



# PORTABLE CMU

2021-2022



# PORTABLE CMU 2021-22

Believers in every time and context wrestle with how to be faithful to their Christian commitment. Portable CMU, offered by CMU faculty, affords opportunities for congregations to engage with questions of faithfulness in our time.

## Discover the Bible

### Engaging the Bible

Joyful Wrestling: The Art of Reading Scripture .....	6
Gerald Gerbrandt	
Deuteronomy as a Sermon for the Church Today .....	6
Gerald Gerbrandt	
Where the Human Heart and the Heart of God Meet: Exploring the Psalms .....	6
Pierre Gilbert	
<b>NEW</b> The Good News of Jesus According to Luke.....	7
Sheila Klassen-Wiebe	
<b>NEW</b> A Living Faith: Discipleship and the Letter of James.....	7
Sheila Klassen-Wiebe	
Studying the Bible Prayerfully .....	8
Andrew Dyck	
Choosing the Way of Life in an Age of Freedom: The Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament .....	8
Pierre Gilbert	
'Welcoming as Christ has Welcomed': Explorations in Paul's Letter to the Romans .....	8
Gordon Zerbe	
Philippians: Explorations in the Meaning of 'Citizenship' .....	9
Gordon Zerbe	
<b>The World of the Bible</b>	
Jews and Christians in a Roman World .....	9
Gordon Zerbe	
Refugees and Migrants in the Biblical Period .....	9
Gordon Zerbe	

## Understand the Church's Story

Who are "We"? – Mennonites and Anabaptists within a Global Church .....	10
Gerald Gerbrandt	
Denominations – Who Needs Them?.....	10
Gerald Gerbrandt	
Reformation Heirlooms .....	10
Andrew Dyck	
Four Theological Affirmations Amid the Challenges.....	11
Harry Huebner	
Making Sense of Martyrdom in our Time .....	11
Chris Huebner	
The Mennonite Brethren Story .....	11
Brian Froese	

## Being the Church in our Time

### Living Ethically

Being the Church Even When we Disagree .....	12
Wendy Kroeker	
Love (All) Your Neighbours .....	12
Delmar Epp	
The Good Life .....	12
Delmar Epp	
Pacifism: Can we Still Believe (Live) It? .....	13
Harry Huebner	
Human Sexuality, the Bible and the Life of the Church.....	13
Dan Epp-Tiessen or Irma Fast Dueck	

### Church Rituals and Practices

Church Practices and Christian Imagination .....	14
Irma Fast Dueck	
<b>NEW</b> Worship as the People's Work .....	14
Irma Fast Dueck	
Learning to Swim in the Waters of Baptism .....	14
Irma Fast Dueck	
<b>NEW</b> At Death's Door: Explorations in Death and Dying .....	15
Irma Fast Dueck	

Can Reading Be a *Spiritual* Discipline? ..... 15  
Paul Doerksen

**NEW** Handel's Messiah: Preaching or Entertainment ..... 15  
Dietrich Bartel

**Living our Faith**

Speaking of Jesus: Bearing Witness to our Experiences  
of Jesus Christ ..... 16  
Andrew Dyck

Being With God: Living Attentively ..... 16  
Andrew Dyck

The Problem of Prayer ..... 16  
Pierre Gilbert

Proclaiming Jesus Christ in a Religiously Plural World ..... 17  
Harry Huebner

Surviving and Thriving Despite Cancer (and other  
major life crises) ..... 17  
Dan Epp-Tiessen

**At the Intersection of Faith and Life**

Social Media: The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful ..... 17  
David Balzer

Death, Dying and the God of Life ..... 18  
Justin Neufeld

**NEW** Germinating Conversations:  
Justice, Sustainability, and our Food Systems..... 18  
Kenton Lobe

Creation, Ecology and the Bible ..... 18  
Dan Epp-Tiessen

Exploring the Refugee Challenge..... 19  
Stephanie Stobbe

You had to be there: A History of Humour, Laughter, and  
Comical Christianity ..... 19  
Brian Froese

# 2021-2022 PORTABLE CMU

The Portable CMU initiative, offered through The CMU Centre for Faith and Life, reflects the commitment of CMU faculty to resource and enliven the church's imagination, faith, and vocation.

