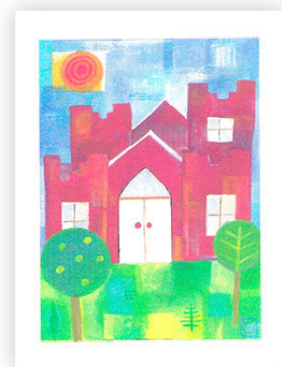


INSIDE...



Niagara United Mennonite Church

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A Miracle for Christmas

This year was the first time in many years that my sister Linda did not spend Christmas with our family. Did we miss her? Yes. Were we sad? Absolutely not. Why not? Because **we** received **a miracle** for Christmas. As many of you already know, Linda received a heart transplant on October 31. Without it, 2009 could well have been our last Christmas with Linda, but now we have the hope of many more.

Linda was a member of this church for over 40 years, but she rarely attended. After graduating from university, she spent two years in India, and when she came home, she took a job at an adult education centre out in the bush, two hours west of Thunder Bay. The nearest town was over 30 miles away, and although it would have had a few churches, she never got involved. None of her friends and colleagues were church-going, she traveled a lot and the seminars she taught often took place on weekends or started on a Sunday. All good excuses not to go to church.

As a child, I adored and admired my big sister with her exciting lifestyle and travel to exotic places. She was a successful career woman on the cutting edge of new teaching philosophies. As a teenager, the highlight of my summers were my visits with her at the centre. Linda would come home for a visit in December, but she never came for Christmas. She preferred to celebrate with her friends and colleagues.

She didn't think she needed to be part of an active church community, and felt she could worship God just fine on her own in the beautiful nature all around her.

But this attitude changed with the death of a close friend and the demise of the centre, about 10 years ago. She found herself all alone with no support group and no community. Now she recognized the true value of family. She made an effort to come to all the family celebrations, and especially for Christmas.

She moved to a new job and a new life in a community outside Chicago. Here she joined a small Mennonite congregation, North Suburban Mennonite Church. She is their oldest member. She has made up for lost time, participating in a Bible study group, attending retreats, serving on the church board, worship leading, planning fundraisers and even spearheading the startup of a Ten Thousand Villages store.

One Sunday this past summer, Linda collapsed after church. Fortunately her pacemaker/defibrillator kicked in, or she would have been dead. She was also lucky that it didn't happen in the car on her way home, or she might have had an accident that could have hurt or killed her or someone else.

When I got this news, I felt it was a wakeup call that Linda's time would soon be up, and to appreciate the remaining time we could have with her. But Linda really believed that God gave her another chance because He still had work for her to do here on earth. I think that is why she agreed to be put on the transplant list.

Knowing how long the waiting lists are, I really did not believe that a transplant would actually happen. So we were in shock when it did, and that it happened so soon.

After ten days in critical condition in intensive care, Linda has made an amazing recovery. She can walk much further than she could before, and to her great joy, she was able to sing Christmas carols again, for the first time in over two years.

A transplant patient needs much care. Because Linda is single and has no family in Chicago, she had to prove to the transplant board that she would be looked after, otherwise she would not be eligible. More than 50 people from her community and church family signed up to help look after her, to stay with her, to clean her house, prepare meals, to provide transportation and run errands. The staff at the hospital were absolutely amazed at this support. They had never experienced anything like this.

Linda's spiritual resolution for 2010 is to pray more intentionally. Already she has prayed with another patient in the heart transplant unit. Amazing. My sister, praying out loud with someone. Wow!

I share this story, because I know we have many families in our congregation with family members that are marginal to the church or even at odds with the church. Keep praying for them, and do not give up the hope that they too, will one day find their place in God's plan. Sometimes it takes a long time.

Never far from my mind is the donor family. As our family was celebrating, another was grieving. Somewhere in Chicago, this family struggled through their first Christmas without their loved one.

Why does one person die, while another person lives? Why does God allow a tragedy in one family and give another family a miracle? These are God's mysteries for which we do not have the answer.

Spiritual practices can help us in our struggles with these things that we cannot understand. Our family has truly experienced the power of prayer and much encouragement both from this church family and from Linda's. Spiritual practices help us through in times of crisis. And they fill our hearts with gratitude when we experience a miracle and receive a blessing.

submitted by Dorothea Enns





February at a glance...

