and beliefs about how the world is and should be. Worldviews help individuals define right and wrong, progression and regression, and, most importantly, their role or function in the world. Though individually nuanced, a worldview is generally derived from a person's faith, culture, and community of origin. Western culture's worldview has generally been defined by the Christian story found in Scripture. This is important to understand today, as some in our

culture seek to abandon parts of this worldview.

Living without a worldview is like being told to dig a hole in the middle of a field, with no discernible reason for the hole or any knowledge of its size. It becomes hard to continue digging.

That's the position we find ourselves in currently in the West. The cultural norm is to tell people, specifically young people, that they are not bound by traditional marks of a worldview. They can be whoever they want, do whatever they want, and create the person they want to be with no boundaries. Tellingly, the slogan for my wife's high school graduation class was "undefined." All well and good until it is the responsibility of the individual to define themselves. That is no small task. (The book *3 Big Questions That Change Every Teenager: Making the Most of Your Conversations and Connections*, by Kara Powell and Brad M. Griffin is a good resource on identity and meaning in the lives of youth in the 21st century.)

This is where the Anabaptist tradition shines. While it offers a traditional Christian worldview, it is grounded in a strong sense of communal life that gives us a place to practice that worldview. Anabaptist spirituality not only furnishes the

theological and philosophical house with good, solid (probably Amish-made) chairs, tables, and sofas, it also brings people to come sit together in those chairs to live in that shared story. In this way, Anabaptism provides a wonderful place for people to find identity and meaning.

Anabaptism stresses the importance of the congregation in providing context for the Christian identity in Christ. Christians are called to live out their identity together; faith is no private matter. The Anabaptist tradition beckons believers to be accountable and to serve one another. In a healthy congregation, believers become known by one another. The opportunity to meet Jesus comes through fellow believers; becoming like Jesus requires mutual submission. Oswald Chambers said something that rings true here: "We look for God to manifest Himself to His children: God only manifests Himself *in His children*" (*My Utmost for His Highest*). Perhaps that quote is too absolute, maybe it is not, but it reminds us that by living life together we are transformed into the children of God. Here, in the Anabaptist tradition, identity is found: a wonderful story of love and redemption to be grounded in, but

Anabaptist spirituality not only furnishes the theological and philosophical house with good, solid chairs, it also brings people to come sit together in those chairs to live in that shared story.



JOYCE WIELER



The Anabaptist model of placing Christ at the centre of interpretation avoids interpreting by bias or theological preference.

more than that, a community to live that story in.

There is a lot to cherish in the Anabaptist tradition. In light of the needs of our culture (the need for identity, the need for meaning, and the need for love and friendship), this is an appropriate place to begin to discuss Anabaptism's virtues: as a place to simply *be* Christian. To know ourselves in light of Christ. To be loved by him through his people. To be known by him and his people. Among believers, God's people discover what it means to be made in the image of God. It's a place where the poor in Spirit see the kingdom of heaven, the pure in heart see good, and mourners are comforted.

A Jesus-centred Bible

The Anabaptist understanding of Scripture is another aspect of the tradition that I find attractive. Anabaptists hold to a Christ-centred reading of the Bible. This means that Anabaptists interpret the Bible through the life and teachings of Jesus. It means that all Scripture answers to Jesus. Stuart Murray puts it like this: "Anabaptists today remain convinced that if Jesus really is 'the focal point of God's revelation,' these narrative accounts and interpretations of his life, teaching, death, and resurrection must be central to our understanding of the whole of God's revelation in Scripture" (*The Naked Anabaptist*).

This changes the way we read the Bible, I think, for the better. Christians' views on how to read the Holy Scriptures can be quite different. Among Protestant

churches especially there are many different and often-contradictory interpretations of passages. The Anabaptist model of placing Christ at the centre of interpretation avoids interpreting by bias or theological preference, or by choosing our favourite passages to hold above the rest.

For example, take the topic of violence. There are many passages in the Bible that depict acts of graphic violence or—in some places—seem to condone them. Christians have long run to these passages to justify war. In stark contradiction stand the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "But I tell you, do not resist an evil person" (Matthew 5:39), and "but I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). Whether you think that these passages support strict non-violence or not, these words of Jesus cannot simply be discarded.

When congregations interpret the Scriptures, it is of great consequence to remember that, of all the revelations of Scripture, only one is spoken of as "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Hebrews 1:3), and "all the fullness of the Deity" (Colossians 2:9). God honoured Christ by making him the perfect representation of God. In interpreting the Bible, it is important to remember that Christ is not another prophet sharing God's word, he is the Word of God itself.

A plan for peace

Of all humanity's deficiencies—which are many—there seems to be a distinct lack of peace. We long for peace, but peace seems to evade us. Disunity and distrust seep into human relationships like the cold winter air seeping into an old house. In a chronically sinful world, we must ask ourselves how we can be reconciled to one another. The answer is in Jesus' model of love and forgiveness.

Dusting off our EMC Constitution and finding the statement of faith, we will see that article nine outlines the Anabaptist commitment to peace. I did exactly this when I began attending an EMC church a couple of years ago. It was the first time I had encountered a church with such an article in its statement of faith. The article asserts that it was Jesus' peaceful nature toward others that

helped to bring reconciliation to the world. Our part, as his followers, is to continue that peace, in part through nonviolence.

Now, I will not claim that the Anabaptist movement discovered or created the ethic of nonviolence; as an Anabaptist, I believe Jesus is responsible for that. However, it is the Anabaptists who made this a strong point of their practice of faith. And, I think, for good reason.

In Matthew 5, Jesus reproaches his Jewish audience for their lack of love for outsiders. He says, “even pagans do that” (Matthew 5:47),

When believers share the word with one another, practice peace together, and show Christ-like love, the kingdom of heaven is found on earth.

referring to loving their own. Jesus, in his wisdom, saw that loving those who love us does little in the way of reconciliation; it is loving our enemy that heals.

I had a coworker who was keen to correct my work and would sometimes ask to do the job himself. Later, I found myself correcting his work after a failed inspection. Was this person my enemy? Certainly not. But even in an insignificant incident like that, there was a choice to be made: love and forgive, or hold on and resent.

The way of peace that Jesus illustrates is not as much about nations as neighbours; not a policy but a daily practice with the people we are closest to. To tie this back into our theme of community, the best place to begin practicing the way of peace is with the believer next to you.

Jesus-centred discipleship

Jesus' version of discipleship looks different from ours. He took twelve men on a walking tour of first-century Palestine. He discipled them for three years. Replicating this model is difficult, yet it is the heart of what Jesus is doing here that is the key: living life together. As Christians, life is a shared event. Food. Laughter. Joy. Mourning.

Pain. Spiritual growth and learning. Common experience pushes the collective further toward Christ. When believers share the Word with one another, practice peace together, and show Christ-like love, the kingdom of heaven is found on earth.

Christ's message is not one primarily for entities: the nation states and the political tribes. It is one for the people, wherever they may be. It is a faith that puts a relationship with God and with my neighbour first. Discipleship is the heart of the Christian faith. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said in *The Cost of Discipleship*, “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”

From a skeptic to an Anabaptist

I did not grow up in an Anabaptist congregation; it was something I discovered attending Steinbach Bible College. My initial reaction was not affectionate; there is no complex structure of theological thought and, glaringly, the position of nonviolence is unpopular. But flipping through the pages of the New Testament turned a skeptic into an Anabaptist. I saw how stances on violence, Scripture, community, and Christian life were tuned to the message of Scripture. Anabaptism's firm and plain love of Christ attracts me.

It reminds me of the funeral we began with. It speaks volumes about theology when congregations love each other well. You can feel it in your bones and smell it in the air, like I did at that funeral. These people were doing Anabaptist theology. When Anabaptist theology is practiced as it is preached, you can, as I did, walk into a funeral and see that these people really love one another.

Sam Pauls is a member of the Blumenort Community Church and a recent grad of Steinbach Bible College.



He lives in Blumenort with his wife Kareenna.

THE ANABAPTIST

AND THE

WASP

How a picnic taught me about peacemaking with creation

By Candace Hamm



ISTOCK/PUBLIC DOMAIN

Our history with creation

The first generations of ethnic Mennonite immigrants to Canada were known for their rural lifestyle and for the pride they took in beautifully kept gardens and farms—most of which had to be started from scratch. God’s creatures were part and parcel of daily life.

When local historians in my hometown of Steinbach, Manitoba, talk about the area, they speak of the Bothwell cheese factory and the hatcheries, the teams of horses and the hog butchering days, the family milk cow and the prizewinning livestock. Sometimes they tell funny stories too, like the time a farmer hauled leaking manure tanks past an evangelistic tent revival outside of Steinbach and stunk up the place so badly that attendance dropped for the next service! Today, many of us live in urban centres, but others still farm, and we’re (usually) fond of our rural heritage.

When historians tell of our ancestors’ arrival from Russia, they also never fail to mention two other creatures: ravenous crop-destroying grasshoppers, and hordes of bloodthirsty mosquitoes. These insects added insult to injury during years of drought, poor crops, and other struggles. It seems that life for our newly-Canadian forebears could be a hungry, itchy one. Being a people of the land was not always an easy task.

