

Connections

Scattering Seeds for a NEW Season



Apricot blossoms in Niagara herald an early spring!

With the early arrival of spring, the snow has disappeared hopefully not to be seen again until next winter even though late spring snowfalls and freezing temperatures are still possible well into May in some areas of Canada. In southern Ontario the buds on the fruit trees and grape vines are swelling and about to burst open revealing new growth, a full 4 weeks ahead of normal.

As a child I was always interested in science and loved the experiments which involved putting bean seeds in a glass jar with a wet paper towel and charting how they germinated and sprouted. Sowing vegetable seeds (peas, beans, carrots, cucumbers, corn) in my mother's garden and helping to keep them weed-free were jobs that I enjoyed and the rewards were delicious. I also remember the love and care with which my Oma Regier tended the flowerbeds surrounding her house. When I got married she graciously let me dig up some flowers to start my own garden albeit they didn't thrive as well in the soil I had as they had at her house. Perhaps that is why the Bible passage in Mark 4: 1-20, "The Parable of the Sower", has always resonated with me in a special way.

Mennonite Women Canada (formerly Canadian Women in Mission) is celebrating its 60th Anniversary this year with the theme "Scattering Seeds for a NEW Season". Since 1952 women's groups across Canada have faithfully supported their larger provincial and national organizations by offering their time, talents and financial donations. During the past 60 years there

have been many changes in how we interact with each other on these different levels. The rapid rise in the use of internet technology and the various types of social media have changed the world. Communicating with each other and accessing information around the world is achieved in the wink of an eye and at the touch of a finger to a keyboard.

It definitely is a NEW season in communicating for us at Mennonite Women Canada although what we are communicating is not new. Our mission statement as printed below is an updated version recommended by the Task Force (2010, page 19). "It still has the four points which move from an inward perspective of personal faith and commitment to its outward expression relating to women in their own communities as well as those from other communities and around the world. It is less wordy and more concise using today's terminology."

Mennonite Women Canada encourages women to:

- ~ nurture their life in Christ
- ~ acknowledge and share their gifts
- ~ hear and support each other
- ~ serve and minister across the street and around the world

In preparation for this NEW season, we have ventured out into the world of the internet. We have a webpage of our own which is under the umbrella of Mennonite Church Canada at www.mennonitechurch.ca/mwcl/. A blog was started at www.mennowomencanada.blogspot.com. Both the blog and the web page have links to our projects for more detailed information and an opportunity to donate on-line. It has been challenging to keep these pages updated and inviting. We welcome younger women who are interested in sharing their expertise to get in touch with us. We recently have been exploring Facebook as another way to connect with women. So keep your eyes open and you might just see us there soon!

Our planning committee has been working on putting together a 60th Anniversary Celebration event on Saturday, July 14 during the MC Canada Annual Assembly in Vancouver. Please plan to attend. Note that you will need a ticket to attend this event and will need to purchase it by June 15. For more details see the poster on the back page.

Liz Koop, President

60th Anniversary Special Edition



Pennies and Prayer Inheritance Fund

In 2010 a donation was made to the Pennies & Prayer Inheritance Fund to celebrate the birthday of a congregation. That was the year that the Zoar Mennonite Church in Langham, SK celebrated their 100th anniversary. There are two ladies groups in the congregation. The First Ladies Aid was organized shortly after the founding of the church and continues to the present. Members of that group remembered that their mothers and grandmothers had given pennies, accompanied by prayers, to support missionaries. In honour of the Zoar Mennonite Church's anniversary, the First Ladies Aid decided to contribute a dollar per year to PPIF.



A donation in memory of "Minnie" Wilhelmina Thiessen (b. May 2, 1923 d. September 14, 2011) was recently made to the PPIF by the Friendly Hour Women's Group of First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Minnie was an active member of the Friendly Hour, serving as their secretary for many years. Minnie had taken secretarial training in Saskatoon and was employed for some time as the secretary receptionist of First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon. She sang in the church choir and cared deeply for her faith family. Minnie never married, but loved being a sister and aunt to her biological family. She will be deeply missed.