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>Reminder: Don't forget to sign up to volunteer at the MCC Promotion Dinner, either for serving, food prep or baking fabulous desserts.</p>	<p>1 6:30 pm Marriage Prep. Class 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young women's bible study 7:30 pm Male Choir</p>	<p>2 9:00 am Women in Mission Quilt 6:00 pm Women in Service Potluck</p>	<p>4 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting 7:00 pm Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>5 7:00 pm German Choir 8:00 pm Choir Practice</p>	<p>5 7:30 pm Sr. Youth</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>7 10:00 am Doris Dirks 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks</p>	<p>8 6:30 pm Marriage Prep. Class 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young women's bible study 7:30 pm Male Choir</p>	<p>9 9:00 am Women in Mission Quilt 7:00 pm Women in Service Quilt 7:30 pm Church Council Meeting</p>	<p>10 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting 7:00 pm Men's Bible Study 7:00 pm Worship Committee Meeting</p>	<p>11 7:00 pm German Choir 8:00 pm Choir Practice</p>	<p>12 7:30 pm Sr. Youth 7:30 pm Revelation Bible Study</p>	<p>13 Reminder: pick up your planter orders at the church between 9am - noon</p>
<p>14 10:00 am Joachim Dau 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks</p>	<p>15 OFFICE CLOSED 6:30 pm Marriage Prep. Class 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young women's bible study 7:30 pm Male Choir</p>	<p>16 9:00 am Women in Mission Quilt 7:00 pm Spiritual Council Meeting 7:00 pm Women in Service Quilt</p>	<p>17 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting 7:00 pm Men's Bible Study 7:30 pm Missions & Service Comm. Meeting</p>	<p>18 7:00 pm German Choir 8:00 pm Choir Practice</p>	<p>19 7:30 pm Sr. Youth</p>	<p>20</p>
<p>21 10:00 am Hans H. Dau 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks 7:00 pm Benefit Concert for Haiti</p>	<p>22 6:30 pm Marriage Prep. Class 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young women's bible study 7:30 pm Male Choir</p>	<p>23 9:00 am Women in Mission Quilt 7:00 pm Women in Service Quilt</p>	<p>24 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting 7:00 pm Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>25 7:00 pm German Choir 8:00 pm Choir Practice</p>	<p>26 7:30 pm Sr. Youth 7:30 pm Revelation Bible Study</p>	<p>27 6:00 pm MCC Relief Sale Promotion Dinner</p>
<p>28 10:00 am Udo Woelke 11:00 am John Tiessen</p>						

Mennonite Church Canada – Prayer, Notes & News

Sunday Dates	Prayer:	Ministry Notes:	News:
Feb. 7/10 Education Sunday	Please pray for and with the Church Today as we celebrate Education Sunday, let us pray that God’s abundant love and grace will inspire us to continue growing as followers of Christ and to share these blessings with all whom we meet!	This is how your financial support of Mennonite Church Canada is ministering...from across the street to around the world! Mennonite Church Canada develops downloadable worship resources for Education Sunday, Lent, and other seasons of the Church year available at mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre . Thank you for helping us to make these items available!	Stay in tune with the wider church Can Mennonite Church Canada log 1,000 Acts of Peace in 2010? Make a date with peace this Valentine’s Day by visiting www.liveforpeace.org and share your Act of Peace in the Public Square on the 1,000 Acts of Peace forum
Feb. 14/10	MC Canada’s Witness Council is learning about the lingering effects of Residential School on individuals, families and communities. Please pray that across the country, God’s love will compel us to hear and share stories that break down stereotypes and invite healing through understanding.	With your support, we participate in a variety of peace and justice initiatives beyond our denomination. Janet Plenert, Executive Secretary of MC Canada Witness wrote to the federal government in support of KAIROS, an ecumenical peace and justice organization which recently lost government funding. See Plenert’s letter at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1231 . Thanks to your support, MC Canada helps us advocate on this and other issues.	
Feb. 21/10	Please pray for good health for MC Canada Witness workers Daniel Pantoja (Philippines) and Norm Nicolson (Burkina Faso) who are recovering from gall bladder surgery and struggling with mononucleosis respectively. (WoW Prayer Directory, pg. 79, pg. 46)	Partnering with other church congregations or institutions is one way that we can encourage each other in our walk with Christ – like the five-year partnership covenant between Trinity Mennonite Church in Calgary and the Korea Anabaptist Center in Seoul. Thank you for sharing your energy and resources in this way. (WoW Prayer Directory, pg. 80-81)	Mennonite Church Canada encourages you to fill in a PEACE TAX FORM along with your regular income tax form. This is an opportunity to be witnesses for peace as we file our income tax returns. Download and complete the form at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/413 .
Feb. 28/10	Please pray for the encouragement and witness of the emerging Mennonite congregation in Sahagun, Cordoba, Colombia, which was accepted as a “church in formation” by the Mennonite Church of Colombia (IMCOL) on January 16. Witness workers Gamaliel and Amanda Falla serve as pastors to congregational pastors in this region. (WoW Prayer Directory, pg. 119)	The staff at the Mennonite Heritage Centre assists 200 people a month find answers to important questions. These answers are important parts of family genealogies, radio programs, TV documentaries, legal cases, academic research, books, magazine articles, brochures, school essays etc. Thank you for your ongoing support.	Then register your participation with an email to jplenert@mennonitechurch.ca or call toll-free 1-866-888-6785 to add your name to the list of people witnessing in this way. This helps us build a case for Bill C-390, the Act Respecting Conscientious Objection to the Use of Taxes for Military Purposes.