## COVID-19 and Portable Format

COVID-19 is reshaping how we can be present with one another. For fall 2021, CMU will offer Portables only using the Zoom online format. A decision regarding the format for 22 winter-spring Portables will be made in fall 2021. Consideration will be based on pandemic and travel protocols across Canada, along with comfort levels for both CMU faculty and congregations. CMU will communicate with congregations once this decision has been made.

## Portable Options

Within the possibilities of a virtual format, congregations are asked to consider a Portable structure that works best in their setting. Options may include, though are not limited to, the following:

- Up to three ~one hour sessions offered over a week or on a week end (Friday-Saturday 'retreat', or all in one day)
- A ~one hour adult Bible study or Sunday School class, either on a one-time basis, or up to three sessions scheduled over a few weeks
- In some cases a CMU Portable may include a Sunday morning sermon (within a ~one-hour worship service)

## Discuss Format with Faculty

Regardless of form, it is essential that congregations be in direct conversation with the faculty member who is offering the Portable. Faculty want to tailor Portable options to the particular needs and interests of individual congregations, in ways that are also feasible for themselves. Please contact Hilda Nikkel to help facilitate this connection with CMU faculty.

# Online Portable Cost

- \$100 per session (Note: one CMU Portable session is equivalent to about 60 minutes of input and facilitation from faculty)

**For further information, to inquire about reserving a Portable, or to speak with a faculty member, please contact:**

**Hilda Nikkel**    Phone: 204.487.3300 ext. 651    Email: PortableCMU@cmu.ca  
Toll-free: 877.231.4570    Website: cmu.ca  
Fax: 204.487.3858

*Please call early to make a booking since some offerings will be in high demand.  
We welcome bookings both by individual congregations and by two or more congregations working in cooperation.*

# PORTABLE CMU COURSES

Believers in every time and context wrestle with how to be faithful to their Christian commitment. Portable CMU, offered by CMU faculty, affords opportunities for congregations to engage with questions of faithfulness in our time.

## Discover the Bible

### Engaging the Bible

---

#### Joyful Wrestling: The Art of Reading Scripture

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

##### **Gerald Gerbrandt, President Emeritus & Professor Emeritus of Bible**

It is the faith of the church that through Scripture God speaks to us. But all too often when we read Scripture, we hear ourselves rather than God. A fundamental need in the church today is to learn again how to read Scripture. The church must learn “afresh to acknowledge the Bible as the functional center of life, so that in all our conversations, deliberations, arguments, and programs, we are continually reoriented to the demands and promises of the Scriptures.” (Ellen Davis). This Portable will consider what factors and assumptions undermine hearing the God of Scripture, and how we might read it again with integrity and effect, keeping in mind two themes: 1) that reading the Bible can be a *delight and joy*, and 2) that at the same time, it inevitably is a *struggle or wrestling match*.

#### Deuteronomy as a Sermon for the Church Today

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

##### **Gerald Gerbrandt, President Emeritus & Professor Emeritus of Bible**

As Israel prepares to enter the Promised Land, Moses presents guidelines for how to live in that land in a way that can lead to blessing. The land may be an unmerited gift, but at the same time, living in the land entails responsibilities, with the potential of losing the land. In what way might these guidelines inform the church of today, and how we live together in our community?

#### Where the Human Heart and the Heart of God Meet: Exploring the Psalms

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

##### **Pierre Gilbert, Associate Professor of Bible and Theology**

The book of Psalms is about the heart. In the Psalter, we find no stories, little dogmatic teaching, and no sustained appeals to embrace the faith. While there is no



shortage of ideas to analyze and dissect, it represents first and foremost a place where the human heart and the heart of God meet. The Psalms provide a framework for the believer and God to relate to each other. The Psalms supply words and emotions to facilitate the interaction between humans and God. Nothing is off-limits: joy, praise, wonder, trust, confidence, sadness, guilt, regret, distress, even red-hot, blinding anger are on the menu. As long as there is humble faith and sincerity, the Psalms will accommodate the whole range of human emotion and experience, thereby enabling the man or the woman of faith to encounter the living God.

