



Connections

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



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

Greetings from the President

This issue of *Connections* is the sixth one that our Communications Committee has put together. Intended to connect, inform, encourage and affirm Mennonite women across Canada *Connections* is published twice a year, in the spring and the fall. There are a number of ways that you can receive *Connections*. A printed version and an electronic version are sent to every Mennonite Church Canada congregation. Please ask your pastor or church administrator to make copies for the women in your congregation. Copies are also available at your provincial women's Enrichment Day or Retreat through your provincial women's rep. You can also find it on our web page at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/mwc/> and our blog at <http://mennowomencanada.blogspot.ca/>.

In each issue of our newsletter we include an update on our projects as well as interviews or profiles of women from across Canada. This is one way for us to learn what other women are involved in, to hear of their joys,

challenges and struggles, and to broaden our own perspectives. This issue features interviews of four women actively involved in congregations representing different ethnic origins: Hispanic, Hmong, Lao, and West African. We encourage you to get to know your many wonderful sisters in these emerging churches.

Some interesting facts: From a recent survey of MC Canada congregations, Tim Froese reports that there are about 225 congregations. There are 57 congregations (including emerging ones) whose first language is NOT English; 49 congregations provide ministry in 2 languages; another 13 provide ministry in 3 or more languages. Currently we worship in 19 different languages. In the past 10 years, 74% of our new congregations have been non-English.

As Mennonite women across Canada let us encourage, hear, and support each other as we continue to serve and minister to those in our midst – across the street and around the world.

~ Liz Koop ~



Left to right:
Waltrude Gortzen (BC)
Liz Koop, President
Myrna Sawatzky (SK)
Kate Janzen (AB)
Lois Mierau, Sec/Treas.
Elsie Wiebe (MB)
Linda Wiens (ON)

Celebrating our Ethnic Diversity

Marleny Coronado



Marleny, her husband Arnulfo Tovar, and two of their six children, were sponsored to come to Canada by the Avon Mennonite Church, Stratford, ON. They arrived in 2003 from Villavicencio, Meta, Colombia.

Marleny had been a volunteer with “Asprovivir,” an organization that worked to obtain housing and food for people displaced by the paramilitaries, to put children into schools, and to get government money for better housing for seniors.

Because of her work, the paramilitaries attempted to kill her. After Marleny spent three months in the hospital recovering from bullet wounds, the government moved her to Bogota and placed her children in a “safe house.” For two years, Marleny, Arnulfo and their family lived in different locations. It was in Bogota that Marleny became acquainted with the Mennonite Church and Jaime Meza.

In Ontario, Marleny found meaningful work, but not Arnulfo. He moved to Saskatoon in 2006 to look for work there. Marleny and the children followed him in 2010. She now works cleaning offices at the Saskatoon Community Clinic.

Meanwhile, Jaime Meza had become pastor of the Hispanic group at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon. This has become their church home. Marleny likes a church that is transparent and where money goes to help people in need. She finds joy in the fellowship of the church, in Bible Studies, in opportunities to learn more, and in helping to coordinate events for the Hispanic group at church. If her English were better, she'd like to be more involved in the whole congregation. Marleny appreciates connections to the English service such as when Pastor Jaime uses the morning texts and message during the Spanish evening service.

How would she like her sisters-in-Christ to pray? Marleny says, “We need to pray for each other and we need to pray together! There are many needs, such as the sick, homeless people, family members left back home in Colombia, and people who need Jesus Christ.”

-- Submitted by Naomi Unger and Verna Olfert

Boonyang Onesychanthasay: The “lady leader”

In 1980 Boonyang Onesychanthasay, along with her husband and 6 children, came to Canada from a refugee camp in Thailand. They had fled there from their homeland, Laos, to escape severe persecution at the hands of the Communists after the Vietnam War. Sponsored by the Vineland United Mennonite Church through MCC, the parents found work in a nearby basket factory while the children attended school.

