



Pastor's Pen

Yoel Masyawong & Mark Diller Harder

Intercultural Pastor Canoe Trips

In the summers of 2019 and 2021 the Missions Ministry of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) supported a three-day interior canoe trip for a group of Intercultural MCEC pastors. The idea was the brainchild of Yoel Masyawong, pastor at Grace Lao Mennonite Church who plays a coordinating role with pastors in first-generation congregations in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. Yoel invited his friend and experienced tripper, Mark Diller Harder, pastor at St Jacobs Mennonite Church, to be the trip guide and spiritual guide for both of these trips. Five or six participants from Chin, Lao, Ethiopian, Thai, Hmong and Anglo backgrounds canoed into the Canadian wilderness at Massassauga (2019) and Kiwartha Highlands (2021) Provincial Parks. These were wonderful experiences of intercultural interaction, group building, fun and laughter, learning new wilderness skills and a depth of conversation, trust and mutual understanding and friendship. Yoel and Mark both share about their experience as leaders.

Yoel Masyawong:

I grew up on a mountain in Thailand, with a lot of hills and trees, and some small creeks and rivers. In my childhood, I can't remember any recreational activities; certainly not on the water. We lived in a tiny house and walked hours to work on a few acres of farm in the middle of the mountain. I remember I needed to draw drinking water from the rivers nearby. When we immigrated to Canada, life changed. We learned about recreation in our free time, and car camping while on vacation. An interior wilderness canoe trip isn't something that even passed through my mind.

However, with my wonder and curiosity, I asked my Canadian pastor friend Mark to tell me all about what he loved so much, canoeing. He grew up in this western



culture and has expertise in canoe trips. Then, I started thinking to myself "what if I took a group of intercultural pastors on a trip like this?" I started the conversation with my colleagues. While a few were intrigued, some argued that this isn't the joy they dreamt of in Canada. Why go somewhere on purpose without comforts when you have memories of earlier times in life back home when you had no choice but to live with little? In addition, there was a lack of experience in swimming and how to canoe. They were doubtful this trip was even possible. Eventually, I gathered a few pastors who were brave enough and interested in this cross cultural adventure. Six of us with three canoes, paddled on the waters, with a few portages into some different lakes. Two years later a second group went again.

There is one thing I learned from these trips. The cross-cultural learning isn't something that can change overnight. How could one make one's negative experience from the past become a pleasure in the present day? In most first-generation cultures, the solo pastor is responsible for almost everything in the church, so getting away or taking a vacation is a challenge in some congregations. This trip allowed pastors to get away. Our purpose for the trip was to take solitude, rest, and seek God in the wilderness. While on the trip, the participants shared their thoughts about the trip: "This is like the early missionaries who had to leave every-

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Writers & Contributors



Brent Horst • Editor



Yoel Masywong & Mark Diller Harder



Ken Bauman

Editorial

Beginnings & Endings

This issue marks a few endings and acknowledgements of jobs well done. I interviewed some of the men who have maintained our cemetery for many years. Thank you, Ken Bauman and Earl Martin, for your past service and Guenther Mohr for your continued service. Pastor Mark, Charles Kruger and Laverne Brubacher share some thoughts on Laverne's retirement from regular song leading at SJMC. Thank you, Laverne!

We also have a number of beginnings this fall at SJMC. We kicked off the new church year with a Welcome Back breakfast and saw a larger congregation worshipping in person. We continue our live streaming so that many others can join us online for Sunday morning worship and funeral services.

In this issue I highlight the Henry and Edna Shantz family in the crossword feature. Hopefully some of you completed last issue's Brubacher family crossword. Can you do these without looking at your church directory?

I shared one of my writings in worship this summer (see the worship service from August 14, 2022 on www.sjmc.on.ca) and I received comments of appreciation. I have decided to share another Word Picture (1,000 words) related to breath. At beginnings, or endings and all times in between, it's important to breathe.

Pastors Mark Diller Harder and Yoel Masyawong from Grace Lao Mennonite were asked by the Mennonite magazine The Leader to share about their intercultural canoe trips over the last couple of years. This article is our Pastor's Pen for this issue.

I hope you had a relaxing summer and that you will participate in person and online as you are able. As Mark noted that song leading has evolved at SJMC, so have many other parts of our worship and community life. There are many opportunities to participate in various ways, so please feel welcome to join in our Life Together, as it continues to evolve.

Brent

Thank You!

