LIFE TOGETHER

St. Jacobs Mennonite Church www.sjmc.on.ca Fall 2026

Pastor's Pen

Mark Diller Harder

Communion Grape Juice





Have you ever wondered where our grape juice comes from for communion? Let me tell you a story.

For many years, we simply bought grape juice from a grocery store for our communion services. That worked great. BUT, there was one communion Sunday several years ago, when we realized after 9am, that no one had bought the grape juice. What to do! The service would start soon. I was sent out to find grape juice at the close-by Sobey's in Waterloo. Problem solved. Problem was, there was no grape juice at the store. It has become harder and harder to find actual grape juice sold in grocery stores. Everything has moved to mixed sugary fruit drinks, with real pure juices missing. So, that Sunday, we consumed a cranberry-grape drink mix from our little communion cups. Did people notice?

Out of that frantic experience, Rachel (on the communion committee) and I decided to bring our own canned grape juice in for communion. We have a grape canner and have often dripped out the juice into larger canning jars. Then one year, we noticed a big sign advertising fresh grape juice at the Old Older farm on Three Bridges Road, right across the road from our SJMC Cemetery. We checked it out. They had large 20 litre pails of fresh grape juiced already squeezed and ready to can. So, these are the jars of grape juice we now use regularly for communion.

A few weeks ago this fall, I drove out to that same farm to order another pail of grape juice. We are on the last jar at church, just enough for the Thanksgiving Earth Communion. I knocked on the door, and no-one answered. I would have to come back. But then as I started leaving the long driveway, out of the corner of my eye, I saw some women in the driving shed. I stopped and walked over. I started to hear women singing. I had stumbled upon an Old Order Widow's Gathering Hymn Sing! Soon I met the friendly familiar face of the woman who lives there and has always taken my orders. She knows by now that I am the pastor in St Jacobs. As she wrote down what I needed, she started asking me about when we have communion and what it looks like. She shared that they have communion twice a year, fall and spring, and that this very upcoming Sunday was their fall communion. She was concerned that the new grape juice wouldn't arrive in time for Thanksgiving, but I assured her we still had enough. In a previous visit, she had shared all about the funeral meal she had helped prepare. She is always interested in how we do church. The whole time I was there, I listened to

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Writers & Contributors



Brent Horst • Editor



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Janet Bauman



Leah Boehm



Marcia Shantz

Editorial

Fall has arrived with all its beauty, new beginnings and endings.

Mark gives us a view behind our Communion Grape Juice in his Pastor's Pen this issue. We said farewell to Kandace Boos and welcomed back Don Penner for now. Janet's congregational prayer on that occasion fit the season and the transition well. Bruce's contribution to another fall worship service on creation is also included for your thoughts.

Marcia reports on an SJMC group putting MCC Relief Kits together and Leah Boehm helps us to get to know Veronika better. Thank you Veronika for sharing so openly and trusting us with some of your story.

For fun, there are the answers to last issue's crossword and some photo captions. There were a lot of summer activities of our live together, and we've included photos of some of those good times.

I found something I wrote a few years ago, entitled "Nonsense?" It's one of my 1,000- word "word-picture" articles. What is on your heart, mind and soul? This congregational newsletter would be much better if more of you shared your stories, thoughts and wonderings. Please send to brent.horst@rogers.com or put in my church mailbox.

Thanks,

Brent

Thank You!

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

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about three or four hymns, sung by the widow's group in the background, all in full harmony. I commented on the beautiful singing, and she quipped, 'you should have been here on Sunday night for the youth hymn sing, with about 130 youth!' (15-25 years olds)

St Jacobs Mennonite and the local Old Order community do share a long history and origin, all starting from that Three Bridges cemetery location, going back to the late 1800's. It feels good to re-connect in this small way over communion juice. May the cup of blessings abound!



Special Events @ SJMC



Choir



Music Event

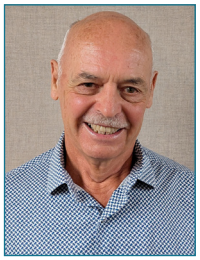


Peggy and Friends Final Song



SJMC Ladies Lunch

Life & Times



Laverne Brubacher, 82

Retired after 50 years involved in residential renovation business.

