White Army forces play? And how did local socioeconomics, ethnicity, and ideology factor into the pattern of violence against Mennonites? Friesen motions toward these questions in chapter 10 and implies certain answers but does not offer a comprehensive assessment. A deeper exploration of Mennonite-Ukrainian relations and regional Ukrainian narratives could have offered more insight into this key historical inflection point.

These critiques do not detract from Friesen's overall accomplishment. The monograph offers a wealth of historical knowledge and provides a cogent examination of Russian Mennonites and modernity. It is certain to become a standard textbook in the field. Friesen convincingly argues that far from being "the quiet in the land," Russian Mennonites were dynamic contributors to the evolving economic, social, and cultural landscapes they inhabited.

Sean Patterson
University of Alberta

## Dora Dueck, ed., *On Holy Ground: Stories by and about Women in Ministry Leadership in the Mennonite Brethren Church*. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2022. Pp. vii + 201. Softcover, $22.95.

Who gets to tell their own stories? Does it matter? The subtitle of *On Holy Ground*, "Stories *by and about* women in ministry leadership in the Mennonite Brethren Church," implies there is something significant about women telling their own stories. According to editor Dora Dueck, it was a lack of Mennonite Brethren (MB) women's voices in Doug Heidebrecht's book *Women in Ministry Leadership: The Journey of the Mennonite Brethren, 1954-2010*, that spurred the need for *On Holy Ground* (1). The book is a collection of fifteen women's experiences of ministry leadership, told in their own words—told in their own words until after publication three pages of Mary Anne Isaak's chapter were removed, and the book republished.

*On Holy Ground* is informed by an emphasis on experience and storytelling, or, as Dueck calls it, "life-writing" (1). It may be likened to a feminist commitment to the experiences of those for whom there is/was the most at stake (in this case, women). History is not written in a vacuum devoid of power dynamics, including the social location of the person(s) writing the history. It is therefore important to privilege the voices of those whose history this is, and who

were most impacted by it, to ensure their perspectives are documented and even prioritized.

The book highlights the diversity of women's ministry leadership experiences including challenges, joys, and questions about the future. Amid this diversity, several common themes emerge. I focus on the following themes for how they shaped these women's experiences of ministry: expectations of women in marriage, the significance of scripture, sense of calling and the role of mentors, and thoughts about what work there is still to do regarding full celebration of women in ministry.

Several authors note that for married women to step into ministry leadership roles when they did, a change in theological perspective was required. A popular assumption was that once married, a woman would stay home to care for her children. Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen shares, "I was not aware of any woman in a church leadership role who had been able to combine marriage and family with their calling. The attitude that marriage and pastoral calling were incompatible realities repeatedly confronted me" (30). Laura Kalmar shares how her perspective moved from marriage as an opportunity to support her husband in ministry, to marriage as "not based on the model of wife as submissive helper and husband as 'head,' but on mutuality, shared experience, and personal growth" (17). This shift in understanding enabled her to see herself as a minister. As understandings of the role of women in marriage expanded, married women were able to become ministers.

Scripture appears to have also played a key role in either limiting or empowering women for ministry. Elfrieda Neufeld Schroeder notes how Genesis shaped an understanding of men as better suited for ministry compared to women. The MB conference, she writes, was "stuck on the creation order and forgot to look at the book of Acts where the Holy Spirit comes to believers and creates a new order" (85). Seminary professors appear to have played an important role in offering insights for biblical interpretation that helped change understandings of women and ministry. For example, Mary Anne Isaak notes how professor George Shillington encouraged her to present a paper on a new understanding of 1 Timothy that was not detrimental to women (68). Sherri Guenther Trautwein names Luke 24 and the women who witness the resurrected Christ as shaping and encouraging her understanding of women and ministry (191–192). Because scripture is a key source of theo-ethical authority for the MB, a scriptural basis for women in ministry has been a necessary part of accepting women in ministry leadership roles.

