

LIFE TOGETHER



St. Jacobs Mennonite Church

www.sjmc.on.ca

Winter 2023

Pastor's Pen  Janet Bauman

The Beginning of a New Year!



The beginning of a new year is an opportunity to reflect on the journey we have taken with God this past year, and to welcome God as our companion and guide for the year that is to come.

For many years now, I have had a habit of reading back through my journals sometime around the turn of the calendar year. I make myself comfortable on the couch in front of the fire and I spend a couple of hours reading what I have written in the last year. My journals are not day-to-day diaries. Mostly I go to my journal when I have something to wrestle with—some issue or challenge or idea, some decision to make or a niggling frustration. Writing helps me make sense of things and explore things from different angles. I also go to my journal to capture joys, new insights, and some great quotes from somewhere—things I don't want to forget. I might even write snippets of my own poetry, or a sermon seed.

A wise spiritual friend recommended this yearly journal reading practice. It's actually a version of the Consciousness Examen prayer—an ancient prayer practice that comes to us from the Jesuits and is most often used as a way to pray and reflect at the end of a day. But it can also be used at the end of a week, a month, a year or even a lifetime. It is a prayer practice that simply assumes that all of life is either movement toward God or away from God. It is a way to intentionally look for God in our day, to make a habit of noticing where and when God shows up, and over time, to discern the ways that God leads and guides us. It is also a way to notice when and how we have felt distanced from God and explore why that might have happened.

So, as I prepare to reread my year-long journal ramblings I intentionally invite God into the practice from the beginning. As I reread, I mostly notice how the experiences of the year have their ups and their downs. I try to look

for common threads and themes, and also for surprising things. Ideally, I look for growth and movement in my life, but often I notice the stuck places—the things that keep coming up over and over again, the things that didn't get resolved and the things that I avoided dealing with. Overall, I am looking for the presence and activity and leading of God's Spirit. Sometimes it is only in this kind of looking back—this hindsight—that we notice the movement and leading of God's spirit in our lives.

And then I journal again—a kind of year-end summary about all my observations, and any "aha" moments. Maybe God nudges me toward a growth edge for the new year. Finally, I close the practice with prayer, giving thanks for the experiences through the year when God was particularly close, and giving over to God what has been difficult in the past year—what is not yet healed or resolved. And I try to release into God's care loved ones and their journeys. I pray for forgiveness where I have caused hurt or pain, and for wisdom and guidance in those areas where I still struggle. As I bring the practice to a close, I invite God to be present with me in the new year whatever is to come.

Even if you don't keep a journal or a diary, you can still do this kind of year-end reflection. You could look back through your calendar or day planner to see how you have used your time. Recall the highlights and challenges in each month. You could look back through your bank statements to see how you have used your resources. You could look back through the pictures you have taken this year or look back through your posts on social media. Some people give the year a title or a name or choose a word or a phrase that best describes the year that was.

At the beginning of this new year, I invite us into this kind of a prayer practice. Take a "holy pause." You could reflect back on this past year, and you could also try this prayer at the end of each day for a while.

Continued on Page 3

Writers & Contributors



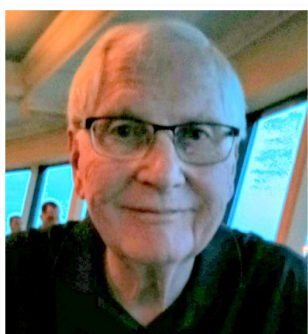
Brent Horst • Editor



Janet Bauman



Beth Metzger



Nelson Scheifele

Editorial

A New Year...

A new year has begun. Janet and I talk about some ways to review the year past and embrace the new one. What is your approach? How was your 2022? Have you made resolutions for 2023 yet, or have you already broken them? I wonder and I pray that it will be a good year, whatever that means for each one of us.

In this issue, Nelson helps us to get to know Wayne and Beth Bridge in his article and Beth Metzger gives us a glimpse into the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Collective's use of our church facility. I look back at our wonderful meal and sharing time with our brothers and sisters from Grace Lao Mennonite church.

I hope you enjoy reading the Life and Times descriptions of Elaine, Robert and Gloria. See if you can complete the Metzger Clan crossword puzzle. Did you get all the Shantz Crossword answers correct?

As we look back at 2022 and look forward to 2023, we thank God for the many blessings we receive and especially for the mutual blessing of being part of a caring and generous faith community.