Mennonite believers are also known for certain parts of our theology. In particular, we can be distinguished by our Anabaptist commitment to peacemaking; that is, our belief in non-violence, reconciliation, and in finding creative solutions to conflict. We work toward peace by looking for ways to care for those who are suffering: providing food or meeting other needs for those who are struggling, and supporting the downtrodden. In the EMC, peacemaking is part of our Statement of Faith. Scripture, we insist, shows us that “we may not participate in or support anything that will

violate this life of peace but should be peacemakers and ministers of reconciliation” (EMC Statement of Faith, article 9).

We Anabaptists work for peace. Why? Because Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Peacemaking is part of who we are as a body of believers in Christ.

Now, I don’t know about you, but I’ve often thought of peacemaking as something I do by giving money to organizations working in war-torn countries. The sacrifices made by people like Dirk Willems or conscientious objectors in wartime also come to mind. So does reconciliation between family members, choosing to discuss charitably with one another instead of becoming polarized, and gathering together despite political or theological differences. Peace, to me, has to do with people.

It’s a different story with our relationship to the land. As our grandparents did, my family has chosen to grow most of the fruits and vegetables we eat. In the midst of planting, weeding, watering, mowing, and pruning, we also pick potato bugs without a second thought, try to keep the squirrels and deer from eating our harvest. And though we don’t generally contend with hordes of grasshoppers, the mosquitoes are as hungry as they ever were when our ancestors arrived in Canada. Our relatives who farm on a larger scale have their own set of challenges with animals. Creaturely conflict is a normal part of rural life, just as it was for previous generations, so I don’t usually think about peacemaking with creation.

Or at least, I hadn’t thought about it until our friends came to visit and share an outdoor brunch.

A fall happening

In Manitoba, wasps and picnics go together. Show up to an event in the great outdoors with food, and winged visitors will follow. We expect it. Outdoor eating in late summer and early fall requires one hand over a soda can

and an ear open for the sound of buzzing. So, when we hosted our friends for brunch, we expected a few extra guests.

But that day, something was different. Our maple syrup and waffles were bug-free, and we weren't fighting to protect our iced coffee. In fact, the wasps didn't seem to be around our deck at all! The difference felt odd enough that we spoke about it. One of our friends suggested that perhaps the wasps were content because "they have what they need."

I hadn't noticed this before, but as I thought more, I realized she had a point. We had planted many local species of flowers in parts of our small acreage; across the yard, golden-rod, asters, and meadow blazingstar were in full bloom even though it was the beginning of September. The wasps were around, all right, but they ignored us, hovering around clumps of purple and yellow blooms. Over *there* meant they weren't over *here*. We ate in peace.

Was it possible? Could it be that we had accidentally made peace with wasps?

Could it be that we had accidentally made peace with wasps?

Connecting creation to the God of peace

This question sat in the back of my mind for the next few months until I decided it was time to do some research. Several articles I found suggested that my friend was right: science seems to tell us that when wasps are hungry, they become more aggressive. I also learned that wasps are hungriest at the end of summer because their food supply dies off at the same time of year that populations are highest. No wonder they're grumpy! It seems that, completely by accident, that fall we provided the wasps with enough food that they didn't need our sugary drinks.

I learned something. But there was more to learn. Now that I knew my friend was right, I wanted to see what God might have to say on the topic. I'm a seminary student in the field of systematic theology—I get to spend many hours trying to understand who God is and what he wants for us as his people. As a member of the EMC, I'm also an evangelical; one of the things that helps define our faith as "evangelical" is that we care very deeply about Scripture.



ISTOCK/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

How might these wasps fit with Scripture's idea of peace?

It turns out the Bible has a fair bit to say about animals and peace. Isaiah 11:6–9 is one example; it's the famous "peaceable kingdom" passage. "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.... They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." Scholars debate what exactly those words mean, but one thing everyone agrees on is that this picture of peace, where creatures and humans live quietly together, represents God's intentions better than violence does.

Someday, in the new heaven and new earth, God will redeem the whole world and make everything new. In the meantime, he calls us to participate with him, to represent his peace in the world. Old Testament scholars tell us that when God created humans in his image, he made us to be his representatives on earth as priests, caretakers, and administrators of his cosmic temple (creation), participating in God's ultimate plan and pointing creation toward its ultimate goal: peace.

Peace? With wasps? Was I right in thinking that God meant me to learn about peace from a picnic?

There's a theological term called "praxis" that maybe helps explain why I think the observations gleaned from this picnic were important for me to attend to. Praxis means that we aren't meant to just think about what God wants; instead, we should also learn lessons from our actions. We learn by doing. Now, the idea of praxis cannot replace Scripture. Scripture is authoritative and praxis is not. What praxis can do, I think, is help us refine our interpretation of Scripture.

I understand praxis this way: God tells us in Scripture that he is a God of peace, and he invites us to be part of his peacemaking. When I know that God desires peace, I am more likely

to recognize instances of peace in the world. I can take what I notice, return to Scripture, and check to see whether this instance of peace matches God's intentions. In the case of these wasps, nature alerted me to an idea I find evidence for in the Bible: God's plan for the peace of all creation. Learning from fall picnics seems to fit quite well into a praxis process. The only question I had left was what I should do with what I'd learned.

When I know that God desires peace, I am more likely to recognize instances of peace in the world.



ISTOCK

Living in the “now but not yet”

Now, peacemaking with creation, lessons from daily life, and God’s intentions in Scripture might sound lovely, but there’s a problem. We haven’t yet fully arrived in God’s redeemed creation. The world around us is full of conflict between many different species, and often, peace seems nothing more than a far-off dream.

Our theology tells us that peace is coming, but our heritage reminds us that it hasn’t yet fully arrived. Think back to those early Russian Mennonite immigrants. There doesn’t seem to be any way our ancestors could have lived peacefully among hordes of grasshoppers; instead, their crops were lost. In a more recent example, two summers ago my husband and I found our batch of young chickens slaughtered by a mink. That chicken run was as secure as we could make it. Or what about those wasps? Was my yard safe for those who have anaphylactic allergies? Sometimes, creation is not peaceful. What about the human body and its protein needs? God provides us with animals for food, but isn’t that violent? And what should we do about mosquitoes?

I really don’t know how to make peace with a mosquito. Or potato bugs. To be honest, it’s difficult to practice peacemaking with other humans, let alone creation, so while I do believe I am called to peace, including with flora and fauna, I don’t always know how to move toward that goal in a broken world. I’ve wondered about the idea of doing what I can, and for the rest, taking redemptive “baby steps.” Perhaps I can at least minimize the harm I inflict on the world around me? It’s not a satisfying answer, but in a broken world, perhaps it’s the answer we must accept for now as part of a creation groaning together (Romans 8:22). All of creation waits for peace together.

There’s a problem. We haven’t yet fully arrived in God’s redeemed creation.

While the earth and I long for redemption, I can also participate in God’s coming peace using what I do know. I can show the “now” in the “not yet!” That fall picnic did change my response when creation and I rub up against each other. Since then, we’ve moved to a new property where we’re taking steps to live in peace—a little at a time. We’ve put up fencing to keep rabbits out of our gardens; otherwise, they’re welcome to roam. We’re prioritizing natural gardening methods to avoid harming the insects who come to pollinate our crops. We’ve also planted native flowers among our vegetables to welcome the butterflies, bees, and wasps, but perhaps far enough away from our door to avoid endangering allergic guests.

I don’t have all the answers. But because I am an Anabaptist, I believe I am called to live in peace with those around me. Because I am an evangelical Anabaptist, I also want life to constantly lead me back to Scripture, revisiting passages like Isaiah 11:6–9 and allowing their words to shape me.

God, please grant that I be willing to imitate You, whose peace extends outward to humanity and to the rest of creation, in whatever way You see fit.

Candace Hamm is a graduate student at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto and a member at Ridgewood Church just outside of Steinbach, Manitoba, where she and her family reside.





ISTOCK

‘THEY ALSO SERVE WHO ONLY STAND AND WAIT’

When is a living sacrifice no longer viable?

By Cameron S. McKenzie

THEY ALSO SERVE who only stand and wait.”

I was first introduced to the sonnets of John Milton in college. One in particular, no. 19, “On His Blindness,” has stuck with me. In it, Milton reflects on the question of his value to God as a writer now that he is going blind. He ends by observing that a king with thousands of servants rushing about doing his bidding is equally served by others who stand by, waiting.

I thought of this poem when I read Erica Fehr’s July 8, 2025, reflections on intrinsic and extrinsic value, which touch on one of the most profound questions of our time: what makes a life valuable when strength evaporates and productivity diminishes? In a culture where worth is often

measured by output, activity, or visibility, the reminder that our value rests elsewhere is both needed and urgent.

At the centre of the Christian vision is the conviction that every person bears the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27). This truth grounds our worth—it cannot be earned by achievement and is not diminished by disability, aging, or decline. As Fehr observes, nothing alters this reality. Of course, the roles we fill, the work we do, and the contributions we make have significance, but they are always secondary. God looked upon creation and called it “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Our being is blessed before we ever do anything.