In 1986 the family moved to St. Catharines to be closer to other Laotians and the emerging Lao Christian Fellowship. The group began meeting in rented space and in 1997 purchased their own building, a neighbourhood bar, which they converted. Of the 60-70 participants, about 80% are Laotian; the rest are from the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and China. Worship services are in English. Programs for children, youth and adults are well attended. In addition to coordinating the potluck meal every Sunday, the women have their own Bible Study class, which Boonyang leads.

Boonyang has a passion for fitness and enjoys working out 3 or 4 times a week. For a retired person, she has a lot of energy. As the “lady leader” of her church she is now busier than ever. Her-eleven grandchildren keep her young.



When asked about challenges, Boonyang responded that learning English was very hard for her. As a result, one of the services that her church now provides is translation for newcomers, helping them with doctor appointments, filling out government forms, and making them feel welcome.

Speaking on behalf of her church, Boonyang would welcome prayers from her sisters in Christ - prayers for stronger relationships, unity, and wisdom in dealing with conflicts. In the basement of the church are posters of Menno Simons' teachings and the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi which serve as reminders of their mission.

Boonyang shares Matthew 5:7-10 with us, especially verse 9. “Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God.”

-- Submitted by Liz Koop

Celebrating our Ethnic Diversity

Theresa Powoe: Motivated to Serve Christ



During the Liberian civil war, Theresa Powoe's companions were shot and killed. Theresa was unhurt, she believes, not because she was better than the others, but because of God's grace. She says, "God still has work for me to do, to honor Him and share His gospel."

Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton sponsored the Powoe family to come to Canada as refugees. Her husband Joseph and their two oldest sons arrived in 2004. Theresa came in 2009 with their two younger boys. She is grateful to be in Canada, knowing that many Africans want to come to the west, but can't, and is thankful that settling into Edmonton has gone fairly smoothly. Theresa is now training to become a Health Care Aide.

There are 17 West African families in Holyrood. Theresa joined the church in 2011 and has found peace and love there. She participates in the women's group and takes her turn teaching a

Sunday School class of 4 to 8 year olds. She's observed how everyone serves one another as equals in Christ and wants to serve with that attitude as well. She's also observed that singing groups at Holyrood are small compared to the women's choir in her home church in Liberia!

Theresa rejoices that God continues to work in her life. Even though raising a family is sometimes hard, Theresa is thankful for her children. They are a gift from God.

The situation in Liberia is heavy on her heart. Many medical facilities were damaged or completely destroyed during the war. Consequently, illnesses, accidents and things that should not result in death, such as snakebites, malaria and childbirth, are often deadly. Her Liberian church wants to build a regional hospital. Theresa asks us to pray that the necessary funds will be raised and that the hospital will be a strong Christian witness when completed.

Having experienced God's deliverance personally, Theresa challenges us to trust God, even in the most difficult times, and then to keep on trusting.

-- Submitted by Naomi Unger

West meets East

On July 31, Cheryl Dyck, Rita Siebert and Waltrude Gortzen of MCBC Women's Ministry visited the women of the Western Hmong Mennonite Church at their meeting place, the Hammond United Church in Maple Ridge, BC. After warm greetings, introductions, refreshments and an opening prayer by **Seng Yang, the pastor's wife**, the conversation flowed. "They were eager to talk and we were eager to listen and learn," Waltrude said later.

Because of the Vietnam War, Hmong speakers from Laos came to Canada as refugees in 1980. One of the sponsoring churches in Ontario was Mennonite and it was through them that the Hmong first learned about Mennonites. After the war people were no longer free to worship as they wished.

The congregation meets for Sunday service, as well as Tuesday evenings for Bible study and Saturday evenings for song and band practice in preparation for Sunday worship.

Fourteen women of all ages are in their group, gathering four times a year. They are committed to participating in MCBC's Women's activities because it is a way to grow in faith, gain experience in prayer and fellowship with other Mennonite women. For example, to raise money for their group to attend



Left to right: Kay Moua, Kia Xiong and Seng Yang

the 2012 fall retreat, a group of nineteen, including husbands, picked 64 buckets of blueberries in the hot summer sun and sold them for \$800.00.