What will be in 2023 for you, for me and for our life together?

Brent

Thank You!

- Article and Picture Contributors
 - St. Jacobs Printery
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 - Pauline Martin - Distribution

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Here is the basic outline:

The Prayer of Consciousness Examen

Invitation

Find some space and time for quiet. Take some deep breaths to help you arrive in the space and quiet yourself. Invite God to be with you as your support and guide.

Looking Back

Look back over your day/year. Take your time. Notice the “high” points when you sensed that you were close to and connected to God and to God’s love for you. These moments might include: feeling joyful, at peace, content and deeply connected; experiencing a sense of delight, awe and wonder, being fully alive, being in the flow, and at your creative best; knowing a sense of being loved and cared for in all circumstances. You may want to jot these moments down in a list. Take time to thank God for these moments of encounter with the divine.

Look back over your day/year again. This time notice the “low” points when you felt like you were distanced or estranged from God. These moments might include a sense of despair, sadness, or anguish; a time when you had troubled thoughts, or felt lonely, lost, or abandoned, or when fear or shame overwhelmed you. You may want to jot these moments down in a list. Take time to pray about

them—offer your regrets and your sorrow to God. Invite God’s forgiveness for any hurt or pain you caused. Try to let go of those difficult moments and release them into God’s care. You don’t have to carry those experiences.

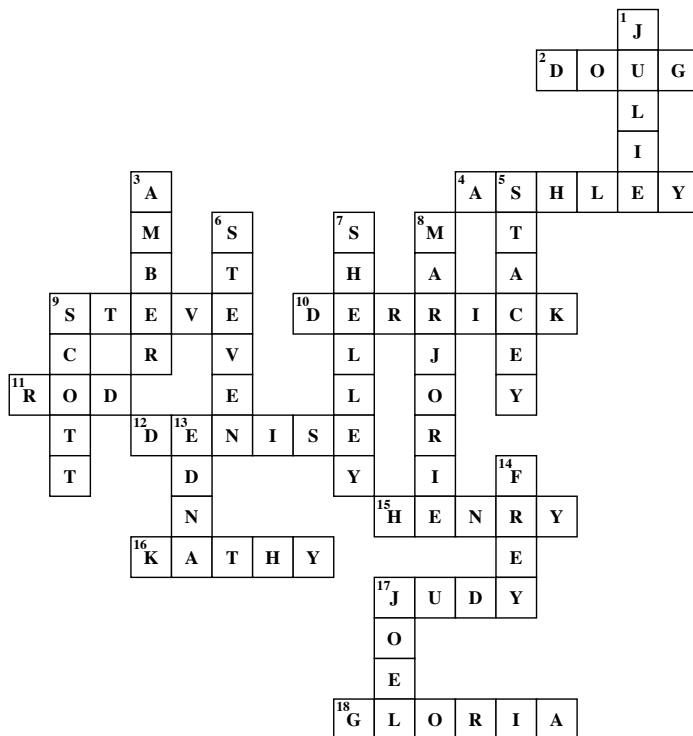
Looking Ahead

Look ahead toward the new day/year. Notice how you feel. You may want to jot down these thoughts too. What are you excited about and anticipating with joy? Invite God to be with you in those moments that are yet to come. What makes you anxious? What do you dread? Again, invite God to be present with you in those moments too. As you bring the practice to a close, try to give into God’s care your feelings about the day/year to come, and ask God for calm, peace, patience and whatever else you think you might need.

As you head into 2023, consider whether there is any way that you could keep track of the ways God is showing up for you this year—maybe with a journal, or with photos. Maybe you could jot a little “note to self” in your calendar or drop a note into a gratitude jar to be reviewed at the end of the year. Perhaps it is simply an intention to pause in the moment to offer a prayer of gratitude. Whatever you do to mark the passing of another year, may you know God as your companion and guide on this next journey around the sun!

Shantz Family

CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS



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

Life & Times



Elaine Hershberger

Retired volunteer teacher's aid for all of Alvin's teaching years. Former volunteer at the Elmira MCC Thrift Store.

*Childhood Home: Farm at Wagner's Corner
Present Home: Elmira, Ontario
Age: 85 Surname: Wideman*



Gloria Shantz

Retired from teaching so enjoy using my skills in an ESL conversation class and with my grandchildren

*Childhood Home: Farm west of Elmira
Present Home: Waterloo, Ontario
Age: 68 Surname: Weber*



Robert Poole

Truck driver for Home Hardware Stores Ltd.