This conviction lies behind Christian resistance to the utilitarian logic that dominates so much of modern debate around abortion,

poverty, disability, or MAID. To stand with the vulnerable is to insist that every human life bears immeasurable dignity, stamped as it is with the image of God.



INTRINSIC VALUE IS more than a theological principle. Older believers who have walked with Christ embody the perseverance of discipleship, what Eugene Peterson called “a long obedience in the same direction.” Their presence tells younger generations that faith is not a sprint; it’s not even a marathon. It is a lifelong pilgrimage. The psalmist affirms, “They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green” (Psalm 92:14–15).

Churches are accustomed to people stepping aside once they can no longer carry out visible ministry roles. But does that mean that they stop serving? An arthritic hand lifted in prayer might speak hope more powerfully than any sermon. The steady presence of elderly saints reminds us that God’s promises endure beyond the rush of modern life.

In God’s kingdom, service is never confined to the active or visible. The quiet companionship of sitting at a bedside, a smile offered across the sanctuary, or whispered prayers in the night are all forms of holy work.

The Christian tradition has long affirmed prayer and worship as true vocation. Monastics understood their cloistered lives as intercession for the church and the world, a hidden calling that sustained the people of God. Likewise, the Jewish teaching of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, reminds us that God entrusts his people with the work of mending creation. For Christians, this resonates with Paul’s vision: “that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

The point is that just because our capacity for performance has lessened, the call to repair

By enduring faithfully in weakness, we can resist a culture that idolizes strength.

the world is not out of reach. Prayer, presence, endurance—these are themselves acts of restoration. To intercede for others is to weave hope into the torn fabric of life. By enduring faithfully in weakness, we can resist a culture that idolizes strength. Even the smallest gestures become part of God’s renewing work. Gentle words, quiet trust, and the courage to remain open to God have rich gospel potential.

Simeon and Anna in the temple (Luke 2:25–38) embody this waiting vocation. Their long lives culminated not in accomplishments but in the simple act of recognizing Christ. To wait in faith is itself a participation in God’s redemption.



AND THEN THERE is the way in which churches too frequently mimic the values of society as a whole. Perceptions of ministry often reflect our wider cultural preoccupation with productivity, equating ministry with leadership, activity, and output. Yet Paul insists, “those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable” (1 Corinthians 12:22). Weakness is not an obstacle but a place where God’s grace shines clearly (2 Corinthians 12:9).

When we limit our definitions of effective ministry to activity, we risk overlooking those whose faithfulness is lived quietly in weakness or dependence. To follow a crucified Lord is to embrace the paradox of glory revealed in frailty.

The gospel proclaims that our lives are precious to God. Paul urges believers to “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1).

This call is not bound to youth or strength, nor does it end with retirement. Every stage of life can be offered as worship.

Jesus blesses the poor in spirit, the meek, and those who mourn (Matthew 5:3–5). God delights in lives that rest in his mercy even when stripped of worldly strength. An elderly saint in a care home, a disabled believer unable to “contribute” in conventional ways, a sufferer who endures with trust in Christ—all testify to the truth that God values being as much as doing.



I WAS REMINDED of this when, a few months ago, my wife visited my ninety-six-year-old mother in her care home. My mother, now living with dementia, was sitting in her wheelchair at the nurses’ station, leading what appeared to be a worship service. She no longer remembers daily details, but in her imagination, she had gathered residents and staff into a congregation and was leading them in prayer, proclamation, and song.

Of course, no hymns were actually sung. There was no intelligible sermon. Yet her gestures and voice carried the weight of decades in pastoral ministry. Her somewhat incoherent rambling flowed seamlessly into a clear and precise recitation of the Lord’s Prayer. The hallway became a sanctuary, the nurses’ station an altar, the passersby a congregation.

This was no make-believe moment. It was a parable of worship as Pope Benedict once

described it: a form of holy play that prepares us for eternal worship. In true play, there is no utilitarian purpose, no striving for measurable gain—only joy, beauty, and delight. My mother, caught up in her imagined liturgy, was rehearsing for eternity.

And in that moment, her act of worship was as real and effective as any she had offered in her fifty years of active service to the church. She was inhabiting a vision of ministry that is not measured by sharpness of mind, physical capacity, or visible outcomes. Her ministry was a communion with God offered for the sake of others. It was *waiting for the Lord* (Psalm 130:5). Even in her frailty, she was bearing witness to the eternal value of life rooted in God’s call.

And I would say more. She was not simply remembering who she had been. She was revealing who she still is: a servant of Christ, an icon of the worship that will one day fill heaven and earth.



TO AFFIRM INTRINSIC worth is not to dismiss the value of fruitful labour but to place it within a deeper truth: we are created in the image of God, called to actively represent God in creation, but undeniably loved before we ever act, and cherished before we contribute.

The church must live this truth. We must honour the elderly as witnesses of faith, affirm presence as ministry, and resist narrow, ableist views of Christian life. For in the end, our value is not secured by what we do, but by the God who names us his own. And that is all that matters.

Cameron McKenzie is lead pastor of Fort Garry EMC in Winnipeg, Man. He is married to Irma.



The hallway became a sanctuary, the nurses’ station an altar, the passersby a congregation.

In His eyes

(A poetic devotion by Brigitte Toews)



In His eyes – before your birth
In His eyes – you'll find your worth
In His eyes – written all your days
In His eyes – catch His gaze!

In His eyes – the light of life
In His eyes – holy sacrifice
In His eyes – way of the cross
In His eyes – seeker of the lost

In His eyes – the way, the truth
In His eyes – resurrection proof!
In His eyes – true life abounds
In His eyes – new holy ground

In His eyes – flames of fire
In His eyes – our heart's desire
In His eyes – your hidden thoughts
In His eyes – where counsel's wrought

In His eyes – wisdom is found
In His eyes – fixed solid ground
In His eyes – your guiding light
In His eyes – in your darkest night

In His eyes – the veil is torn
In His eyes – our soul's reborn
In His eyes – you'll find his peace
In His eyes – prisoners released

In His eyes – the light-the heat
In His eyes – heaven's mercy seat
In His eyes – filled with grace
In His eyes – God's holy face

Brigitte (Bouvier) Toews is a part
of Heartland Community Church
in Landmark, Man.

Great Commission stewardship goes beyond money

WHAT DOES STEWARDSHIP in local churches look like regarding global missions? Is it just a matter of finances—bang-for-the-buck kind of thing—or could we include the time given by individuals and congregations to study missions, to hear reports from mission workers, and intentional time in prayer for mission efforts?

While I want to be careful not to dismiss the need for the EMC Board of Missions to be wise and discerning in terms of how much of our budget goes toward supporting workers and the fruit they generate, what role does the sending church have in producing that same fruit?

Back in September, I, along with several others, travelled to Spain, Morocco

and Europe to connect with workers serving in what could be described as hard soil. Among the goals and objectives I prepared for this trip, I wanted to evaluate the “successfulness” of the work being done: thinking in terms of contacts being made, thoughtful strategies, use of spiritual gifts, growth rate of new believers, number of baptisms, and so on.

I told someone upon my return that, as a Conference, we need to recognize the amazing workers we have serving the global community. There is no lack of hard work and diligence in their efforts. Our workers recognize and appreciate that they are serving on behalf of the sixty EMC churches in Canada. So, one may ask, why does the

harvest seem limited in certain areas when Jesus himself said “the fields are white unto harvest?”

It is because, when sending churches play a greater role in the harvest, they produce fruit. Even though overseas workers seek to use their gifts faithfully, they also depend on the sending base to intercede on their behalf. The reality is that the sending base is just as accountable for the harvest as are the workers. We all long to see a greater harvest, and so collectively we come to our Saviour, led by the Holy Spirit, to pray for breakthroughs, for people of favour, for dreams and visions, for open doors, for serendipitous moments, for empty hearts to be filled with the love, grace, and forgiveness of Jesus.

Doing “our part” as the local church does not end with sending and supporting workers. Thankfully, many of our churches highlight missionaries each week or month in their bulletins. Well over one hundred people from our Conference have gone out on prayer teams in the past ten years, hundreds have served on work teams, pastors and church leaders are encouraged to visit mission fields by receiving a five-hundred-dollar subsidy from the Board of Missions, and our prayer calendar goes out to hundreds of homes each year.

All of these components combine to help answer our prayers for a bountiful harvest around the world. Thank you for your stewardship to help us bear this fruit together!

Even though overseas workers seek to use their gifts faithfully, they also depend on the sending base to intercede on their behalf. The reality is that the sending base is just as accountable for the harvest as are the workers.



As EMC Director of Global Outreach, **Gerald Reimer** supports EMC missionaries all over the world.

Translation and God's amazing work

By an EMC worker
West Asia

JESUS CAME TO this world, lived, died, and was raised to start God's new creation. He started the work of forgiving and healing broken parts. And he made a people for himself that would continue this work, in his strength.