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Intercultural Pastor Canoe Trips Continued

thing behind to rough it,” or “The lake in our culture is a curse” or “My congregants called me while I was on the water and it was hard to totally get away.” We did happen to have data on our phones so some shared up-to-date photos on Facebook or livestreamed the trip to their congregation or even to Myanmar. One congregational member wanted to know the address of where we were. One pastor accidentally called 911 and we had to report that we were just fine.

When people enter a new culture, they hold memories and experiences from their past. There are good memories, but also wounds and trauma that still can haunt them. This can make an impact on their current physical, spiritual and emotional health. The canoe trip helped open up those places to healing and renewal. It is not necessary to forget our past but to keep looking forward. As Paul urges the people in Philippians, “forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. (Ph.3:13-14) To cross the cultures, it is not as simple as taking off your own shoes and putting on new shoes. We may need to leave our socks on, our own identity. The new shoes may not fit, they may irritate us at the beginning, but we slowly re-shape the shoes to fit us with our own integrity. We need the willingness to learn and adapt that will bring us to the next level. We experienced this through the joy, peace and beauty of God’s creation in the Canadian wilderness.

Mark Diller Harder:

When Yoel first approached me to lead these canoe trips, I wondered how it was all going to work. The pastors had never canoed before, let alone been in a wilderness setting where you have to survive off what can be carried with you in your canoes. Two weeks beforehand we did some canoe training at a local Conservation Area and that gave me hope. We ventured out. One pastor was so scared of the water that he didn’t lift a paddle until after the first portage. We battled mid-June mosquitoes and cold nights. My more Western style dehydrated food and especially the Minute Rice did not go over well (we changed the menu the second year and Yoel made the rice). But soon everyone was comfortable and began to enjoy this new setting. Trust grows when you paddle a canoe, set up tents, and hang a bear pack together, relying on each other within the vulnerability of the wilderness. We swam and laughed and played. We sat around the campfire, watched the stars, marvelled at the full moon and began to share stories of ministry.



Intercultural understanding grows when relationships deepen and become mutual. I do not fish, but several pastors brought along their fishing gear and took the lead. They threw the full un-scaled fish, head and all, onto the hot coals and soon we were all enjoying its yummy delights. While swimming in some deep waters off a rock island, a pastor shared the sharp memory of swimming for safety across a huge river as an escaping refugee earlier in life. I would never have been trusted with that story without first having canoed with him. We prayed and studied the Bible together, the Scriptures coming alive in fresh ways with new perspectives. We could talk about how different our cultural approaches were to preaching and pastoral care and even theology, and yet we were bound together as trusted Christian pastors. I am reminded of the words of Paul in Romans 1:12 – ‘so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.’ We left the trip as colleagues and friends, grateful for the gifts we could share.



Life & Times



Orvie Martin

Retired dairy farmer and now driving people to appointments

*Childhood Home: Farm in Woolwich Township, just outside of St. Jacobs
Present Home: St. Jacobs, Ontario*



Pauline Martin

Church Office Administrator at SJMC

*Childhood Home: RR1 Drayton, Ontario
Present Home: Elmira, Ontario
Age: 59 (turning 60 on October 24)*



Marcy (Marcella) Ninomiya

Retired from international inclusive development with persons with disabilities; currently helping to support a Syrian refugee family; sharing my recently published memoir.

*Childhood Home: Conestogo, Ontario
Present Home: St. Jacobs, Ontario
Age: 79 Surname: Weber*

Some of my favourite smells, sounds, tastes:

- Fresh cut grass ■ 100 horsepower tractor working at full throttle ■ AERO chocolate bar
- Fresh-washed kitchen floor ■ River running over stones ■ Beef roast and mashed potatoes

- Coffee brewing ■ Popcorn popping
- Apple Cinnamon Crisp
- Geese in flight ■ Train whistle
- Rooster crowing

- Scent of sandalwood ■ Curry
- Guitar music ■ Children's laughter
- Fresh cut grass
- Freshly baked bread

Some things you may not know about me:

- Milked cows for 30 years
- Driving Old Order Mennonites to appointments
- School bus driver for Ayr Coach Lines
- Operated a trenching machine for 8 years

- Was Old Order Mennonite until age of 4
- Took ballroom dance lessons
- Hopped on a train at 18 and went to Alberta and worked for a year

- Established 4 bakeries for intellectually-challenged persons: 1 in Japan, 2 in Thailand, 1 in Myanmar
- In Gr. 12, got 3rd prize in national cherry pie contest ■ Speak Vietnamese, Japanese and Thai languages
- Gave an injection to a water buffalo

Personality traits others would say I have:

- Friendly ■ Kind ■ Gentle ■ Considerate
- Optimistic ■ Like to meet people and start a conversation