## **NEW** The Good News of Jesus According to Luke

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

**Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, Associate Professor of New Testament**

All four Gospels tell the story of Jesus. This Portable will look at Luke's distinctive version of that story, with attention to several of the Gospel's characteristic themes and unique texts. We will explore Luke's understanding of the salvation Jesus brings, Jesus' practice of table fellowship, and the Gospel's strong emphasis on discipleship and wealth. Depending on the season of the church year and congregational interest, we could also explore Luke's distinctive presentation of Jesus' birth, his death, or his resurrection. Our study will lead us to a renewed appreciation for the significance of Luke's portrait of Jesus for the church today.

## **NEW** A Living Faith: Discipleship and the Letter of James

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

**Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, Associate Professor of New Testament**

Even though Martin Luther called the letter of James an "epistle of straw," this book of the Bible continues to be a favourite for many Christians. With its vivid imagery and straightforward instruction, the letter of James makes Christian faith practical and relevant for daily life. And yet, living out the vision of Christian discipleship set out by James is anything but easy or simple. Many Christians wrestle with where to find grace and where to find Jesus in this short instructive letter. In this portable we will begin with an overview of the book and a look at its historical context and literary background. Most of our time will be spent studying some of the following key themes in the letter: speech, perfection, wisdom, friendship with God, anger, wealth, and faith in action. Our aim will always be to reflect on how this letter can and does shape faithful Christian discipleship today. In the process we will find Jesus in the letter as well!

## Studying the Bible Prayerfully

*(available fall 2021)*

**Andrew Dyck, Assistant Professor of Ministry Studies**

What's the interplay between *reading* the Bible and *being read by* the Bible? How can we approach the Bible through prayer? Andrew Dyck recommends two practices for studying the Bible prayerfully: *lectio divina* and *imaginative gospel contemplation* (from the booklet *A Lifelong Apprenticeship: Study Guide for Growing Disciples* by Cam Stuart). These practices can help people hear and be trained by God's Word. Andrew's presentation will include a scriptural basis for each approach and give time for participants to practice "prayer without ceasing" as they study the Bible. Both *lectio divina* and *imaginative gospel contemplation* can be practiced by individuals during their personal quiet times, or by small groups meeting together.

## Choosing the Way of Life in an Age of Freedom: The Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

**Pierre Gilbert, Associate Professor of Bible and Theology**

How can we communicate the Christian faith in a society where most people no longer recognize the authority of Scripture and tend to be cynical of organized religion? The wisdom books of the Old Testament (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon) can provide a fresh perspective on that question. Wisdom writings were intentionally designed to address an audience, which like today, was faced with a multiplicity of options, was cynical towards the faith, and would not be coerced by tradition. In this respect, wisdom teachers did not attempt to impose an opinion, but extended a vibrant invitation to consider what gives significance to human existence from the perspective of faith. To a generation like ours that is struggling with purpose and meaning, the wisdom books offer a wonderful way to discover the Way of Life that is to be found only in Jesus Christ, the power and the wisdom of God.

## 'Welcoming as Christ has Welcomed': Explorations in Paul's Letter to the Romans

*(available fall, winter 2021-2022)*

**Gordon Zerbe, Professor of New Testament**

Everything in Romans leads up to the closing exhortation: "Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you" (Rom. 15:7). Indeed, Paul makes the claim that "loving the neighbour" (*philadelphia*) extends to "loving the stranger/foreigner" (*philoxenia*). What were the issues that prompted this concluding challenge and the letter as a whole? What theological perspectives does Paul present in support

of this counsel? What guidance might Paul's theology and instruction have for Jesus followers today when it comes to our own practices of welcome, especially around issues that divide, or in extending hospitality to outsiders?

## Philippians: Explorations in the meaning of 'Citizenship'

*(available fall, winter 2021-2022)*

### **Gordon Zerbe, Professor of New Testament**

One of the central themes of Paul's letter to Philippi is that of citizenship: its character, privileges, and responsibilities. By entering into the political, social, and religious world of Paul and the congregation in Philippi, we will seek insight into how Paul consoled and challenged that congregation, and what relevance that message has for Jesus-loyalists today. (Zerbe is the author of the recently released commentary on Philippians in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series sponsored by Mennonite churches.)

