

LIFE TOGETHER



St. Jacobs Mennonite Church

www.sjmc.on.ca

Winter 2026

Pastor's Pen Kandace Boos

Wintering; finding a rhythm in rest and the anticipation of spring

I have never been a fan of winter. I hate the cold, I hate the snow, I hate the struggle to keep track of hats, mitts, scarves and boots; and I HATE the way the weather intrudes on my schedule and activities with its inconvenient icy roads, snow squalls, wind chills and frigid temperatures. I hate the way the heating dries out my house, and my fingers and toes get dry and cracked. I hate hanging quilts and stuffing cushions in drafty spots in my old house just to keep the heat in. I miss the sun. I miss the ability to wander in and out at will, sipping coffee on the porch in my bare feet.

Instead, I hunker down with layered socks, sweaters and blankets, crock pot stews and extra hot tea. I miss the freedom to invite friends and family over to visit, knowing that if we run out of room around the table, we can always take to the patio and add a few more. Instead of meeting up and barbecuing together, we stay off the roads just in case and let each other know when we arrive home safely. We cancel plans and stay home. We wake in the dark and return home in the dark. We are isolated by the cold and the slower pace of the dark season. However, knowing that spring is coming soon gives me hope for a time when friends will be near, travel will be easier and my feet will feel the grass and stone once again.

As a beekeeper, this wintering season is so important, but the rhythm of the beekeeping year also helped me to develop an appreciation of the anticipation of spring. In this climate zone, we wrap our hives in insulation, often tying them up tight to protect them from hungry animals that may smell the honey. Inside the colony has pared down to be just the essential crew, tightly clustered into a ball,

using their wings and body heat to keep the queen alive and her eggs viable. They rotate from the outer layer that works the hardest, to the inner layer that rests and warms up for their next shift. I think this cluster rotation has a lot of wisdom to offer us humans in the dead of winter.

Perhaps we're not meant to spend the entire winter working to keep others warm and rested.

Perhaps we also need to take time to rest and be warmed and cared for so that we can again be effective when our turn to generate heat comes around. Like the bees, we need to rely on each other and on the community as a whole to carry us through the harsh season together. When we break free from the group and try to make it alone in the cold fallow season, we can't survive.

There is so much the honeybees can teach us about the importance of a slow, fallow season. We so often associate fallowness with grief, sadness, and failure, but it really only means to rest. We need time without any striving to do or pushing ourselves to stretch and grow. We need to allow ourselves to reflect on the growth that has already happened, and to live in our present selves. We do ourselves a disservice when we don't allow ourselves the spaciousness to experience life in all the stages of our becoming. We are more than our productivity.

In the spring, the bees break apart from these ball formations and leave the hive on early forage flights to see what food sources have survived, and which sources may be beginning to produce for the upcoming season. Here in Ontario, we've had a really rough few years with record losses of hives after rapid freeze-thaw cycles in the spring that confuse the bees into breaking their formations early and venturing too far from the warmth of the hive. Unseasonably warm, early temperatures make the bees think they can begin their foraging work far earlier than they should. When the temperature predictably drops rapidly, the bees get stranded far from home without the food



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Writers & Contributors



Brent Horst • Editor



Kandace Boos



Som & Keo Phanpha



Kristine Clemmer



Yoel Masyawong

Editorial

It's winter in Ontario. We might as well enjoy it, even if the shovelling is getting a little tiresome! In this issue, Kandace gives us some good thoughts about this time of year in her Pastor's Pen.

I tried to provide some light humour from a new columnist "Peppy". I hope you try your hand at the new Photo Caption Contest and complete the crossword of Nearby Places to our church. It's always fun to read about some of our members in the Life and Times feature. Kristine gives us a glimpse into the fun Mystery Dinner for the Youth last fall.

There are also some more serious updates from our friends at Grace Lao Mennonite Church. Som and Keo had a fruitful leadership training trip to Thailand and sadly it's time to say "farewell" to Yoel, at least in his current role as pastor of GLMC.

I hope these articles and the pictures included give you a good view of our Life Together recently. Enjoy!

As always, I'm open to your contributions to this newsletter in the form of an article about a topic, event or thoughts that you are willing to share with all of us in this format. Send me something!

May this winter wonderland turn into a green spring sooner than later.

Thanks,

Brent

Thank You!

