

## 2011-2012 Executive Members



l to r: Myrna Sawatzky (Saskatoon SK), Waltrude Gortzen (Abbotsford BC), Lois Mierau (Langham SK), Liz Koop (St. Catharines ON), Patty Ollies (Milverton ON), Ev Buhr (Edmonton AB)

## From the President's Desk *by Liz Koop*

As I sit in front of my computer and ponder what to write here I am quite overwhelmed by my new role as President of Mennonite Women Canada. I feel it is a huge responsibility as well as an honour to have been elected as the head of a national organization in the church.

Over the years, my involvement in my local church has been rewarding and enriching. My experiences of serving on the local executive, sitting on a committee at the provincial level, being a part of the Task Force and feeling the support of family and friends have brought me to where I am now....President. It feels daunting at times to be at the helm, but I know I am in a place where I will be able to use my gifts and abilities and where I feel God wants me to be. My prayer is that together with a dedicated executive, the support of women across Canada and the support and affirmation of the Witness Council of Mennonite Church Canada I, together with my executive, will find the strength and wisdom to lead Mennonite Women Canada during the next few years.

There has been and continues to be much talk about change, both in local congregations and in the broader church. Mennonite Women Canada has experienced changes over the years as well. We are fully aware of the role of demographics and how the value placed on traditional women's groups is changing. How we as an organization adapt and adjust to changes in society will undoubtedly play a role in our future.

Connecting with women across Canada will be a priority for us. This includes strengthening the connections that already exist among us, making new connections with women in our local churches and area/provincial churches and restoring connections that may be weak or broken. As we work together I pray that together we may become a stronger organization.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions please feel free to contact me at [koopfarms@becon.org](mailto:koopfarms@becon.org) or 905-562-5920. You can also visit our blog at [www.mennowomencanada.blogspot.com](http://www.mennowomencanada.blogspot.com) and leave a comment there.

## MW Canada Annual Meeting *by Barb Draper*

Bev Suderman-Gladwell spoke at the Mennonite Women Canada 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and Luncheon in Waterloo on July 8, 2011. The theme was "Celebrating Connections". She used a group of volunteers to show how women are often brought together as we share our sorrows and laughter. We pray together and sometimes look after each other's children or cook meals for each other in difficult times. We value the deep friendships that form. But sometimes new people come to our churches and they see a group of women who are close to each other, who have fun together and who are too busy to reach out to those outside the group. Bev read from Isaiah who encouraged the people of God to extend the tent and she encouraged all women in the church to look outward and to make room for others to be part of the group. We need to take the risk of welcoming and befriending new people. "You never know when you will need another set of supporting arms," said Bev.

In the business part of the meeting, the executive reported that MW Canada continues to provide assistance to women from MC Can-



ada congregations who are studying theology at the Masters degree level through their *Spiritual Growth Assistance Fund*. They also support Radical Journey, an MC Canada venture for young adults and several ministries of MC Canada Witness, including the Samuelito Day Care Centre in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

*Mennonite Girls Can Cook*, a recently released cookbook was available for sale after the meeting. Seven women from B.C., two from Manitoba and one from Seattle put the book together using recipes from their popular blog. Royalties from their sales go to the Good Shepherd Shelter in the Ukraine. Royalties from sales at the luncheon were donated to the Samuelito Day Care Center in Bolivia.

At the close of the meeting, Erna Neufeldt passed on a candlestick and candle to Liz Koop, incoming president, citing several scriptures that refer to Christ as the light. She encouraged Liz to think of the candle symbolizing the nurturing community of Mennonite Women Canada.



*Pennies and Prayer Inheritance Fund*

A donation in memory of Marge Sawatzky, Vineland, Ontario (b. April 1922, d. December 11, 2010) was recently made to the Pennies & Prayer Inheritance Fund (PIIF).



Lovingly remembered by the women of Vineland UM Church, Marge was a willing worker, a strong supporter of missions and a wonderful hostess. As a pastor's wife (Peter G. Sawatzky) she helped shepherd faith communities in Saskatoon, Goshen, Zaire, Steinbach, Botswana and Kitchener/Waterloo. She was always involved in woman's church work and also started the cradle roll in many of the churches they were a part of. Retirement to Vineland brought them closer to family. The many relationships they had with people around the world and at home were very precious to Marge. She was a wonderful wife, sister, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, friend and role model to many. She will be deeply missed.