*Childhood Home: Farm near Poole, Ontario
Present Home: Elmira, Ontario
Age: 60 Surname: Poole*

Some of my favourite smells, sounds, tastes:

- Freshly baked bread ■ Freshly mowed grass
- Classical music ■ Birds singing
- Cherry Pie ■ Dislike seafood
- Smell of cinnamon buns ■ Lilacs
- Children laughing ■ Taste of apple crisp
- Water running in a stream
- Gerber's sausage
- Fresh baking ■ Fresh cut grass
- Sound of baby laughing
- Snacking on potato chips ■ Popcorn
- Waves crashing on rocky shore

Some things you may not know about me:

- Lived in Northern Alberta for 41 years
- Had a bear at our door and windows in Alberta. He wanted in!
- Volunteered at Elmira Thrift store for 12 years ■ Was in a horse and buggy accident on my way to school
- Went to a one room schoolhouse
- Went to university at the same time as my father
- Spent a summer in Germany
- Sang in the WLU choir
- Grew up on a 100-acre dairy farm
- Shattered my tibia and kneecap
- Have driven almost 3 million kilometres in Ontario in the last 26 years

Personality traits others would say I have:

- Sense of humour, laugh a lot
- Stand firm on my beliefs ■ Caring
- Being on time ■ Dislike clutter
- Creative ■ Energetic ■ Compassionate
- Hard-working ■ Optimistic ■ Reliable
- Patient ■ Helpful ■ Caring
- Courteous ■ Quiet

My interests include:

- Entertaining ■ Reading
- Games ■ Puzzles
- Knitting ■ Travel
- Gardening ■ Baking
- Music ■ Reading
- Travel ■ Being outdoors
- Camping ■ Renovations to our house
- Hiking ■ Vacations south in the winter
- Helping our children with their home maintenance

Some favourite lifetime memories:

- My marriage and the birth of my children
- Our move from Kansas to Alberta
- Camping in the Rockies
- Riding horse in the ocean
- Holding new babies (especially children and grandchildren)
- Skiing at Lake Louise
- Going on safari ■ Visiting BBI
- Honeymoon in Nigeria
- Family vacations out East, West and Florida
- Growing up on a farm ■ Weekends at Chesley Lake with our children
- Trip to Barbados and small Caribbean islands of St. Vincent and The Grenadines
- Watching lots of ringette games

Other vocations I might have chosen or would choose:

- Would have been a teacher if going to high school had been an option for me at that time
- Considered farming or operating excavating equipment

Where I like to play or ponder:

- Walking around the pond near our house
- By a lake
- Relaxing with a book
- During walks in nature
- In my backyard
- By the water
- Reclined in a lawn chair in our backyard
- Playing with the grandchildren
- While driving the many kilometres daily

Some items on my "bucket list":

- Enjoy another 10 healthy years
- Watching the grandchildren mature
- Waiting for great grandchildren
- Travel somewhere in Asia
- Watch my grandchildren grow to adulthood
- Volunteer at Hospice again
- Enjoy old friendships and make new ones
- Spending 4-6 weeks in the winter in Florida after retiring
- Ride in a hot air balloon ■ Travel

Indigenous Food Sovereignty Collective

Beth Metzger

“Where do we get drinking water?” It was a question asked near the start of a busy and productive day with the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Collective of Waterloo Region (IFSCWR). Three more people would ask that same question before we finished. Luckily for all those at SJMC, the answer is, “From any faucet.”

When the idea was raised through the SJMC Peace Justice and Social Concerns (PJSC) group to work with the IFSCWR, it caught my interest. The idea of being able to do something concrete to support the region’s indigenous community was appealing, and this was something simple that I knew how to do – working in our well-equipped kitchen. Mind you, it had been a while. A few days beforehand, I stopped by the church to remind myself of all the equipment details. At that time, I had the pleasure of meeting Heather Richardson, one of the group’s leaders. She familiarized herself with our setup, we made plans, and on October 16th, it happened! Six SJMC men and women participated in the event. We washed dishes, chopped vegetables, and pointed our partners towards the drinkable water.