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and energy, or the shared warmth to keep their bodies moving. This means those bees die before the natural end of their lives. Like humans, bees need to share resources and knowledge to make it through the less predictable seasons.

A hive that has “overwintered” is a much more valuable hive, because they have shown their “hardiness” in their ability to adapt and survive in our harsh climate. A hive in their second year is also much more established with better, more practiced hive systems and cleanliness, better communication, more efficient foragers. They come with a level of trust from the beekeeper, that they will be a calmer, more predictable colony, rather than those that are

all brand new babies. And as such, they tend to produce more honey, better quality comb, and have earlier signs of problems within the hive or in the environment. Also, a hive that has already survived a winter season has the knowledge to adapt to unpredictable weather patterns and is much more likely to continue to survive.

So, this winter, may we find ourselves slowing down, cozying up, resting and sharing together in slow and intentional ways. May we give ourselves a season to be fallow and experience all of who we are right now- without any further polishing or healing or growing. May we see that this season is still an important part of our lives that we cannot and should not rush past.

Special Events @ SJMC



Day for Truth and Reconciliation



Tim Horton's Men's Group



Cox Family Blessing



October 5th Worship Service

Life & Times



Beth Metzger, 66

Retired from my job as head of database management/data mining at Kindred Credit Union.

Childhood Home: New York City
Present Home: Waterloo



Ryan Clemmer, 49

Professor at the University of Guelph teaching about materials, energy, and design. As a side gig – I am a low paid Uber driver for an exclusive clientele!

Childhood Home: Elmira
Present Home: St. Jacobs



Brenda Poole, 66

Retired after working at CIBC bank for 25 years and then financial industry at PIB in Elmira.

Childhood Home: St. Jacobs
Present Home: Elmira

Some of my favourite smells, sounds, tastes:

- Tastes: Starches, fats and salt, sadly...
- Smells: bookstores, lavender, freshly cut wood, my dog's fur (most of the time)
- Sounds: Music - most kinds, but especially the Big B's: Blues and Baroque
- Listening to birds chirping in the tree

- Wood burning fireplace (smell)
- Snap of a baseball in a glove (sound)
- Curry (taste)
- Fresh coffee (smell)
- Kids laughing (sound)
- Mint smoothie chocolate (taste)

- Smell of baked bread, lilacs and coffee
- Taste of chocolate and potato chips
- Sounds of children laughing and birds singing

Some things you may not know about me:

- My first name is Barbara.
- Learned oboe in high school.
- Spent most of my childhood summers at my grandparents' in Florida, with no beach in sight.
- When I joined the KW Philharmonic Choir at 15, I was the youngest member they had ever admitted - for about a year.

- I worked in a chocolate bar factory, a car assembly plant, the federal government, Blackberry, and a consulting company
- Squirrel once thanked me for saving its life
- I won a game of Catan in which Mark Diller Harder was playing too

- Started babysitting at age 11 for 25 cents/hr
- Played ringette for more than half a century and still play
- Hiked a volcano on St. Vincent island in Carribean
- Was a nanny in Munich, Germany for 1 year at age 18

Personality traits others would say I have:

- Stubborn
- Kind
- Smart
- Love animals
- Terrible housekeeper
- Over-joiner (I can easily over-schedule myself into exhaustion.)

- Funny
- Low-key cringe – no cap
- Calm
- Friendly
- Patient

- Energetic
- Active
- Kind
- Ambitious
- Caring
- Efficient

My interests include:

- Travel
- Family
- I am a "serial hobbyist." Over the years, I have taken on stamp collecting, secret codes, language learning, fibre crafts, paper crafts, gardening, genealogy... and MORE!

- Playing slo-pitch
- Participating in fantasy hockey and baseball
- Collecting hockey cards
- Reading
- Walking dog
- Watching kids' activities

- Cycling
- Camping
- Traveling
- Skating
- Serving on Social Committee at church
- Babysitting our grandchildren

Some favourite lifetime memories:

- The Tennessee Smoky Mountains on the way and from Florida. Its beauty moves me.
- Going to Walt Disney World as a family with Larry and our young daughters.
- Trip to Guatemala with a team from SJMC.
- Graduating from university at age 65.