Childhood Home: Waterloo, ON
Present Home: St. Jacobs, ON



Sandra Mohr, 77

Retired.
Was a PSW for 18 years.

Childhood Home: St. Jacobs, ON
Present Home: St. Jacobs, ON



Micah Roth, 28

Attends day activities at Aldaview Services in New Hamburg; helps mom & Lily at home

Childhood Home: Waterloo, ON
Present Home: Waterloo, ON

Some of my favourite smells, sounds, tastes:

- Autumn leaves rustling
- Chicken thighs taste good
- Cab Sauv wine
- Cranberries
- Sushi
- Small of cedar wood being machined

- Campfire
- Flowers
- Birds
- At the beach
- Popcorn
- Chinese Food

- Chocolate
- Laughter
- Mom's potato salad
- Smell of baking desserts
- All kinds of music

Some things you may not know about me:

- Got a half cent for every mustard plant that I pulled on the farm.
- Sang in Schneider Male Chorus for 7 years in late 60's and early 70's
- Was treasurer and vice chair of the Mennonite Publishing House board for 6 years about 25 years ago
- Took night class alto saxophone lessons sometime in the 80's

- Started singing at age 3
- Took piano lessons
- Worked at Home Hardware for 6 years

- I go horseback riding at Pride Stables
- I can speak more than I let on
- I love dressing uo as a ghost for Hallowe'en
- Pastor Mark is my hero!

Personality traits others would say I have:

- Loyal
- Trustworthy
- Always on time
- Detail oriented
- Organizer
- Delegator

- Friendly
- Compassionate
- Approachable
- Big Heart

- Affectionate
- Goofy in a good way
- Funny / Good sense of humour
- Friendly
- Stubborn
- Warm hearted

My interests include:

- Gardening
- Golf
- Committee & Board involvement
- Playing bid euchre with my grandkids
- Skiing
- Reading

- Reading
- Knitting / Crochet
- Camping
- Coffee time with friends
- Like to travel

- Bowling with my friends
- Playing Bingo at Hillcrest Church
- Dancing
- Looking at photos of family and friends
- Watching videos including past services of SJMC
- Hanging out with my sister Lily

Some favourite lifetime memories:

- Myanmar bike trip with MEDA
- Growing zucca melons in my own garden when I was a kid
- Milk and cookies after walking home from school
- Family meal times
- Watching our family's lives unfold
- Our trip to Kenya in late 90's with 10 people to help build a church

- Getting married
- Having 2 children
- Trip to Alaska
- Meeting family in Germany

- Visitng family in Ohio at the farm
- Birthday celebrations - especially the cake
- Graduating from high school with special friends
- My guy's trip with Dad and Uncle Don

Where I like to play or ponder:

- Golf Course
- On my deck / garden
- Walking the trail behind my house

- At the trailer
- At the beach

- I like to play with my Aldaview friends
- With Lily - watching videos sitting on her bed

Some items on my "Bucket List":

- Keep walking
- Be involved in my community – helping others
- Watch the History Channel
- Discover more of Ontario

- Be around when my grandchildren get married

- Continue living the good life!

Working for Peace: MCC Relief Kits

Marcia Shantz



Stand at your bathroom sink vanity for a moment. Now, ponder not having access to hygiene items such as: toothbrush*, comb, nail clipper, towel, body soap (bar), laundry soap (bar), bandages, and feminine sanitary pads.

In March 2026, Pauline Martin (SJMC Office Administrator) received an email from Mennonite Central Committee Ontario expressing a dire concern: they had no relief kits (hygiene items) to ship to global areas for people in crisis whose lives have been disrupted by conflict, disaster or displacement. These relief kits send a tangible message that their needs are not forgotten.



Pauline forwarded the email request to a few of us. With Leadership Council's approval, we quickly initiated a 3-week offering project at SJMC to raise funds (not actual items). The week following Easter Sunday, SJMC had collected $5,950.00 in financial donations for MCC! THANK-YOU SJMC for your generosity! Buying in bulk by MCC is cost effective and uses standardized items to fill the buckets, efficiently — with no room to spare! It costs approximately (bulk costs) >$65.00 for one relief kit bucket's contents.



