

# The Gift Exchange

THURSDAY, JULY 3, 2025 | KITCHENER, ONTARIO

LEADERSHIP DAY

## Leadership as a Spiritual Vocation

By Lisa Williams, MCEC

“We need a path back to leadership as a spiritual vocation—a communal practice grounded in trust, mutuality and responsiveness to the Spirit’s word among us,” said David Boshart and Shauna Peachey Boshart at MC Canada’s Leadership Day.

David and Shauna met with 125 leaders from congregations, chaplaincies and organizations across MC Canada. In a time when congregational ministry is rapidly evolving, they encouraged attendees to reflect on what it means to be transformational leaders in a fluid ministry context.

Shauna’s ministry journey has been shaped by nurturing faith, pastoring, leadership development and coaching. She has contributed to the *Shine* curriculum and is currently a coach in MC Canada’s newly formed Transitioning into Ministry program. David is president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

“Transformational leadership is an attempt to demonstrate reliable and impactful leadership behaviours,” David explained. These behaviours and the characteristics they foster in congregations are key to sustaining a vital and faithful Anabaptist identity.

Shauna added, “These behaviours are not leadership techniques but are habits of spiritual oversight that can renew a leader’s capacity to lead with integrity.”

Louise Wideman, pastor at Steinmann Mennonite Church, noted the couple’s emphasis on the posture of leadership: “It’s not so much about what we do, but how we embody leadership.

“The Bosharts left the gathered leaders with a compelling challenge: ‘What if your congregation’s experience isn’t measured by what you do, but by who they become through your leadership?’” ●

WORKSHOP

## Introduction to Spiritual Direction/Prayer Room

By Ruth Bergen Braun, MCA

Spiritual direction has as its purpose a deeper connection with God. Mennonite Spiritual Directors Eastern Canada, which hosted this workshop, has created space for prayer and meditation during the Gathering, using stations in the Rockway library, inviting participants to step aside, to pause.

They invite us to experience spiritual practices including walking the labyrinth, reading in the book nook, a guided meditation on the Eco spirituality table, expressive arts including praying with colour and a Visio Divina guided reflection. This room will be open throughout the Gathering. Today’s workshop will be a deeper sharing of spiritual direction (5:45–6:45 in the library). ●



César García. Photo: Ruth Bergen Braun

## Gathering Kicks Off

“Cultural and social diversity is God’s intention for the universal Church and the guiding principle for regional and local congregations,” said César García in a straightforward, pastoral exhortation on the opening night of the Mennonite Church Canada Gathering 2025.

Approximately 425 people from B.C. to New Brunswick gathered in the Rockway Mennonite Collegiate gym in Kitchener, Ontario, for a session that included a variety of songs, a dramatic telling of three Anabaptist origin stories by Gareth Brandt and a participatory fingerprint project.

García, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference, noted that 1 Peter refers to Jesus’s followers as “exiles” and “resident aliens” living under Roman domination. Then Peter makes what García called a “revolutionary” statement:

*Each one has received a gift, use it to serve*

*one another as good stewards of the varied grace of God.*

This verse, 1 Peter 4:10, is the theme of the Gathering. Peter’s model of church “includes individuals from different congregations across multiple nations, genders and social classes,” said García.

“Are our churches marked by the love and hospitality that set aside the advantages that come with your own identity, culture, gender and social status as a host?,” García asked. More questions followed:

“Are we considering the cultural differences within our regional church concerning governance, worship, and programming?

“Are monocultural congregations actively engaging with churches from different cultures?”

For those who feel this is too difficult, García said that Jesus proclaimed that “God’s kingdom has arrived.” ●

## Spiritual Direction Room

By Susan Fish

It can be challenging to take time to be still or pray amid the buzz of Gathering, but sometimes that’s exactly what is needed.

Recognizing this, the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada (MSDEC) have set up something beyond the usual prayer room.

