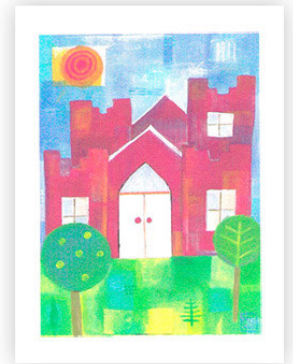


# INSIDE...



*Niagara United Mennonite Church*

## **Gratitude and Blessings,**

*by Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary, MC Canada*

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### *Individual Highlights:*

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Scripture reminds us that “there is a time for everything”. Ecclesiastes suggests there is a certain cyclical rhythm to life – that there is “nothing new under the sun,” and that human and natural events move in a circle. What we experience now is what we- or someone else – have experienced before. There is comfort in this perspective, and we humbly acknowledge our part in this cycle. This perspective is with me as I write to you this last time as General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada. The time has come; many others have gone before me into active retirement; it is not new; the world and the church will go on.

And yet, there is something within me that rebels at these thoughts. Yes, the time has come. But it is also new – for me, and for others. I have never done this before. My wife and my family have never experienced me before in this new stage of life. It doesn’t just feel cyclical: it feels – at least a bit – linear. It is a past that will not return: the mistakes I’ve made cannot be undone; the unfinished tasks will be left to others; the unwise things I’ve said are in the wind and bearing their fruit; the particular gifts I’ve offered are, I trust, also growing in the lives of others. And before us lies a future that has not been before either. Both as a person and as a church we are moving into territory that is new; it is not simply recycled from the past. Genuinely different paradigms are awaiting our wisdom; and new opportunities await our energies. The “whole creation groans, waiting for the revealing of the children of God.” So, in a real sense, there is an irretrievable past that is now our heritage and legacy; and there is a never-before known future that waits our faithfulness.

In all this, I ask for forgiveness where my efforts have not measured up to the expectations you may have had for me. But I also ask that we recognize the over-abundance of blessings that God pours into our lives – so that we can respond with awe-inspired gratitude at the privilege we have to be God’s church, in Canada, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I am very pleased with the appointment of my successor, Willard Metzger. We have worked very closely together over these last 10 years as he led Mennonite Church Canada’s Christian Witness Council. God has gifted him richly, and I am confident that his gifts will be used to strengthen the church. I trust that you will embrace him, anoint him with your prayers, and support him as he begins to lead the church further into this challenging century.

May God’s face continue to shine over us all.

## Reflections from the refugee program coordinator, *by Moses Moini of MCCO*

November 2009 I left to go to my home in Sudan, to my village of Kajo Kaji for a two-month visit. It was a venture upon which I embarked with mixed feelings for it was not just a visit, I had a project planned. With the help of many, I was going to build my mother a house. I could feel the Spirit's nudging, "Go for it!" All well for the Spirit, but I was aware of the challenging environment for which I was headed and the challenges I was sure to face. I knew that crops had failed due to the prolonged drought and that basic services were very limited or lacking all together. However, the Spirit prevailed and so my determination held firm.



I am thankful and return all the praise to the Lord for protecting me during the seven weeks stint and for completing my mother's house. It was great and I felt a real sense of accomplishment!

My time home wasn't easy as I wrestled with so many questions pertaining to the local way of life. Most people are suffering immensely from chronic poverty, diseases and injustice. The government seems disconnected from the people, resources are severely mismanaged, corruption is rampant and there seems to be no vision for the nation. I tried to understand the depth and complexity of the situation and it troubled me immensely.

As I reflected on the seemingly hopeless situation, I was reminded of Asaph, the writer of Psalm 73 who was painfully baffled. He was furious when he saw an injustice that made no sense to him at all. He saw honest, upright people seemingly getting nowhere in life but suffering immensely. On the other hand, he saw corrupt people living in luxury, having the finest foods and in great health. These inconsistencies infected him with envy. Asaph nearly lost his faith in God. I strongly identified with Asaph not only while I was in Sudan but also in my work with refugees who endure harrowing experiences.