- Friendly ■ Organized
- Helpful ■ Optimistic

- Adventurous ■ Inclusive ■ Hard working
- Grateful ■ Love to laugh ■ Committed

My interests include:

- Walking the Health Valley Trail ■ Listening to the sounds of Nature ■ Watching Blue Jays baseball games ■ Identifying trees and birds
- Playing Crokinole ■ Bowling

- Camping ■ Road trips
- History (novels, documentaries, etc)
- Cooking
- Listening to great music, all genres

- Traveling: learning about other cultures
- Volunteering for refugees ■ Baking
- Reading ■ Socializing ■ Jigsaw puzzles

Some favourite lifetime memories:

- Swimming in the Conestoga River in the summer
- Plowing with a 4-horse and 2-bottom plow
- Skating on the Conestoga River in winter

- Camping trips with our children, especially out East and out West
- Getting Married
- Children's weddings
- Time spent with grandchildren

- Life on a turkey farm
- Nursing in Vietnam
- Camp nurse in Japan
- Wedding and marriage life in Tokyo
- Living in the Okanagan Valley, B.C.
- Empowering persons with autism, intellectual disabilities

Other vocations I might have chosen or would choose:

- Am enjoying my retirement years

- Teacher or Entrepreneur (Restaurant)

- Grandparenting
- Continue friendship with refugee families

Where I like to play or ponder:

- Walking the Health Valley Trail
- Quiet times in my apartment
- Reading and meditating

- Early mornings on the front porch
- Hiking in the bush ■ By water

- In the kitchen
- At the riverside
- On the deck

Some items on my "bucket list":

- Travel to the United Kingdom
- Hang gliding
- Drive a 6-horse team

- Travel to Newfoundland
- Road trip across the USA ■ Travel to Europe
- Travel to the Holy Land (do you catch the theme here?)

- Drive out west/to USA to visit former coworkers ■ Share my published memoir
- Visit Asia again ■ Enjoy grandchildren

Caring for Sacred Ground

Brent Horst

When we are walking the grounds of a cemetery, we usually have a lot on our minds and even more on our hearts. We might be visiting a grave of a loved one who passed many years or even centuries before us. We might be attending the funeral of a member of our family or of a friend's family. Or perhaps we are releasing our soulmate to their final resting place.

This might be an over-romanticized description of our SJMC cemetery but there's no getting around the fact that cemeteries are important places for many reasons, perhaps even sacred ground. The SJMC cemetery holds the memories of hundreds of lives. There are markers of generations of families and many people have walked the paths over the years.

Which brings me to something that may never have crossed your mind. Who looks after the cemetery? Who mows the lawn? Who trims the grass? Who prepares the graves? Who does all the "behind the scenes" work?

Two of those who have maintained our cemetery are Ken Bauman and Earl Martin. They have both helped keep it well maintained and presentable for almost two decades. They mowed the lawn, trimmed the grass, and helped with burials. Thank you both for your long, dedicated service to your church family and to the families of all those who have used the SJMC cemetery.

See Ken's Cemetery Musings for his experiences while maintaining our cemetery. Earl had similar memories over his 17-18 years. Earl is glad he helped with cemetery maintenance and was glad for the "good workouts in the fresh air" over the years. Earl helped with many burials over the years. He encourages others to consider helping if you are able and willing.



Guenther Mohr shared some interesting facts about the cemetery and the work that he, Ken and Earl have done for years.

Guenther started with lawn mowing after his retirement in 2008, usually every two weeks or as needed. He "graduated" to helping with funerals when Luke Brubacher was cemetery overseer. Ivan Brubacher, Amsey Frey, Maynard Bauman and Bruce Brubacher were past overseers. Oscar Weber, Floyd Martin and

other volunteers helped with burials and lawn mowing over the years as well. Guenther took over as cemetery overseer in 2008 when Luke decided to focus on other commitments. Guenther looks after burials and cemetery maintenance. He contacts the people needed which includes opening a grave with a backhoe and closing it with a tractor. For a cremation a few of them dig a small hole by hand and close it after the family leaves. Guenther does any necessary record keeping and sends an email with a spreadsheet to the church for any expenses that need to be paid. The maintenance work is paid at minimum hourly wage and time for burials is part of the funeral expenses paid by the families.

Guenther needs help with funerals and lawn mowing and trimming now that Ken and Earl are taking a well-deserved break from their work. Lawn maintenance includes mowing down the rows with a riding mower and around the gravestones with gas push mowers. Some maintenance around stones with a weed-eater is necessary at times. Full burials require preparing the site and cleaning up after interment. For preparing we measure the site and lay down sheets of plywood to minimize damage to sod. The cleanup process includes dumping dirt back into the grave, removing any leftover dirt, removing the plywood sheets and putting back sod. Interment of cremations require preparing the site by hand digging a 2' by 2' by 2' hole and cleaning up after interment.