They have equipped Rockway’s library with objects that allow for quiet reflection, including a labyrinth, prayer suggestions, writing exercises, expressive art supplies, candles, *Visio divina* exercises and more.

All are welcome to use this space for prayer, reflection and quiet, to support the discernment, worship and relationship-building in the next few days.

A group of prayer partners, including Mennonite spiritual directors from across Canada, have committed to pray for the Gathering while it is happening.

Six MSDEC spiritual directors are in attendance at the Gathering: Janet Bauman, Ruth Boehm, Tanya Dyck Steinmann, Norma Lelless, Cheryl Weber Good and Marilyn Zehr. All are wearing custom T-shirts (see



Ruth Boehm models spiritual directors t-shirt. Supplied

photo) they had made to spark conversation. If you meet someone wearing one, feel free to ask them how spiritual direction can benefit individuals and congregations.

Two workshops on spiritual direction—Wednesday July 2 at 4:00 and Thursday July 3 at 5:45—will be held in the prayer room. ●



### THURSDAY SCHEDULE

8:15–9 AM	Breakfast
9 AM–10 AM	Worship/Bible Study
10 AM–10:30 AM	Break
10:30 AM–11:30 AM	Morning Session: Visiting the Wounds
11:30 AM–12 PM	Business Session 1
12 PM–1:45 PM	Lunch Break
1:45 PM–3:00 PM	MC Canada Priorities: Pursuing God’s Calling
3:00 PM–3:30 PM	Break
3:30 PM–4:45 PM	MC Canada Program/ Ministries: Indigenous Relations and Climate Action
5PM–6PM	Supper
5:45 PM–6:45 PM	Workshops: See Program Book, page 35
7PM–9PM	Evening Session: Spirit Acts (Drama) and Testimony

...EACH ONE HAS RECEIVED A GIFT, USE IT TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER AS GOOD STEWARDS OF THE VARIED GRACE OF GOD.

1 PETER 4:10



# Resource Day

BY SUZANNE GROSS, MCA

Do we “love” justice? Or do we “do” justice? How does “doing justice” look in our diverse spaces of culture, history, story and relationship?

We opened with lament at the brokenness and despair. We were reminded that lament and praise can co-exist.

We considered the following questions:

- What theological or biblical values inform our commitment to interculturalism?
- What postures and practices have helped build bridges of trust, understanding and collaboration?
- For those who are BIPOC, what are the unsupportive ways you have been approached by dominant culture?

One longing from the group is to find a way to “get beyond the choir.” How do we share and spread the intersectional work of interculturalism, Indigenous Relations work and creation care?

We seem to be limiting God’s work of doing justice by limiting our attention to socio-cultural things. What would happen if we moved beyond this to socio-political transformation where we deal with justice in our stewardship and in our structures and systems—including our church structures and systems which may be oppressive? Who would we like sitting next to us to explore these big questions?

The Resource Day was led by Jonathan Neufeld and Sandy Plett. Darrel Neustaedter Barg led singing. ●

## WORKSHOP

# Imaginative Prayer

BY MARIANNE SIEMENS, MC SASK

Randall Neudorf led participants through the spiritual practice of Gospel Contemplation that comes from the teachings of Saint Ignatius. There are three steps to Gospel Contemplation: 1. Be the director! Set the scene; 2. Be an actor! Choose a role; 3. Now be you! Picture yourself in the story and have a conversation with Jesus.

The passage that was used was Mark 6:45-56, which is the passage of Jesus walking on the water.



Randall Neudorf. Photo: Marianne Siemens

Be the director. Participants let their imaginations go and as directors saw the scene in different ways; it was chaotic in the boat! What was the body language of Jesus as he passed by? The disciples were cursing in the boat. They didn’t know who he was.

Be an actor. Roles chosen showed how diverse God has made our imaginations. The roles chosen varied from a wave, a person in the crowd to someone hearing Jesus from the first time.

Now be you. Picture yourself having a conversation with Jesus. Ask him a question and engage in a conversation and be open to his response.