When life presents us with something that is not easily explained or understood, it just might be a prompting from God to seek Him in a new way. For Asaph, that meant going to the sanctuary. There, looking from the perspective of eternity, he was given the gift of being able to see this situation as God sees it. What a difference!

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b><u>JULY 2010</u></b>				1	2 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	3
4 10:00 am John Tiessen	5 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	6 7:00 pm Bible Study 7:30 pm Church Council Meeting	7	8	9	10
11 9:00 am Udo Woelke 10:00 am John Epp	12 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	13 7:00 pm Bible Study	14	15	16	17
18 9:00 am Joachim Dau 10:00 am Stephen Cox	19 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	20 7:00 pm Bible Study	21	22	23	24
25 9:00 am Hans H. Dau 10:00 am Dan Janzen	26 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	27 7:00 pm Bible Study	28 3:00 pm Senior Social	29	30	31

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b><u>AUGUST 2010</u></b>						
1 10:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks	2 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	3 7:00 pm Bible Study	4	5	6	7
8 9:00 am Udo Woelke 10:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks	9 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	10 7:00 pm Bible Study	1	12	13	14
15 9:00 am Hans J. Wiens 10:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks	16 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	17 7:00 pm Bible Study 7:00 pm Spiritual Council Meeting	18	09	20	21
22 9:00 am Joachim Dau 10:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks	23 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	24 7:00 pm Bible Study	25	26	27	28
29 9:00 am Jakob Peters 10:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks	30 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	31 7:00 pm Bible Study				



### July Birthdays...

- 2 – Margaret Warkentin (82)
- 12 – Ingrid Reimer (80)
- 17 – Inge Enss (80)
- 23 – John Peters (86)
- 24 – Henry Pauls (80)
- 29 – Hilda Ediger (85)

- 2 – Gerhard Reimer (80)
- 16 – Justine Konrad (87)
- 18 – Helene Nickel (89)
- 24 – Mary Epp (82)
- 28 – Henry Heidebrecht (91)
- 30 – Elizabeth Koehn (84)

### August Birthdays ...

- 3 – Carl Neumann (85)
- 17 – Louise Dyck (83)

- 8 – Erika Teichgraf (84)
- 23 – Agnes Moote (97)

#### Happy 25<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary



Alex & Alice Bradnam  
(July 21)

#### Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary



Alex & Sue Fast  
(July 9)

#### Happy 60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary



Henry & Margarete Pauls  
(July 22)

#### Change of Address



John M. Epp  
PO Box 350  
1743 Four Mile Creek Rd.  
Virgil, ON L0S 1T0  
(905) 468-2569

#### Change of Address



Nathan & Vicky Kendall  
53 Tunis St.  
St. Catharines, ON L2S 1E4  
289-362-3208

## Sharing Corner ...

### 'Final Blog Entry for Yella'

They say the hardest part of going away cross-culturally for any length of time is coming home. That probably would have been very true were it not for the sickness that hit our group right at the end. I would imagine, there's nothing that makes you more happy to be 'home' than being grossly sick in a foreign land.

That has me thinking. What is it about our 'home' that makes us so happy to be there?

When we were in Israel, one thing we kept hearing about from both sides of the conflict was how 'connected' they were to the land. The land, we discovered, was what the struggle was really about. This undeniable, unmistakable, and unfathomable connection to a very specific piece of real estate.

The Dome of the Rock is a good example of this connection. It is built upon the rock traditionally held to be the same rock that Abraham was asked to sacrifice Jacob on. This rock has become the foundation stone of faith.

Abraham proved his faithfulness to God above all else through his willingness to sacrifice his son, and from Abraham has sprung the 3 largest and most influential religions on the planet, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The Rock is also where King David's son Solomon built the first Temple, the first permanent 'home' for God on earth. The first temple was destroyed, but then rebuilt again in the same spot. The Muslims also believe that this Rock is where Muhammad ascended to the heavens and received the Qur'an.