A mixed group of people from a Muslim community meet almost every day online to translate Jesus' teachings in the Gospels into their mother tongue. One of them said passionately, "Jesus' teachings are important for everyone; we need to make them accessible to all the people in the area, so that their communities can be changed by them." Some of the translation team members have read Jesus' teachings and have learned to follow him. Others on the team hadn't read any of the Gospels before starting this work. Their Muslim teachers have taught them the importance of God's word, and that the honourable *Injil*, "Gospel," is God's word, alongside the Koran. Those who hadn't read Jesus' words don't feel that they're doing anything related to "converting" to another religion; rather, they view themselves as working on a text that is honoured in their religion.

This team started translating at the beginning of the year. January was spent making a rough draft and editing Luke 1. In February, part of Luke 2 has been drafted and edited. In Luke 1, the team had long discussions about how to translate the phrase "God's Holy Spirit" (the being who filled John even before his birth, who filled Elizabeth

when Mary visited, and who created a baby inside Mary).

They learned about the inside part of the Temple, where Zechariah burned incense and the outside part where the worshippers were waiting. They pondered what the words of the angel to Zechariah meant, when he said, "Joy and gladness will come to you, and many will rejoice at his birth." They discussed what the term "the Son of God" means. They talked (and joked) about how exactly John leaped in his mother's womb. They considered a borrowed word to translate Elizabeth's words, "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come and visit me?" Struggling to put it into their mother tongue, they came up with an everyday phrase that helped them understand Elizabeth's amazement.

Then, Mary's poem turned into a wonderful treat. The group discovered that one of them was a songwriter. He translated Mary's poem as poetry and,

They considered a borrowed word to translate Elizabeth's words, "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come and visit me?" Struggling to put it into their mother tongue, they came up with an everyday phrase that helped them understand Elizabeth's amazement.

in the editing session, sang bits out loud as he thought of how best to fix the wording and get the meaning right.

This work is happening through this group of people that God picked. Some family members, friends, and colleagues are being consulted for translation advice. Soon, the team is looking forward to taking the first part of the translated text to more people in the broader community for feedback.

Please pray for this endeavour. Pray for the accuracy of the translation. Pray for the family and friends who have discussed translation questions with the team. Pray for the community that will soon hear the translation. Pray that God's word "will not return empty" (Isaiah 55:11), and that the community will be changed.

Identifying details are withheld to protect the security of the ministry and workers.

A ministry of ligaments

By Calvin and Gabi
Life Action Ministries

WE ARE ALL familiar with Paul’s metaphor in his letters of the church being a body, and it is common to talk about being the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. A number of years ago, we noticed one part that doesn’t usually get attention: the ligaments. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul urges believers to make sure they are holding fast to “the head, from whom the whole body, *supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews*, grows as God causes it to grow” (Colossians 2:19, emphasis added). And in Ephesians he writes, “We will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, *joined and held together by every supporting ligament*, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4:15-16, emphasis added).

We’ve realized that our ministry is that of ligaments—we help the rest of the body stay connected, be equipped and grow. We feel called to train and mentor cross-cultural workers, often by connecting them to believers in other parts of the world. In this way, we contribute to EMC’s efforts to expand its training of EMC-administered workers.

One way this is happening is through our connections with Mission Prep, an organization preparing and serving workers from Canada. For several years now, we have been a part of Mission Prep training events (both

virtual and in-person), but now we have invited EMC workers to a pre-field workshop in the summer. Our hope is that they will come away equipped for fruitful ministry.

More recently, Gabi travelled to Europe in January to teach language and culture learning to a group of Latin

We’ve realized that our ministry is that of ligaments—we help the rest of the body stay connected, be equipped and grow. We feel called to train and mentor cross-cultural workers, often by connecting them to believers in other parts of the world.

American workers preparing for cross-cultural service with the organization Eagles of Peace. This was one part of a three-month internship, and the goal was to give them tools to adjust to another culture and connect intentionally. Over the past seven years, we have trained Latinos and Latinas in this context, and four teams are now working in the Balkans, and one in Ethiopia. We also invited an EMC family working

in Europe to attend. At the end of the week, they were encouraged that now they had the tools to learn an immigrant language and connect more deeply with those they want to reach.

About Ethiopia, Calvin has a long-running relationship with the Kale Heywet Church, the largest Protestant denomination in the country. Besides contributing to an extensive ESL ministry, Calvin has also connected Eagles of Peace to Kale Heywet, who wants to send hundreds of cross-cultural workers to serve in neighbouring countries. Eagles of Peace is now planning a Missions Congress, to take place in Ethiopia in the spring. The hope is to mobilize Ethiopians and give them tools to spur their own members into missions. If all that sounds confusing, it’s because that is the world we are in now—believers from everywhere preparing to serve everywhere. Missions is now truly global.

Of course, one of the challenges of such a stretchy ministry is to overstretch, so pray for wisdom for our own family as we navigate connecting different parts of the body, while remaining connected to Jesus, our Head, and to each other within our family.

Calvin and Gabi are involved in training ministry leaders and cross-cultural workers in the Balkans, Ethiopia, the Middle East and other countries.

No compromise on Jesus or mission

By Kent Dueck
Inner City Youth Alive, Winnipeg

WE FIND OURSELVES in very interesting conversations as a ministry in Winnipeg's North End these days. As odd as it may sound, we keep asking ourselves, "What cultural moment are we in?" This is like the Old Testament's commentary on the men of Issachar: they understood their times (1 Chronicles 12:32). That's all we know about the men of Issachar.

It's difficult to be a Christian ministry in this cultural moment. Though our foundation is firmly placed on Jesus Christ, we are constantly pressured to compromise that foundation. If we did, all kinds of financial support would come our way, so I understand how many Christian ministries fall into the temptation.

One writer talks about how Christian ministries and churches are being

colonized by culture. Secular pressure has entered the doors of our churches and ministries. One funder admitted they loved the fact that we fed children in the North End and helped employ young people but wished we could leave Jesus out of it.

One of the downsides to being a welcoming Christian community is that our doors remain open for those who believe the gospel is good news as well as those who don't. I understand the gospel has been bad news at certain historical junctures but if I really believed, at its core, it was harmful, there's no way I could remain faithful to it, nor should I.

My belief has never been deeper that faith is real and relevant, given the spiritual malaise that has settled on the hearts of so many people. We need more of Jesus, not less.

It feels like churches and Christian ministries have lost a bit of confidence

on this front. Christian ministries are biblically wired for self-reflection. Psalm 139:23-24 says, "Search me, God, and know my heart.... See if there is any offensive way in me." This sets a foundation for reflection.

What happens when ministry culture loses this virtuous reflex for reflection? One sad consequence is that we can forget who we are as people of faith. Or, at the very least, we neglect the aspirational identity markers that make us Jesus people.

It's my opinion that we have imbibed some of the cold accusations that culture has thrown at us and are moping about, wondering if it's true—are we really doing harm? We had an interesting moment at a recent retirement party for someone involved in building low-income housing. He had a foggy recollection of a time when churches were relevant: "Didn't churches used to get involved in building houses?" Our team admitted that, in fact, they did. "Yes," he said, "and as I recall it, they were better at it than the government."

Never has there been a greater opportunity to show the good news that is Jesus. It's time we remember that we are the people who care for the poor, bring sight to the blind, and freedom to those in captivity. It's time to shake off false allegations and freely serve in our world.

Kent Dueck founded Inner City Youth Alive in 1986. He recently transitioned out of the executive director role but continues to actively engage the supporting constituency on behalf of the ministry.



The Meals for Kids program provides healthy, nutritious meals in a safe and monitored environment on Bridge Drop-in evenings to the children in the community. Meant to be more than simply providing a meal, the program's goal is to create a safe, nurturing environment for kids to engage with one another and with caring adults.

Guiding Afghans to faith one text message at a time

Reza and Bahar Azimi
Serving Central Asia from Canada

WE, REZA AND Bahar, are Afghan but were born and raised in Iran. We have three children. We currently live in Blumenort, Man.

Through a Farsi-speaking church, we immigrated from Iran to Turkey. There, we were discipled and began our ministry among the Afghan people in 2017, primarily through online outreach. In 2019, we returned to Afghanistan to serve believers in person through in-house church groups formed through online ministry and discipleship. In August 2021, after the Taliban takeover, we left Afghanistan due to security concerns. We spent one year in a refugee camp in Abu Dhabi, and in October 2022, we arrived in Manitoba through Canada's sponsorship program, supported by Blumenort Community Church.

Our ministry among the Afghan people continues today—online in Afghanistan, among the diaspora, and in person here in Manitoba. In 2023, God opened the doors for us to join the EMC as missionaries. Part of our work is focused on Afghans in Manitoba and across Canada through our ministry, Ariana. This ministry focuses on evangelism, discipleship, and the planting of house churches in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries.

The Ariana team engages with seekers on social media by responding to their questions and comments. Their goal is to guide these individuals towards faith in Christ and then mentor them one-on-one, helping



Reza Azimi is assisted by Arley Loewen in the recording studio.

them become part of a church fellowship. On average, the team responds to two hundred direct inquiries each day and exchanges over a thousand text messages.

