



# 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

## Embracing Transitions

We face many transitions in our lives. Some of these are natural transitions such as the ageing process where we move from one stage of life to another without really noticing it. Some milestones such as birth, marriage and death are more memorable and more life altering than others.

Over the past 7 years that I have been volunteering with Mennonite Women Canada, I have noticed one major transition, namely the decline in the number of organized congregational women's groups in our Mennonite churches. As older women's groups are disbanding, younger women are not interested in connecting with each other in the same way as their foremothers did.

Traditionally Mennonite Women Canada (previously Canadian Women in Mission) received its funding through donations from women's groups (often in the form of "dues") which was channelled through the provincial Women in Mission organizations. Since 2007, three of these organizations have formally disbanded but still continue to connect with MW Canada through province-wide Retreats and/or Enrichment Days. Lack of volunteers to take on leadership

positions has meant a transition to a less formal organization.

MW Canada faced a challenge this past year when we were unable to fill our two elected leadership positions of President and Secretary-Treasurer. In February we were delighted to receive a positive response from Shirley Redekop to be our next President. In the past Shirley served on the MW Canada executive for 6 years as the WMCEC Coordinator. The installation will take place during our Annual Business Meeting on Thursday, July 7 at 10:30 am.

Our search for a Secretary-Treasurer continues. At our recent executive meetings on March 10 and 11, we decided to split this position and I have agreed to be the Treasurer for the next 2 years. So if you know of anyone who could fill the Secretary position please let us know. Details can be found on our website at <http://women.mennonitechurch.ca/>.

Mennonite Women Canada is in transition and we do not know what the end result will be. Transition to an alternative organizational model seems inevitable. The challenge for all of us is to find ways to accommodate these changes and still be a meaningful and vital partnering ministry of the church. *Liz Koop, President*



### Current Executive:

Waltrude Gortzen (BC), Lois Mierau (Secretary-Treasurer), Liz Koop (President), Shirley Redekop (President Elect), Phyllis Ramer (ON), Kate Janzen (AB), Mel Harms (SK). Absent: Elsie Wiebe (MB)

# Embracing Transitions

## MCBC Women's Ministry

Since the folding of BC Women in Mission in 2007 and reinventing ourselves in 2008 under the umbrella of MCBC as MCBC Women's Ministry there is no longer as close a connection between women's groups and the larger organization.

Across BC women are still choosing to gather for many different reasons and in different formats. I know that there are spring events, Valentine's Day and Christmas parties, fun outings such as bowling, hiking, baking and cooking. I know of a group that heads to Camp Squeah for a quilting weekend in February and another group that has taken on sewing projects for a Children's Day Care Centre in Mexico. And yes, there are still a few groups that quilt regularly for MCC and groups that gather for Bible Study and prayer.

I am also happy to report that our MCBC women are **still** enjoying the Spring Inspirational Day and the Fall Retreat Weekend. This year will be our 77<sup>th</sup> Inspirational Day and our 52<sup>nd</sup> Retreat Weekend!

To affirm our ongoing partnership with MW Canada, we have found new ways to raise funds at our two events, even though it's not in the amounts we used to raise. With God's help, we will continue to show our love for Christ and for our sisters in Christ across Mennonite Church Canada and **know** that He will continue to bless us in whatever we choose to do in His Name.

*Waltrude Gortzen*

## Mennonite Women Manitoba

"When all about you lies in pieces, may the Holy One make of them a passage," is a statement from Jan Richardson's book, *In the Sanctuary of Women*. When Manitoba Women in Mission made a decision to dissolve in 2009, women in Mennonite Church Manitoba were disconnected and broken in pieces but these pieces gave us something to work with, from which something new has developed.

This past year we have continued to give time to developing an organizational structure that will direct and define our mission. We have tentatively agreed to take our mandate from the MW Canada Mission Statements. Our work will be guided but not limited by these statements. One proposal is that we pay particular attention to the life/faith journey of women – it's seasons, challenges and possibilities. We want to listen to the experiences/voices/perspectives of Manitoba women and discern possible responses. These responses could include: support, advocacy, resourcing, networking, encouraging and prayer.

