

TMTC NOW



Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre

FROM THE DIRECTORS DESK

BY KYLE GINGERICH HIEBERT, TMTC DIRECTOR



Our year began by welcoming members of the TMTC Advisory Council as well as a wider group of stakeholders to Toronto to think together about TMTC's future and I want to begin by thanking everyone who participated in these meetings. It is clear that there is much energy and widespread enthusiasm

for the kind of work that TMTC does and though significant challenges remain, I am grateful for a number of exciting new directions and possibilities that emerged out of those meetings.

As with all of us, the global pandemic resulted in a spate of postponements to which we are all by now becoming more and more accustomed. Most significantly for us, our annual lecture and biennial graduate student conference could not take place as scheduled. While we look forward to rescheduling these events, we are planning to move our regular monthly series of scholars forums online and I want to issue a special invitation for those of you not regularly able to be with us in Toronto to join us. Details will be available on our website and we are excited about being able to welcome graduate students studying outside Toronto, alumni, faculty and staff from partner institutions across North America and beyond, as well as many others to these immensely stimulating events.

This past year TMTC bid a fond farewell to Emma CW Ceruti who wrapped up her time as Administrative Assistant in

June so she could concentrate on writing her dissertation and welcoming her first child. Emma came on board at a crucial time last fall and her contributions to TMTC over the past year were instrumental in making the year a success. We are also delighted to welcome Bekah Smoot-Enns to the role of TMTC Administrative Assistant. Bekah currently serves as the Theological Studies Graduate Coordinator at Grebel, has been involved with a number of other Grebel programs, and brings a wealth of experience with her. Welcome Bekah!

Pulling together the articles for this edition of TMTC Now in the interludes of the online conference we co-sponsored at Emmanuel College, I find myself reflecting on how the sense of loss, anxiety, and uncertainty that continues to overshadow us as a result of the global pandemic has the potential to give way. While the effects of the pandemic are still palpable and will likely be with us for some time, we are nevertheless also beginning to see many of our unquestioned assumptions broken open anew. That our grocery clerks are as essential as our health care workers is merely one such crack made newly visible. And, indeed, if we care to look a bit more closely perhaps these are the cracks that Leonard Cohen sings about so memorably through which the light shines. In this sense, the articles that follow can all be read as lingering with these cracks or, perhaps better, as amplifications of the light that shines in the darkness and is not overcome (John 1:5).

2019 A. James Reimer Award at TMTC Winner



Sarah Kathleen Johnson is the winner of the 2019 A. James Reimer Award. She is a PhD Candidate at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana and a Visiting Fellow at the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, her academic home while conducting ethnographic research in Toronto. Sarah served on the editorial committee for *Voices Together*, a new hymnal and worship book for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA, and is currently completing her dissertation entitled "The Roles of Christian Ritual in Increasingly Nonreligious and Religiously Diverse Social Contexts: The Case of Anglican Baptisms and Funerals in Toronto."

More than Singing: Launching a Hymnal in a Pandemic

BY SARAH KATHLEEN JOHNSON, TMTC VISITING FELLOW AND DOCTORAL CANDIDATE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME



Five years ago, when the groundwork for a new hymnal and worship book was laid, no one expected that the book would be released during a global pandemic when it is difficult and dangerous to sing together. The temporary loss of congregational song is something to grieve. But exploring *Voices Together* without a focus on singing is also an important opportunity.

Voices Together without a focus on singing is also an important opportunity.

Voices Together is much more than a book of songs intended to be sung in corporate worship.

It is a book of **history** with more than 65 texts from the late antique and medieval periods, and more than double the number of songs from sixteenth-century Anabaptists than *Hymnal: A Worship Book*.

It is a book of **scripture**, with songs indexed for each book of the Bible and almost all the gospel readings found in the Revised Common Lectionary (the beheading of John the Baptist was a barrier to achieving this goal!). There is also a focus on singing the Psalms in their breadth and complexity.

It is a book of **theology**, including a text based on the writings of Karl Barth; a hymn commissioned for the Service of Lament, Confession, and Commitment regarding John Howard Yoder held at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary; and four resources by Doctor of the Church, Hildegard of Bingen.

It is a book of **pastoral** care with songs and resources that speak into the challenges of chronic pain, dementia, reproductive loss, and disability. These are words and songs to carry with us at critical moments of life and death. There are resources for

schools, camps, and homes, and songs we hope connect with everyday life.