Heather and her crew arrived with an enormous amount of vegetables grown by members of the collective, along with many other supplies. As the gathering grew, it eventually had a more official start signaled by a smudging ceremony – held on the porch due to uncertainties about our fire alarm system – and a wonderful drumming circle. As their guests, we were invited to take part in all activities, and it was our pleasure. We were especially honoured that an indigenous elder joined the gathering. It meant that all generations were present, right down through teens and toddlers.

There was something for everyone: sewing machines were brought so that people could make feast bags to hold their plates and utensils for feast occasions; beading was being done; kids played with toys and created art; and pasta-making lessons were given, so that anyone with the most basic ingredients would always be able to make a meal. Don’t have a rolling pin? No problem, a tin of vegetables works fine. Most of all, people visited with each other.



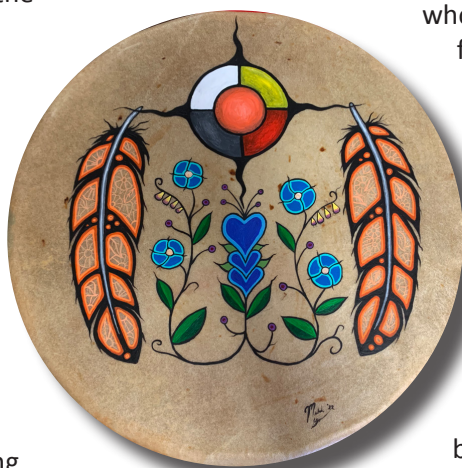
By the end of the day, a huge amount of food had been prepared, and we all feasted on two kinds of soup, roasted root vegetables, chicken and potatoes, and a delicious wild rice salad (my favourite). Not only was our

whole group fed that day; they had brought food to contribute to our food bank collection, and also left preserved meals made that night for anyone in the SJMC community who might need them. They asked that it stay within the SJMC community if possible, and a few weeks later, there were, indeed, some grateful local recipients.

Before the closing drumming circle, we all had a chance to visit the Giving Table. I learned that everyone had brought something to give away. You were to bring something that you didn’t need too much, but that still had some value to you. Even though the SJMC helpers hadn’t brought anything, they asked us each to take something, and there was plenty to choose from. What a beautiful form of generosity!

At the end of the day, I admit, I was exhausted. As we prepared to leave, Heather mentioned that she would be dropping off several meals that night to community members who couldn’t be there – her day was not yet finished!

At a later debrief, it was agreed that this occasion was something everyone involved would like to do again. Keep an eye out for future announcements if you think this fun way to connect with the local indigenous community might interest you.



Food, Faith & Family

Brent Horst

What a fulfilling evening in so many ways! Our sisters and brothers from Grace Lao Mennonite Church (GLMC) hosted, prepared and served a wonderful meal of Laotian food for about fifty SJMC Seniors on Saturday October 15, 2022. They wanted to offer this gift to SJMC out of their gratitude for the many ways we helped them settle in Canada so many years ago. A few of us “less senior” folks were allowed to attend as well!

They prepared very tasty food of course and it was a great time for many seniors to see each other in person again after a long pandemic pause. Yoel Masyawong, pastor of GLMC, gave an update on their church and asked us to sing a couple hymns, acapella in four-part harmony, and Pastor Mark Diller Harder gave a bit of an update on recent SJMC happenings. And then the sharing of stories began, which was the true richness of this beautiful time together.

It was in the late 1970's and 80's that many of the GLMC families immigrated to Canada from South-east Asia. In God's mysterious ways, Shirley and Fred Redekop were MCC Service Workers living in Thailand during this time. Shirley and Fred would help prepare them for life in Canada and some of the Grace Lao members recall being escorted to the airport by Fred. Now years later Fred and Shirley are members of SJMC as well and could receive this evening as a gift from those they helped so many years before. Shirley is also currently an SJMC rep to the GLMC/SJMC Partnership Council.

People spoke of the late Pat Weber (her husband John was able to partake in this meal) and how persuasive she was in heading up the sponsorship response at SJMC. Pat would announce that another family was arriving soon and ask for a new sponsorship group to help settle them and a group would come forward to the piano after the service. Many of these groups were formed and the relationships between sponsors and refugees have remained strong over the years. Several of these sponsorship groups were present to accept this meal from our Grace Lao friends. Some Lao folks talked of how important it was to be cared for in this way and mentioned Lovina and Nelson Weber (who have both passed at this point) as being like parents to them. Today, the Weber's daughter Marcy and her husband Aki Ninomiya are still connected to the



family sponsored by their family and Marcy is seen as a sister. The Ninomiya's are just completing a year of sponsorship for a family from Syria so the cycle of helping refugees settle in Canada continues from generation to generation.