Throughout the week, we connect with believers through various ministries. Bahar plays an active role in weekly Bible teachings for women. She has prepared 36 Bible teaching sessions for women and hosted 48 sessions in total. She is in constant contact with women through online calls, discipling them one-on-one. She currently has seven active disciples and plays a key role in team meetings where we evaluate and strengthen the women's ministry and work through its challenges.

I, Reza, work with the follow-up and response teams. I currently lead 15 full-time workers, whom I guide and counsel as needed to fulfill the work of Ariana Ministry.

In Manitoba, we are developing a small but growing Farsi-speaking

fellowship. We love hosting our Afghan Christian families for meals. During the summer, we have an annual camp and often organize day picnics at nearby parks. Many of our members are young families with children ranging from toddlers to teenagers.

This reflects the seriousness of God's work among the Afghan people and our calling in this mission. We share this to emphasize how deeply we need your prayers—for a spiritual awakening among the Afghan people, so that those walking in darkness may see the light of Christ shining upon them.

Reza and Bahar Azimi are a part of Ariana Ministries, an Afghan-focused media-based ministry they helped start. Accepted as EMC workers in 2023, they counsel and disciple Afghan seekers and new believers online, and encourage believers in southern Manitoba.

Praying for the movement of God’s regenerating Spirit in Bolivia

By Phil Hamm
Bolivia prayer team member

PETER WAS IN a very restrictive colony and knew there was something better than following rules in the hope of perhaps making it to heaven. But the rules were a cage that kept his soul imprisoned and he wanted freedom in Jesus. He escaped the clutches of the demons that wanted him in their bondage. His voracious desire to know God brought him hope and freedom, and the love of God surpassed his wildest dreams. He now works to bring understanding, surety of eternal salvation, and new life to many within hearing distance of the radio station, which he manages.

God is working mightily in this world. How can we discover this? If we can identify where Satan is working

the hardest, we can pray most effectively. We need to find places where God is wonderfully working to liberate people.

The motto of the EMC prayer trips is “Pray on site with insight.” As missionaries and workers share their hearts and spiritual concerns, the prayer team identifies with the emotions and concerns that come through personal interaction.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul asked his supporters to pray for him (6:18-20). This biblical exhortation encourages all believers to pray for those on the front line advancing the kingdom. Although EMC does this through daily, monthly, and annual prayer initiatives, the need for a personal touch is always important. Although we can pray in general ways,

I believe that focused prayer is always more effective. This is why a prayer team of six people travelled to Bolivia January 16–26, 2026.

As Canadian supporters, we form a part of a ministry team by being diligent in prayer, praying for people who are working in Bolivia, ministering to others. Although we pray knowing that God hears and moves to transform lives, our hearts are more in tune when we have had the opportunity to meet the people involved.

Another part of our prayer team ministry is that we encourage our missionaries as they face challenges. We are not responsible for converting people. Prayer focuses on God, who regenerates people through his Spirit. Our responsibility is to plant the seed effectively, and tenderly care for the seed so it can mature and produce a harvest.

Pray for workers for the harvest field in Bolivia. Pray for the believers that they would not just find a new life, wealth, and freedom, but that they could minister to those they have left behind in the colonies—family and friends. Opportunities to minister in Bolivia abound as restlessness for truth grows in the colonies and God softens the soil so that planting can bring a great harvest.

Phil Hamm is a lay minister at Leamington EMC. A former missionary to Japan for ten years, he also served on the EMC Board of Missions for six years.



PHOTO SUPPLIED

Prayer team members and Bolivia workers share a meal.

Candy grandma encourages Bible memorization

Abbeysdale Christian Fellowship
Calgary, Alberta

WE HAVE ONE. Do you? If not, you should! Our candy grandma gives out candy to kids after church, in bags (small ones, but even so)! After the service, candy grandma Linda sits expectantly with her notebook in hand, pen at the ready. Another candy grandma (in training) sits at her side as a long line of children begins to form almost before the last “Amen” is heard. The clean crisp paper anticipates being highly decorated with checkmarks and names by the time the line-up will have vanished. The grandmas know they will likely be the last ones to exit the sanctuary.

A significant number of children, the youngest ones only four years old,



Children line up and wait for their turn to see the candy grandma.

haphazardly line up, all vying for her attention and anxious to receive a bag of treats. Included in the treat bag is a Bible story-based activity sheet on which she has written a special but short verse. The young memorizers are encouraged to bring the completed activity sheet back to her the following week and to recite the accompanying verse. Many children are eager to recite two or three Bible verses to candy grandma in their turn.

She diligently records a point per verse, any verse, in her notebook. Once a year, candy grandma tallies up all the results and many children receive special recognition and possibly a reward. A young girl who had never before in her life memorized a Bible verse was gifted a Bible of her own as additional incentive.

There is double motivation this year for Bible verse memorization, as the Sunday school department has also begun a reward store for scripture memorization. Theoretically, children can recite the same verse in both Sunday school and to candy grandma, unconsciously cementing the verses

concretely into the memory bank of their hearts and brains.

Recently, the entire congregation was challenged to memorize a portion (or all) of the Sermon on the Mount. Adherents who were brave enough to vulnerably face the congregation to recite their memorized portion at the correct sequential placement of time received the utmost respect from those who were either not willing or were not courageous enough to attempt such an admirable but slightly intimidating feat. Maybe candy grandma could have provided some sweet incentives?

It is a blessing that there is now a candy grandma in training, as we may very likely soon need to form two lines of children, maybe even an adult line. Candy grandma may not only be the last to exit the sanctuary, she may also be the last one to leave the entire church building. And if the parents tire of waiting for their enthusiastic young memorizers, who knows but that candy grandma might just end up taking home more sticky fingers than she bargained on.

– Ivy Plett

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Friendly faces create a hospitable community

Pineridge Fellowship Chapel
Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan

A FEW YEARS ago, our board chairman Dennis and his wife went on a holiday to the United States. Their preference is to drive south and take in the scenic beauty, along with the various local attractions they come across. As they plod along in their journey, they visit different churches. Certainly, they want to worship and fellowship alongside other believers, which ought to be the goal of a Christian on Sunday mornings. However, Dennis also enjoys observing how other churches operate. By looking at other churches and how they do things, we find ways to improve.

In one of these Sunday excursions, they came across a congregation called “Friendly Baptist Church.” At first glance, it’s a promising name. Yet as the saying goes, “You don’t judge a book by its cover,” and that applied to this visit. The unfortunate truth is that

this church was anything but friendly. Nobody welcomed or talked to Dennis or his wife the entire time. When they got back, they relayed how their experience had impacted them, and that they never wanted any visitors to our church to feel the same way.

I should clarify that when I arrived at Pineridge Fellowship Chapel in 2020 to pastor, the church was already warm and friendly. My family and I instantly felt welcomed, which was important given all that was going on in 2020. It is easy to become complacent as a congregation. Sometimes when you have a smaller church, new people can almost be treated like outsiders, particularly if they’re different from the church. I’ve seen this in the past in a church I was part of; it ended up driving potential congregants away.

We were determined to make a more conscious effort to be welcoming to visitors. To this end, I think that we have been successful. Throughout the last few years, we have seen new faces

coming on a regular basis. And in talking to a number of these individuals, many initially attended because they felt welcomed and accepted. Our ushers have been stellar at greeting people coming in, and many of the congregants stick around to visit after church.

This attitude isn’t centrally focused on attracting new people. The goal of being friendly and encouraging as a church is meant to glorify God through community. We are commanded to build one another up (Romans 15:2; Ephesians 4:29), and to devote ourselves to loving each other (Romans 12:10). We should be hospitable and sympathetic to each other (1 Peter 3:8; 4:9), knowing that speaking in an uplifting manner can encourage and cheer those who are weighed down in life (Proverbs 12:25). Ultimately, our hope is that this attitude within the walls of Pineridge Fellowship Chapel doesn’t remain in the church, but spills over to the broader community.

– Jeremy Loseth

Candidates pray with church leaders as they prepare for baptism.

Three men were baptized in September 2025, the first baptisms at Pineridge Fellowship Chapel in many years.



PHOTO SUPPLIED

Roseisle EMC not sleeping on living out their faith

Roseisle EMC
Roseisle, Manitoba

PICTURE A SLEEPY prairie hamlet nestled at the foot of the Pembina Hills in southern Manitoba, surrounded by rolling hills and lush farmland, with a small creek running through it. This lovely farming community boasts six streets, three churches, a community store, an outdoor rink, a public rose garden, and a memorial. Minutes away from Stephenfield Provincial Park, there is access to cross-country skiing and walking trails, and to a picturesque lake with a large sandy beach that attracts campers, swimmers, fishermen, and boaters alike. It is in this idyllic setting that you will find Roseisle EMC, a growing congregation of worshippers of all ages and backgrounds.

Now you may imagine that not much happens in our little corner of the world, but did you know that Roseisle is known for its Canada Day “redneck” celebrations? The day begins with a delicious waffle breakfast, put on by Roseisle EMC Youth, and a local business parade. The day continues with a tractor pull and lawnmower

races, before ending with live music and the best fireworks displays around.