I asked for stories from their work and some of them are best not repeated. Ken shared one in his musings and Guenther shared this one from a full burial.

“The ground in the cemetery varies from solid to gravel and sand. This time it was more gravel and sand. The vault was inserted in the grave. We had gone for lunch and expected to come back later to oversee the funeral. However, the grave caved in while we were gone. Fortunately, Luke had come by and checked the grave. He had to jump into the grave and remove the dirt that had partially filled the vault. The family was at the grave site shortly after. An embarrassment avoided.”

Some other facts Guenther shared:

- Number of full size plots: 766 (including the old part)
- With available (155) and reserved plots (64 but no longer allowed), we would be full at 219.



- There has been a tendency to select cremation as a final option. As a result, we have established a cremation only section in the north-east part of the cemetery. Plots will be large enough (2'x2') for an urn and a flat plaque marker. This is a lower cost alternative to purchasing a full lot for cremated remains. The option for interment of cremated remains on top of an existing family gravesite is also an option many people have chosen.
- Prices were recently adjusted to reflect current costs and government changes. Anyone who is interested in knowing what they are should contact Guenther.
- SJMC owns more land, but the cemetery expansion is still outstanding.

So, who will help Guenther keep the cemetery in good shape and make sure burials are looked after properly? If you feel a call to help, talk to Guenther or to Doug Shantz, Finance and Facilities Ministry Leader. Trevor Bauman has started to help with maintenance but we could use one or two other regular maintenance workers and help with burials.



Ken Bauman



Earl Martin

Thanks again to Ken and Earl for your past service and to Guenther for your continued service.

Cemetery Maintenance Musings

Ken Bauman

In the spring of 2004, when I was 66, I changed from full time to part time at Home Hardware Stores which I did until age 80. This was the time that I started with SJMC cemetery maintenance and worked at that until the end of the 2021 season. After 18 years, I “retired” from this work at age 83.

Most of my time over all those years was spent mowing grass around the tombstones and under low trees, along fences and the east side of the Three Bridges Road; anyplace where the riding mower can't do the job. This was usually done every other week and sometimes more frequently depending on the weather. When the grass gets too long the riding mower leaves a little too much loose grass, so I go over that again to make things look tidier.

In the first nine years, there were three or four people helping with cemetery maintenance, so I worked about 18 to 20 hours a year. After 2012 the hours have steadily increased, amounting to over 50 hours in 2021 when the team was down to me, Earl Martin, and Guenther Mohr. I think I did over 450 hours over the eighteen years. I did very little grass trimming and tree trimming. I did get to paint the cemetery sign once.

I never did mow grass with the riding mower, and I was happy not to have to do that. When I started, Maynard Bauman was in charge and when he left Oscar Weber took over. When I started, Nelson Weber brought his riding lawnmower from Conestogo to the cemetery. When he stopped, Floyd Martin brought his riding mower to cut the grass and we are still using his mower today. The door to the cemetery shed was made bigger so the lawnmower could be kept at the cemetery and used as long as it would last. It's still going! When Floyd stopped working at the cemetery Guenther Mohr took over organizing the maintenance crew. Guenther is also the current cemetery overseer.

I only helped with the opening and closing of the graves a few times. That wasn't paid an hourly rate but part of the funeral expenses and passed on by the funeral home. I recall being there for the closing of Milo Shantz's grave and many of his family took their turn to put in a shovelful of dirt.

The work that I did at the cemetery was never something that I liked or disliked, but rather a job that needed to be done. I must have enjoyed the work enough to keep doing it for eighteen years.

When I worked alone at the cemetery, I always took water along but this day I forgot, and it was a huge mistake. After cutting grass for over an hour on a hot summer day I knew I was in trouble without any water to drink. I decided that I needed to drive back to Elmira to get some water. Before I had time to return the lawn mower to the shed, I noticed Margaret Metzger walking towards me carrying a flowering hanging planter. I was cutting grass close to Peter's stone, and I guessed she had flowers for her husband's grave. I shut off the mower and stopped to talk with her. She wondered if I had anything to cut the hanger off the planter, but I was able to release the planter hangers easily to remove them. I am sure the flowers were lovely but what caught my eye was the container of clean clear water that she had brought with her. When I told her of the predicament I was in and asked if I could have a drink of water, she was more than happy to oblige. I was very thankful. Looking back now a drink of water is a small thing but at the time it was no small thing and I never forgot it.