Som Phanpha spoke eloquently and emotionally on how much it meant to him, as a single young man, to be welcomed and supported as he made a life for himself in Canada. He worked, got married, had children and now is a grandfather. He is a leader in the church and recently spent hundreds of hours helping to translate Palmer Becker's book, *The Essentials of Anabaptism*, into Laotian.

Leah Boehm recalled Laotian families growing food on their farm, Alice Martin remembered helping Som travel to Leamington to meet his future wife Keo, and Mary Martin spoke of good memories of the sponsorship efforts as well. Louam Vanhdyvong, Liang Nay and Fay Saengsyri expressed their gratitude for caring for them and talked of their challenge in getting used to Canadian food and learning the language. They admitted to missing rice and hot peppers at times. They also spoke of the challenges and misunderstandings that can happen with a language barrier. Others spoke about the late Selina Horst's ability to find, reuse and provide furniture and other necessities over the years.

Pastor Yoel closed by reiterating the gratitude expressed to SJMC members who helped so many of the Lao folks to settle here and reminded us that we continue to be important to them. They cherish the ongoing connections and partnership that exists between our sister congregations. They also give thanks to God for bringing us together and providing the love that sustains us all. It's their faith in God and this desire to share God's love that drives GLMC to work with Lao Mennonite Conference and Lao Ministry for Christ, as well as look for ways to establish Mennonite churches in Thailand and Laos.

God is good and this evening was a wonderful example of what God's love, shared with others can do. Who knew what great things Pat, and others started over 40 years ago and who knew how much GLMC would have to offer the world? God knew!

Thanks for the food. Thanks for your faith and thanks for being part of our church family. Thanks be to God.



Getting to Know...



Nelson Scheifele

Visiting Wayne and Beth Bridge in their comfortable modest sixth-floor two-bedroom condominium on Westmount Road North, Waterloo, belies the complexity of this septuagenarian couple's lives; a large eclectic collection of CDs, the intriguing nature and animal photos on walls, a music stand and guitar, intriguing book titles, offer multiple clues about its intriguing occupants.

Since first meeting Wayne for coffee at Tim Horton's in November of 2021 with Pastor Mark, it was evident he was an unusual man. That occasion was to explore the possibility of Wayne's baptism at SJMC. Meeting his spouse Beth was still several months away. Since Wayne's baptism on May 1, 2022, I have continued to slowly unpack more about this man's story during numerous afternoon coffees, and that of Beth, an exercise that remains unfinished.

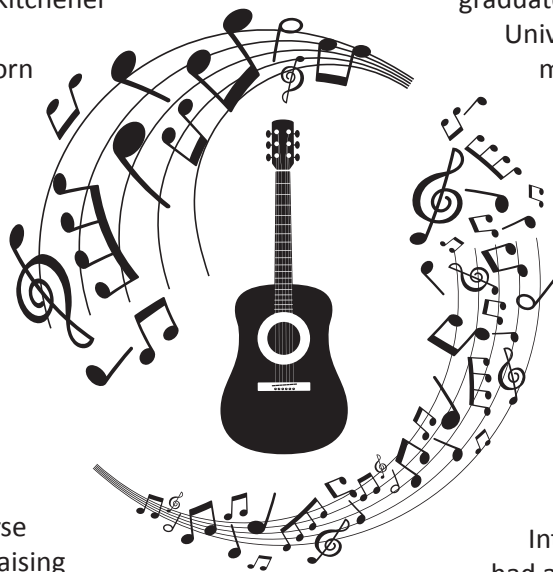
Both Beth and Wayne were born in the area, Beth into the well-known Breithaupt family of Kitchener and Wayne in Guelph but with historic roots in St. Jacobs. The Breithaupts were prominently active in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Kitchener and have several local landmarks named after them. Wayne was born in Guelph, along the banks of the Speed River, in close proximity to the undeveloped riparian area of the Homewood Institute grounds, a natural learning environment for a curious budding naturalist. He was also raised Presbyterian by his devout mother, Margaret Cress. In spite of their Presbyterian religious roots, Beth and Wayne's paths never crossed for another fifty years. Over the course of her adult years, in addition to raising two children, Beth was at various times a

church secretary (St Peter's Lutheran), a Sunday School teacher, and an alto in various church choirs.