Submitted by Naomi Unger

This inheritance fund is a remarkable legacy of compassion from our mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers who had the vision of how small gifts could grow and make a difference. It is a legacy that calls us to dream again. Contributions to the Pennies and Prayer Inheritance Fund will help carry forward this legacy and provide support to programs of Mennonite Church Canada which involve women.

We encourage you to honour the life of a loved one by making a donation in her/his memory or celebrate a special birthday of a family member or congregation with a donation. (MW Canada)

Our Ministries

Your GIFTS help support:

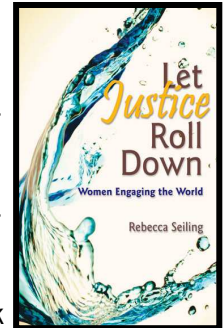
- * Women working in MC Canada's Witness ministries
- * Women studying for advanced theology degrees
- * An International Ministries Project
- * Radical Journey www.RadicalJourney.org
- * Publication of an annual Bible Study Guide (see below)

Let Justice Roll Down

Bible Study Guide 2012

Throughout the prophetic books of the Bible, a steady drumbeat can be heard: return to God's ways, remember who you are, seek justice. These calls are persistent, and not without harsh words of coming judgment. Amos, whose name means "burden bearer," carried a message of warning to the Israelite people.

Let Justice Roll Down, commissioned by Mennonite Women Canada and Mennonite Women USA and written by Rebecca Seiling, is ideal for women's gatherings, Sunday school classes, retreats, or individual reading and inspiration. Twelve sessions examine the book of Amos and topics such as the prophetic voice, the church's witness in the world, consumption and generosity, and the relationship between worship and justice.



Copies will be available for purchase later this summer and can be ordered from:

- * Kathy Shantz 1-800-631-6535 or KathyS@MennoMedia.org
- * Online at www.mennomedia.org
- * Online at www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/Ordering
- * CMU Bookstore 1-877-231-4570 extension 339

For back issues of the Bible Study Guide contact Liz Koop at 905-562-5920 or koopfarms@becon.org

You may **DONATE** to any of our projects by sending a cheque payable to Mennonite Church Canada. Be sure to designate the funds to Mennonite Women Canada and indicate the projects you wish to support. Mail your cheque to Lois Mierau, Box 116, Langham, SK S0K 2L0. You can also **DONATE ONLINE** by going to our **Opportunities for Giving** page at www.mennonitechurch.ca/mwc/givePP.php. Receipts will be issued by Mennonite Church Canada.



Mennonite Women Canada 60th Anniversary Celebration: Saturday July 14, 2012 - 12 noon to 3 pm at MC Canada Assembly, Vancouver, BC. For more information see invitation on the back page.

Women of MCEC Spring Enrichment Day – April 21 from 10:15 am to 3:30 pm at Zurich Mennonite Church, Zurich, ON
Theme: God’s Extravagant Grace
Guest Speaker: Janine Schultz

Alberta Women in Mission Retreat – May 26-27 from noon to noon at Sunnyside Christian Retreat Centre, Sylvan Lake, AB.
Theme: Balancing our Lives
Guest Speaker: Lee Klassen

SK Women in Mission Enrichment Day – April 28 from 10:30 am to 3:30 pm at Rosthern Mennonite Church, Rosthern, SK
Theme: Rooted in Christ...Celebrating our Years
Featuring: Stories and Slides of the past 70 years

MCBC Women’s Ministry Inspirational Day – May 5 from 10:30 am to 3:30 am at Bethel Mennonite Church, Langley BC
Theme: Joyful Proclamations
Speaker: Eden Jersak

Profiles and Interviews



Melanie Neufeld extends community hospitality

by Barb Draper

As one of the pastors of Seattle Mennonite Church, **Melanie Neufeld** works in the community, empowering people who experience homelessness in the neighbourhood. When the church

in Seattle found more and more street people literally on their doorstep, they decided to work at offering radical hospitality. Melanie’s role is to help the church network with other community groups and service organizations to develop meaningful relationships with their low-income neighbours.