Then, on June 3rd, 16 SJMCers spent the afternoon at MCCO's New Hamburg Hub warehouse. Our main purpose was to assemble the relief kits, but first we were treated to a tour of the impressive warehouse facility — an organized feat! Thrift shop sorting and pricing for the thrift shop across the parking lot, comforter baling, meat canner, relief (hygiene) kits, school kits, and more+. Once we received our relief kit assembly training, we set to work. We worked diligently. We filled approximately 85 buckets! (*Due to strict customs regulations, toothpaste is no longer included.) I was very impressed with the MCC trainer and how he encouraged us to fill the buckets neatly and accurately (don't miss items), out of respect for the intended recipients.



But before we even got started, Marie & Ernie Fretz arrived that afternoon with their van brimming full with SJMC Women's knotted comforters. And before leaving MCC Hub that day, Karen and Stew Sauder filled their vehicle with quilt batting, provided by MCC, to take back to SJMC for more use in more comforter knotting by SJMC Women. (More knotters are always welcome. Contact the SJMC office or SJMC website to obtain the knotting schedule for 2026-27.)

It was a very good afternoon together and another tangible way for our congregation to work for peace in a purpose-filled way. May it be so.



To Pastor Kandice

On September 13 worship service we said farewell to Pastor Kandace Boos.

Litany of Release for Kandace Boos

Ryan Martin (LC Chair): Kandace, this morning, we want to officially release you as pastor here at St. Jacobs Mennonite. We have laughed and cried together, worshipped and prayed together, hoped and dreamed together, served and broke bread together. As your ministry among us comes to an end, we give thanks to God for your presence and ministry in this place.

Mark: As your pastoral colleagues, we recognize the ways that we have also learned and grown alongside you. We have been a team together, working through tough times and joyful celebrations as collaborative partners in ministry.

Janet: We have leaned on you and trusted you as we have worked together. You brought unique gifts to the team that made our shared ministry richer. Now we will miss your wisdom and your insights around our table.

Ryan: Kandace, with God's help, we release you from your pastoral responsibilities among us.

Kandace: As you release me, so I let go of all I have had the joy and privilege of holding and tending as one of your pastoral leaders. Thank you for the ways you have supported me and entrusted me with the sacred moments of your lives.

Stephanie: Kandace, as a congregation, we want to leave you with a parting gift as a way to say thank you and send you with our ongoing blessings and prayers.

Janet/Mark: We also have a gift for you Kandace (give gift from pastors).

We were able to connect with Phil Yordy, a local potter, who has closed his retail shop, but graciously gave us access to his remaining inventory.

It is called a "serving cluster", three bowls connected to each other at the centre, for serving dips and snacks. It has been a joy to be a "serving cluster" of three along with you, joined together as a team by our common ministry. May it remind you of the many gifts of ministry and friendship that you have to offer.

We welcome back Don Penner as a ¼ time interim pastor while we decide on our future pastoral needs as a congregation.







Congregational Prayer of Blessing (Janet Bauman)

God of all the seasons of life,
We stand on the threshold of the fall season
Saying hello and saying good-bye

We say good-bye to summer holidays
To carefree, lazy days
To times on porches and patios,
To decks and docks,
Picnics and beaches,
lakes and trails and bike paths

We say good-bye to summer camp
to canoeing and climbing and crafting
To campfire circles
We say good-bye to cottage days, and camping trips,
Traveling to see new places

Bless the gifts of our summer
The rest and relaxation,
The adventures and challenges
The growth and the learning–new confidence, team building skills
The friendships and the fellowship
The renewing of our relationship with you, God our creator,
And with the creation that sustains and inspires us.
May we all be refreshed and renewed, in body, mind and spirit, for the season ahead

We say hello to
Another year of learning and growing
Old friends and new friends
New classrooms and teachers
New grades and projects and challenges

We say hello to a return
To routines and schedules
To regular activities and programs

Bless our new beginnings
Bless classrooms and labs and co-op work placements students, teachers, professors
Homeschoolers and homelearners
Apprentices and mentors
Bless us with curiosity and wonder
May we be inspired to learn new things and grow
In a spirit of openness and creativity
So that our lives and our work reflect your goodness

We say hello
To the Season of Creation
New theme and focus in worship
We hear the call to renew our relationships
With you, God our Creator,
with the amazing Creation you have entrusted into our care
And with all the plants and creatures and people who share our common home

