

From the President's Desk: Looking in the Rear View Mirror

Over the past seven years our organization has had a rich variety of experiences and as I look back I am aware of different emotions that came to me. I experienced:

Gratitude for the many women participating in the life of the church; for the prayers and words of encouragement to me.

Joy when hearing women's voices united in singing hymns like "Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow" at Annual Meetings; when women stepped forward to fill Executive positions provincially/nationally; the overwhelmingly positive responses to the greeting cards you made which Liz Koop and I distributed at the Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay; when 99 percent of women canvassed in 2006 endorsed the Pen-nies & Prayer Inheritance Fund and its two-fold purpose.

Dismay when British Columbia and Manitoba Women in Mis-sion organizations folded; when Mennonite Women USA with-drew our partnership in the publication of the magazine *Tim-brel*; but,

Hope when Mennonite Church BC established a Women's Ministry; when women said yes to accepting positions on the Task Force (TF); when the TF Report showed women highly committed to the work of the church; when it became evident

that Women in Mission groups in Manitoba continue to meet after the closing of the provincial organization.

Encouragement when Tim Miller Dyck, former editor of *Canadian Mennonite* (CM) offered us a page in CM 6 times a year; when a recommended change to our constitution to make our organization open to all women in our congregations was unanimously adopted; when we filled positions on a new Com-munications Committee; at partnering with Mennonite Men in sponsoring a Workshop at Assembly 2011 on "Challenging Gender Stereotypes."

Laughter at our Executive meetings; when in March 2010 at Leadership Meetings we were asked to report at the Plenary Session by way of a Winter Olympics theme and we turned into a "7 Man Women's Bobsled" team!

In 2008 I wrote, "We look forward to the future and continue to seek God's guidance in whatever changes come our way." As I look back I know God has walked with us. God will continue to guide us and provide countless opportunities for us to be messengers of healing and hope.

Peace to you,
Erna Neufeldt



Easter Prayer

Triumphant God,
we rejoice together
in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
We give thanks for the faithful women
who traveled to the tomb early in the morning
and carried their fragrant spices.
We give thanks for the heavenly messenger
whose good news amazed the women
and transformed them into evangelists.
We give thanks for the glorious hope
that death has lost its sting
and joy comes forth from sorrow.
Renew your life in us, O God;
grant us courage to live
as people empowered by the resurrection
all the days of our lives!
We pray in the name of the risen Christ. Amen.
— Marlene Kropf, Elkhart, IN

From Words for Worship, edited by Arlene Mark, used by per-mission of Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA

Thank-you, Erna!

You have devoted many years to Canadian Women in Mission (now Mennonite Women Canada), first as secretary and then six years as president. We are very grateful for your work and dedication on behalf of Mennonite women across Canada. May the Lord continue to bless you and give you fulfilment in your future endeavours.



In the past few years our organiza-tion has made some significant changes. Two of these have been our name change from Canadian Women in Mission to Mennonite

Women Canada and a redefining of what we used to call 'membership'. We want to include not only women who belong to traditional women's group in our churches but all women who participate in a Men-nonite Church Canada congrega-tion. For that reason we have decided to use the official Mennonite Church Canada logo of the dove with the name Mennonite Women Canada as our new logo.



PENNIES & PRAYER INHERITANCE FUND

A donation in memory of Mary Dyck Fransen, Vineland, Ontario (b. February 28, 1924, d. October 18, 2010) was made to the Pennies & Prayer Inheritance Fund (PIIF) in 2010.

Mary's mission in life was to bring joy to others. Hosting people at home was just one of many ways she did this. She always saw people in their best light, giving praise whenever she could, thereby encouraging them to live up to their potential.



There are many memories of conversations with Mary – of her love for her children and grandchildren, of the Vineland area, of her sisters and brothers, of the routines of daily living, of walks down the beach or in shopping malls, and on and on. Mary, we loved you from when we first met, and continue to love you still.

The PPIF was established in 2006 to encourage and support women in sharing their gifts while engaging with the world, and presenting the reconciling gospel of Jesus Christ. The two fold purpose for this Fund is to be a home for gifts made in honour or memory of loved ones and for supporting women involved in Mennonite Church Canada's ministries.