Melanie Rempel grew up in Chatham, Ontario, and met her husband, Jonathan Neufeld, when they both attended CMBC (now Canadian Mennonite University) in Winnipeg. While Jonathan worked as a pastor at Bethel Mennonite in Winnipeg, Melanie served as an MCC volunteer, working with the Elizabeth Fry Society there. As she was exposed to the huge needs and wounds of people who lived on the margins of society, she longed to be better equipped to help them find healing and transformation.

In 2002, when their daughter, Thalia, was one year old, Melanie and Jonathan moved to Elkhart, Indiana, to study at AMBS. For three years, Melanie received support from the Spiritual Growth Assistance Fund of Mennonite Women Canada. As well as theology, she studied social work, focusing on community development. The Neufeld family returned to Winnipeg, and then moved to Seattle in 2007.

Melanie has hesitated to call herself a pastor because she doesn’t do many of the traditional things that pastors do. Her work for the past five years has been to establish relationships, not only with the homeless people of the neighbourhood, but also with other groups and agencies. She says, “There is lots of good energy in the neighbourhood,” and finds it a blessing working together with Muslim and Jewish communities as well as with Mormon and Christian Science churches.

The very success of her work has also brought some of the biggest challenges. The local business community has felt threatened, fearing that the work of Seattle Mennonite will lead to more homeless people moving to the area. As Melanie has made friends with people in her neighbourhood, she also needs to be very careful not to be overwhelmed and works seriously at self-care. On the positive side, she says, “My life is being transformed by the relationships.”

The Neufeld family is planning a sabbatical this summer which will include a week in Toronto, getting to know the Sanctuary program with Greg Pauls.

Esther Patkau and "Canadian Women in Mission, 1895-1952-2002"

by Naomi Unger



Esther Patkau has always been interested in history, missions and women's ministries. It was these interests, not the new millennium nor the change in Mennonite Church structures, that motivated her to write the history of Canadian Women in Mission ten years ago.

Over the course of several months in 2002, Esther did her research and writing. In addition to some historical material in her basement, she had easy access to the Mennonite archives housed at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon.

From 1951 to 1974, Esther Patkau was a COM missionary/church-planter in Japan. She and her colleagues introduced people to the gospel of Jesus Christ by including the Bible in English conversation classes. She related to the women who were interested in Christianity in response to Japanese evangelists.

Back in Saskatchewan, Esther was called to be co-pastor of First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, and served there from 1976 to 1983. Hospital visitation was part of her pastoral work, and that led, eventually, to Esther volunteering as a chaplain at the Royal University Hospital.

Since 2005, Esther has been chaplain at Bethany Manor. In addition to co-ordinating worship services and spiritual

programming, Esther offers a listening ear and a caring response to the seniors living in the Manor.

Esther has been a member of the Friendly Hour Women's group at First Mennonite Church for many years. At various times she has served on the executive of Saskatchewan Women in Mission.

The bulk of Esther's book is descriptions of how the women got organized provincially and nationally and summaries of the annual gatherings of CWM from 1953 to 2002. She concludes with an appendix that is full of useful information, including lists of mission projects, annual offerings and themes for conferences and retreats.

What was very helpful to Esther was the material gathered by Katherine Hooze for her 1977 history of CWM and by Gladys Goering in 1980 for her history of the General Conference Women in Mission.

It is significant to Esther that for 100 years women have continued to meet to support missionaries and encourage each other in good works. She noted that as giving for evangelism declined, the support for MCC and material aid increased.

Thank you, Esther Patkau, for your gift and ministry to Mennonite Women Canada in the form of this history book.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of Esther Patkau's history book please contact Liz Koop at 905-562-5920 or koop-farms@becon.org.



Working together is a blessing

by Lorna Rogalski
Vineland, Ontario

Mother Teresa said, "We can do no great things—only small things with great love."

Over the past 50 years I have been richly blessed by women's groups locally and across Canada. We meet many women who shape our faith journey, and older women in the church have impacted my life

with their encouragement and their example of service. As I worked in various positions in my local group, I appreciated the gifts of other women, the friendships and the love and support given during difficult times. Thus, it is my turn to be an encouragement and example to younger women in the church.