We are excited to be hosting a Sister Care Seminar on May 13 & 14, 2016 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

Women in Mennonite churches in Manitoba continue to gather to sew blankets, assemble school and health kits for MCC; for Bible Study, often using the Annual Bible Study Guide; to provide meals and child care to families in need; to care for neighbours beyond our faith communities; to encourage, listen and be present with one another.

*Elsie Wiebe*



## WMCEC

Many of Women of MCEC are still busy with quilting, comforter tying, Bible studies, retreats, special events, and finding ways to connect with women within their congregations and their communities. Many are looking at ways to become more intergenerational.

WMCEC plans a yearly Spring Enrichment Day in April. In 2014 we also organized a bus trip to Ottawa where we were hosted by Ottawa Mennonite Women. We hosted a Sister Care Retreat with facilitators Rhoda Keener and Carolyn Heggen in October 2014. We held a second retreat in 2015 and have plans for two more in 2016.

My personal involvement in these events has been focused on sharing and hearing each other's stories. The theme for our Spring Enrichment Day in Markham is "This is my Story, This is my Song", hearing the stories of those who years ago, and more recently have chosen Canada as their new home.

In my home congregation, a highlight for me was conducting an interview with two of our matriarchs: Margaret Gingerich and Doris Jantzi. Both of these women, currently in their 80's, have influenced my life, as well as contributed in many ways to life of the church and the community.

My words of encouragement would be to listen to each other's stories, with open hearts and minds, without judging or fixing. Sometimes the most healing thing we can offer each other is to just listen.

*Phyllis Ramer*

# Embracing Transitions

## Mennonite Women Alberta

Wherever Mennonite women find themselves in Alberta there is a willingness to connect. In past years most of the women's groups did similar projects such as serving food at all church functions and quilting. These were good times of visiting and worship. Today those groups have almost disappeared but women's need to connect has stayed the same.

Let me tell you what we do at my church Foothills Mennonite in Calgary. Every fall we have a 'Job Fair' where there is an opportunity to sign up for Bible studies, hiking and walking groups, serving at the Ronald McDonald House, food groups and yes, even quilting.

Twice a year all the women from our church are invited to attend a WISK (Women Intergenerational Seniors to Kids) event. Four women of various ages serve on this committee. This Easter we had a Palm Sunday Luncheon following the worship service. Forty plus women of all ages joined in the activity. We served soup, buns, and a simple dessert. A woman who has Ukrainian roots taught us how to decorate



eggs using waxes and special dyes. The young girls decorated sugar cookies and created Ukrainian flower wreaths. There was chatter and laughter around each table. Before dessert, while we were finishing the eggs, we listened to a short devotional that encouraged us to always do our best and never give up. The woman who spoke is a hockey coach and she used her passion for hockey to demonstrate how God can do great things through each one of us.

This May long weekend all women from Alberta Mennonite churches are invited to a retreat at Sylvan Lake. This will be our fourth annual retreat and Carol Penner will be our guest speaker. The theme for the weekend is "**re(making) our stories.**" A third of the women who attend are new Canadians and they bring a new excitement and enthusiasm. We are appreciative that Mennonite Church Alberta supports these women with subsidies if required for their registrations.

*Kate Janzen*

**Note:** For full length articles and colour photos with captions please see our 'Stories' section on our website at <http://women.mennonitechurch.ca/stories>

## Saskatchewan Women's Ministry

Transitions. What a perfect word to sum up Saskatchewan Women's Groups. Last year, after 73 years, we said goodbye to our Saskatchewan Women in Mission organization and are now transitioning into having a Saskatchewan Women's Rep under the umbrella of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan. It's always hard to say goodbye to the past and begin a new venture, but thankfully we're not alone in this. We are fortunate to have support from other provinces who've already been down this road and who are willing to guide and encourage us on our journey. Together we will succeed.

We will once again be hosting our **Fall Women's Retreat at Shekinah on October 14 & 15**. This is the only event being planned for this year and I am thankful for the women from Zoar Mennonite in Langham for volunteering to help organize this year's retreat. Our theme will be based upon the 2016 Annual Bible Study Guide, "Faith Travels".