## The World of the Bible

---

### Jews and Christians in a Roman World

*(available fall, winter 2021-2022)*

### **Gordon Zerbe, Professor of New Testament**

How did 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' slowly consolidate as separate and (often) mutually hostile movements in the years after the time of Jesus? How did Jews and Christians begin to understand their identities in relation to each other, and as they both navigated the challenges of a world politically dominated by Rome and culturally oriented to Greece? This Portable begins by exploring the complexities of "second temple Judaism" and Jewish migrant (diaspora) experiences in the Greek and Roman worlds, and then reviews how the Jesus movement arose in this context, eventually emerging as a movement painfully divorced from 'Judaism.'

### Refugees and Migrants in the Biblical Period

*(available fall, winter 2021-2022)*

### **Gordon Zerbe, Professor of New Testament**

Migrant experience is at the core of the biblical narrative, in the context of turbulent political and economic circumstances. This Portable will identify and explore crucial episodes in that story, reflect on analogies with our own time, and consider the call to "love the foreigner," the New Testament's word for "hospitality."

# Understand the Church's Story

## Who Are “We”? - Mennonites and Anabaptists within a Global Church

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

**Gerald Gerbrandt, President Emeritus & Professor Emeritus of Bible**

A common discussion among us is whether to use the term “Mennonite” or “Anabaptist” for ourselves. Or even, whether either term remains helpful or relevant. How do we understand ourselves, and speak of ourselves, within this tradition? And how might we relate that understanding to our larger identity as Christians? This Portable will consider who we are, our story and theological emphases, how to understand ourselves in relation to these two terms, and how we are part of a particular tradition as well as part of the global Church.

## Denominations: Who Needs Them?

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

**Gerald Gerbrandt, President Emeritus & Professor Emeritus of Bible**

Denominations have become a standard feature of North American church reality, mediating between the local congregation and the global church. In this Portable, questions like the following will be considered: Are denominations a necessary element of church life, with a positive role to play? Or are they a distraction and waste, weakening the larger mission of the church? What are the strengths and weaknesses of placing primary emphasis on the local congregation?

## Reformation Heirlooms

*(available fall 2021)*

**Andrew Dyck, Assistant Professor of Christian Spirituality and**

**Pastoral Ministry**

A philosopher once said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” The church needs to learn from the past, while being open to what God is doing today. This sermon series highlights three central contributions from the Protestant Reformers and early Anabaptists. Although these two groups had agreements and disagreements, their contributions remain vital for today's church: living faith, welcoming God's word, and Holy Spirit-ed singing. Andrew draws on scripture, stories and songs for this Portable, originally framed as a series of sermons. A discussion time could be added after these presentations.

## Four Theological Affirmations Amid the Challenges

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

**Harry Huebner, Professor Emeritus of Theology and Philosophy & Director of International and Inter-Faith Theological Initiatives**

The church is a community of faith. These presentations will explore some of the basic beliefs that distinguish the church as a believing people. The themes selected are: God / incarnation; creation / fall / redemption; sin / salvation; and being human / living the mystery.

## Making Sense of Martyrdom in our Time

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

**Chris Huebner, Associate Professor of Theology and Philosophy**

Contemporary Mennonites often have trouble knowing what to make of the scenes of suffering and gratuitous violence collected in the *Martyrs Mirror*. For the generations of Mennonites who have grown to think of themselves as pacifists, it is often felt that these stories of violence are better off left behind in order to focus on more “positive” examples of peace and faithful witness. This set of presentations refrains from such an impulse and seeks instead to understand the *Martyrs Mirror* and other early Anabaptist martyrologies in their own terms. Together we will explore what we, in contemporary Mennonite church contexts, can gain from understanding what these Anabaptist martyrs were up to. Special attention will be given to wartistic and literary depictions of Anabaptist martyrs in relation to early Christian, medieval, early modern, and contemporary representations of martyrdom.

## The Mennonite Brethren Story

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

**Brian Froese, Associate Professor of History**

This Portable provides an orientation to the historical experience, denominational identity, and contemporary priorities and challenges of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Beginning with a brief historical exploration of the origins and development of the 16th-century Anabaptist movement, and the subsequent development of the Mennonite Church within the wider context of Protestantism in Europe, special attention is given to the origin and growth of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia, North America, and its emergence as a global movement during the 20th century. The historical survey will serve as the backdrop against which to interpret cultural, theological and sociological forces, and factors that shaped Mennonite Brethren faith and life, theology, worship, ecclesiology, and ethics.