Another more obscure thing I heard is that the Muslims also believe this Rock is where God created the world from...that it was the starting point of all creation.

The Rock then has become a 'home' where heaven and earth meet, and for created beings who are both spiritual and physical in nature, it begins to make a bit more sense why such a place has such a profound hold on people.

It remains difficult for me to fully comprehend why these people are so attached to the land. I know the entire time I was listening to both Israeli Zionists, and Arab freedom fighters I struggled to relate. When I heard a Jewish settler talk about why he decided to leave his high paying job in Chicago to move to a little suburb in Israel, about how the land had called him, and that he felt he was fulfilling God's promises by living in that specific part of the world...I tried but I couldn't relate.

I listened to the story of a Palestinian who had been beaten, had had his child's teeth bashed in, and his wife had lost two pregnancies because of attacks by radical Jewish settlers, and yet he was going to stay in his home even if they killed him. When I listened to him, I tried but I couldn't relate.

Their connection with the land was so strong, and they were willing to die and kill for it. It seemed very foreign to me. That is until 17 of the 24 of us got leveled with food poisoning, my wife included, and I started hearing people say...'I just want to go home'. There was agony, panic, shock, and fear as one after another fell victim to this horrible sickness.

Although food poisoning only lasts a short time (24-48 hours), it is violent and extreme. It has become a window into the suffering and struggle that both the Jews & the Palestinians have faced. The Jews through constant anti-Semitism peaking with the Holocaust, and now the oppression that the Palestinians face daily at the hands of the Jewish state. That pain and fear, agony and shock makes humans say, 'I just want to go home.'

Compounding this very human instinct to get home when things get bad, is the mysterious intersection of the Spiritual and Physical which appears all over the land in the form of Holy Sites. Places in space and time where God has visited His people and left a mark. I believe that we have been designed to contain both natures, the physical and the spiritual. That we are drawn to seek reality beyond what we can see, touch, taste and smell. We are drawn to seek the Designer, the One who created both the human and the land. There is no doubt that we often get confused in such a curious pursuit. Some of us create gods because it's easier to worship something we can see and imagine in the physical, other reject the good that is in the physical world and condemn everything that isn't purely spiritual.

Living with both the physical and spiritual at once, acknowledging the relationship between the two, and the importance of both, is foundational to the Christian faith. After all, it is Jesus Christ who is both God and man in 1 person. He showed us how to live with the tension, and how beautiful it can be. He showed us how to live well in the land and yet not live for the land only. In the gospel of John Jesus says some profound words to His disciples. He is preparing them for the bad news of His death. He knows that they will experience pain, shock, and fear when their Messiah dies. This is how He chooses to comfort them:

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."* John 14:1-3

Our final 'home' is in the Father's house. A house with many rooms, and Jesus is preparing a place for us there, just as He is preparing us for that place.

Israel has been a tremendous experience. I have gained some insight into the world and life of Jesus, and have come face to face with some of the most intense conflict in our world today. I strongly doubt that I am aware of all that this experience has taught me, but I have recognized 1 thing above all others. God desires that we trust Him.

by Stephen Cox

### The Cheap Tour of Sudan, by Greta Wiens

Several weeks ago I received an e-mail from a Mennonite agency about a learning tour to Sudan. The trip was planned for June, and a few would-be participants had suddenly dropped out. Would I, or any of the other recipients of this message, wish to take their place? The cost of the trip was estimated at \$6,000.

I like learning tours, and I've never been to Africa. Sudan is always in the news, negatively, of course, but a couple of people I know had just been there and come back safely. Get a new passport, update my vaccinations, prep for travel – all doable; just write out a cheque for \$6,000 and ... Well, maybe not.

Who has \$6,000 laying around for an opportunity like this? Mentally I reviewed the faces of church and family members. The e-mail message said to respond by Tuesday. This was a Thursday r Friday. It was too late to put an announcement in the church bulletin.