A well-deserved



Brent Horst

On August 28, Laverne Brubacher took his last regular turn as one of our song leaders at SJMC. Pastor Mark acknowledged this with a heartfelt message of gratitude:

“Laverne is retiring from being on the regular Sunday morning song leading roster after 63 years! I think that is an amazing run!

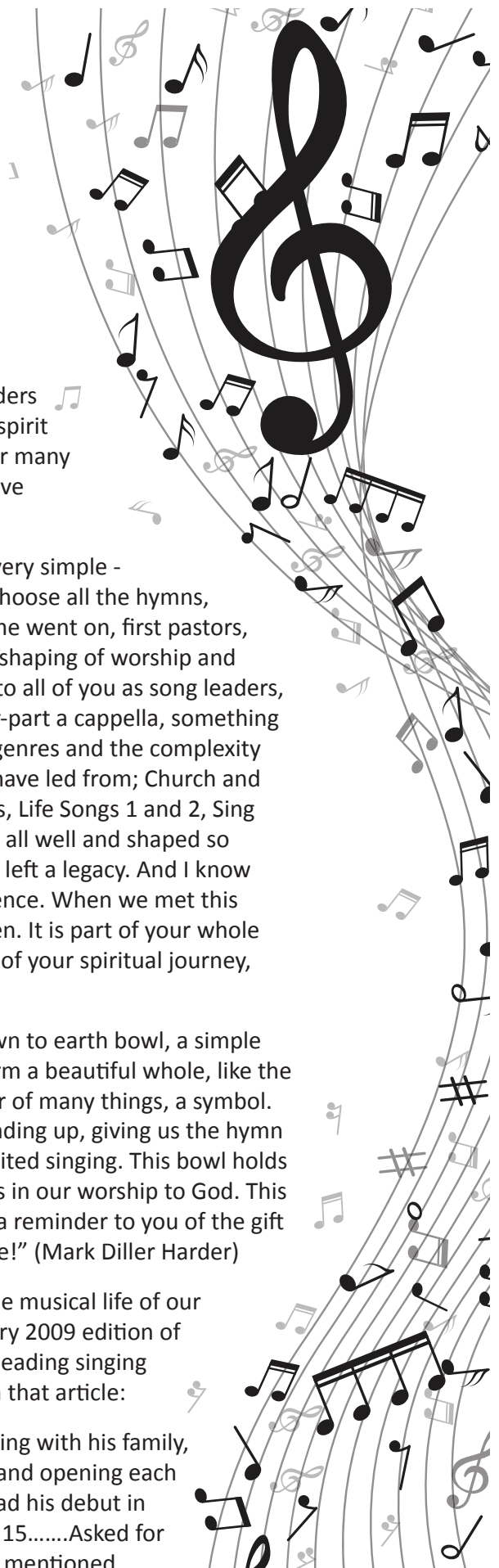
Laverne, you started song leading when you were 15 with initial encouragement as a Rockway Mennonite Collegiate student in that setting, but soon with the trust and encouragement of the wise leaders of the time from SJMC, your home congregation. We still have that spirit of giving young people opportunities to test and grow their gifts. For many of those years, you were the only or prime song leader - and you have helped mentor others who have joined the roster.

Song leading has changed and shifted over the years. It used to be very simple - Richard Yorby would leave all the hymn slots blank and you would choose all the hymns, leaving the hymn of response blank until hearing the sermon. As time went on, first pastors, and then the combination of pastors and worship leaders did more shaping of worship and themes. They would carefully choose the hymns and pass them on to all of you as song leaders, knowing they would be well led. They used to be pretty well all four-part a cappella, something we still enjoy, but now there is a broad range of musical styles and genres and the complexity and beauty that brings. I wonder how many different hymnals you have led from; Church and SS hymnal, the black, rust, blue and now purple Mennonite hymnals, Life Songs 1 and 2, Sing and Rejoice, Sing the Journey and Sing the Story. You have led them all well and shaped so much of the character of our good congregational singing. You have left a legacy. And I know how much you have enjoyed it and been fed yourself by the experience. When we met this week, you said you got more out of song leading than you have given. It is part of your whole philosophy of life of giving back. Song leading has been a deep part of your spiritual journey, and for that we give thanks.