# Being the Church in our Time

## Living Ethically

---

### Being the Church Even When We Disagree

*(available fall 2021)*

**Wendy Kroeker, Instructor of Peace & Conflict Transformation Studies and Co-Director of Canadian School of Peacebuilding**

Conflict is a normal and inevitable part of congregational life and yet many feel ill-prepared to handle conflict in the church and choose to avoid working with it. The conflict can emerge from changing times, diverse expectations, differing styles of leadership, or disagreement over theological issues. This portable will explore some of the root causes of conflict and its impacts on interpersonal dynamics in the community. As well, various models for working with conflict and transforming conflict will be presented. Some topics will include approaches for handling difficult persons and conversations, styles of conflict, and communication skills for enhancing interactions. Learning methods will utilize presentations, participatory activities, and small/large group discussions.

### Love (All) Your Neighbours

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

**Delmar Epp, Associate Professor of Psychology**

Today's churches seek to build community in the face of increasing diversity, both within our congregations, and in our broader contexts. Yet there often exists an anxiety over opening our doors to change, and our culture promotes a need for protection and isolation from those outside our circles. Working from a social-psychological perspective, we will explore the origins of prejudice, the variation in people's prejudicial attitudes and behaviours, and the potential to transform relations among people who differ.

**Possible sessions:**

- Habits of Mind
- The Need for Prejudice
- Our Response

**Meditation:** "Who is my Neighbor?"

### The Good Life

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

**Delmar Epp, Associate Professor of Psychology**

In this series, we explore aspects of the good life from the perspective of Positive Psychology, in light of Christian faith. Positive Psychology asks how people can be happier, live more fulfilling, productive, meaningful lives, and demonstrates

through research that the emphases we find in Christian communities, on relationship, forgiveness, hope, gratitude, etc. really do lead to increases in our physical and psychological health, and to a sense of meaning in life.

### Sessions

- ***The Good Life I: Happy are those...***

We explore worldview assumptions of Positive Psychology and Christian theology, and find competing ideas, but many points of contact. We consider the goal of happiness in its varied meanings.

- ***The Good Life II: Living Well***

We focus on Positive Psychology's goals and emphases in building resilience and strengths of character, emphasizing virtues and their practice to find common ground with Jesus' teaching.

- ***Meditation: Flourishing in Faith***

## Pacifism: Can we still believe (live) it?

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Harry Huebner, Professor Emeritus of Theology and Philosophy & Director of International and Inter-Faith Theological Initiatives**

These sessions will focus on how to understand Anabaptist/Mennonite pacifism. We will ask whether it is still believable or whether we need to make adjustments in light of our new best insights. The first session will review the Anabaptist/Mennonite understanding of the peace position in general; the second will focus on the current challenges and the biblical political theology presupposed by pacifism; and the third will look at how pacifists might live today in light of our violent society. How can we make a difference? Although some parts will be in the form of theological reflection many stories will be told drawing on the presenter's experiences of peacemaking. The Sunday morning sermon will be entitled "Peace: The Desire of God."

## Human Sexuality, the Bible and the Life of the Church

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Dan Epp-Tiessen, Associate Professor of Bible or Irma Fast Dueck, Associate Professor of Practical Theology**

Many congregations desire sound Biblical reflection and honest conversation about human sexuality, particularly given the church's strain related to LGBTQ questions and issues. Several CMU faculty have addressed these themes from various perspectives and in different contexts. These faculty are willing to walk with congregations in a portable or workshop format focused on how understandings of Scripture, Confessions of Faith, the church, family, relationships, and gender can inform our own convictions and questions about sexuality. Congregations may choose to invite one or more faculty-based on the issues and questions most relevant to their context. Please communicate your congregational interest and to the extent possible, CMU will work with you to shape a portable or workshop most appropriate to your setting and need.