A Muslim Initiative for World Peace

This letter has been discussed at many different organizations, including Mennonite Church Canada. The Faith & Life Committee of MC Canada prepared the response quoted below, which was affirmed at the MC Canada conference in Saskatoon, in June 2009.

Robert J. Suderman
General Secretary
Mennonite Church Canada

Andrew Reesor-McDowell
Moderator – General board
Mennonite Church Canada

In October, 2007, a group of 138 Muslim scholars published a letter to Christians, Jews & Muslims everywhere, called "*A Common Word Between Us and You*". This letter, which can be found at www.acommonword.com, focuses on the fact that all three Abrahamic faiths have two major commandments in common: **1.** You shall love God & **2.** You shall love your neighbour. If all Christians, Muslims & Jews were to live by these two commandments, we would be one huge step closer to world peace.

"To the Muslim authors of "A Common Word between Us and You" which was addressed to Christian Churches throughout the world: The General Board of Mennonite Church Canada commends you for your thoughtful and respectful call for a conversation of peace between Muslims and Christians. This leadership body of Mennonite Church Canada herewith adds its voice of support and encouragement to your initiative.

At the annual Assembly of Mennonite Church Canada in July, 2008 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, delegates considered a call from its Faith and Life Committee, the body commissioned to give guidance in theological matters in our denomination, to respectfully engage people of other religious faiths.

We recognize that there are two important strands of wisdom found within Christian Scripture. One strand holds God to be present and at work in the whole world, not limited to any one story or one culture. Your exposition of the two commandments of love, love for God and love of neighbour found in all three Abrahamic faiths illustrates that conviction. Thus we affirm the importance of a respectful dialogue with those who profess a faith and spiritual way different from our Christian one. Like the Apostle Paul in his speech on the Acropolis as recorded in the Book of Acts, we should seek common understanding and be slow to condemn. As people of peace, Mennonite Christians are interested in promoting peace with people of different religious persuasions.

The other strand of wisdom found in our Christian Scripture invites us to claim and proclaim the particular truth given in Jesus Christ. As Mennonite Christians we confess that Jesus is the one who most fully reveals God to us. We confess that, as God's Son, Jesus speaks and acts on behalf of God. As such Jesus guides our view of life and our ethics.

Holding these two strands of wisdom together allows us as Mennonite Christians to appreciate the common ground within the different branches of the Abrahamic faith traditions. At the same time, we bring to this relationship our conviction, as one of the historic Peace Churches in the Christian tradition, that Jesus, through his teachings, life and death, clarifies what love for the neighbour entails. At the heart of Jesus' revelation is the call to love even the one whom our society wants us to name as our enemy (Matthew 5:43-45). God's love, as exemplified in Christ, overcomes human enmity and conflict by rejecting violence. God's love enables diverse communities to be reconciled and to seek the common good by working together for peace and justice. Thus we bring to the celebration of the common word between us the firm conviction that Jesus' command to love extends to all of humanity.