How we relate to the community

Roseisle EMC has experienced amazing growth in the last five years. In 2021 we saw an average of 52 people in church service attendance. By 2025, we saw an increase of 89%. In our Sunday school, from 2021 to 2025, we saw a 58% increase. We also baptized 19 people and helped three members transfer in.

With increased attendance comes challenges. New attendees come with different backgrounds. Some worshippers have no previous church experience, while others possess deep theological knowledge. Churchgoers come from various traditions, including Mennonite, French, Mexican, English, Dutch, German, and Brazilian. Ministering to so many people with varied faith journeys and needs has proven to be a challenge, but one that we are doing our best to meet.

We consider our most important ministries to be our strong Sunday school program, our summer VBS program, our youth program, and our women’s group. We put a lot of effort

into these programs, and they are well-attended and going strong.

Most of our church’s social outreach happens in the nearest town, Carman, where there are more needs.

While Roseisle EMC does not have a clear and defined vision statement, our main goal is to preach the word of God in a simple and understandable way and to live it out so that others feel prompted to follow Christ.

At our recent membership meeting, Pastor Fernando encouraged us to learn from the first church described in Acts 2. Luke tells us that the first church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people” (vv. 42–47). This is a wonderful description of unity in the body.

We are thankful that so many believers have flocked to our little church, and we pray that we can continue to grow in God’s love together.

– Michelle Cenerini,
with Fernando Hiebert

While recent church growth has created some challenges for Roseisle EMC, the church is doing their best to meet needs within the church and in their surrounding community.



PHOTO SUPPLIED

Leamington is growing—and so are we!

Leamington EMC
Leamington, Ontario

FROM GREENHOUSES TO trucking, our town is changing fast, and God is doing something new. At Leamington Evangelical Mennonite Church (LEMC), we are seeing young people, families, and new members coming together to worship, serve, and grow in faith. In a community full of opportunities and challenges, we are discovering that God's work in our church reflects his work in our town.

Growth is all around us in Leamington. Our region has transitioned from being known as the tomato capital of the world to the greenhouse capital of Canada. With more than 4,500 acres now covered by plastic and glass, this shift has brought significant change to our community. The greenhouse industry supports thousands of migrant workers and a wide network of related industries.

Leamington remains a blue-collar town, shaped by fabrication shops, greenhouses, and trucking companies. As a church, we are excited about the opportunities God has given us in the midst of growth and change. With ongoing economic pressures, our community continues to support one another through volunteering, donating, and partnering with local efforts. In this way, the church is present in word and action.

LEMC is a diverse congregation. Many of our older members have Mennonite roots in Mexico, bringing with them an agrarian heritage and an entrepreneurial spirit. Alongside this, we are seeing people from

Associate Pastor
Joel Giesbrecht,
wife Courtney
and son August.



a wide range of backgrounds participate. We also share our facility with a Spanish-speaking congregation. This community reflects the multicultural reality of our community.

The largest growth in our congregation has been among young adults aged 18 to 25. This past year, we welcomed approximately 23 new members after 200 people left to start another church in Leamington. God gave us a new mandate to grow. While there was some temptation to return to a single Sunday service, we sensed a call to continue offering two services. On average, 345 people now gather weekly to worship at LEMC. To support the growing younger population, we hired a new associate pastor, Joel Giesbrecht, who joined the staff on January 1, 2026. We are excited for Joel, his wife Courtney, and their young family to join us in ministry.

In the coming year, our focus is to develop a small group ministry. As growth increases, it becomes more difficult to know everyone personally. Small groups will allow us to connect more deeply, foster meaningful relationships, and share discipleship.

We have also been encouraged by the broader EMC family. Attending the EMC Equip Conference in London, Ont., was a positive experience for our leadership. It provided vision, encouragement, and practical tools that affirmed the direction God is leading our church.

Above all, we recognize that it is only by the grace of God and his mighty power that we are witnessing young people come to faith and grow in the Lord. We move forward with humility and hope.

– Phil Hamm,
with Margaret Wall

Fleming ordained, leaders commissioned

Evangelical Fellowship Church
Steinbach, Manitoba

EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH (EFC) in Steinbach experienced an active and meaningful fall season. In late November, we were pleased to celebrate the ordination of Trevor Fleming. Pastor Trevor, along with his wife Jamie and their family, joined EFC as our associate pastor in January 2024.

We also had the opportunity to commission two couples from our church as they moved into new ministry roles. Adrian and Melinda Miller accepted a pastoral position in Saskatchewan, and Ethan and Amy Thiessen accepted the role of pastor of youth and young adults at Niverville Community Fellowship church.

In early January, Darrell and Elaine Kehler departed for a three-month



PHOTO SUPPLIED

Conference Pastor Andy Woodworth and EFC church leaders pray over Trevor Fleming (front, second from left) and his wife Jamie (front, second from right).

ministry commitment in Bolivia, where Darrell serves as the interim MEM Field Director. We are encouraged to see these couples following God's leading and serving in these important roles.

We concluded 2025 with a meaningful Christmas Eve service, celebrating the birth of Christ.

– Kevin Davis

Kleefeld EMC accepts members



PHOTO SUPPLIED

KLEEFELD EMC (KLEEFELD, MANITOBA)—Accepted into church membership at the Kleefeld EMC on November 23, 2025, were the following: Richard and Carol Bergman, Helyn and Josh Dueck, Nicoley Funk, and Irina and Rod Penner. We warmly welcome them into our church family and wish them the Lord's richest blessings as they fellowship and serve with us.

– Louella Friesen

Unity through dialogue: Regional Leadership Forums 2026

EMC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Emery Plett and other staff from the EMC national office recently organized a series of four events for local church leaders across four regions: Region 3 (Northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan), Region 4 (Western Manitoba), Region 5 (Manitoba Interlake), and Region 6 (South-Central Manitoba). The Steinbach office team travelled to each region to share a meal, engage in discussions, and pray together. More than eighty leaders from nineteen churches participated in this year's Regional Leadership Forums.

Across our nine regions, we have churches that speak a variety of languages, practice different traditions, have unique backgrounds, and adopt diverse ministry styles. Still, we are united by our dedication to mutual cooperation as a Conference. The Regional Leadership Forum emphasizes the vibrant life of our local churches and encourages open dialogue about their successes and challenges. As the EMC continues to grow, these meetings are essential touchpoints that ensure the efforts and energies of our directors stay connected to grassroots experiences.

The discussions highlighted the importance of hearing directly from those on the front lines. Leaders shared inspiring stories of what is going well: new people attending and finding hope in Jesus Christ, innovative community outreach initiatives, and new young leaders stepping in to serve. We heard about churches hosting worship

Emery Plett addresses leaders from Region 5 on February 11, 2026, in Arborg, Man.



SCOTT MARBLE

and prayer nights, serving the local community, and raising awareness of missions and ministry opportunities. The renewed sense of optimism underscores the resilience and creativity within our fellowship of churches.

Equally important were the honest discussions about challenges and struggles within our churches. Pastors and leaders shared openly about issues such as declining attendance in some churches, financial pressures from rising costs and decreased donations, and the need for support to help their churches move forward. Conference staff listened carefully, reaffirming that no church faces these struggles alone. This focus on vulnerability not only fosters empathy but also opens the door for targeted support like shared training workshops, ongoing consultation, or resource sharing from the broader Conference community.

Throughout the meetings, a steady tone of unwavering support was

present in every session. The EMC's dedication to empowering and uplifting all churches was the consistent message, with directors promising ongoing partnerships to meet needs. As one participant eloquently said, "collectively, we are the Conference"—a reminder that our strength comes from unity, where every local voice adds to the whole.

Looking ahead, these Regional Leadership Forums aim to energize our mission of being *a movement of people advancing Christ's kingdom culture as we live, reach, gather, and teach*. They are designed to foster a culture that is responsive, supportive, and forward-thinking. By celebrating successes and addressing challenges together, the EMC embodies the gospel's call to support one another, ensuring a brighter future for all our churches. Together, we are the Evangelical Mennonite Conference.

— Andy Woodworth



From the web

www.emcmessenger.ca


“The EMC I see”

p. 2, Nov/Dec 2025 issue

Wow, thanks Erica for this gracious and kind goodbye to a family you have served so well. Your leadership in pushing us to ask deeper questions, and engage with culture more intentionally has had a huge effect on my own life. You have a thoughtful, kind and disarming way of pushing me to be honest in writing and speaking.

But the other thing that stood out to me about your service were the years you served as the secretary to the Board of Leadership and Outreach. You quietly took minutes while bombasts like myself spouted on things you knew far more about than anyone in the room. That was a humility that I will always remember. Thanks for it all.

– Layton Friesen



Evangelical Mennonite Conference

Financial Reports

January–December 2025, unaudited

	General Fund 2025	General Fund 2024
Income*	2,022,716	1,907,617
Expenses	2,170,690	1,903,289
Excess/Shortfall	(147,974)	4,328

We give thanks to God for the continued strong support of EMC ministries, and we acknowledge the contributions of EMC churches and individuals who give so generously.