# Rituals and Practices

---

## Church Practices and the Christian Imagination

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Irma Fast Dueck, Associate Professor of Practical Theology**

The most vital and subtle lessons of the Christian faith and life are conveyed in the practices, rituals, and gestures that the church engages in. What makes them powerful is that they are embodied theology that refuses to separate the mind, heart and body. The practices of the church function as a prism, enabling Christians to view the world with a particular imaginative lens—at their best, with the imagination of Christ. This Portable will examine particular practices of the church and see what they reveal about what it means to be Christian and part of the Body of Christ. Special attention can be given to practices such as baptism, communion, healing, Sabbath, weddings, and funerals.

## NEW Worship as the People's Work

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Irma Fast Dueck, Associate Professor of Practical Theology**

The word “liturgy” comes from the ancient Greek word “leitourgia” which means “the people’s work.” At its simplest, worship is something we do (vs. something we go to or something that is done to us). Worship is a spiritual practice. Issues addressed will include how we grow in our practice of worship, what worship reveals to us about what it means to be the church, how we live as disciples, and how to engage in mission.

**Audience:** This CMU Portable may be developed with the whole church in mind or it may be tailored specifically to worship leaders, planners, and pastors.

**Link to Voices Together:** This CMU Portable can also be developed to include an exploration of worship through an introduction to Mennonite Church Canada’s newest worship book, *Voices Together*. This would include an additional music resource person and the cost of those sessions would double.

## Learning to Swim in the Waters of Baptism

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Irma Fast Dueck, Associate Professor of Practical Theology**

Baptism is an important Christian practice which, at its root, gives witness to our faith and brings us into the Christian community. In the history of Christianity, this simple pouring or immersing in water in the name of the Trinity has been a defining act of witnessing to faith. Despite its central role through the centuries, Christians have had to consider anew the meaning of the practice both for those being baptized and for the church. This Portable dives into the waters of baptism and explores the Biblical and theological story that shapes the practice. It focuses



on contemporary questions connected to baptism including: Why are so many self-identifying Christians not baptized? What makes it hard to receive baptism? What is the nature of the tension between baptism, the practice of communion, and church membership—and how do we negotiate it? Should baptism be understood more as an expression of God’s claim upon the person or a sign of participation in the body of Christ, the church? Specific topics and themes connected to baptism can be negotiated according to a group’s interests and concerns.

## **NEW** At Death’s Door: Explorations in Death and Dying

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Irma Fast Dueck, Associate Professor of Practical Theology**

This Portable will explore death and dying, with the assumption that our understanding of death is bound up with our understanding of life and what it means to live and be alive. We will explore death and dying in the Christian imagination. We will reflect on understandings of mortality, and the ways we avoid it, how we cope with it, and the ways life is valued and affirmed through accepting death. This Portable can be shaped around the interests of congregations and can be designed around more specific age groups (for example, youth, young adults), though an intergenerational setting is generally assumed. Possible themes such as dying well, ritualizing death, grief, contemporary death culture, and ethical issues connected to death and dying, can be considered.

## **Can Reading Be a Spiritual Discipline?**

*(available fall 2021)*

### **Paul Doerksen, Associate Professor of Theology**

Reading plunges us into a spiritual paradox, reminding us of our isolation and our connection to others and to God (Daniel Coleman). If this is true, reading literature as well as religious writing, done with ‘intelligent charity,’ should be understood as a spiritual discipline with edifying possibilities for a shared life of Christian faith. To that end, this Portable affords the opportunity to read selected literature and theological writings in order to bring them into constructive conversation, as spiritual discipline.

## **NEW** Handel’s Messiah: Preaching or Entertainment

*(available fall 2021)*

### **Dietrich Bartel, Professor Emeritus of Music**

For over 250 years, audiences around the world have been flocking to churches and concert halls to listen to Handel’s oratorio Messiah. What makes this work so compelling, enduring, and popular for such a wide range of a listening audience, whether they are “churched” or not? We will explore Handel’s world and the beginnings of this piece, its rise to the most popular and widely listened to oratorio ever written, and look at how Handel delivers the message of the chosen Biblical texts.

