

Foreword

This issue of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* is devoted primarily to a second round of papers from the conference “MCC at 100: Mennonites, Service, and the Humanitarian Impulse” that was held at the University of Winnipeg from September 30 to October 2, 2021. Joining the ten articles we published about MCC this past summer, our fall issue includes seven articles on diverse aspects of MCC’s operation that cover both historical and contemporary themes.

The JMS Forum opens with an article exploring the institution that appears on the front cover. Mary Jane Logan McCallum investigates the role of the Summer Service program at Clearwater Lake Indian Hospital. Beginning in 1953, young Mennonite volunteers worked at this racially segregated tuberculosis sanatorium near The Pas, Manitoba. McCallum approaches MCC records about this program with two goals in mind. First, given the absence of most institutional archival records for Clearwater Lake, which were destroyed or lost, the records from the Summer Service program constitute a rare glimpse of day-to-day operations at this institution that was “part of a network of abusive and underfunded hospitals across Canada.” This is an important point for future researchers. In many of the contexts in which MCC operated, the agency kept extensive records, which may fill archival gaps where state records for that contemporary period are inaccessible. Second, McCallum raises the tension between witness and service by exploring how Summer Service workers engaged in proselytizing among Indigenous patients who were quite literally captive at the institution. Finally, she questions how young Mennonites, who would come to support the burgeoning civil rights movement in other locales over the next decade, were silent on the conditions they witnessed firsthand at Clearwater.

The article by Chris Sundby joins a conversation initiated by Alain Epp Weaver, Anna Holdorf, and Jeremy Rich in our previous issue. How were understandings of MCC service reshaped as volunteers were sent to an increasingly diverse array of locales as part of an emerging global development industry? Sundby considers the impact of Paulo Freire's widely influential *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Read by MCCers as they moved from the field to graduate school and back again, an encounter with Freire led many to reconsider (often critically) their past and future MCC postings as well as their home environment. Freire's outsized influence was most obvious in a growing number of dissertations at places like University of Wisconsin–Madison as well as in internal MCC publications like the Development Monograph Series. Though MCCers responded in different ways to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, even those who did not embrace Freire's more radical conclusions were impacted by the "Freirean shift," as it pushed the agency to consider decolonizing development and service work.

The following two essays in this issue, by Johannes Dyck and Bernhard Thiessen, reveal the ties that existed between MCC and Mennonites behind the Iron Curtain. These relationships were under constant surveillance by intelligence agencies including the KGB and the East German Stasi. Dyck considers MCC's attempts to re-establish contact with Mennonites in the Soviet Union who had been deported east during the Second World War. Letters from Soviet Mennonites published in North American Mennonite periodicals gave way to visiting MCC delegations and those of the Soviet All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. As visitors traversed the East-West divide, Dyck carefully considers how diverse interests aligned to produce unexpected openings in the Iron Curtain. Thiessen, in an impressive reading of security files, reveals how Mennonite communities in East Germany, and MCC initiatives, were penetrated by Stasi informants active in interfaith organizations, relief operations for North Vietnam, student exchanges, and Mennonite congregations.

Articles by Timothy Gachanga and Jodi Dueck-Read explore MCC relationships to peacebuilding. Gachanga considers the importance of community peace museums established with MCC support in Kenya. Through the gathering and sharing of artefacts and oral testimony at sites marked by colonial and postcolonial violence, community members seek to break from cycles of conflict and employ shared memory as powerful tool for reconciliation. In the following article, Dueck-Read calls for something akin to a "Freirean shift" that would see MCC consider the contributions of queer theory in its definition of peacebuilding. Specifically, this would involve

an acknowledgment of the harm that the agency's employment policies have caused to 2SLGBTQIA persons. Resonating with some of McCallum's conclusions about MCC silence on systemic violence at Clearwater, Dueck-Read identifies a tolerance for heterosexist violence amid MCC's otherwise expansive and courageous legacy of peacebuilding.

The final article of the JMS Forum is by Paul Heidebrecht. He reminds us that even as the broad discussion of MCC history in these two issues of the journal points to a robust, complex, and evolving institution, we may still be underestimating the agency's overall impact if we fail to take so-called "spin-off" organizations into account. These include an impressive list of institutions whose ties to MCC may be less or more apparent to outsiders. Some, like Canadian Foodgrains Bank, operate globally, while others, like Mennonite Community Services (working with Low German-speaking newcomers in Aylmer, Ontario), function at a very local level. In part due to their willingness to accept a broader range of funding sources, some ultimately work on scales that far exceed the capacity of provincial offices of MCC. The history of MCC spin-offs, as catalogued by Heidebrecht, appears less a by-product of growth and increasingly as a coherent strategy of social innovation that the agency would be wise to remember as it moves into its next century of operation.

This issue also includes two research papers that address questions of cultural production and Mennonite identity, though they are separated by a gulf of several hundred years. Piet Visser turns to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literary art of Dutch Mennonites and Doopsgezinden. Visser argues Doopsgezinden "deliberately and pragmatically manifested themselves as mainstream fellow Christians" while displaying little concern with topics specific to "Mennonitism." In a nuanced and extensive tour of their artistic production, Visser highlights remarkable Doopgezind contributions to a number of genres, including poetry and biblical drama. As Visser concludes, this was a small religious minority fully engaged with, and even shaping, mainstream Dutch culture through works that demonstrated few of the tendencies we might associate with later centuries of Mennonite artistic production. The final article will be of interest to readers of Wes Berg's review of *Voices Together* in our last issue. The article, by Emma Beachy, examines the work of Mary Oyer in the creation of the 1969 Mennonite hymnal. Beachy paints a complex portrait of Oyer as one who "shattered gender boundaries" and pushed forward transformation in certain cases while resisting change in others. As Beachy points out, attempts to incorporate instrumentation or maintain a cappella hymn

singing were “best understood as proxies for larger, more nebulous shifts which were harder to address.”

Following our book review section we conclude with a tribute to Lawrence Klippenstein by Conrad Stoesz. A pioneer in Mennonite history and the first salaried archivist at what is now the Mennonite Heritage Archives, Lawrence’s prolific and eclectic collecting placed generations of Mennonite historians in his debt.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *JMS* and we look forward to returning in 2023 with two new issues devoted, respectively, to selected papers from Conrad Grebel University College’s “Indigenous–Mennonite Encounters in Time and Space” conference and the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies’ “Departing Canada, Encountering Latin America” conference. A well-deserved thank-you to our dedicated editorial team and especially managing editor Jeremy Wiebe and copy editors Hans Werner, Muriel Smith, and Linda Thiessen for their work as we doubled our normal output this year. See you in 2023!

Ben Nobbs-Thiessen, Editor