

Nicole Brenneman's Reflection

I want to begin by saying how thankful I am to have been so warmly welcomed and cared for here at Nutana Mennonite.

My church experience began with Tristan and the Brenneman family. Newly dating in June of 2020, Tristan and I made my first trip to Winnipeg only weeks into knowing each other to visit his family for Bronte's Graduation. Upon visiting and making my first impressions with them, I remember Ang mentioning just how nice it would be if we attended church on Sunday all together at Charleswood Mennonite. I, being quite apathetic towards it but not wanting to disappoint my boyfriend's mom, happily agreed to go. The service was held outside and was treated as more of a time for sharing as COVID restrictions were still limiting. It was beautiful, and foreign, and I felt welcomed without knowing anyone at all. Having only experienced a handful of catholic church services previously with my Aunt in small town Russell, MB – this was quite a change.

My siblings and I were not raised with any particular faith or practice. My mom was raised United growing up in Russell, MB and my dad was raised Baha'i, growing up in Fort Qu'appelle, SK. My dad was denounced from his faith by his own parents and community for choosing to live with my mom while they were only engaged. Due to this, my parents were uncomfortable in having their children practice one faith or the other. I had no idea my dad had even practiced a faith until it was revealed to me when I was 12 or 13 years old.

We were raised with access to religion. We had a beautiful children's bible and my eldest sister went to church for a year or two with a friend's family – we just never went as a family ourselves. We had all the box sets of the TV show Seventh Heaven, a comfort show for my siblings and I in the early 2000's. I was no stranger to the idea of God and who He may be, I just never really placed it into an active part of my life.

That was until I came here. It was here where I continue to learn prayer and a deeper understanding of the bible and its teachings. About Hymns and how they can sound so beautiful with the congregation all singing that I tear up. To experience the compassion and care through our hard losses, and now to soon experience the joy of a new baby in this congregation leaves me with no words. It's also here I want to mention how much I love Mennonite cooking and baking; it is just so delicious!

I am so grateful to have been invited to formally join this community. Nutana has become such an important piece of who I am in these last few years and I am very much looking forward to the many years that are yet to come with our growing family.

Luke's Reflection

One of the things that God has changed in my heart over the years, is how I view the community of faith. While I have always been told that everyone is welcome in the faith community, and I myself have always felt welcome, that is not the case for everyone. It seems like sometimes the faith community is like an airport. Everyone is allowed in, but there are certain things you have to leave behind, and a certain way you have to be. Growing up the way I did, there was never anything I had to leave at the door. Through relationships with others, I realised that sometimes the church asks that people leave a part of themselves behind, if they want to be "in". Believe certain things, act a certain way, and sometimes even present yourself in a certain way. As a Christian kid this was easy for me, but when my scope of who I knew grew, so did my desire for people to be able to come into church just as they are. I was always a bit of an odd duck growing up, especially for rural Saskatchewan. I took dance classes, enjoyed wearing a lot of bright colours, loved drama, creative writing, and reading. I remember in the 9th grade I participated in almost every single sport and club at school in addition to my out of school activities. I cast a wide net searching for a place where I could belong, and one of the places that I found belonging growing up was at church. My youth leaders were all in the same school as me, and did a really good job of making me feel safe and welcome not just at youth but also at school. I really wanted everyone to experience that belonging which is what inspired me to do what I do for work. Something that drew me to this church was the statement of inclusion on the church website. I am really happy to become a member at this church, because I see a similar desire to have people come and find belonging here. I hope people here do not have to leave part of themselves at the door, but can come and be welcomed as their true selves.

David and Dionne's Reflection

Patrick asked for us to reflect on our journey into Nutana Park Mennonite Church. David and I came from quite opposite Christian traditions and together we looked for a church we were both comfortable in. We were members of the Anglican Church for many years, but when we moved to Prince Albert, it wasn't a good fit.

During a relief sale, we were assertively talked into trying Grace Mennonite by Ryan Siemens who was the pastor. I liked the ethics of MCC, had volunteered at Ten Thousand Villages, had our wedding registry there. I appreciated the way the Mennonite church loved people and demonstrated God's love in tangible, useful and non-colonial ways around the world. David liked that Mennonites didn't fight about silly things and got along peacefully despite differences. David's more of a pacifist than me. I liked that Mennonites gathered around to help when a tree fell on someone's house. How they all came together to put a new roof on the house of a released offender on parole.

My personal journey in faith was difficult and marked significantly by religious trauma. I needed a place for Luther and Silas to grow up in faith without that concern.

We love how this church is faithful to the core of the gospel of Christ and understands that loving others and faith are practical expressions.

We love that our kids are welcome and embraced here, even when they ask difficult theological questions during children's time. We make jokes about not being ethnically Mennonite, but we know we belong at Nutana Park.

Rita's Reflection

As far back as I can recall, 76 or more years ago, my parents and I and my four older siblings, attended the North Star Mennonite Church in Drake Sask. At the age of 18 I was baptised in this church. and became a member. It was a very active community of more than two hundred members.... active not only on Sundays, but most days of the week. On Sundays, our worship commenced with Sunday School and then was followed by a children's story, and then two sermons,....one in English and one in German , (It was a long, long morning!) After the German service, we always closed with the German hymn, "So Nimm denn meine Haende". As a small child, I loved that song, because it was the signal that the incredibly long service was finally over! However, as I matured, the mental image of God taking my hand and leading me gave me comfort. It is still a favourite hymn of mine.

A more modern and almost "secular" form of this image which I have loved , is in the lilting song that Anne Murray sang many years later,,,,,,,"Put your hand in the hand of the man that stilled the waters; put your hand in the hand of the man from Galilee"

Another relatively older hymn written by FM Lehman in 1917 is "The Love of God"....."is greater far than tongues can tell" and as the words say in many convincing ways, that the enduring magnitude of God's Love cannot be measured. There is no limit to his love.

God's word, set to music, has always "struck a chord" (so to speak) in me and has had the greatest influence on my life. I accompanied many choirs in schools and churches, including NPMC ,and felt a satisfaction in doing so. The influence of religious music , in particular Mendellsohn's Elijah, and Handel's Messiah, in church, and elsewhere, has reminded me of the existence of a loving God, who will always be with me, through difficult times, as well as wonderful times. I feel very comfortable coming back to this congregation in which I was an original charter member , and am in sync with your opinions and beliefs. After a foray into other pastures for some time, I feel as though I am coming home. I would like to thank all of you for accepting me , and making me feel welcome again.

Favourite Hymn: "So imm Denn Meine Haende"

Alternative Hymn: "The Love of God"

Another alternative Hymn "Put You Hand in the Hand of the Man"