We chose to give you a pottery bowl from Phil Yorby. It is a very down to earth bowl, a simple bowl, and yet elegant and beautiful. The colours mix together to form a beautiful whole, like the many varied voices in a congregation. A bowl is a container, a holder of many things, a symbol. This bowl holds our gratitude, our many good memories of you standing up, giving us the hymn number, blowing your pitch pipe and leading us in vigorous and spirited singing. This bowl holds the many songs and hymns sung by this congregation over the years in our worship to God. This bowl holds our musical offerings to the audience of One. May it be a reminder to you of the gift and opportunity to lead the songs of the church. Thank you, Laverne!” (Mark Diller Harder)

For a more complete record of Laverne’s amazing contribution to the musical life of our congregation, please see the article by Charles Kruger in the February 2009 edition of Life Together. That was to recognize Laverne’s 50-year milestone in leading singing and thankfully he continued for 13 more years! A few excerpts from that article:

“Some early memories of Laverne’s early music making include singing with his family, “The Lord is in His Holy Temple” at the beginning of Sunday School and opening each session of Summer Bible School with “Marching to Zion”. Laverne had his debut in musical leadership at a Sunday evening service at the tender age of 15.....Asked for some of the highlights of Laverne’s musical involvement at SJMC he mentioned



impromptu singing at the Life Songs Singers concert in the St. Jacobs Schoolhouse Theatre, leading singing at Marcia's and Larry's wedding, the cathedral-like sound of SJMC's annual silo singing, and singing the part of Balthazar in "Amahl and the Night Visitors", an SJMC musical production in 1995. Laverne has felt privileged to lead singing at funerals and considers Easter Sunday a highlight each year.... Laverne's respect for the contributions of our many talented musicians to our church's musical worship was an emphasis in his overall comments on the state of music in our church....His music leadership has challenged him to do what he sometimes thought he couldn't do, and has helped him become more confident in public forums. Church music is and has been an important part of Laverne's life." (Charles Kruger)



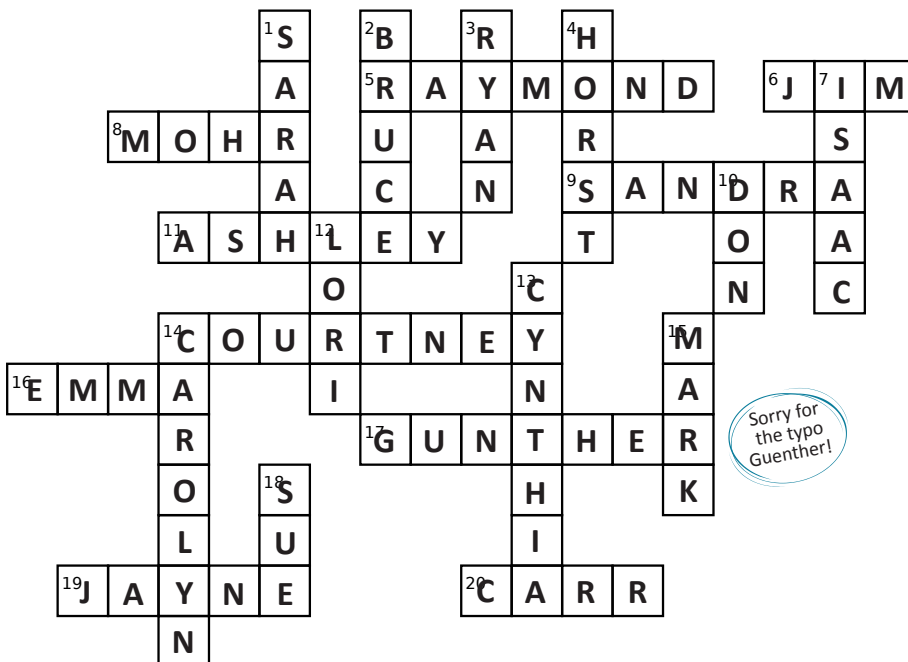
These last words come from Laverne's current thoughts on his retirement from the regular song leader roster.

"In the last thirteen years, the role of the song leader has continued to evolve. We have the pianist giving the first chord of the hymn, instead of using a pitch pipe. Many of the hymns are now accompanied. The new Voices Together has lots of new songs for us to learn, while keeping many of the older favourites. The last two and a half years dealing with Covid has kept us from meeting together and that has affected our ability to sing together. I look forward to singing in a full house again. I am very pleased to see a number of very good younger song leaders stepping up. We are indeed a very musical congregation. I'm grateful to be a part of a congregation who encourages people to develop and to grow. I very much appreciate the opportunity that I was given. Thank you." (Laverne Brubacher)

Thank you, Laverne for your long musical service at SJMC and we will continue to enjoy hearing your voice among us in many ways for many years to come.