A participant said, “It’s a nice way to start the Gathering—having a conversation with Jesus focusing on prayer.” ●

# Kids’ Book Signing and Bonus Activity

BY SUSAN FISH

Children’s author Aimee Reid, who will be signing books today from 1:00-1:45 PM at the Common Word display, invites Gathering attendees to participate in a creative activity based on her most recent book, *Stitched Together*.

The book came about after Reid, author of eight picture books, was asked by Herald Press to write a children’s story that reflected the joy and connection of the global family of faith over 500 years of Anabaptism.

She recalled quilting experiences and from that created a book about cloth, stitching and connections to Church past, present and future.

Reid’s book incorporates images of fabric sent by people from the five Mennonite World Conference regions.

Joan Daggett of Shine curriculum says of Reid’s book: “*Stitched Together* is a delightful book that helps young and old alike remember God’s faithfulness and look forward to what




Aimee Reid. Supplied



Making the Hamilton Mennonite Church quilt that inspired *Stitched Together*.

**Activity:** She invites Gathering 2025 attendees to think about and draw their own points of connection, recalling that when she did the same activity in her congregation, a young person drew a picture of the rainbow Jello their family brought to potlucks (pictured). Paper for the activity was given out in registration packets while pencil crayons can be found at the MennoMedia booth. Those not attending the Gathering can also participate, using the template found at [mennomedia.org/stitched-together](http://mennomedia.org/stitched-together).

God is doing next. Like a cozy, colorful quilt, this story is one you will enjoy sharing with your children and grandchildren.” ●



## Each Gift

1 PETER 4:10

**What’s an unexpected gift you received from someone?**

Aimee Reid: When my daughter was three, she said it was “dumb” to pray that she would “grow to know and love God all the days of her life,” because “I already know and love God.” That response has provided encouragement and inspiration to me. As a mother and children’s author, I keep in mind that children are my siblings in Christ.

**What gift do you bring to the church?**

Using words to inspire and encourage is a gift I try to use faithfully. ●

## WORKSHOP

# Justice, Hope and Palestine

BY KATRINA FROESE, MCBC

Michael Lynk, law professor and former UN special rapporteur for human rights in occupied Palestinian territories, took participants through a clear and succinct overview of the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands from the perspective of international law. The hour-long presentation consisted of definitions of genocide and apartheid, showing examples of actions from current and former leaders of Israel that have contributed to the tension, and highlighted the actions necessary for the International Law Commission to take to right the wrongs.

After a seemingly bleak summary of the developing situation, Lynk ended with words of hope, saying that human rights violations will only be defeated through optimism.

This workshop was hosted by the MCEC Palestine-Israel Network. ●

## WORKSHOP

# Creation Care in Action

BY LISA WILLIAMS, MCEC

At an engaging workshop, Joanne Moyer and Tim Wiebe Neufeld invited participants to reimagine how we care for creation, offering a view of what’s possible, from sustainable food and eco-friendly living to worship, education and bold climate action.

Joanne shared highlights from MC Canada’s 2024 Sustainability Report, revealing a network of people across the country taking real, practical steps to live out their faith through environmental stewardship. She noted a strong desire for more tools and resources within church communities to fuel this momentum.

Attendees were encouraged by a powerful video showcasing creative, grassroots efforts from individuals and congregations coast to coast.

Want to dive deeper? Joanne will be available throughout the Gathering in the display area to continue the conversation.

Explore the full sustainability report and a one-page summary at the CommonWord display in the exhibit room.

Let’s keep building momentum—together. ●

# Gathering Bingo

Find people to initial each of the squares and bring your completed bingo card to the Canadian Mennonite table to enter a draw to win a memorable prize. ●

First Gathering	Under 25	Not related to you
Born outside of Canada	Took two flights or drove 500 km to be here	Baptized in the last three years
Dislikes rhubarb	Has a great beard	Walked or biked here