- Birth of our kids, watching them grow
- Marrying Kristine
- Going to Hawaii and Easter Island
- Camping with family and friends
- Going to first Blue Jay game at Skydome
- Family road trips

- Hot air balloon ride over St. Jacobs area
- Our wedding day
- Our childrens' weddings
- Family vacations
- Camping
- Climbing trees as a child

Where I like to play or ponder:

- In bed before I fall asleep - it's such a safe and cozy place.
- In the car as a passenger on a road trip (IF I remember to bring my knitting).

- Baseball diamond
- Health Valley Trail in St Jacobs
- Road trips

- On the beach digging my feet in the sand
- In my backyard
- While walking on trails

Some items on my "Bucket List":

- Visit the Galapagos islands.
- Looking forward to a cruise to Alaska this summer with all our children and their spouses. (Sorry, environment.)
- Hoping to keep my eyes, brain and hands in operating order, so that I can craft and read into my 90s or higher.

- Travel in September
- Visit Japan with Kristine
- Go on an African safari

- Do an Alaska Cruise or land trip
- Visit Australia
- Learn to make cinnamon buns
- Hike in the Swiss Alps

MC Canada Thailand Trip

Som & Keo Phanpha

First of all, we want to thank God for his love, grace, mercy, goodness, and protection. And thank you for your prayers, love, and financial support for this trip. Our trip with MC Canada as peace theology training resource workers, according to the Anabaptist perspective, began in Chiang Mai, with AAMEN (Asia Anabaptist Mennonite Education Network) from October 31st to November 3rd. There were ten countries that came together as Asian Anabaptist churches (U.S. and Canada). My first peace training session was in Chiang Mai with friends of the Grace Church Network on November 3rd, 2025. I don't work for MC Canada but we partnered with them for this trip.



After that, we travelled to Roi Et province, and then to Ubon Ratchathani to meet with Tom & Christine Poovong, MC Canada witness workers. The next day, we headed to the Sisaket province with the MC Canada team for peace training. From there on, we trained with eight churches and met with nineteen pastors for church planning and missionary. During the peace training in Roi Et Grace Center, one person accepted Jesus as her Lord and saviour, and eight people committed to turning away from drugs and addictions.



There is still tension between Thailand and Cambodia, and they took us to see the site where a bomb hit the 7/11 store that killed ten people, which was only 8 km from the church where I was training. Our last peace training was in the Chonburi province. We got feedback from many churches in these provinces that they had never received this kind of training before. Anabaptist values bring stillness and calmness deep into our hearts. I have a lot of videos, but all in Thai!



Before my trip to Thailand, due to short budget, two trips to down south Songkhla Hat Yai where we were supposed to do peace training were cancelled. That was supposed to be our last trip in Thailand. However, God knew everything that would happen on this trip, and as many of you know, there was a big flood that hit this province. Thanks be to God! He knew every thing ahead of time. Glory to Him on high.



Peppy The Pew

Hi, my name is Peppy. I am one of the many pews in the sanctuary at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church. Yeah, yeah, I know *Peppy le Pew*...lol, but that's my name and I had it first. I am related to all the other pews at SJMC and some of them have odd names too. There is Bea Holder, Cheavy Bottoms, Long John Sliver, Elmer Wood, John Plank, Shelly Shellac and of course my uncle, Jack Sit. You don't know Jack Sit? That's okay, I know we all look alike to you. Oh, I should have told you I am a little knotty!

Speaking of all looking alike, we can't figure out why some of you seem to have a favourite pew. It appears to be based on location, location, location. Is that right? Some want to be on camera, some don't, and some feel they've found the sweet spot for the sound system. But we see your scowl when someone else is sitting in your special spot or the usher tries to put you into a spot you don't like. I say "we" since all we pews talk about all y'all. Well, not actually talk like you talk (and you talk a lot), but we do communicate. We have a lot to talk about too.

We talk about how we've been the stable constant of this church for over 100 years. We talk about how in years past some of us only sat men, some only women and children. A big day was when you installed cup holders onto us. We weren't really sure what they were until the first communion! We have heard many of you boast about how many cupholders you have in your vehicles and we're proud to say most of us have 8. We won't talk about the few "short benches" among us, since that's apparently politically incorrect. Can we call them "capacity challenged?" We talk about the "big switch" in 1976 when we were all turned around to face the other way. What was that all about? Something about the last shall be first and the first shall be last maybe? It seemed to upset some of you more than it did us. It was fun to be closer to new pew relatives for the last 50 years. Wow, 50 years. Time sure flies when you're just sitting around! We talk about the renovations of 2015, when we were all removed and given wonderful make-overs! That felt good, but we did lose a few relatives in that change. Rumour has it that some of us ended up in an antique shop in Clinton. I hope they all found a good home and none of us were cremated!