Brubacher Family

CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS



Down:

1. oldest daughter of youngest son
2. middle son
3. husband of daughter of oldest son
4. matriarch's maiden name
7. great grandson attending SJMC
10. oldest son
12. married granddaughter SJMC member
13. wife of youngest son
14. oldest daughter
15. youngest son
18. wife of middle son

Across:

5. patriarch's first name
6. husband of oldest daughter
8. married name of youngest daughter
9. youngest daughter
11. youngest daughter of youngest son
14. middle daughter of youngest son
16. matriarch's first name
17. husband's name of youngest daughter
19. wife of oldest son
20. married name of oldest daughter

A Billion Breaths

Brent Horst

I breathe; therefore I am. Take a deep breath. Breathe it out. Breathe easy. We take a breath twelve to twenty times every minute of every day. That's up to 28,000 breaths a day! Most breaths we don't even notice. Some are unforgettable. We catch our breath, we sigh, we blow out candles, we blow sweet nothings into a loved one's ear, or we huff and puff and try to blow the house down! We inhale, exhale, respire, pant, gasp, and wheeze.

Sometimes we are out of breath. We get on the treadmill each January, intending on fulfilling that annual New Year's resolution to exercise. Soon we feel out of breath, our heart pumps hard trying to get enough oxygen to our muscles, and we think we're going to die! I've run ten minutes now - am I skinny yet? Marathon runners manage their breathing for over 26 miles. Some of us feel out of breath going up four flights of stairs! Sometimes a situation "takes our breath away". As we leave a baby's room, we quiet our breathing so as not to wake them. We let out a breath of relief if they stay asleep as we walk away. Then we turn on the baby monitor to hear and even see their breathing. It gives us comfort to see the rise and fall of their little chests. When a baby is born everyone waits for their first breath. When it takes a few seconds longer than usual we catch our breath. When seconds turn into minutes, we know the tragic reality. They will never take that first breath. Nine months of living without breathing, sustained by their mothers' bodies, they need to now breathe on their own, starting their own 28,000 breaths a day. But it doesn't always happen. That's why every breath of every live baby is so precious and why we sometimes just watch them sleep, nourished by each breath they take.

We sometimes hold our breath on purpose. We hold our breath while underwater or for a silly contest. If we hold it too long, we get lightheaded and the reality of the need to breathe regularly is very clear to us. We might involuntarily hold our breath when scared or at night due to sleep apnea. Archers hold their breath at the moment of bow release for best accuracy. Our environments make it difficult to breathe at times. Smoke from a fire, chemicals, strong odours, or lots of dust in the air make us cover our mouth and nose or maybe even use a mask of some sort. Breathing during a pandemic can become a threat. In these times and other times when we hold our breath, it's such a relief when we can breathe freely once more. We use devices to maintain our breathing while sleeping, we are sometimes given oxygen to help supplement our breathing and we may even need a machine to breathe for us at critical times. CPR provides the oxygen needed by our bodies while we may not be breathing on our own. I learned mouth-to-mouth resuscitation in my Red Cross first aid course to provide my breath to others. I almost drowned once and that first

breath when I emerged from the water was memorable. We say we need a breath of fresh air, sometimes figuratively but sometimes physically if we feel suffocated in some way. If someone does restrict our breathing for whatever reason, it's frightening, and we fight to take that next breath.

When we meditate or try to calm ourselves, we breathe deeply, rhythmically, and very consciously. "Take a deep breath. In and out. In and out. As you breathe in, breathe in the energy of those around you, feel your lungs fill with oxygen, notice your chest expand. Now breathe out, slowly and with control. As you breathe out, relax your chest, relax your body, breathe out all the stresses and worries of your mind. Breathe in, breathe out and relax." Breathing is integral to many things we do in life and controlling it, sensing it, and using it most efficiently can be very important in many things. So much of vocal performance, playing wind instruments, having a baby, enduring pain or being an athlete is about breath control.

Breath is a theme in the Bible. "Let everything that breathes, praise the Lord", "then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.", "Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.", "When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.", "The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.", "When their breath departs, they return to the earth.", "his breath is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck", "Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live." Some familiar hymns talk about breath. "Breathe on me breath of God", "Breathe upon us Holy Spirit" and "Nothing is lost on the breath of God".