In his early life, Wayne spent much time on the banks of the Speed River soaking up the natural world. Describing himself as "born with a thirst for knowledge", Wayne persisted in understanding the world around him, both natural and cultural. He abandoned his religious upbringing at age fourteen and ventured into the world in search of other spiritual enlightenment. At school he was put in the "bright kids" class, and much was expected of him. However, if it didn't interest him, he had a tendency not to apply himself. Nevertheless, he won scholastic Kiwanis awards, made the grade 13 honour list and was on the university Dean's list.

Wayne describes several "streams" as influencing his life: music, nature, expression through writing, thirst for knowledge and photography. He became an accomplished guitarist and played professionally in lounge and dance bands for many years. He earned a B.A. in Music at the University of Guelph and added two years of graduate work in ethnomusicology at York University with an ambition to become a music professor. That did not materialize, and he largely sustained himself with performance in bands and privately teaching up to 55 students per week. Meanwhile, fed by the spiritual interests of musicians he admired such as George Harrison (Hindu) and John Coltrane (Zen Buddhism), he read extensively in world religions, an interest he continues to pursue today. Among his music are extensive and definitive collections of Jazz and Blues CDs.

Interestingly, Wayne's pursuits always had a spiritual undercurrent. Responding to



a spiritual urge, he undertook a two-year correspondence diploma course in professional photography (1991-1993). As his interest in the music business waned, he found nature photography captured his artistic passion. That passion was combined with canoe-tripping in Algonquin Park, a passion which he discovered in 1994 and which he passionately pursued for the next twelve years - in all seasons, although winter was limited to camping or day-tripping by car. "Solo canoe tripping" suggests Wayne, "is the closest I've ever come to the real me." Following his lifelong pattern, he reads voraciously and researches everything he can find on his current subject of interest.



Some of us became aware of his vast reading during the fall (2022) speaker series. In his presentation Wayne highlighted the importance of Henry David Thoreau and particularly his classic work, "Walden" which among other appeals "tweaked my interest in spiritual self-discovery and the notion of self-reliance and living a simple life." Wayne's reading and passion inevitably leads him to other authors and books. Interested readers might wish to explore his reading interests further in conversation with him.

Beth and Wayne met during a music "jam night" in an English pub in Fergus around 2000 and were married in 2002, each having experienced the pains of divorce. In 2006 they left the Elora/Fergus/Inverhaugh area where Wayne had lived since 1989 and moved to Bethune Township near the community of Kearney on the edge of Algonquin Park where they established the West Algonquin Nature Store. The move was "spirit compelled" a term not uncommon for Wayne to use as he describes his life journey. In addition to assisting with the business, Beth was employed as a clerk for the community of Kearney, and for ten years served as organist every other week at a small Anglican parish church in Emsdale.

His years of canoeing in Algonquin Park provided material and inspiration for Wayne's writing passion. He was a reporter for the Almaguin Highlands News and authored his 2019 self-published book, "Algonquin: A 25-Year Trip". In

this book he describes what happened with his 1994-2019 association with Algonquin Park and surrounding area, allowing him to grow from a lost, "Bohemian" guitar player into a nature photographer.

In the fall of 2016, experiencing a growing weariness of the isolation from family, Wayne and Beth relocated to Waterloo where Beth could be close to her daughter and two grandchildren. After the move "My spirit" writes

Wayne, "quickly led me to a pond within short driving distance of our condo" resulting in newfound inspiration and the writing of a fictional book, "Jacob's Pond". This also renewed interest in his maternal ancestors, the Cress family, Pennsylvania Mennonites who settled and became a prominent family in St. Jacobs. Simon Cress brought his family to the area in spring of 1806 and in 1819 purchased a parcel of land which comprised the southeast side of present St. Jacobs. The family built the house in which Margaret Metzger grew up and operated several businesses in the community.

In 2015, on vacation, Wayne had visited The Mennonite Story and purchased Isaac Horst's book, "A Separate People" which had a significant impact on him. After their move to Waterloo, Wayne became engaged in conversations with the late Abner Martin of Elmira who assisted him in understanding Old Order vs modern Mennonites. Wayne finds much affinity with the Old Order theology and way of life. Their "separateness", strict stance on separation of church and government, respect for nature and living-with-the-land simple lifestyle resonate strongly with him. But of course, he realizes he could not join them. Nevertheless, in spring of 2021 he felt compelled, again by the spirit, to contact Pastor Mark about baptism. A year later, after numerous conversations and discernment, Wayne was baptized on May 1, 2022. In Wayne's words, "For me there is only one faith I would embrace (Mennonite) and only one church I wish to join: the Mennonite Church in St. Jacobs."