When we were rejuvenated, we were happy to see that some of our scars still showed. Occasionally little Johnny (statistically likely a Martin, Shantz, Brubacher or Klassen) would carve something into us with a pencil, pen or sharp object of some sort. Good thing you can't hear us when that happens! Not sure what the parents were doing while this was happening, but sometimes we know they were sleeping. 😊 Sometimes they looked like they were listening, but I think their minds were off somewhere else and



certainly not noticing the shenanigans. Some children lie on the ground under us, some stick their gum on us, and some run their toys over us. That tickles! Anyhow, we wear our scars proudly and continue to do our jobs.

Our "jobs" are to give you all a solid, relatively comfortable place to sit. We have done so for decades, and you seem to like us. We heard discussion of us being replaced by chairs, and although we don't want to be rude to those shiny, padded "non-pew" sitting devices, we are glad you kept us. Remember, you can lie down on a bench pew but not on chairs. And we like to think we are a bit nostalgic and have a lot of character.

We do hear a lot of great things. We hear wonderful music from children playing prelude to full-on orchestras. We hear amazing singing including four-part harmony right above us as you all sing along. I personally am not a fan of the rounds you do, but my cousin Elmer who is at the front says they sound amazing up there, so I'll have to take his word for it. Sometimes we hear some tense words. All in all, you seem to get along with each other most days. Most times we hear wonderful, inspiring words. We may not have souls but there's something that happens to me when I hear about that son of a carpenter, Jesus. Maybe it's the carpenter connection (we were created by Globe Furniture carpenters after all) but I feel all warm inside when I hear some words. Speaking of warm, we're not opposed to having cushions put on top of us since sometimes the sanctuary can get pretty cold, especially when you leave us alone all week. Now and again, you covered us with beautiful quilts and that was super nice!

Thanks for listening to me. I and my relatives are happy to do what we do and be a part of this place. I hope when you sit on us, you feel supported and somewhat comfortable, even if our old wood creaks and groans or is that your bodies?!?

By the way, when you have communion, the sound that all those little glass cups make being put into our tiny cup holders is funny to us too!

The best seat in the house,

Peppy the Pew

Advent Hope Served With a Side of Mystery

Kristine Clemmer

On a winter Saturday, December 6 at noon, SJMC's church basement looked unexpectedly radiant. Christmas lights looped across the ceiling and wrapped around the central pole, and Amanda and Hubert Chathi arranged the heavy banquet tables in a striking star-shaped formation.

Amanda, who surely doubled her step count before noon, tended to every detail with a simple goal: to awe every kid and to ensure the joy of Christ's welcome was felt, no matter what mystery appeared on their plate. Together with fellow youth sponsors Ashlinn and Devin, and a steady group of parents, they worked tirelessly to keep everything running smoothly throughout the afternoon.

At the heart of it all, SJMC pulled together a three-round mystery dinner featuring fifteen cleverly named items. Youth from Grades 5 through 12 blindly selected from a menu of puzzling item names—some offering a small hint (like *Decapitated Snowman* with its mashed-potato face), others giving no clue at all (*Fibre Fill*, *Dasher*, *Mistletoe Joe*).

I'm still not convinced half of the youth knew what they'd signed up for—but that was part of the mystery.

And surprises came.

Utensils arrived without food.

Food arrived without utensils.

Mashed potatoes appeared as the now-famous *Decapitated Snowman*—wide-eyed, carrot-nosed, tragic and hilarious.

For all the dramatic names, it was simply a turkey dinner—one that Amanda had thought through down to every last detail—arriving in whatever odd sequence the numbers allowed.

Dessert showed up in any round the numbers dictated: a snowy cupcake covered in mounds of white icing, topped with a three-and-a-half-inch Rice Krispie cone dipped in melted green chocolate and finished with sprinkles to represent a Christmas tree.

Meanwhile, what could have been pure chaos instead hummed along with surprising ease. Careful planning met a church-basement kitchen refined by generations—every utensil in its place, every pot exactly where you'd expect it. In a space built for feeding crowds, sponsors and parents found what they needed and kept everything moving.