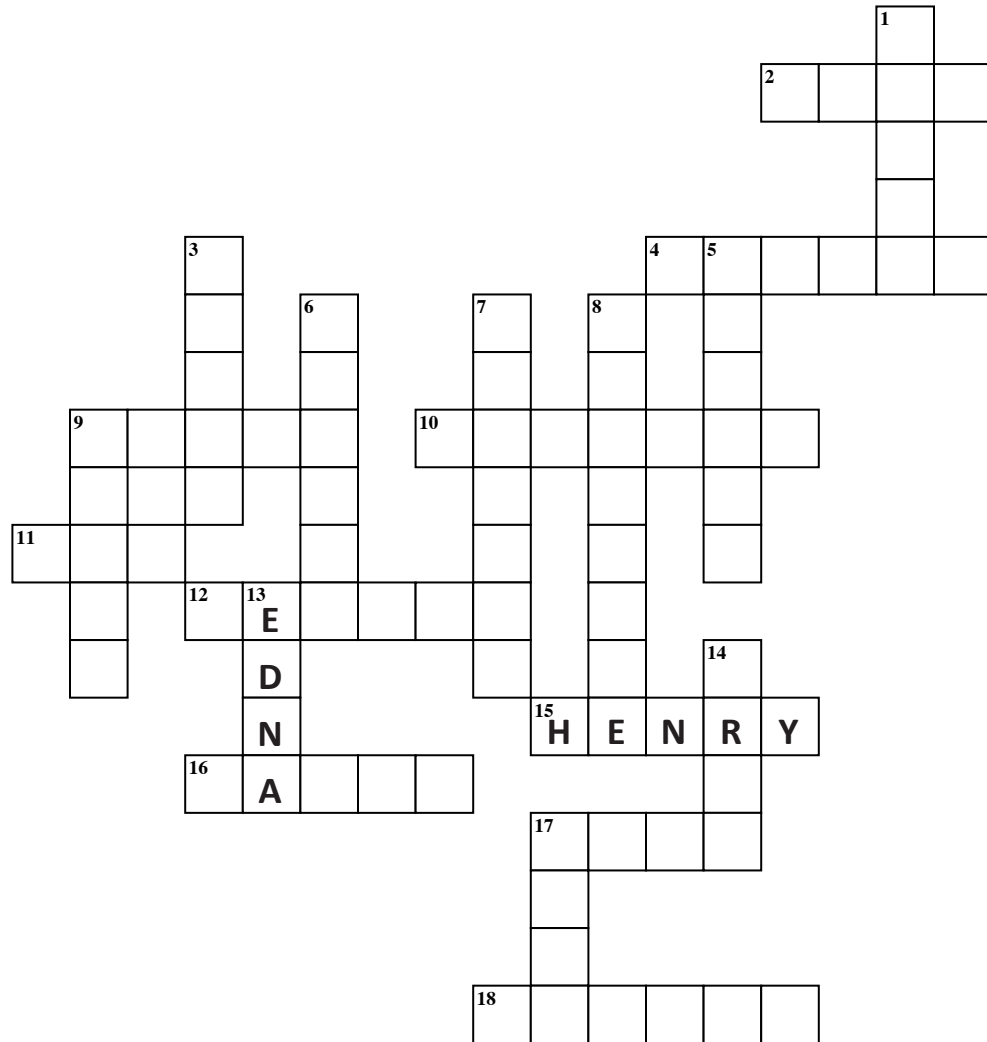
We don't know when we will take our last breath. If you have sat with someone dying, you know their breathing changes when they are close to that moment. If we live into our 90's we approach one billion breaths in our lifetimes. We can't possibly remember each one or even be aware of most of them, but some are so very important. The first breath of a new baby is so very precious and the memory of someone's last breath special, if we are privileged to hear it. Every breath in between can be a moment to remember or simply another moment while we are alive.

Appreciate each breath. Celebrate each year of breathing. Live your life with purpose while you have breath to sustain you. We breathe; therefore we are!

** This is from a series of writings by Brent Horst called Word Pictures, where exactly 1,000 words are used to describe a particular theme.

Shantz Family

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Across

- [2] Eldest son's first name
- [4] Heidelberg son's oldest daughter's name
- [9] Daughter's husband's first name
- [10] Son who lives in Heidelberg
- [11] Son who lives in St. Jacobs
- [12] Heidelberg son's wife's first name
- [15] Patriarch's first name
- [16] St Jacobs son's daughter's name
- [17] St. Jacobs son's wife's first name
- [18] Eldest son's wife's first name

Down

- [1] Eldest son's daughter's name
- [3] Daughter's daughter's name
- [5] Heidelberg son's middle daughter's name
- [6] Daughter's son's name
- [7] Heidelberg son's youngest daughter's name
- [8] Daughter's first name
- [9] St Jacobs son's son's name
- [13] Matriarch's first name
- [14] Matriarch's maiden name
- [17] Eldest son's son's name

Pictures Together

at SJMC