# Living our Faith

---

## Speaking of Jesus: Bearing Witness to Our Experiences of Jesus Christ

*(available fall 2021)*

### **Andrew Dyck, Assistant Professor of Ministry Studies**

Participants will be guided into a conversation about the pitfalls and possibilities of speaking about Jesus with friends, neighbours, and colleagues. The following questions will be considered. What are our own experiences of knowing Jesus? Where and when do we hear people talking about Jesus? What can we promise to people who trust Jesus?

## Being with God: Living Attentively

*(available fall 2021)*

### **Andrew Dyck, Assistant Professor of Ministry Studies**

Christians have often emphasized having a personal daily “Quiet Time” for reading the Bible, reflecting, and praying. A Quiet Time can, however, become so filled with activity that it no longer includes quietness for paying attention to God’s still small voice. People reasonably ask whether it is possible to hear God’s voice, or whether God still communicates to people. This workshop can help set you on a path towards a conversational relationship with Jesus by means of teachings from scripture and experience, and by practicing stillness and “sacred reading” of Scripture (i.e. *lectio divina*). *(Suitable for a workshop of up to 5 hours.)*

## The Problem of Prayer

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Pierre Gilbert, Associate Professor of Bible and Theology**

Prayer can be a very confounding practice. Why do we pray? Why do we often have the impression that God doesn’t answer our prayers? Does prayer really make a difference? We will explore this question by first examining the Lord’s Prayer as found in Matthew 6:9-13. Second, we will look at the flipside of the issue and consider what happens when God does indeed answer our prayers, but in ways we didn’t expect. Habakkuk, a seventh-Century prophet, once received an answer to an urgent prayer. But God’s response shocked him...*beware what you pray for...* Matthew 6:9-13 and the book of Habakkuk will provide a foundation for understanding more adequately the nature of prayer and will give us some insights into the basic principles we need to take into account as we anticipate God’s response.

## Proclaiming Jesus Christ in a Religiously Plural World

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Harry Huebner, Professor Emeritus of Theology and Philosophy & Director of International and Inter-Faith Theological Initiatives**

My own inter-religious experience began in the 1980s when I lived in Jerusalem working with MCC. There, for the first time in my life, I met Jewish and Muslim believers who became personal friends. More recently I have become deeply involved in Mennonite-Christian and Shia-Muslim theological dialogue. I am often asked whether I am able to share my faith that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour in these settings. This portable is designed to address questions related to serious interfaith engagement. Does this require compromise with one's own faith? Does this mean that we can speak only of our agreements and not our differences? Can one be deeply and authentically Christian in such contexts? I am also asked how I am able to take the Muslim faith seriously when there are people who terrorize and kill others in the name of this faith. Hence, the portable will also give some content and history to Islam and its radical fringes.

## Surviving and Thriving Despite Cancer (and other major life crises)

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Dan Epp-Tiessen, Associate Professor of Bible**

Dan and his wife Esther are both double cancer survivors, and they had a son, Tim, who did not survive cancer. Dan shares stories of what it is like to be a family that “does” cancer, and he explores the biblical and faith resources that have sustained him and Esther, and helped them not only survive but thrive, despite their journeys with cancer, loss, and grief. Dan's hope is that these biblical and theological resources will comfort and strengthen persons who are hurting, and will prepare others for the pain and struggle that come with the territory of being human.

## At the Intersection of Faith and Life

---

## Social Media: The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful

*(available winter, spring 2022)*

### **David Balzer, Assistant Professor of Communications and Media**

We live in a media-saturated society, from personal smartphones to home-theatre sized TVs, to 24/7 Internet connections, to church-based Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. All of these provoke us to adopt, adapt or reject technology and media. This portable examines the opportunities and challenges of living in a mediated society. Is there a biblical mandate to engage new technologies? How do we discern the media messages that shape our reality? How might individuals, local churches, and families foster media-related practices that are life-giving?

## Death, Dying, and the God of Life

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Justin A Neufeld, Instructor of Philosophy and Theology**

In 2015 the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the ban on physician assisted suicide (physician assisted dying), ruling that the ban violates the right to life, liberty, and security of the person granted by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In this portable we will engage the legal, medical, cultural, and theological issues surrounding physician assisted death. Through the examination of these several layers, this Portable hopes to facilitate in-depth congregational engagement on how Christians and the church can faithfully follow the God of life even in the midst of suffering, sickness, and death.