We say good-bye to old ways of thinking about the Earth
That it is ours to exploit and extract from
Without counting the cost
Teach us to love the Earth, teach us live sustainably, teach us to share and care with hearts of wonder and compassion

Bless our September beginnings at church
New seasons of learning and growing and discerning together
What it means to be disciples of Jesus
Bless this Season of Creation
Bless our Tending to Creation weekly activities
And bless our efforts to restore right relationships with the vast community of all creation

This morning we also say goodbye to Kandace
She has been pastor, confidant, friend, mentor
Artist, connector, team member, advocate, ally,
We give thanks for the ways she has blessed us and challenged us
Encouraged and supported us

Bless her in this time of change
We pray for her ongoing healing
For restored energy and creativity
May she be renewed and refreshed
As she says hello to a new season in her life

With gratitude we release her, and bless her.
And we ask you to bless her and her family
in this time of uncertainty and discernment
about what comes next and when
We pray that your Spirit will uphold her and fill her
Guide her and protect her on the next part of her journey.

We pray this all in your name,
AMEN

peace
BE WITH YOU

Getting to Know...



Leah Boehm

A pleasant afternoon visit allowed Veronika to share much of her life story. Veronika was born in the town of Kevelaer in West Germany, a strong Roman Catholic community of about 12000 people. The cathedral had tall, coloured windows and high ceilings creating wonderful acoustics for the 20-person choir which sang regularly.

Veronika was second oldest in a family of five girls and one brother. Growing up, there were constant fears as her father was a war veteran with PTSD, who was 75% injured both physically and mentally. His uncontrollable outbursts of anger and threats to kill all of them made them all fear him. He seemed to know he was a threat to his family and when these fits of anger hit him, he would isolate himself so as not to commit physical harm, but the mental trauma followed all through life. Unfortunately, there was no help, no counselling available at that time.

Veronika attended the local school to grade eight then to a school that was ten kilometers away in another town, Geldern, for grades nine to eleven. She was always a good student and really enjoyed math, a trait her father impressed upon her.

In 1964 the family came to Canada to find a better life, however, her father did not find fulfilment of his dream here and moved the family back to Germany. Veronika and one sister were left in Canada to sell the house and wind up any finances.

Veronika completed grade 12 and 13 in Canada and having excellent grades she was accepted to the Math department at University of Waterloo where she studied financial management. She got a job at Maple Leaf Limited as a financial manager in the poultry division.

She married a veterinarian in Guelph, Ontario and lived with him for 36 years despite much mental cruelty. She had one stillborn child and a miscarriage in her marriage. She has one son. It was watching this son grow up that made her stay in her marriage. When he had his education in finance, had a job, and was married, Veronika filed for divorce. She moved to Kitchener and bought a house.

Her son is employed as a director of a Pension Plan Operation, and lives in Thornhill with his wife. Their two sons age 20 and 22 are both studying at the University of Guelph; one is into engineering and the other into criminology.

Veronika started long distance running. She trained in the early mornings before work and at age 50 she ran a 42 km marathon in Ottawa. She continued to try new things and took a quilting class. She applicated and hand quilted a beautiful tree of life quilt which took her four years to complete. It is on her bed in her room.

After living in Kitchener for some time, a friend introduced her to a man that she thought would be a good partner for her. They met, dated and were married. She found this new relationship difficult as she was the sole financial provider. Two years later she filed for divorce, losing several thousand dollars to this man for the rest of his life.

Veronika had a bad fall at her house, breaking her arm and badly injuring her shoulder. A diagnosis of osteoporosis followed soon after. She was no longer able to do the heavy work of maintaining her home. She made the difficult decision to sell the house, give up her lovely garden and leave it all behind.

She chose St. Jacobs Place as her new home. Since there was no Roman Catholic Church here, she searched for a place of worship and a community who could accept her and of which she could feel she belonged.

She began regular attendance at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church. Here she found that which she had been searching for. She felt this is a welcoming, friendly, accepting community. The pastor visited her several times and was open, accepting and had charisma. She became a member of St Jacobs Mennonite Church several years ago.