– The Board of Trustees

**Income includes donations and transfers from other funds (e.g., estate funds).*

Correction: “Abide in Me: why the church must not surrender to the digital takeover” by Will Braun, published in the Jan/Feb 2026 issue of *The Messenger*, should have been identified as a reprint from the June 2025 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*. Our apologies for the omission.



project builders

32nd Annual Golf Classic

June 18, 2026
Fly-In Golf Club
Steinbach, MB





Guidelines for letters

Letters (250 words or less) are generally to comment on issues raised in *The Messenger*. The magazine reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, legality, and taste.

For letters by e-mail, the writer’s name and e-mail address are deemed to be an electronic signature. The writer’s mailing address is to be included in e-mail correspondence.

A note from Glenda Friesen on her article in the Jan/Feb 2026 issue:

Although this has been a topic of research and interest for me for many years, much of my recent thinking on work and worship comes from a seminar I attended in Grand Rapids Michigan in summer 2023. In fact, the systolic/diastolic function of the heart as a metaphor for a life of work and worship came to me originally from that seminar. That seminar was facilitated by two authors of a book called *Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy* by Cory Wilson & Matthew Kaemingk.



DENNIS FRIESEN
1948–2025

With great sorrow, we announce the passing of Dennis Friesen of Kleefeld, Manitoba; beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle and friend. On Friday, October 10, 2025, his fight with cancer ended peacefully at home with family around him.

His passing leaves a huge hole in the hearts of Louella, his wife of 55 years, daughters Kerri (and Sheldon) Schroeder, Joelle (and Aaron) Klassen and son Andrew Friesen, as well as his grandchildren Adam and Jareth Klassen and Lacey Schroeder. He will also be lovingly missed by his siblings, Wilbert (Hilda) Friesen, Flo Friesen, Elda Borse (Darren Palmer), Leona (Mike) Kroeker, Ray Friesen (Ula Nieuwejaar), Corinne F. (Rick) Loewen, Louise Friesen (Peter Dueck), and Jim (Rhonda) Friesen, his in-laws Al Hiebert, Ron and Wendy Dueck, Sandi Neufeld, Pat Moule, nieces and nephews.

Dennis is predeceased by his parents Albert and Annie Friesen and his step-mother Elisabeth.

In 1970, he married Louella, the love of his life, and they were blessed with three children.

Dennis' faith was the central support in his life. He volunteered many

years at Kleefeld EMC on trustee, executive, and building committees. Together with a small group of dedicated men, he began Christian Service Brigade in this church and was instrumental in leading many boys and young men to Christ.

His drafting and project managing skills led him to many close relationships in the construction industry. Dennis started his career at CT Loewens in 1968. He spent seven years working at PennCo, before moving to Three Way Builders in 1991. In all, Dennis was responsible for drafting or managing over 1,000 buildings before his retirement in 2014. Even after retirement, he continued to act as a consultant in other building projects that were close to his heart.

At age eight, he moved in with his widowed grandmother as her companion for several years. He also enjoyed helping out with farm chores on his grandparents' farms.

Dennis was passionate about all sports, especially hockey and baseball. He also developed a keen interest and love of horses.

From purchasing his first purebred Arabian to driving a sleigh or buggy in recent years, Dennis was a common sight in the horse community and on the grounds of the Mennonite Heritage Village. He loved canoeing and fishing in Whiteshell Provincial Park. Other hobbies included painting, reading, woodworking and cheering on the grandkids at music, drama and sporting events.

The family would like to thank the home care and palliative care teams for their help in allowing Dennis to fulfill his wish of dying at home. Special thanks also to Dennis's sister Louise Friesen for her nursing care and expertise.

Psalm 46:10 Be still and know that I am God.

– The Family

SBC

The Distinctiveness of Earliest Christianity

with Joshua Coutts, PhD

April 28 - May 1, 2026

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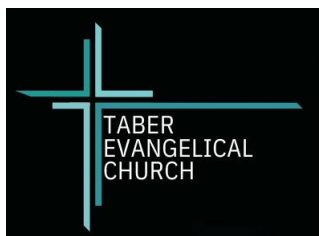
Shoulder Tapping

Please send all position ads (150 words or less), including pastoral search ads, to messenger@emconference.ca. Ads may be edited. Please advise us when it is no longer needed.

Additional EMC Openings

Often there are more churches looking for staff than are identified on this page. For information on additional openings, contact Conference Pastor Andy Woodworth (awoodworth@emconference.ca or phone 204-326-6401).

EMC Positions



Associate Pastor: Taber Evangelical Church (Taber, Alta.)

Taber Evangelical Church (EMC) is prayerfully seeking an associate pastor to join our church. This person would serve alongside our lead pastor with a specialized focus on next-generation ministries. Our congregation is comprised of many children, youth and young adults, so support in ministering to this demographic is a vital need we currently face. Character requirements of an associate pastor would correlate with what Paul prescribes for a leader in 1 Timothy 3. Additionally, somebody with a passion and heart for a team leadership approach and ministry is essential.

Taber Evangelical Church is located in Taber, Alberta, with an average attendance of over 300. Our mission

is to glorify Jesus by proclaiming God's Word and making disciples who follow him.

For more details on the job description and other requirements, please contact our search committee. You can reach Jake Koethler at 403-635-1205 (WhatsApp) and Alex Wiebe at 403-849-8815.



Youth Pastor: Westpointe Community Church (Grande Prairie, Alta.)

Westpointe Community Church is in Grande Prairie Alberta. Our vision is to glorify God through creating opportunities to draw people into community, to encourage, guide and equip each other to walk closer to Christ and be empowered to minister beyond. We are seeking a dedicated and passionate youth pastor to join our ministry team. This individual will play an important role in leading and overseeing our youth ministries while actively participating in Sunday morning worship services.

Some key responsibilities include oversight of the youth ministry program, coordinating weekly youth group gatherings, creating opportunities for mentorship and discipleship, and involvement in youth Sunday school.

The successful candidate will maintain a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer and Bible study and be committed to biblical teaching. Previous

experience in youth ministry or pastoral leadership and a degree in theology, ministry or a related field are preferred.

Interested candidates should submit their resume, cover letter, and references to office@westpointecc.com



Interim Pastor: High Level Christian Fellowship (High Level, Alta.)

High Level Christian Fellowship (HLCF),

located in northern Alberta, is seeking an interim pastor to bring preaching, teaching and leadership for building community within our church family of approximately 100 people. The interim pastor will also assist in providing visionary guidance and supportive direction as we review how we carry out HLCF's values, vision and mission. If this interests you or additional information regarding the job description is required, please contact James Connellan, board chairperson at elder@hlcfc-emc.org.



Associate Pastor of Discipleship: Roseport Evangelical Mennonite Church (Roseport, Man.)

Roseport EMC is seeking a passionate and servant-hearted associate pastor of discipleship to join our ministry team. This newly created role offers a unique opportunity to shape and strengthen discipleship within our church family, helping people grow in faith and live out the gospel in their daily lives, all within the context of a growing and vibrant rural community in Manitoba.

Are you interested in

TEACHING ABROAD?

Bolivia May & June Short-term

more details at emmissions.ca/short-term

The associate pastor of discipleship will lead and oversee key ministries, including Sunday school, youth and young adult engagement, evangelism, pastoral care, and spiritual mentorship. This role calls for strong communication skills, a heart for teaching and mentoring, and the ability to foster spiritual growth across all generations.

For a full job description, go to our church website at www.rosenortemc.ca. Please send your resume, cover letter, and references to info@rosenortemc.ca.

Senior Pastor: Island Gospel Fellowship (Burns Lake, B.C.)

Island Gospel Fellowship is seeking a full-time pastor. Burns Lake is a community in the heart of the beautiful Lakes District of northern British Columbia with an approximate population of 2,000. Burns Lake serves as the supply centre for a population of 7,000 people.

Island Gospel Fellowship has a strong presence in the community serving as a gathering place for many community activities and events in our church gymnasium. We are a congregation of all ages with about 145 adults and children who call IGF home.

We are looking for a Spirit-filled pastor gifted in preaching, teaching, and reaching out to our community. It is important that the pastor can work effectively with other leaders in the church, community and conference. A successful candidate will have a minimum of two to three years of biblical studies (bachelor's or master's degree preferred) and would be willing to become credentialed/or-dained with the Evangelical Mennonite Conference. Please send your resume to: igf@telus.net marked "search committee."

Other Positions



Lead Pastor: Gospel Fellowship Church, (Steinbach, Man.)

Gospel Fellowship Church is seeking a full-time lead pastor. We are a congregation with an average attendance of 75; our church is a part of the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference (EMMC). GFC is a faith community in a broken world, sharing the hope of freedom in Christ. We are searching for an individual who passionately loves God and loves people, one who is able to provide vision and direction for our church, and willing to compassionately lead our congregation with sound biblical teaching.

For a full position description, please visit our website (www.gospelfellowshipchurch.ca) or contact us at applications@gospelfellowshipchurch.ca.



Children's Ministry Pastor: Bethel Church (Hochfeld, Man.)

