

# INTO ACCOUNT

## SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS + ALLIES

### **Into Account Organizational Statement Regarding John Rempel**

In the past several weeks, Into Account has been made aware, from multiple credible sources, of serious allegations of sexual abuse committed by John Rempel, who formerly held academic and/or ministerial appointments at several Mennonite institutions, including Conrad Grebel University College, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), and The Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre.

Rempel has defended his allegedly abusive behavior of male students under his ministerial care by claiming “sexual exploration” as his motive. As a theology professor and authority figure in Mennonite institutions, Rempel stood for years against the full affirmation of LGBTQ+ people into the church. The obstacles he created for LGBTQ+ Mennonites created immeasurable pain in his students and mentees, and contributed to the abuse and violence that Mennonites have perpetrated against LGBTQ+ people.

For our staff, these allegations constitute a personal and professional betrayal that is difficult to quantify. Our Director of Operations, Jay Yoder, founded the Pink Menno movement for queer justice in the Mennonite Church USA. Our Director of Theological Integrity, Dr. Hilary Jerome Scarsella, was a student of Rempel’s. In 2010, while an M.Div. student at AMBS, Scarsella began work on a survivor-centered communion liturgy. She continued work on this liturgy for several years after graduating from AMBS, until its eventual publication in 2016, by MennoMedia.

Rempel was listed as a collaborator on the final document and played a significant role in final changes to the text that happened against Scarsella’s wishes. While there is much about this liturgy that we still value, we cannot in good conscience continue to recommend its as-is use. Scarsella has issued a preliminary set of interim recommendations and will be working with survivors to develop a fuller set as soon as possible.

At Into Account, we are deeply familiar with the reprehensible conflation of queer sexuality with sexual abuse. It is intolerable to hide behind queer sexuality as an excuse for sexually exploitive behavior and other abuses of power, particularly when that power is acquired in part by making oneself into an obstacle for LGBTQ+ justice.

There is no defensible response to these allegations in which LGBTQ+ people and sexual violence survivors are collateral damage.