The other event I'm looking forward to is the Mennonite Church Canada Annual Assembly that's being held in Saskatoon in July. Being new to my role as Women's Representative means there are many of you that I haven't met, not only from Saskatchewan but from all over Canada. I admit that this can definitely be a little intimidating but I find myself more excited than nervous.

To be able to get together with so many people to worship and share our love for God is truly a blessing. The women I've had the pleasure of meeting so far have been so welcoming and encouraging that to think of how much more powerful we all will be when we're joined together gives me hope for our future as Mennonite Women. I look forward to seeing many of you there and I look forward to the journey ahead. *Mel Harms*

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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# Opportunities for Giving

- **Spiritual Growth Assistance Fund (SGAF)**
- **Pennies and Prayer Legacy Fund (PPLF)**
- **International Ministries (Thailand)**
- **Short Term Ministries**
- **Publication and Communication**

For more information please visit our website at:  
<http://women.mennonitechurch.ca/>

## Our PPLF Recipients



**Darnell & Christina  
Barkman** (Philippines)



**Nathan & Taryn Dirks**  
(Botswana)

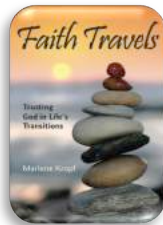
*Thank you for recent donations to PPLF!*

- ~ Kara Ledohowski
- ~ Norma Koop in memory of Judith Dyck
- ~ Saskatchewan Women in Mission
- ~ Alberta Women in Mission

## 2016 Annual Bible Study Guide

*Faith Travels ~ Trusting God in Life's Transitions*  
by Marlene Kropf

Life is full of change and transition. **Faith Travels** takes women on a journey through the Old Testament, inviting them to walk alongside the Israelites from the wilderness and into the Promised Land. Just as the biblical story tells of a people who trusted God along the journey, this study helps readers consider God's promises in their own lives during times of transition. **Marlene Kropf** carefully weaves stories of Celtic Christians throughout the study as well, bringing together the larger story of our human desire to be faithful to God as the journey unfolds.



**We send a complimentary copy to each church every year.** Please contact MW Canada if you are not on our mailing list! To order additional copies please contact Craig Anderson at **MennoMedia** in Kitchener ON: [craiga@mennomedia.org](mailto:craiga@mennomedia.org) /1-800-631-6535 or Arlyn Friesen Epp at **CommonWord** in Winnipeg MB: [info@commonword.ca](mailto:info@commonword.ca)

## 2015 SGAF Recipients

**Shari Nash** from London ON, studying at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, ON  
**Danielle Fillion Rimbault** from Kitchener, ON is also studying at Conrad Grebel University College.  
**Laura Funk** from Winnipeg, MB is studying at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, IN.

## Area Events

**April 23 ~ WMCEC Spring Enrichment Day** at Rouge Valley Mennonite Church, Markham, ON.  
Theme: "This is my Story, This is my Song"

**April 30 ~ BC Women's Ministry Inspirational Day** at Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, BC. Speaker: Ingrid Schultz  
Theme: Wisdom in Legacy: 2 Timothy 1:3-7

**May 10, 11 & 12 ~ WMCEC Sister Care Seminar** hosted by Agape Fellowship, London, ON

**May 13 & 14 ~ MW Manitoba Sister Care Seminar** with Carolyn Heggen and Rhoda Keener at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB

**May 20, 21 & 22 ~ MW Alberta Spring Retreat** at Sunnyside Retreat Centre, Sylvan Lake, AB. Speaker: Carol Penner. Theme: (re)make: making and remaking our stories

**July 7 ~ MW Canada Business Meeting** in Saskatoon, SK

**October 1 ~ WMCEC Sister Care Workshop** at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, St. Catharines, ON

**October 14 & 15 ~ Saskatchewan Women's Retreat** at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim, SK. Theme: "Faith Travels"

**October 14, 15 & 16 ~ BC Women's Ministry Retreat** at Camp Squeah, Hope, BC