Bethel Church is inviting applications for the position of children's ministry pastor. Our congregation has approximately 400-plus attendees and is located 10 km south of

Winkler, Man.

Bethel Church is a growing and active congregation-led church that supports a wide variety of ministries serving young people, families and the community. We are looking for someone who is passionate about children's ministry and developing leaders. This full-time position will involve sharing responsibilities and delegating tasks in collaboration with the program directors for the following ministries: Awana, children's church, children's and youth Sunday school, VBS, and all future children's ministry opportunities.

To learn more about Bethel Church, go to our website www.ourbethelchurch.com or contact us at ourbethelpastoralsearch@gmail.com.



Executive Director: Youth for Christ (Landmark, Man.)

Youth for Christ Landmark is seeking an executive director to guide our mission of reaching the young people of Landmark with the hope and love of Jesus Christ.

Key responsibilities are: provide strategic leadership grounded in Christian principles; oversee day-to-day operations, budgeting, and staff development; foster a healthy ministry culture and team cohesion; build relationships with churches, community leaders, and donors; advance outreach programs that engage youth spiritually and practically.

Qualifications include: personal faith in Jesus Christ; leadership experience, preferably in a ministry or nonprofit setting; fundraising and community-building skills; organizational and communication abilities.

For more information or to submit your resume contact board.landmark@yfc.ca.



The snow hill was my downfall

MY GRANDPARENTS LIVED on a beautiful acreage when I was a child. They had a large garden, a cute playhouse, and a big hammock slung between two old apple trees. The main feature during the winter months was the large, gently-sloping hill at the back of the property. One day in particular stands out in my childhood memory of that private snow hill. After several runs down the hill, my oldest sisters decided to add some extra excitement by daring my second youngest sister to slide down the tree-covered side of the hill. Fortunately, her common sense was in good functioning order and she declined the offer.

“I’ll do it.” My voice barged boldly into the conversation. I saw an opportunity to prove my bravery and gain approval from my big sisters. I plopped down on my tummy, head first. Aiming the sled down toward the trees, I started my ill-fated journey. Partway

down the hill, a particularly large tree loomed in front of me. I was told that my sisters yelled for me to bail off, but I was too busy watching my short life flash before my eyes. I slammed into the tree with a thud, the breath knocked out of me (and hopefully some common sense knocked in). I gradually recovered from the sudden impact, no longer impressed with my sisters’ suggestion of attempting tree trunk navigation. I had to admit, though, that it was my own competitive arrogance that had gotten me into the predicament. Unfortunately, it wasn’t the last time I’ve erred in judgment.

The Israelites also had a serious propensity for making poor judgment calls. The Bible records their stumbling, erring path as they repeatedly forsake God and worship other gods. We see their lack of belief and slap our proverbial foreheads: “Why don’t they learn their lesson?” we sigh. “Why are they so

obstinate?” Their actions start feeling strangely familiar to our hearts; prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.

In John 15, Christ said that a true believer will bear good fruit. However, anyone with gardening experience (or a lawn full of dandelions) knows the persistent growth of weeds. Do we simply pull them out, clean off our shovels, and spend the rest of the summer lounging on our patios, waiting for the bountiful harvest? Unfortunately, no. In his excellent book *The Mortification of Sin*, John Owen uses the gardening metaphor to explain the continual work of sanctification. We tromp out to our garden day after day to wage war with the weeds that stunt the growth and mar the beauty of our good crops.

What do we have in common with the Israelites? Our propensity to let doubts and sinful desires deceive us. At times, we refuse to humbly allow the Lord to search our hearts (Psalm 139:23–24). We careen down the hill of our own understanding instead of running to our great High Priest. “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:24–25).

Praise God that he “is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). We walk as new creations, looking forward to that day when we will be perfect, seeing Christ as he is (1 John 3:2).

I slammed into the tree with a thud, the breath knocked out of me (and hopefully some common sense knocked in).



Karla Hein (Westpointe, Grande Prairie) is the wife of one and mother of two.

When God plays the piano

IMAGINE A PIANIST who could say “I love you” to his lover by playing a song at the piano. The better the pianist and the better he knew his lover, the more compelling this love song would be. In some ways it might be even better than talking or writing a letter.

It would have its limits. For example, it would be hard for a piano piece to say, “I love the way the sun shines on your hair when you’re making coffee in the morning.” But music might express how he *feels* when he sees her standing in the light.

Where is this going? When God wanted to say, “I love you” he chose the perfect “musical instrument” to express this—Jesus. The instrument God chose was a first century Jewish peasant man. Using only the “music” of ordinary human nature, Israelite piety, Jewish customs, and the Aramaic language of a first-century rabbi, God sang “I love you” to all the world, in every language. Confined only to what could be said with this infant’s cry, this child’s banter, this young man’s sermon, this obedience to death on a cross, God sang “I love you” with truth and power. God chose that instrument because it had precisely the right tone, range, timbre, and volume to say what he meant in a song we could play along with. And how the people danced!

Of course, not everything in the eternal abyss of divine love was expressed by Jesus in his earthly life. One professor explained this by comparing Jesus to a bottle of water from Lake Ontario. The water is *truly* Lake Ontario, but the bottle does not

contain the *whole* of Lake Ontario. However, we will never discover anything in all the depths of Lake Ontario that contradicts what is in that bottle.

Jesus, as the infinite God, expressed God’s eternal love through a finite human instrument. Take God’s freedom—the sovereignty of his love—as an example. Nothing will ever prevent God from loving as he wills to love. But how does this limitless, universal freedom to love sound when God plays it on the instrument of a wandering Jewish preacher?

In Mark 1:32ff, on the morning after an evening of amazing healings in Capernaum, the disciples awake to discover Jesus has slipped out at night and is gone. Oh no! Where is our local wonder worker? They dash about searching and eventually find him out in a deserted place, praying to his Father. They say to him, “Everyone

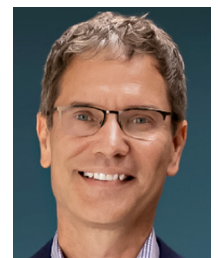
is looking for you.” He answers, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come” (vv. 37–38).

Can you hear that music? There’s the eternal, dashing freedom of God who will love as he wills to love. Capernaum could not close him in and claim him for themselves; his love was for *everybody!* That is the boundless symphony of God’s love played now on the instrument of an ordinary man who never got further from home than he could walk.

And here is the stunning truth: God is perfectly capable of playing that song on the instrument of your little life. With this Pianist also being the piano maker, you would be quite the piano, no matter how ordinary you look. But chiefly this is because God is one virtuoso pianist, who delights in the love conveyed in the song that is your life.

How does this limitless, universal freedom to love sound when God plays it on the instrument of a wandering Jewish preacher?

Layton Friesen is academic dean at Steinbach Bible College. He lives in Winnipeg, Man.



Passing faith to your grandchildren's grandchildren

THIS PAST FALL, our house experienced a sewer backup because of a significant rain event. I needed help with our basement restoration and remodel, and I was given Len Friesen's name. In my first conversation with Len in my torn-apart basement, I learned he is also involved in leading an organization called Legacy Coalition Canada. This is a resource organization that trains grandparents to pass on their faith to their grandchildren. I was intrigued because, as the EMC director of next generation, I understand that one of the greatest gifts to younger generations is a legacy of authentic faith passed down from older adults.

Recently, I had the opportunity to interview Len to learn more about the

work that Legacy Coalition Canada is doing and the resources available to grandparents and churches. Here is a transcript of part of our conversation.

Mo: Could you tell me about Legacy Coalition Canada?

Len: Our key focus [is] to help grandparents grow in their biblical role through our resources and events, so they can have a greater spiritual impact on their family. We think [about] more than just our kids and our grandkids. We want to think four generations down the road. So how can we resource, equip, and train, and leave that legacy of faith to our grandkids' grandkids?

Mo: Why is this work important?

Len: Well, it's important because a lot of our grandkids are going

through struggles today that they may not have the desire to talk to their parents about. So how can we equip and resource our grandparents to share that biblical truth with them? That biblical view comes from the grandparents, because they have that faith. They know that biblical truth and they want to pass that on.

Mo: What resources can you offer churches to help grow grandparents in their ability to have a spiritual impact on the next generation?

Len: One of the most important resources that we have is

what we call Grandparenting Matters. It's a six-hour seminar that breaks down everything from the role and influence we can have on our kids and our grandkids, to how to communicate with them. It's a downloadable video series [for] purchase. Soon it's going to be followed up by Grandparenting Influence, another video series.

Len went on to tell me about some of the other events he is involved with and some resources available on their website. This is a relatively new Canadian arm of an American organization, and they are working to adapt American resources to fit Canadian culture.

If we want our next generations to be inspired to grow in their faith in Jesus, we need to have adults of all ages living lives that demonstrate this kind of faith.



Legacy Coalition Canada is seeking to provide practical training for grandparents to share their faith with the next generation. For more information, visit legacycoalition.ca or contact the EMC office.



As EMC Director of Next Generation, **Mo Friesen** equips and encourages those working with next generations across the Conference.