Veronika has remained active at learning new things. She has taken flute and guitar lessons and enjoys playing her music. She shares this gift by performing at St. Jacobs Place from time to time.

Veronika stated she has learned a lot through hardship and life experiences and that has helped her to become a loving, caring person. She likes the town of St Jacobs as it reminds her of the town in Germany where she grew up. I hope she will always feel welcome and loved among us.

NONSENSE.

Brent Horst - August 2023

A penny for my thoughts? Or maybe five cents since the penny is no more? Keep your cents. I'll give you my thoughts for free. Because they make no sense. Nonsense you might say. Not worth even a penny much less five.

But first you tell me this! What is the sense in a baby created in love, living life in the womb for nine happy months and then when he is birthed into this world, he becomes still, no breath, just still. I held that baby, my grandson. Make some sense of that, will you, because I can't. What about the parents finding out their child's life is over due to drugs, or dying on the streets or by just giving up? What about those in institutions, living as patients not parents or children or siblings? Is this just fate, or God's will or just how life is…or is it nonsense? All of it.

What's the sense in having enough food to feed everyone, yet over a billion people go hungry every day. What about a climate that's changing because of our excessive consumerism, obsession for driving, flying, burning oil and using plastics once; plastic that lasts forever? What about the oppression and suppression by those who have taken power from the people they are to serve? What about those who hate another, just because of race or colour? What about all the wars? The wars of countries playing some deathly game of arm wrestling with guns, bombs, and missiles. Make some sense of that…please! It is all so overwhelming.

I think about these things; too much some days and I think that it just makes no sense. I can't make sense of it; can you? I hear people try to explain, justify, or rationalize but I don't get it. It's depressing when you think of it all. It feels so hopeless, so senseless and such a waste. Sometimes I just want to scream NONSENSE and sometimes I can't find my voice and just shake my head.

Then somehow, somewhere, I feel hope. I sense love. I see the light shining through the darkness. I see a crack in the crust of filth, and some light shines through. Just a bit at first and but then more and more until the light overcomes the darkness. Hope overrides despair. In these moments it may still not make sense, but it feels worthwhile. It feels important. It feels like my soul has been touched and awakened.

After that stillborn grandchild came six more living grandchildren. They don't replace. They aren't more or less important. They are each unique, created in love and with us in spirit or in body. The love for all seven is the most amazing, special love there is. Families do things and say things that make no sense. Nonsense is in abundance some days. Yet there is nothing stronger than family love for each other and I've seen it carry huge burdens, suffer great loss, and not just survive, but thrive. Deep grief comes from deep love. Deep love like that doesn't make any sense either. We just accept it, rejoice in it, bathe in it and work at sustaining it. I guess things that don't make sense to me are like that too. I just need to accept them, find something to be grateful about and allow it to wash over me without drowning my soul.

Wars break out but many are averted with diplomacy and a common will for peace. People care for each other during times of war. Many people who run institutions do it with such amazing kindness and love for those who live in their homes. Babies are born every day. A baby was born long ago in Bethlehem who brought new hope and represented LOVE from above. This makes no sense to my rational mind but feels true in my deepest being. Rainbows appear when they are needed most, Manna Moments (moments when God reaches out in tangible ways) happen frequently. We are surrounded by wonders of nature and amazing acts of humanity. We love and we are loved, even in the midst of all this nonsense. Tragedies and illnesses happen, and loss seems inevitable. It is truly better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all. Sounds like nonsense but you know it's true.

It's not really for me or you to make sense of everything that happens to us, to those we love or to anyone on this planet of ours. If I try to make sense of everything, then I have no faith. I have no understanding that love conquers all. I can't really explain love any more than I can explain much that happens to me and around me. Explain to me that feeling you had when you met your soulmate and when you both said "I do" to a life together. Explain to me the bond between parent and child. Explain to me the care and empathy we have for strangers in need. Explain the human spirit that survives Holocausts, disasters, and crises. We can't explain, we can only experience and marvel. I must live the good days, the bad days, the tragic days, and the most wonderful days. I must love unconditionally and be there for those I love and for those who love me. People do love me. God loves me. That makes no sense but feels so right.

I guess nonsense is not as bad as I thought. If everything made sense, there would be no mystery in life. There would be no need to support each other and be with another when we don't know what to do or say. There would be no wonder, no surprise, no unexpected joys and no sense of awe.