At this time Beth has decided to take a break from church involvement and being a church worker. She is, however, supportive of Wayne's activities.

Unfortunately, this past June (2022), Wayne had a major heart attack while they were with family at a family cottage on Georgian Bay. He was air-lifted to Sudbury for



surgery before they were able to return home. Thankfully, recovery has been good, confirmed by a recent positive cardiology report. As with all events, Wayne seeks the deeper meaning of life events. For him the heart attack was a message from God; “smarten up. I’ve got something for you to do.”

It was a call, Wayne feels, to further explore ways to align his spirit with God’s. This strong sense of the spirit’s direction is common for Wayne. He feels it recently directed him to close down his nature photography/blog website. It has compelled him to work hard at his classical guitar, accepting his age-imposed physical limitations.

It pushes him to research old-time gospel music and repertoire. “I’m not sure where all this is taking me,” he muses. “I have three ideas for books plus music themes jangling around in my head. Currently I’m waiting for the good wheat to emerge from the chaff.”

Welcome to the SJMC community Wayne. While physical limitations curtail playing your beloved guitar and knee problems make sitting in church challenging, we will continue to find ways to incorporate your convictions and breadth of knowledge into congregational life. And welcome, Beth, wherever and whenever you find opportunities to join us.



2023

Brent Horst

Resolution or Motto?

Welcoming a new year often comes with planning for the year ahead. We might make New Year's resolutions; we might set annual goals and we might look forward to certain life milestones that we will experience in the coming year.

Like many people, I have not found resolutions to work well for me. I used to set very specific, somewhat lofty goals and often broke them within weeks, if not days! Not to say this doesn't work for some people. I know people who set quite challenging and specific goals and their discipline and focus allows them to be successful at meeting them. Good for you if you are like them, but this just isn't for me or many others!

What I have found to be helpful is to first take stock of my life each year, as I complete one calendar year and begin the next. I have always done some journaling and have been more diligent in making notes of my daily life since I retired over two years ago. As I review my journal at the end of a year, I highlight major events, learnings and significant things in a year-end letter to my adult children. I started these annual letters in 2011. These letters have been helpful to remind us of where we've been, what we've experienced together and how we've lived our lives as a family who love and care for each other.

Then as I start to look to the year ahead, I think about any milestone birthdays, anniversaries or events and how these might be acknowledged and celebrated. I think about what I might have started but not yet completed and prioritize a few things. I try not to be too specific but commit to more general plans. For example, I might plan to cycle more than the year before without setting any specific distances. Sometimes a specific goal, like cycling 1,000 kilometers in a year draws my attention. (For Oscar Weber that's just a good month!) I prefer to have longer-term goals like golfing 100 different courses in my lifetime, rather than by a certain date. Since I set that goal in 2010 when I was at 50 courses, I have added 24 new courses to my list.

Sometimes setting a motto for the coming year helps me to have an overall focus or theme for the year. In 2010, as I looked to turning 50 years old, I decided that "If not in 2010, then when?" was a good question for that year. I believe this focus helped me to start a few significant new challenges. I signed up for a program at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) which is now called Journey, and I completed it over the following five years. I attended the first Tending the Soul retreats in 2010, which took three years to complete. I also decided to write a book about our extended family cycling trips. We connected the dots of our cross-Canada trek in 2011 and I finished my book four years later. So, a number of things that I started in 2010 took years to complete but I'm not sure I would have started them without that focus of "if not now, then when?" I am also convinced that those things I started in 2010 were very good for me as our family entered a rather tough few years in 2013. That year my motto was "2013, A year like we've never seen". This turned out to be true but not quite in the way that I had hoped.