Pastor Mark Diller-Harder, dressed in a tuxedo in preparation for high noon, moved easily among the youth—welcoming, joking, and connecting in the way he does so naturally. Pastor Kandace, radiant in her holiday dress, brought a calm warmth that anchored the room.

What stood out most was how the afternoon simply worked. People showed up, helped where needed, and cared that the experience mattered.

Although this article arrives well after Advent, the season's themes—*Great Expectations: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love*—still fit beautifully. There was waiting for a mystery to arrive. There was shared laughter around real tables. There was welcome, and simple joy showing up in unexpected ways. Youth and their friends, present in the same room, making memories and quietly building community.



Special Events @ SJMC



Advent



Christmas Eve Orchestra



Christmas Pageant



Senior Christmas Fun



Senior Christmas Potluck



Senior Christmas Potluck



Beyond Sunday Morning



Senior Games



Communion



Communion



Eternity Sunday Choir



Eternity Sunday



Out of the Boat



Scripture Drama



Pork Fundraiser



Menno Singers

Dear SJMC Family,

As I write this, my heart is full of gratitude and joy. I find myself echoing the words of Paul: *"I thank my God every time I remember you"* (Philippians 1:3).

Serving as pastor at GLMC while having SJMC walking alongside has been one of the great gifts of my ministry in the past 21 years. From the very beginning, you welcomed me not just as a partner in ministry, but as part of your family in this community. You shared not only ministry, but many other things as brothers and sisters in Christ—and that is something I will always treasure. I am thankful for the ways you shared news with us, cared deeply about one another, and created space at our partnership meetings to speak honestly about joys, challenges, and health concerns. Those gatherings were more than meetings—they were moments of mutual care, prayer, and trust.

I carry many joyful memories with me during these years; the event such as "Guess who's coming to dinner?", helping us to get to know more of the families at SJMC, providing meals for seniors as a sign of Christ's love, or supporting our egg roll sales. You never get bored to keep eating them! I am especially grateful that you generously allow Pastor Mark to help at the sale—your openness and generosity reflected the very heart of partnership. There was also so much joy in worship and fellowship together. Thank you sharing your pastors to preach at GLMC, to join together in pot-lucks, and to share life stories around the table. I will never forget the skits with Pastor Mark at the church picnic, the fun games, the laughter, and the sense that church can be both deeply faithful and wonderfully joyful.

From Vacation Bible School filled with energy and imagination, to picnics that felt more like family sponsorship reunions, to countless small acts of kindness—you reminded me again and again that the church is alive when people show up for one another with love and care.

Although my role as pastor at GLMC is changing, I am grateful to share that I will remain in the area as I step into my new role as Development Associate for AMBS and continue working as Regional Minister for MCEC. This is not goodbye forever but rather a transition in how we journey together for God's kingdom. Thank you for your trust, your partnership, your generosity, and your faithful ministries in Jesus Christ.

May SJMC continue to be a place where faith is nurtured, joy is shared, and God's love is made visible in both big moments and everyday acts of care. My prayer for you as Paul states, "The one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). I will always give thanks to God for you.

With deep appreciation and blessing,

Noel Masyawong



Caption Contest

I am trying a Caption Contest as a NEW feature in Life Together.

This is an example of how this could work.

Here is a picture taken in the fall of 2025 with some potential captions.

Possible Captions:

- “Now is that fall forward or fall back, I always forget?”
- “Dave, with time on his hands!”
- “Time flies if Dave drops it!”
- “Dave about to post his first Tik Tok!”
- “If I turn this clock to 11:15, then the preacher might stop talking!”