Frequently the religions of the world fix their attention on how they are different from one another. "A Common Word Between Us and You" highlights in a very helpful way the centrality of the conviction within the Abrahamic faiths that the God who calls us to love our neighbour is One. We owe a word of gratitude to you, for inviting us to affirm the common word between us for the betterment of humankind. To this end, we add our voice and signature to your initiative.

A note from Rick Cober Bauman, MCC Ontario Executive Director

Two MCC events, separated by one month, need to be connected.

On January 4th, we learned of the death of Peter J Dyck, MCC leader, storyteller, visionary, at the age of 95.

Some would say Peter, and his late spouse Elfrieda were partly responsible for MCC choosing to "live on" after completing its founding task of helping the starving and terrorized Mennonites in Russia during the 1920s famine and civil war. After all, this "temporary" collaboration of Canadian and US Anabaptists had done what it set out to accomplish - send aid to their people trapped in the Ukraine, and help many of them immigrate to this continent.

But Peter, Elfrieda, and others who MCC sent to Europe in the 1940s, became the hands and feet of a miraculous effort to save thousands more refugees, this time people who were victims of the devastation of the second World War. Their efforts resulted in another migration into Canada and the US, but also saw over 5000 souls move to Paraguay to begin new lives. During their tumultuous ministry in Europe came the earliest use of the phrase "in the name of Christ".

Peter would remain for 32 years as an MCC leader.

And the other event, one month earlier was far less dramatic. The last of 12 MCC Boards in North America adopted the "New wine, new wineskins" foundation statements. Not earth shattering of course, but after growing from its "temporary" beginning 90 years ago into 12 different MCCs scattered across Canada and the US, MCC is now claiming its global identity as a "worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches". Still responding to disasters, still building peace and justice, but much more rooted in the church. And, something Peter and Elfrieda would be pleased about I think, building the phrase "in the name of Christ" into the very core of the MCC identity.

I recently counted 11 other "refugee" groups that MCC has assisted in coming to Ontario alone. Our new friends have changed MCC and our churches. As we enter a new year, my prayer is that the radical hospitality encouraged by Peter and Elfrieda "in the name of Christ", will live well in all of us.



Sharing Corner ...

Volunteer Stories - The women of our church held a lovely "celebration evening" in November where a variety of personal stories of involvement in the church were shared by women of different ages and experiences. Some of them gave us some valuable insight into the history of particular ministries of the church over the last 50 to 70 years! We thought that you would find some of those stories interesting, and so you will read about them in the newsletter from time to time as they are submitted for the benefit of the whole congregation. Sharon Dirks

“Whatever you did for one in need.....you did for me”

Mathew 25:35- 36 & 40

I was hungry and you gave me something to eat
 I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink
 I was a stranger and you invited me in
 I needed clothes and you clothed me
 I was sick and you looked after me
 I was in prison and you came to visit me



Many people in our church over the years have responded to people's needs in a direct way, or give money to help people in other countries. Historically and currently Christian Mennonites have responded to people needing help. I want to challenge you: Be open and see where God leads you to help someone. This is not always comfortable for everyone, and asking for some support or direction for how to "help" others is Ok.

Everyone will be "in need" at some point in their lives. People who attend our church and those in the community who do not attend sometimes ask for help. It is good to ask for help when it is needed.

The **practical assistance team** has been set up to help with some of the requests that come through the church. This working group is still in early stages of development. The group's function is to help connect requests to options for help. Often requests need an action in addition to prayer. The practical assistance team does not give money, but connects people with supports.

Sometimes life challenges people financially. Someone may need to be driven to doctor's appointments. Someone may need home maintenance and a person with that skill can give the time. A person may need to connect with some services, and need encouragement to take those steps. Sometimes people do not know where to start. Often helping is walking alongside someone not carrying them. Helping is also giving people options and support as they make choices. One of the important aspects of helping others is to show respect. We can all end up walking in another person's shoes and there is no room for judgment when helping. (*Look up* Luke 2:1-9)

I have seen our church develop in how we give "practical assistance" over the years. We have always had compassion to help others. It is exciting to have God giving us opportunities to help people in our community and in our church in ways that are more direct. Where can you help? There is nothing too small that God can't use in a big way. Even smiling at a person can make a difference you will never know. I want to encourage everyone to be open to opportunities and respond with kindness and humility. God can use you, will you be willing?