Living in Canada means becoming more Canadian. Special celebrations are often in the traditional Hmong style followed by western

style. Their young people prefer to be more modern. Their food is a combination of East and West. They plan to sell spring rolls at the MCC Festival in September, knowing that the masses find them delectable. At the 2013 Women's Inspiration Day, the spring rolls they provided were all eaten.

Our Hmong sisters encourage us all to make more connections to ethnic women's groups, keeping in touch at special events but also at other non-event times.

Visit Mennonite Women Canada's blog for the full story of this visit.

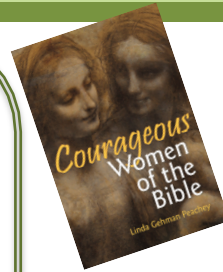
-- Submitted by Waltrude Gortzen

Opportunities for Giving

MW Canada's 6 Opportunities for Giving:

1. **Spiritual Growth Assistance Fund (SGAF)** provides scholarships to women studying theology at a Masters level.
2. **Pennies and Prayer Legacy Fund (PPLF)** helps to enhance the involvement of women in Mennonite Church Canada mission work.
3. **Publication and Communication** – used to publish the annual Bible Study Guide and keeping in touch with women across Canada
4. **International Ministries** supports Mennonite Church Canada work among the Isaan people of north-eastern Thailand.
5. **Radical Journey** supports cross-cultural experiences for young adults.
6. **Where Most Needed:** Your generous donations make us partners in Ministry.

More information on these projects is available at <https://donate.mennonitechurch.ca/mennonite-women>



2013 Bible Study Guide

Now available from MennoMedia. Contact Craig Anderson at 1-800-631-6535 or

craiga@mennomedia.org.

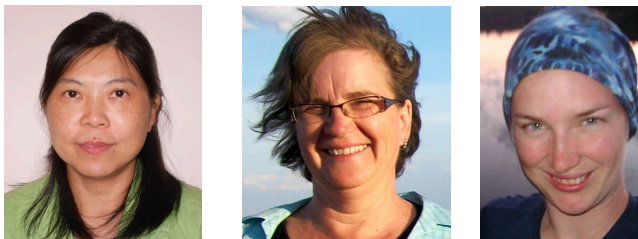
Online at www.mennomedia.org or www.resources.mennonitechurch.ca/

For previous year's BSG's contact: presmwcanada@mennonitechurch.ca



Together we can do so much more!

OUR 2013 SGAF RECIPIENTS



We are pleased to announce three recipients. Left to right: **Iris Leung** from Burnaby, BC will be studying at Trinity Western University. **Melody Neufeld-Rocheleau** from Saskatoon, SK will be taking courses at CMU. **Jessica Reesor-Rempel** from Kitchener, ON will be studying at Toronto School of Theology. Blessings to each of you as you study and discern where God is leading you!

OUR PPLF RECIPIENTS



Darnell & Christina Barkman (Philippines)

Nathan & Taryn Dirks (Botswana)



www.mennonitechurch.ca/mwc/
www.mennowomencanada.blogspot.ca
<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2009>

Upcoming Events

October 18 & 19: SWM Fall Retreat at The Timberlodge at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Friday 5:00 pm to Saturday 4:00 pm. Theme: ***I Heard Her Voice: Courageous Women of the Bible***. Speaker: Elsie Goerzen. Special Music: Valerie Wiebe.

October 18 - 20: MCBC Women's Ministry Fall Retreat at Camp Squeah, Friday 6:00 pm to Sunday 2:00 pm. Theme: ***Peace by Piece***. Speaker: Rebecca Seiling, author of *Let Justice Roll Down*.

2014 March 5-8: Spring Leadership Assembly – Mennonite Women Canada executive meets in Winnipeg.

May 3, 2014 - 75th Anniversary - BC Women in Mission – MCBC Women's Ministry Inspirational Day at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, BC. Guest Speaker: Karen Martens-Zimmerly.

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