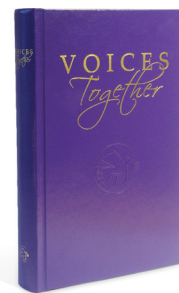
It is a book of **many cultures**, and **many languages**. It includes resources from a diversity of Mennonites in North America and from the worldwide Anabaptist church. Material connected to Indigenous communities has been treated with particular care, including a land acknowledgement. There are four resources in American Sign Language.

It is a book of **ethics**, of explicit and implicit calls for social justice, that aspires to cast a vision of who we are called to be as peacemakers, and to shape our world views in ways often beyond our awareness. It tackles complex questions of gender, race, and ability. It addresses economic inequality and climate justice.

It is a book of **literature** — stunning poetry that spans genres, languages, and cultures.

Beyond songs, it includes words for worship, prayers, poems, readings, portions of scripture, and instructions for movement and action. Twelve works of visual art grace these pages, each a call to worship and an invitation into stories of faith and life.

Receiving *Voices Together* when it is unsafe to gather and sing is an opportunity for leadership for those who are not musicians. Theologians, historians, pastors, ethicists, scholars of disability, gender, and culture, and more can invite communities into other aspects of this worship and song collection. Those of you who are connected to TMTC can be key leaders as we explore how this book brings voices together without singing a single note.



Research Note

BY HYEJUNG JESSIE YUM, TMTC ASSOCIATE AND DOCTORAL STUDENT AT EMMANUEL COLLEGE



As Antonio Gramsci notes, critical inquiry begins with the consciousness of oneself “as a product of the historical processes to date” and my dissertation begins with a similar question about how I understand myself and the world where I am situated. Since I joined the Mennonite community ten years ago, seeking ‘peace’ has been a crucial part of my vocation. As a Korean migrant woman living in Canada, I explore in my research the question of how ‘peace’ can be understood in a multicultural society from a migrant woman’s perspective. In Canada, colonial settlement and migration have significantly influenced the construction of a multicultural society. In

order to respond to the context, it is necessary to pay attention to colonial complications with multiple social factors such as gender, race etc. For this, my research project examines Mennonite peace theology through a postcolonial lens and constructs a postcolonial understanding of peace in a Canadian context. The term ‘postcolonial’ refers to the historical condition in the aftermath of colonization as well as a theoretical engagement with the particular historical condition and legacy of the West-centric knowledge, practices, cultural norms, and human interactions. I plan to do part of this research at the University of Amsterdam through the Bridging Gaps exchange program in Fall 2021. Since the Mennonite Seminary is one of the partners of this program, I look forward to engaging in conversation on my postcolonial project with Mennonites in Amsterdam.

Recent Events

August 14-15, 2020: Co-sponsored the Christian Left conference online with Emmanuel College

March 27, 2020: Online Writing Retreat facilitated by Allison Murray

March 11, 2020: Scholars Forum with Sarah Johnson, "Thinking Theologically with Occasional Religious Practitioners"

March 6, 2020: Jazz Fundraiser with the Tom Reynolds Trio

February 12, 2020: Scholars Forum with Zac Klassen, "The Theological Representation of Israel and Judaism 'After' Karl Barth"

January 8, 2020: Scholars Forum with Max Kennel, "Secular Mennonite Social Critique"

December 11, 2019: Scholars Forum with Sarina Annis, "Early Mennonite Missionaries in Quebec: Thinking Through the Anthropology of Christianity"

November 22, 2019: Mennonite Scholars and Friends Forum and Reception in San Diego on the theme of "Migration, Borders, and Belonging"

November 13, 2019: Scholars Forum with Pablo Kim Sun, "Making an Intercultural Mennonite Ethnoreligion in a Global Context"

October 9, 2019: Scholars Forum with Hyejung Jessie Yum, "A Postcolonial Response to Felipe Hinojosa's Latino Mennonites"

September 18, 2019: Welcome Dinner in Toronto



On March 6, 2020 friends and colleagues of TMTC enjoy the Evening of Jazz TMTC Fundraiser with the Tom Reynolds Trio.

TMTC Fellow Spotlight

BY KIM PENNER, TMTC RESEARCH FELLOW



In light of the pandemic and in my current work in ecclesiology and ethics I have been pondering the value of what womanist theologian Keri Day calls, "radical hope". Radical hope is grounded in experiences of brokenness and holds together optimism and realism for Christian ethics. The need

for realism and optimism is present in the work of many liberationist theologians. For example, a similar understanding exists in Serene Jones's work as she holds grace alongside sin rooted in her own experiences of God. It also exists in Malinda Berry's work as she brings aspects of moral realism together with liberationist and Anabaptist-Mennonite theological-ethics in the form of "shalom political theology", and in Karen Guth's work as she merges aspects of moral realism, feminist theology, and witness theology. In addition to these excellent contributions, radical grace articulates a stance or moral vision for Christian ethics that is particularly imaginative as it moves beyond the binary language of the "real" and the "ideal".