## NEW Germinating Conversations: Justice, Sustainability, and our Food Systems

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Kenton Lobe, Teaching Assistant Professor, International Development and Environmental Studies**

In an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, more than 860 million people remain malnourished and just over 1 billion are obese. This, while evidence of the ecological impacts of our food system on biodiversity, water, seeds, soil, climate, and the land continues to rise. This CMU Portable will explore food system dynamics at different scales, from the household to the global, with particular attention to the diversity of perspectives that underpin current conversations surrounding ecological sustainability, food security, and food justice. We will follow food from the soil, the farms, and the fishing boats, through global and local marketplaces and finally to those who eat.

## Creation, Ecology, and the Bible

*(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)*

### **Dan Epp-Tiessen, Associate Professor of Bible**

Human-caused ecological destruction is the greatest threat currently facing the planet and its many life forms. This Portable explores a variety of biblical texts that can inspire respect and proper care for God's magnificent creation. Some of the topics covered will be: what kind of world does God create and what are the implications for human action; creation's praise of God and God's delight in creation; Jesus as the Cosmic Christ through whom God brings healing not just to humans but to all of creation; why do many Christians believe the Bible teaches that creation is expendable and merely a backdrop to the divine-human relationship.

## Exploring the Refugee Challenge

(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)

### **Stephanie Stobbe, Associate Professor of Conflict Resolution Studies**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Global Trends Reports continue to document unprecedented numbers of forcibly displaced people worldwide due to war, conflict, and persecution. The international community continues to struggle with how to assist refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people. Approximately one percent of refugees under UNHCR mandate are resettled in third countries. From an interdisciplinary perspective, we will explore how local communities, such as churches and other groups, can be effective in the resettlement and integration of refugees by listening and sharing stories of refugee and sponsor experiences. Through various cultural lenses we can discuss conflicts that might occur and ways of constructively addressing them; and the importance of material, psychological, and social support needed to build relationships for successful integration.

## You had to be there: A History of Humour, Laughter, and Comical Christianity

(available fall, winter, spring 2021-2022)

### **Brian Froese, Associate Professor of History**

Laughing, joke telling, cartoons and humour in general has played a vital part of human history for entertainment, teaching, fomenting revolution, dismissing opponents, and for many other reasons. In this portable we will explore four selected episodes in church history that underscore the role of humour in the development of Christianity in terms of theology, day-to-day experiences, and critique. Humour may be the best medicine, but it is fine history, too.

- 1) Introduction, and “What have the Romans ever done for us?”  
Humour in the Early Church Era
- 2) An Early Modern Late Show: Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*
- 3) Mere Mirth: C.S. Lewis and Laughter
- 4) A Comical Gospel: Sarah’s Laughter and Foolishness in Corinth

The CMU Centre for Faith and Life connects individuals, congregations, and the broader community to opportunities and resources focused on strengthening ministry capacity, theological reflection, and faith-filled living.

Go to [cmu.ca/cfl](http://cmu.ca/cfl) to learn more about each unique event and resource.

## FOR PASTORS AND MINISTRY LEADERS

---

ReNew: Resourcing Pastors for Ministry

Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology

Direction Journal

Unique workshops for pastors and congregational leaders

## EVENTS FOR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

---

Face2Face: Community in Conversation

Xplore: Keep Thinking – A 55-Plus Enrichment Program

CMU Vespers

The J.J. Thiessen Lecture Series

Other public lectures

## RESOURCES FOR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

---

CommonWord: Bookstore and Resource Centre

CMU Press

Sunday@CMU

re:Worship – Resources and reflections for worship planners and leaders

Canadian Mennonite University Library

Choral Music Lending Library

## FOR CURRENT STUDENTS

---

Office of Ministry Inquiry

Pastor-in-residence



---

## Mission Statement:

Canadian Mennonite University is an innovative Christian university, rooted in the Anabaptist faith tradition, moved and transformed by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Through teaching, research, and service, CMU inspires and equips women and men for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.



500 Shaftesbury Blvd. | Winnipeg, MB | R3P 2N2  
ph. 204.487.3300 | toll-free 877.231.4570 | fax 204.486.3858

[cmu.ca](http://cmu.ca)