

January 1, 2023

## 5. Children of God through Adoption — **Galatians 3:23–4:7, NRSV**

My mid-sized Canadian city of Waterloo has the highest growth rate of any similar city in North America.<sup>1</sup> Rental and purchase prices skyrocket as housing demand exceeds supply. Over the last year, homeless encampments formed in the heart of our city, one near the train station and another in a central park. Recently, our local government decided to relocate these folks—to the outskirts of the city, right across from the regional dump.

It's easy to dismiss homelessness as caused by drug use, but that may be chicken-and-egg. *Canadian Mennonite* quotes Joe Mancini, cofounder of the Working Centre, as writing, “Dislocation is the root cause of addiction.’ When people no longer feel they belong, he says they often use drugs ‘to mask trauma, abuse, shame, failure and stress.’”

In recent years, many Christians have experienced dislocation and a lack of belonging. In 2022, **42 percent of US pastors** considered quitting full-time ministry, citing stress, loneliness, and political division as their top reasons. Dr. Betty Pries, who works in congregational health, writes in a **blog post**, “Polarized differences have become personal and painful. At best, they are exhausting. At worst, they are life-threatening.”

We are called to unity in Christ and to welcome one another even when we disagree. Pries asks, “How are we creating communities of belonging that include a diversity of people? How are we caring for one another?”

- How do we ensure no one is left living across from the dump, both literally and metaphorically, in our congregations?
- How might you reach out with care to someone you see as “the other”?

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<sup>1</sup>. “2021 Waterloo Region Vital Signs Report.”



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## Resources for this session

***Salt & Light Videos*** are great for leader preparation or introducing each weekly session. **Hendy Matahelemual**, an associate minister for community engagement with Mosaic Mennonite Conference, is the presenter for unit 2. The videos are closed-captioned, free, and available on [\*\*MennoMedia's YouTube channel\*\*](#).