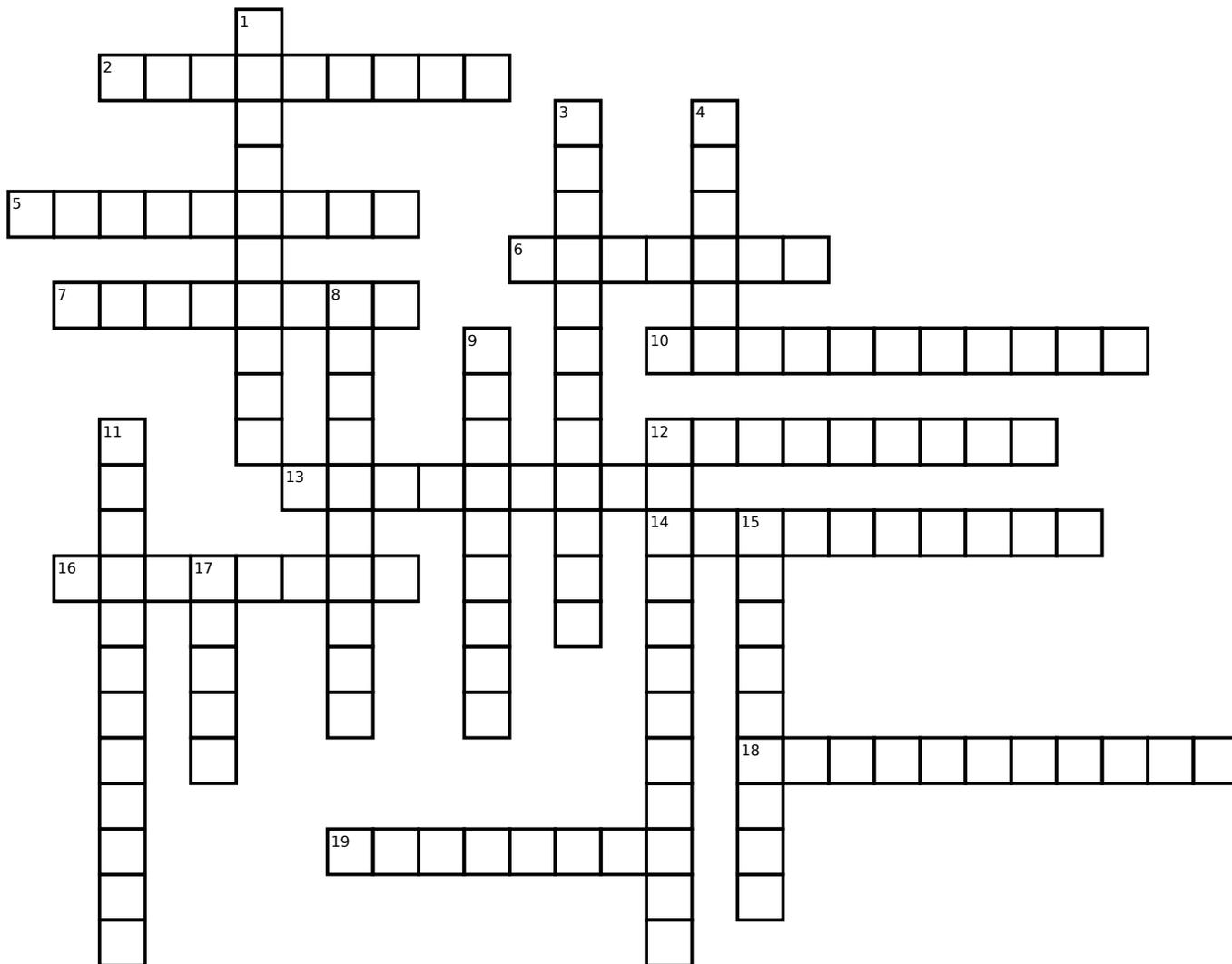
You get the idea – the funnier the better. Now it’s your turn with this picture:

Come up with your best funny caption for this picture and send it to me (Brent). Either email, phone me, put a note in my church mailbox or talk to me directly. I will pick the “winner” this first contest but after that the “winner” will pick the best caption in the next issue. I will publish the “winner” and best runners-up in the next issue as well. I am saying “winner” because you don’t actually win anything!



Nearby Places

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Down:

1. Home of Stemmler's Meats
3. Another flowery valley town
4. Home of the Syrup Festival
8. Home of the Mennonite Relief Sale
9. Sounds like a nice flowery valley
11. If you have a birthday from December to March
17. End of the middle Crowsfoot road

Across:

2. Named after a river and a Mennonite wagon
5. Renamed from BERLIN in 1916
6. Not WINDOW/QUEEN but similar
7. Home of Anna Mae's
10. Suburb of Yatton
12. Better place to live than SICKSLEY
13. Amalgamation of Galt and two other cities
14. A stereotypical Catholic village
16. The centre of the Universe (not Toronto)
18. Not FALCONTOWN but similar
19. 1815 Battle of _____