Visions of trans-Atlantic flight and arrival in the sun and heat of an exotic, if troubled, destination faded away. My index finger hovered over the “delete” key. Other people’s photos of Sudan slide-showed through my mind until one definitive thought lodged there: I don’t want to go to Sudan because I feel as if I’ve just been, and it didn’t cost a cent.

Besides hearing reports from MCC staff who were there not long ago, I had just finished reading a rather unique book about the situation in Sudan’s Darfur region. The author is a Sudanese – so often we can only read about other countries from a Westerner’s perspective – and a Muslim who is not afraid to tell his readers how God has worked in his life. The Translator: A Tribesman’s Memoir of Darfur by Daoud Hari is a short book and written in a disarmingly simple style. Hari served as a translator for foreign journalists and international aid workers until continuing threats to his life necessitated his departure for the USA.

What impressed me besides the humanity and sincerity of this autobiographical story was learning how people from around the world who were grateful for his assistance as a translator and guide worked together to extricate Hari from his dangerous and untenable position. They knew him personally and so pitched in to rescue him.

There’s a saying or slogan to the effect that “there’s nothing quite like being there”, and as someone who likes to travel, I heartily agree. I can’t claim to know Sudan from one book (or the patchwork of others I’ve read over the years, and the ones I’m reading now to learn more). Yet finally I pressed “delete” on my computer without regret. I opted for the cheap tour of Sudan.

\*\*\**Daoud Hari’s book is available in the St. Catharines library system.*

## Promoting peace with books, not bombs, in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Can one person make a difference? That question is often asked, and then answered with “of course” or “not much” depending on whether the speaker is an optimist or a pessimist, or maybe a believer or a realist. As Christians, we would say that with God’s help, anything is possible – even if we don’t have the masses with us. But do we really believe this? Are we willing to stick out our own neck when we realize that we may be the only person speaking out? And what about if speaking out, or acting out, may require us to give up the comforts of our home and lifestyle, and force us to enter a life among strangers in a foreign setting with language barriers and new food challenges and multiple other discomforts? Are we still willing to sacrifice all this to “make a difference”?

Again and again, I am impressed by stories of people who have given up years of their lives to support important causes, either on their own, or with small groups of supporters. Gradually, their initiative grows into a self-supporting organization, reaching into often unpopular corners of the world. In some cases, this initiative may not even impact a whole country, but maybe only a small village or a few families.

Greg Mortenson was such a person. Always looking for new challenges in his hobby of mountain climbing, he suddenly found himself lost & physically helpless in a poor village in the mountains of Pakistan. Moved by the kindness of the village chief and his people as they nursed him back to health, Greg promised to return and build a school for the children. That was in 1993. Over the next decade, Mortenson built more than sixty schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan. He endured death threats, a kidnapping, and more, as he dedicated his life to building literacy and peace, one child at a time.



An excerpt from *Three Cups of Tea*:

Greg watched and listened as the children sang Pakistan's national anthem to start their school day. He saw Twaha's seven-year-old daughter, Jahan, standing tall and straight beneath her headscarf as she sang. When the song ended, they sat down in the dirt and began writing out their multiplication tables. A few, like Jahan, had slates on which they wrote with sticks dipped in mud. The rest scratched in the dirt with sticks. "Can you imagine a fourth-grade class in America, alone, without a teacher, sitting there quietly and working on their lessons?" Greg asked later. "I felt like my heart was being torn out.... I knew I had to do something."

But what could he do? He had barely enough money left to travel by jeep and bus to Pakistan's capital, where he would catch an airplane to fly home. Still, there had to be something.

Standing next to Haji Ali, looking at the mountains that he'd come halfway around the world to climb, Greg suddenly felt that reaching the summit of K2 to place a necklace there wasn't really important. He could do something much better than that to honour his sister, Christa. He put his hands on Haji Ali's shoulders. "I will build a school," he said. "I promise."

And so began "one man's journey to change the world... one child at a time".

In Greg Mortenson's book, *Three Cups of Tea*, we accompany Greg on this journey. And with him, we learn that with the first cup of tea you are a stranger, with the second... a friend, and with the third cup of tea, you are family.