Patricia Regier

Celebration Story – Broadcasting faith in Burkina Faso

January 2010, Equipping

Worship in Burkina Faso is a highly oral experience. There are no bulletins, no overhead projectors. Songbooks are a rarity. Those who can read may have brought a Bible or their own personal song book – if they are fortunate enough to have one – but most sit and listen attentively.

During one worship service, a parade of women enter the back of the sanctuary, singing and swaying in time to the balifone – a traditional marimba like instrument – and drum music. In their hands, each one clutches a field hoe. The women swipe at imaginary weeds in time to the music. The hoe is a symbol of work and working together in this culture. The presentation is a call to all Christians to gather together to work for the Kingdom of God.

The children, who have had to clear out to make room at the front, peer in through glassless windows, standing on tip toes.

Pastor Coulibaly Abdias of the Orodara Mennonite Church dreams of expanding a radio broadcast ministry in this culture where oral communication is a highly valued tradition. In rural areas especially, few Burkinabe people read or write; indeed, having their own language in written form is a recent development.

In response to this communications need, Mennonite Church Canada Witness has assigned Norm Nicolson to work in a recording studio as a Vernacular Media Technician and Instructor. Nicolson continues language study in preparation for his duties.

Radio broadcasting is relatively inexpensive. Most people, even in rural areas, have a radio receiver. Although a broadcast ministry can be a complex endeavour in a country with over 60 languages, plans are to begin with Jula, the language of commerce, and then add Samogho, a local indigenous language.

Abdias says that the Mennonite Church brings the work of peacemaking to the whole evangelical community in Burkina Faso. He highlights several prayer needs: the holistic development of the church, its material and spiritual growth, and political and social stability in Burkina Faso and the surrounding region. "This whole region is very acquainted with civil wars and political turmoil," he says, adding, "Pray for the churches to grow strong."

Then he shares a final request that mirrors the concerns of many Mennonites in Canada. "I pray that God will help the new generation to have a strong faith and keep the ways of communion and communication with God so that they can know a better life in the future."

February Birthdays...

21 – Elizabeth Friesen (81)

23 – Maria Naeser (91)



Other news...

Upcoming Fraser Lake Camp Events:

February 15th - 10am to 3pm - Free Family Day open house at Willowgrove

April 10th - 6 pm - Fundraising Dinner and Auction featuring guest speaker Rick Tobias from Younge Street Mission

April 17th - 6 pm - Fundraising Dinner and concert featuring musical guests 'Rouge River Connection'

Email info@fraserlakecamp.com or call 905.642.2964 today to purchase tickets or for more information.

The School of Writing at CMU invites applications for its 2010 program, held May 10 – 14 on campus at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. The School offers participatory workshops on Poetry, Fiction, Life Writing, and Writing for Children & Young Adults. Participants learn from well-known writers and authors from across Canada and abroad who visit for special readings and question periods. Enjoy time for writing and reflection on CMU's inspiring north campus: visit www.cmu.ca/schoolofwriting

Register now to join local, national and international practitioners and students of peace, justice, and development at the second annual Canadian School of Peacebuilding to be held at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg, MB, June 14 to July 2, 2010. Three 5-day sessions, each with two or three courses running concurrently, are offered for academic credit or for training for practitioners. Visit www.cmu.ca/csop; email csop@cmu.ca.

Inspired by Assembly 2009's promotion of "1,000 Acts of Peace," mindful of Assembly 2010's focus on Colossians 3:15-17, textile artists are invited to consider participating in Acts of Peace/Art for Peace. This exhibition will take place during the MC Canada assembly in Calgary (June 29-July 3). For more details, email Ray Dirks at rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca or Bev Patkau at lpatkau@shaw.ca. Or, visit <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/gallery>.

Visit the following website <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resources/equipping/index.htm> to learn more about Mennonite Church Canada. Also visit our area conference's website, <http://mcec.ca/> to learn more about Mennonite Church of Eastern Canada.