Online donations to this Fund can be made at

<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/mwc/ministries.htm>

Erna Neufeldt, Toronto United Mennonite Church, Toronto, ON

Ministries of Mennonite Women Canada

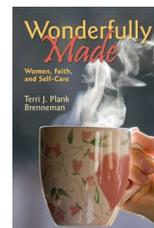
Your gifts help support:

- * Women working in MC Canada's Witness ministries
- * Women studying for advanced theology degrees
- * Women in service/internship programs
- * Publication of an annual Bible Study Guide (see below)

You may donate online by going to our Opportunities for Giving page at www.mennonitechurch.ca/mwc/givePP.php or by mailing a cheque payable to Mennonite Church Canada (designated for Mennonite Women Canada) to Mennonite Church Canada, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

Wonderfully Made

Women, Faith and Self-Care



The annual **Bible Study Guide**, a joint project of Mennonite Women USA and Mennonite Women Canada is published for use in women's gatherings, Sunday school classes, retreats or for individual reading and inspiration.

In her preface to this Bible study, Terri J. Plank Brenneeman writes, "To offer good and healthy care to others, we need to nurture and replenish ourselves, our primary resource."

Wonderfully Made is available from Mennonite Women Canada executive members or from Mennonite Publishing Network at www.mpn.net/wonderfullymade or by calling 1-800-631-653. Price: \$10.00 Copies will be available at MW Canada's Lunch and Annual Meeting, July 8, 2011 (see details below).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Women of MCEC Spring Enrichment Day

Maple View Mennonite Church, Wellesley, ON
Saturday, April 16, 2011, 9:45 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Theme: LEAPING OUT IN FAITH

Speaker: Susan Allison-Jones



SK Women in Mission Enrichment Day

Tiefengrund Mennonite Church, Laird, SK

April 30, 2011, 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Theme: GOD'S GIFT THROUGH HEALTH ISSUES

Personal stories by Mryna Sawatsky, Mary Krause and Tena Siemens

MCBC Women's Ministry Inspirational Day

Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver, BC

Saturday, April 30, 2011, 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Theme: FASTING & FEASTING, THE JESUS DIET

Speakers: Ingrid Schultz, Dr. Helen Eng, Katrina Goertzen

"CELEBRATING CONNECTIONS"

This is your invitation to **MW Canada's Lunch and Annual Meeting** on **Friday, July 8, 2011**, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. at the University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON. Come to celebrate and honour our sisterhood!

Please pre-register for this event at Mennonite Church Canada website at www.mennonitechurch.ca/events/waterloo2011 or by contacting Erna Neufeldt (647-340-7503) or Liz Koop (905-562-5920).

COMMITMENT TO CREATION

Joanne Moyer, Lethbridge, AB



- Plant marigolds, chrysanthemums, chives, onions, garlic, basil, savoury, horseradish, mint or thyme among your garden plants. Their natural odours and root secretions repel some insects.
- Attract birds with bird feeders, bird baths, and bird houses - birds provide natural insect control.
- Use a soaker hose or apply water slowly to the base of plants rather than the leaves.
- Water the lawn or garden during the cool part of the day in order to reduce evaporation.
- Celebrate the Earth's bounty by sharing with others.

These gardening tips are found in Joanne Moyer's book, Earth trek, celebrating and sustaining God's creation (Herald Press, 2004).

Joanne, a 33 year old from Lethbridge, Alberta, became interested in the environment as a camp counselor. The God revealed through creation helped her to understand the God revealed in the Bible. Joanne is currently working on a Ph.D. in environmental studies through the Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba.

For her thesis, Joanne is researching how learning happens within Kenyan faith-based organizations doing environmental and development work. Her

research consists of observing the work of these organizations and interviewing staff and volunteers about their experiences.

Challenges for her are cross-cultural communication and being a single, white woman. Joanne is inspired by the people she has met and the work they are doing. The organizations and their impact may be small but their commitment is huge.

A big highlight was participating in bird banding. Although she didn't actually band the birds, she got to handle them. She says that it's impossible to describe how amazing it is to hold a small wild animal in your hand and feel its little heart beating as you carry it to the beach to release it back into the wild.

Joanne's Christian faith keeps her from despising humanity for our abuse of our environment. Having seen, in Kenya, that the priorities of natural environment and of human economy do not always have to be in conflict, Joanne believes that human and non-human interests can be balanced.

Considering her work as an act of discipleship to God, under the grace of Jesus, Joanne finds hope. Environmental work is extremely discouraging because our efforts are so meager in comparison to the problems. However, the fate of the planet doesn't rest solely with people. The earth is God's and God is in control.

Joanne finds that sharing environmental concerns on the level of faith is "more effective than preaching gloom and doom or listing depressing statistics or scientific data." The present crisis is largely a problem of ethics, beliefs and values. Linking with other Christians is a good place to start in caring for creation.