*Stones into Schools* picks up where *Three Cups of Tea* leaves off. Over the past sixteen years, Greg Mortenson, through his nonprofit Central Asia Institute (CAI), has worked to promote peace through education by establishing more than 130 schools, most of them for girls, in remote regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Just as *Three Cups of Tea* began with a promise – to build a school in Korphe, Pakistan – so too does Mortenson's new book. In 1999, Kirghiz horsemen from Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor rode into Pakistan and secured a promise from Mortenson to construct a school in an isolated pocket of the Pamir Mountains known as Bozai Gumbaz. Mortenson could not build that school before constructing many others, and that is the story he tells in this dramatic new book. *Stones into Schools* brings to life both the heroic efforts of the CAI's fixers on the ground – renegade men of unrecognized and untapped talent who became galvanized by the importance of girls' education – and the triumphs of the young women who are now graduating from the schools. Their stories are ones you will not soon forget.

Greg Mortenson is a humanitarian and former mountaineer who believes that the best way to peace is through education. He lives with his wife, Tara Bishop, and their two children in Montana.

The above-mentioned books can be found in our church library. Available is also a "Young Reader's Edition" of *Three Cups of Tea*. Please avail yourselves of these excellent resources.

Submitted by Kathy Rempel



## Other news...

**Summer Volunteer Opportunities at NUMC** - The summer months are filled with vacations, family reunions, cottage living, conferences, beach strolling and lounging – all wonderful refreshing and invigorating activities which we have been anticipating all winter long. And we all need this break from the busy schedule of work and school. But sometimes, these leisure activities can become stressful and very self-centred. To offset this danger, the Missions and Service Committee is providing an opportunity for voluntary service right here at home.

Sometime in the middle of August, we will be hosting our annual peach-peeling event in the church auditorium and kitchen. The exact date for this occasion will depend on the ripening of the local peaches, and we will keep you posted in the weekly bulletin. So, for now, just block out a couple of weeks in mid-August for this worthwhile cause.

We will require someone to pick up the donated peaches from local farmers, many helping hands to wash and peel the peaches, volunteers to mix the peaches with sugar and Fruit Fresh, and pack them into freezer bags and pails. Finally, someone needs to deliver the full pails to ValuMart in Virgil for storage until they can be taken to New Hamburg, where they will be baked into pies for next year's MCC Relief Sale. We are also looking for someone who is willing to take over the organizing and overseeing of future peach-peeling events from John Epp, our present man-in-charge.

All of the above activities occur on a Saturday morning, in an atmosphere of fellowship and camaraderie with volunteers from various local churches. So you won't want to miss this exciting summer opportunity! Please add your name to the sign-up sheets in the foyer, and we will let you know the exact date and time of this event once the peaches are ready. *Kathy Rempel, Missions & Service Committee.*

**REESOR REUNION PICNIC** for former residents of Reesor, their families, relatives and friends on Sunday, August 8, 2010, at Backus Mill Conservation Park in Port Rowan. Memorial Service and Devotions begin at 11:00 a.m. Business meeting and luncheon to follow. For further details please call Martha Bartel at 905-468-7029 or Mary Wieb at 519-586-2986

August Work and Learn Team opportunity in Haiti: MCC Haiti has invited Ontario to send a Work and Learn Team of 6-8 participants from August 19 to Sept. 2. If you have the willingness to learn about Haiti and to work alongside our Haitian brothers and sisters as they walk the road of recovery, we invite you to apply by writing a letter outlining your interest, previous cross-cultural experience, and church involvement. Please email your letter to WAL leader Leah Reesor (leahreesor@gmail.com) by July 9. Additional details are available at <http://ontario.mcc.org/wal>.

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.

*If you would like to submit any photos or articles for the newsletter, please contact the office at 905-468-3313 or e-mail at [office@redbrickchurch.ca](mailto:office@redbrickchurch.ca). **Deadline for the September newsletter is August 27, 2010.***