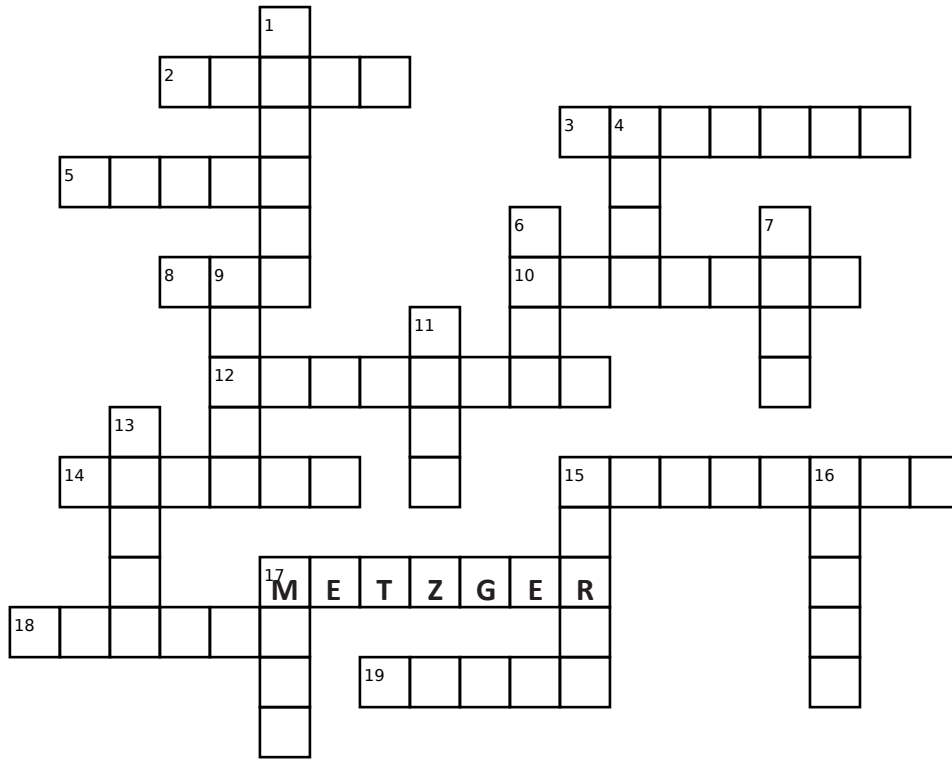
I skipped picking a motto for a few years after that but last year, I chose "Bless you in 2022". I wanted the focus on "you" or others and I was ready for blessings as compared to the pandemic restrictions and isolation of 2020 and 2021. This theme helped me to complete writings for my siblings and others. I called them "YOUlogies" since their content was similar to what one might share at someone's funeral as a eulogy but was meant to be heard by that person now, while they are very alive and well. These were very personal and not that easy to share but my motto pushed me to take that step of giving them to the subjects of my writing. They were all well received, and I think they were a blessing to them. I hope others were blessed by my actions in 2022 as I tried to live out the year's motto.

Now what will my motto for 2023 be? Mottos don't need to rhyme but it makes them easier to remember when they roll off the tongue. 2023 has many opportunities to rhyme as compared to say 2012. Try rhyming with twelve! Consider some options for 2023: Time for me; Whatever will be will be; Can't wait to see; Grant it Jesus is my plea; Take me, Mold me, Use me, Fill me; Set me free; Sing with Glee; Sea to Sea; Save the bee; Hug a tree; Not so comfy; Find the key; etc.

Lots of candidates. I wonder for 2023, what will it be? Maybe that's it! "2023 - What will it be?" Maybe I'll just have to wait and see and be ready for whatever it will be? What about you? What will your focus be for 2023? May God be with you and those around you, whatever 2023 will be.

Metzger Family

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Down:

1. Husband of Vera, last name Martin
4. Sister to John and wife of Ken
6. Heidelberg sister of Erma and Marie
7. Married to Larry, mother of Melinda
9. Geocacher and husband of Marie
11. Hobby painter and father to Larry
13. Brenda and Robert's last name
15. Sister of John and leader of SJMC Women
16. Son of John and retired from Toyota
17. Played ringette into her 80's, her license plate is RSHEEP

Across:

2. Last name of Marie and Ernie
3. Song Leader, soloist, teacher and daughter of Larry
5. Married to John and mother of Larry
8. Husband of Erma and Baker by name
10. Late husband of the "sheep whisperer"
12. Husband of Michelle, father of Elise
14. HH Truck driver married to Brenda
15. Daughter of Brenda, granddaughter of Mary
17. This SJMC family clan
18. Social Committee Coordinator and daughter of Emanuel
19. Great granddaughter of Emanuel and Mary