One of the highlights of being President of Ontario Women in Mission was celebrating 50 years of serving and working together in 1996. During my term and long before, women from the Mennonite Conferences of Eastern Canada met on a regular basis to learn to know one another, planning how to work together. In 1995 we celebrated the integration of these groups, becoming Women of MCEC. This was a wonderful experience!

Working together is a blessing..... continued

My term as President of Canadian Women in Mission was a gift as I was able to build relationships with various women across Canada and experience firsthand the gifts or treasures that were part of each "women's group." Working on the executive gave me the insight that each province struggled with the same issues and as we learned to cope and move forward, continuing to serve in the community and abroad. During my term (1999-2002), we saw numerous groups disbanding because of age and illness. These were sad times for CWM and the women who had so faithfully served the church for many years. We also struggled with the fact that new groups were not forming in our churches as our younger women were working mothers who chose to use their gifts differently in the church. This was an invitation for us as executive to make changes in how we do

"women in mission." It was a pleasure to be a part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of CWM in 2002.

As I reflect on these years, I believe that women's groups have been richly blessed as they worked together and have also been a blessing to those they faithfully served.

I applaud how in recent years, all women in the church are considered part of Mennonite Women Canada. There are many ways we can work together, young and old, as we tie quilts together, work together in the church kitchen at a potluck or serve a meal to people from the community. Let's be open to learning from one another as we serve God together. ~ Lorna Rogalski, Vineland, Ontario

DID YOU KNOW....?

....that at the first national gathering on July 8th, 1952 in Gretna, MB there were over 300 women present?

....that women's groups in the various provinces were formally organized before 1952? **British Columbia** women organized in 1939, **Manitoba** followed in 1942, **Saskatchewan** in 1943, and **Alberta** in 1948. **Ontario** women were formally organized in three distinct conferences — Ontario WMSC (Women's Missionary and Service Commission) in 1917, South Western Ontario Women in 1944 and United Mennonite Women's Mission Society in 1947. These three later integrated in 1995 as Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

CHURCH CHUCKLES

From the Secretary's Desk

By Ev Buhr, Secretary, First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, AB



It's always a challenge having 150 people proof read something you've written, but that happens every Sunday with the church bulletin. The best bulletin blooper we've ever printed was put in by a former secretary - The first hymn was *Come, let us all unite to sin*. One that slipped past me was *Mt Shepherd will supply my need*. Our pastor submitted this sermon title – *What the Donkey Says*. She was a little chagrined when it came time to preach/say her sermon.

Then there are a few that I've managed to catch before they went to print: *Thin is the glory* (thin doesn't show up with spell check, but curiously, thine does); *Prelude and Quiet Mediation* (seems appropriate for a Mennonite church); and *Postlude and Quit Meditation* (also quite appropriate). Many of us have received those emails with funny church signs. My favourite one is: *Honk if you love Jesus. Text while driving if you want to meet him in person!*

Contacts

President: Liz Koop
Phone: 905-562-5920
Email: koopfarms@becon.org

Secretary-Treasurer: Lois Mierau
Phone: 306-283-4657
Email: glmierau@yourlink.ca

Mennonite Church Canada
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.,
Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

The Communications Committee

We want this to be a place where we nurture and encourage each other through the telling of stories and sharing of information. We welcome submissions and encourage you to send your stories and comments to us. Members of the committee are (from the top, left to right)
~ Waltrude Gortzen - Waltrude@shaw.ca
~ Naomi Unger - dnunger@sasktel.net
~ Barbara Draper - rbdraper@golden.net
~ Liz Koop - koopfarms@becon.org





Mennonite Women Canada 60th Anniversary Lunch

Join us at the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly in Vancouver, B.C.
to celebrate 60 years of seeds scattered and sown.

Saturday, July 14, 2012, 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm

\$25 per ticket. Ticket order deadline is June 15, 2012.
Includes hot lunch, annual meeting,
and featured guests from *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*.

For more information: www.mennonitechurch.ca/vancouver2012
For tickets contact Coreena: cvonkampen@mennonitechurch.ca

*As each has received a gift, employ it for one another,
as good stewards of God's varied grace. 1 Peter 4:10*