According to Day, radical hope "acknowledge[s] that hope moves beyond feelings of mere optimism." Because the precondition for hope is despair and brokenness, hope necessarily includes an understanding of radical loss. Even as it includes this awareness and realism about brokenness, "hope is [also] the audacious conviction that genuine newness in history is possible [...] These possible other futures are based on the radical social practices and defiant liberative projects of those who are marginalized, as these groups articulate new meanings of love, freedom, and justice (*Day, Religious Resistance to Neoliberalism*, 162)." However, they are also always rooted in an awareness of what has and will continue to go wrong. Day claims that radical hope, embodied in community, resists oppressive systems, such as capitalism.

I am convinced that Day's vision of radical hope has the potential to change our discipleship practices to make them more accountable to the most vulnerable among us, whose pain and precariousness have been highlighted by the pandemic, by resisting, pragmatically, systems of oppression. I will give shape to this argument in my upcoming writing projects.

Dissertation Defense

September 3, 2020: **Zac Klassen**,
McMaster University,
"Theologies of Israel and Judaism After Barth"



Teaching Note

BY JASON REIMER GREIG, TMTC RESEARCH FELLOW



In cooperation with Dr. Pamela Cushing, I recently helped create and teach a new course, “Faith, Spirituality, and Care Practices” in the Disability Studies department at King’s University College in London, Ontario. The goal of the course is to bring a different perspective on religion with Disability Studies (DS), particularly with respect to cognitive impairment/intellectual disability.

Generally, DS discussions of religion tend to focus on deconstructive attempts to unveil and interrogate historically oppressive practices and discourses on disability and impaired people perpetrated by religious people and institutions. This is something I do in the course, but I believe religion (Christianity specifically) has the potential to contribute more positively to DS, in a way beyond mere appeals to religion as a good “coping mechanism” for people considered intellectually disabled. For example, how might the practice of iconography in Eastern Christianity bring a new understanding not only of the “sacramentality” of bodies, but challenge “normal” bodies as well? Or how does a relational view of the imago Dei challenge the (late) modern belief in the “ideal” human person as an independent, autonomous individual? Or how might the Gospel change the way we understand “suffering,” especially in the context of the label of intellectual disability? Drawing upon both my academic work as well as the time I have spent accompanying people with cognitive impairments, I try to ask questions which get beneath issues of “inclusion” and “access,” and probe the fundamental nature of what it means to be contingent creatures created by a good God living in anticipation of the kingdom of God.

About the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre

Founded in 1990, the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (TMTC) is a graduate teaching and research centre administered by Conrad Grebel University College with support from an Advisory Council comprised of representatives from Mennonite educational and denominational institutions in Canada and the United States.

TMTC helps form theological leadership for the church by providing and supporting graduate theological education from a Mennonite perspective within the vibrant ecumenical context of the Toronto School of Theology (TST) at the University of Toronto. TMTC seeks to foster interdisciplinary reflection on the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition, as well as other traditions, by graduate students and scholars working across the breadth of the theological disciplines and those working outside the discipline of theology proper. It encourages graduate students to grow toward wise theological discernment, spiritual depth and maturity, excellent scholarship, mutual and respectful dialogue, and ecumenical and global awareness. TMTC is also devoted to creating an awareness of the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition among scholars, teachers and students from other traditions and is often described as the Anabaptist/Mennonite “hub” at TST.

To make a donation to TMTC, please make cheques payable to *Conrad Grebel University College*, specifying “TMTC” in the memo line. Interested donors may contact Fred W. Martin at fwmartin@uwaterloo.ca or 519-885-0220 x24381.

TMTC Staff

Kyle Gingerich
Hiebert, Director



Bekah Smoot-Enns
Administrative
Assistant



TMTC Fellows

Jason Reimer Greig, Research Fellow
Lydia Neufeld Harder, Senior Fellow
Sarah Johnson, Visiting Fellow
Kim Penner, Research Fellow

TMTC Advisory Council

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
Canadian Mennonite University
Eastern Mennonite University
Mennonite Church Canada
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
Mennonite Education Agency
(Mennonite Church USA)
Toronto United Mennonite Church

Contact Info

Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre
47 Queen's Park Crescent East
Toronto, ON M5S 2C3
416-978-6078
mennonite.centre@utoronto.ca