May nonsense abound in your life and mine. May we not just endure but flourish in the nonsense of life. Those are my thoughts for your penny. Here's a penny for yours.

Special Events @ SJMC



Baptism



Church Camping Campfire



Weiner Roast at Martin's



Church Camping Worship



Cluster Worship



Baby Dedication



Pam, Karen, Kevin & Stewart



Senior's Event



Grace Lao Picnic



Grace Lao Worship



Welcome Back Sunday



Grace Lao Worship



Doris Kramer Stone Sharing



July 19th Picnic

The trees are a *metaphor* for our transition from *life* to death to *life*.
Plants, before they die, spread *seeds* for new and abundant *growth*.
To bring in the *new*, you have to let go of the *old*.
We die to our sins so we can *live* by the mind of *Christ*.
Basically, our old self dies so that *God* can pick us up and carry us.

• Bruce Kleinknecht sharing during a worship service of the "God's Shalom for our Common Home" theme this fall.

Caption Contest ANSWERS

"Reverse Santa Visit?"

"Wolf Stew"

"Perhaps a little too much maple syrup, boys?!"

"Laurel and Hardy"

"Batman and Robin"

"Bert and Ernie"

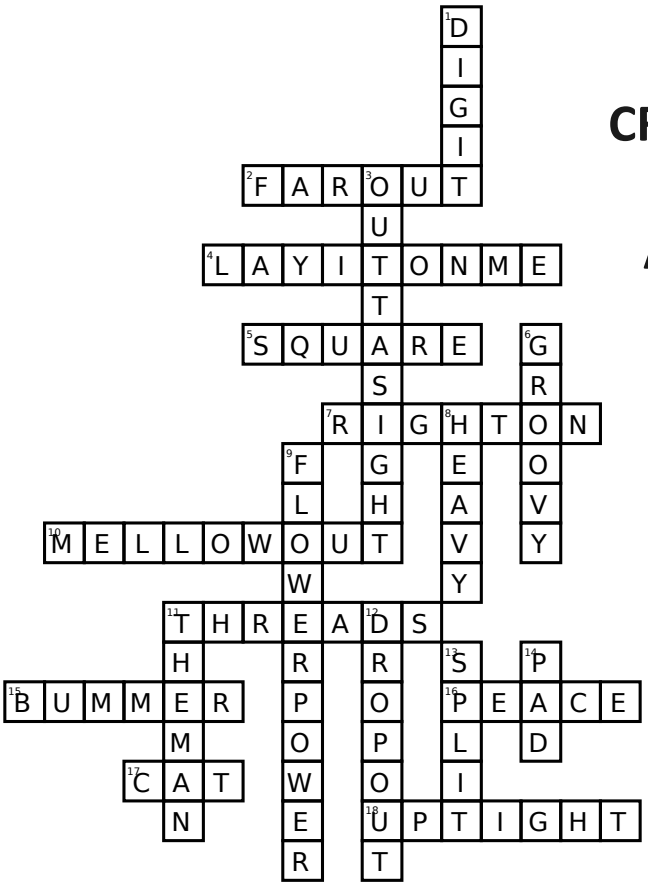
"Fred and Barney: Yabba Dabba Doo"

"Bob and Doug MacKenzie: where are your toques?"

"Vintage: chair and occupants"



60's CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS



Down:

1. Two words meaning to understand, appreciate or agree.
3. Two words for something amazing or fantastic
6. Fantastic, cool, or harmonious
8. Profound, deep or intense.
9. A phrase representing non-violent peaceful protest
11. Two words for authority figures or establishment
12. Refuse to conform with society
13. To leave, especially quickly or suddenly
14. House or apartment; place of residence

Across:

2. Two words for impressive, weird, or wonderful
4. Four words for asking someone to give information or opinions
5. Someone who isn't cool, implying conventional or old-fashioned attitudes
7. Two words as an exclamation of agreement or affirmation
10. Two words to calm down, relax, or go with the flow
11. Clothes, specifically stylish or unique ones
15. A disappointing situation or person
16. The word for two fingers in a V
17. A person (e.g. "cool ___")
18. Tense and unable to enjoy life; overly anxious or stressed