THRIFT SHOPPER FOR PEACE *Angelika Dawson (nee Wiebe), Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, BC*

Q: How did you come to have an interest in Thrift shops? A: The words "second-hand" have been a part of my vocabulary for as long as I can remember. I grew up with hand-me-downs and things my mom bought at the local Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Thrift Shop. I still have the very first item I bought with my own money over 25 years ago: an oversized, man's sweater. It was 1979, a couple years after the release of the movie *Annie Hall*, I was 14 and all my friends were wearing men's clothes: suit jackets, shirts and ties. I picked up this sweater for a dollar and when I wore it to school the next day I was the envy of them all. I discovered that not only could I be the height of current fashion without spending a fortune, I could also be unique. When my friends asked where I got the sweater, it was with smug satisfaction that I said "Sorry, I got this at MCC, it was the only one there!"

Q: What work do you do for MCC? A: I work as a writer in the Communications Department for MCC in British Columbia. I write press releases, stories for print and web, newsletters, bulletin announcements for churches, letters and more. My favourite part is meeting people who do interesting work for MCC. I love interviewing people, writing their stories and then making them famous.

Q: How does your faith play a role in your work? A: I'm grateful to God for the gift of working with words/writing/language/listening and that I'm able to earn a living by writing for an organization like MCC. I take the mission and value statements of MCC very seriously and all of my writing is done "in the Name of Christ." When I can share with the public/media how MCC is making a difference in the lives of those in need all around the world, then I am sharing that work from my faith perspective. I've had the very great privilege of travelling with MCC to Ukraine and to Laos/Cambodia. Meeting with teachers, farmers and health care workers in these countries was so inspiring to me. But when I meet people here at home, too – like people who have HIV/AIDS and are living well partly because they are cared for through an MCC support group – well that's a faith-growing experience, too.

Q: What are some of your challenges? A: After doing this work for 14 years, the challenge is to keep it fresh. The other challenge is the constant demands to do more in the time I'm given, working smarter and more efficiently. I need to recognize that I do this for the organization, not the money.

Q: What are the highlights? A: One highlight is the MCC Festival in Abbotsford each year and the enthusiastic way in which youth and young adults respond. It is such a joyful, multi-generational celebration that even though it's a truckload of work, you come away from the weekend having had a blast and raising \$700,000 for people in need. Giving was never so much fun!

Q: Anything else you'd like to add? A: You really never know where the Lord will lead you. I think you just have to be confident in the gifts God has given you and trust that you will find ways to use them. If someone had told me when I graduated from high school that I'd be working in the communications field for MCC, I probably would have laughed... and yet, here I am! *Read more at <http://thriftshopperforpeace.wordpress.com>*



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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



From the *NEW* Communications Committee

You have in your hands the first issue of “**Connections**” put together by the newly-formed Communications Committee. Our mandate is to assist MW Canada with communicating information to you via the newsletter, the blog and the website. Our hope is to provide a place where we, as Mennonite women from across Canada, can talk about what we believe, how we are living what we believe and what values we aspire to. 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 (left to right):

- ~ Waltrude Gortzen - Waltrude@shaw.ca
- ~ Naomi Unger - dnunger@sasktel.net
- ~ Barbara Draper - rbdraper@golden.net
- ~ Liz Koop - koopfarms@becon.org



DID YOU KNOW....?

100th Anniversary: In 1911 the first General Conference (USA) Mennonite woman, Ann Allebach, was ordained to the ministry at the First Mennonite Church, Philadelphia, PA. Who was the first women pastor ordained in MC Canada and how many are currently serving in our churches? Please send us your answer.

VISIT OUR BLOG: www.mennowomencanada.blogspot.com

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.mennonitechurch.ca/mwc/

CHURCH CHUCKLES

If you have a story that you would like to share, please send it to us!



Years ago, I decided to bring a layered lettuce salad to a Sunday noon church potluck. It was a lovely salad: I carefully layered the lettuce, celery, green peppers, onions and peas topped with mayonnaise, cheese and bacon bits, in my la-a-rge Corning-ware rectangular dish, and put it in the church refrigerator. When noon came I went to get it--and it wasn't to be found--where could it be? Imagine my dismay when I found it baking in the church OVEN! Some well-meaning kitchen committee member had, I suppose, assumed it was a casserole (after all, I realized, it was in a pan, and had cheese and bacon on top) and put it in the oven to bake. I was fit to be tied--my lovely lettuce salad

was ruined. I tried it but it did taste a little weird. Although at first I was not happy with the anonymous person who thought she knew what my dish was but didn't bother to check, later I had to laugh. A cooked lettuce salad is kind of funny!



Amy Dueckman (nee Rinner), Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, BC
BC Correspondent for the Canadian Mennonite