Many of the contributors highlight the significance of mentors in helping them discern their call to ministry. Ingrid Reichard notes that "women, who don't necessarily begin with the assumption that they are leaders, are that much more dependent on being mentored and encouraged to see themselves as leaders. Their path to leadership includes a lot more self-doubt and challenges" (98). Contributors note the importance of mentorship by strong women leaders in the form of mothers, aunts, and grandmothers (93–94); affirmations from fathers (92), men already in leadership (15), congregants (89), and male professors and/or pastors (84, 98, 130); the support of family; and examples of women already in ministry leadership and/or professor positions (70, 87). Carol Penner's chapter not only relays the significance of mentors but is written as a mentorship letter to "Tara," a student who reached out to Penner for support (105). Mentors and allies have played an important role in opening doors for women in ministry.

This book, as well as the three pages that were removed,[1] are a necessary read alongside any institutional history of MB women's ministry leadership. Within these pages there are pieces of history that would not otherwise be known. Women share their experiences of sexual harassment (110, 113), of comments on body size (75), and of the role that birth control (and the decriminalization of contraceptives) played in enabling them to work and become ministers (152), for example.

Also significant are the insights in these pages regarding the present-day growing edges of the church. The work for equality is not done, several of them claim. A "wall" often remains. Karen Huebert-Sanchez claims that in some ways, not much changed for women in leadership between 1985 and 2015 (121–122). Dueck notes there is sometimes a gap between policy change and experience (160). Guenther Trautwein talks about a lack of women as keynote speakers, worship leaders, and seminar facilitators at MB conference meetings (197). Penner names how patriarchy as a system of inequality might also intersect with racism. Certainly, the censoring of Mary Anne Isaak's voice regarding her experience of ministry, including her changing perspective on gender and sexuality, illustrates the inequalities that remain. Today, who gets to say who belongs in leadership roles? Could an understanding of gender beyond a binary of male and female push this conversation about inclusion further? What about race, class, and ability and how they intersect

[1] John Longhurst, "Read the Missing Pages from New Book *On Holy Ground: Stories by and about Women in Ministry in the Mennonite Brethren Church*," *Time to Tell* (blog), June 30, 2022, https://timetotellcanada.blogspot.com/2022/06/read-missing-pages-from-new-book-on.html.

with women's experiences of ministry? Some of the stories in this book push in that direction. I hope they serve as motivation for continued growth—that someday, being accepted and celebrated as a ministry leader would not be based on social location (race, class, age, ability, sexuality, gender), but on the calling of the Holy Spirit.

Kimberly Penner
Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church (Kitchener, ON)

## John M. Janzen, Harold P. Miller, and John C. Yoder, eds., *Mennonites and Post-Colonial African Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2021. Pp. xviii + 298. Hardcover, $160 US.

At first blush this book sets a high bar for itself: how to convince readers that it is "post-colonial" when the cover names three white North American males as editors, and the table of contents another three from the same demographic as the very titles of the first three chapters. The cause is similarly fraught in that all but two of twenty-three chapters are penned solely by white, mostly North American male, scholars and professionals. Yet, the same volume critiques a time from fifty years ago when African studies was unjustly dominated by "men of western European descent" (2) before a time of post-colonial healing with black writers in charge. It does not help that the book traces MCC's role in Africa without much African perspective on that role and relies instead on the "particularity" of NGO workers' "own life story" (1). And then to add another wrinkle, the book intertwines "African studies" with "Anabaptist perspectives," a process the editors promise a little vaguely will "be evident in the essays of this volume" (13).

Despite these challenges, this book certainly makes a significant contribution to the history of MCC and North American service workers in Africa. It achieves this in part because the editors cast the term "post-colonial" in rather broad terms: a "decoupling from the 'neocolonial'" attributes of old empires, and replacing an "inferior" Africa with an "authentic" one (2). This broad umbrella allows for a diversity of approaches, as do definitions of "development" from Anabaptist experts. The editors, for example, laud Edgar Stoesz's 1973 work *Thoughts on Development,* exchanging a focus on African "deficiencies" with a search for "sustainability within a framework of social justice" (11), as well as Alain Epp Weaver's