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.

~ Liz Koop, Vineland United Mennonite Church, Vineland, ON

Online donations to this Fund can be made at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/mwc/ministries.htm>

*Ministries of Mennonite Women Canada*

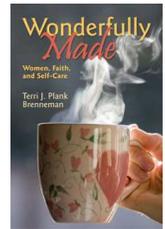
**Your gifts help support:**

- \* Women working in MC Canada's Witness ministries
- \* Women studying for advanced theology degrees
- \* Participants in Radical Journey [www.RadicalJourney.org](http://www.RadicalJourney.org)
- \* 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](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/mwc/givePP.php) or by mailing a cheque payable to Mennonite Church Canada (designated for Mennonite Women Canada) to [Lois Mierau, Box 116, Langham, SK S0K 2L0](mailto:Lois Mierau, Box 116, Langham, SK S0K 2L0).

**Wonderfully Made: Women, Faith and Self-Care**

by Terri J. Plank Brennenman is this year's Bible Study Guide published by Faith & Life Resources. Its 13 chapters are designed to be used as a traditional Bible Study, as meditations for a group, or for individual reflection.



In Chapter 7, "Share Burdens", Terri Brennenman writes, "Holding hope for someone who feels no hope is a sacred trust.... Because I had been held in prayer and hope through my own 'valley,' I could offer to hold hope with confidence that sharing the burden of another would restore vision and functioning. Faith would be renewed." Each women's group should have received a copy of the study guide. Extra copies can be ordered from Kathy Shantz for \$10.00 each at 1-800-631-6535 or [KathyS@MennoMedia.org](mailto:KathyS@MennoMedia.org).

UPCOMING EVENTS



**Sask. Women in Mission:** Women's Retreat – October 14 & 15 at Shekinah Retreat Centre,  
**Theme:** Spiritual Growth and Learning  
**Speaker:** Rose Graber, Grace Mennonite Church, Regina

**MCBC Women's Ministry:** Women's Retreat Weekend – October 14 – 16 at Camp Squeah  
**Theme:** The Business of Everyday Life  
**Speaker:** Ann-Michele Ewert, MEDA  
**Guest Appearance** by Doris Daley, Award-winning Cowboy Poet

**Alberta Women in Mission:** contact Ev Buhr at 780-439-3594 or [pebuhr@telus.net](mailto:pebuhr@telus.net) or [office@edmonton1st.mennonitechurch.ab.ca](mailto:office@edmonton1st.mennonitechurch.ab.ca)

**Women of MCEC:** Supper and Celebrating Women evening 6:30 pm — Thursday, October 20 at Breslau Mennonite Church.

**Speaker:** Wanda Wagler-Martin  
 To order tickets (\$25) contact Karen Gingerich at 519-634-5936 or [pkgingerich@netflash.net](mailto:pkgingerich@netflash.net).

**Mennonite Women Canada's 60th Anniversary Celebration** during MC Canada Assembly, July 2012 in BC. All women are invited and encouraged to attend. Details will be available in our April 2012 issue of "Connections".

### *CPTer called to walk alongside the oppressed* by Barb Draper



**Kathy Thiessen** says that Christian Peacemaker Teams collided with her life in 2005 when she and her husband Vic were living in London, England at the time that four CPTers were kidnapped in Iraq. Working with the London Mennonite Center, Kathy fielded many questions from the media about CPT.

In 2006, after the CPTers were released, she had the opportunity to hear Norman Kember speak at the Greenbelt Arts Festival. As this elderly man spoke about his desire to do something more for peace than just march and sign petitions, Kathy began to wonder if she could ever do something like that. She thought she would be too scared, but a few months later she went on a 10-day delegation to Palestine and realized that she hadn't seen a suicide bomber, only ordinary people who wanted to raise their crops and live their lives. Kathy recognized that she lived in relative freedom and felt the need to walk alongside others who were not so privileged.

When Kathy and Vic's time in London came to an end, they returned to Winnipeg. Vic began working with Mennonite Church Canada, but Kathy couldn't find a new niche for herself. She missed the community household they had lived with in London and suburban Winnipeg just wasn't the same. After spending time journaling, reading and praying, she travelled to the CPT offices in Chicago by Greyhound bus, spending time talking to people and doing some painting. At the end of that

time, she signed up for 30 days of intensive training to become a CPT reservist.

Still unable to find a job, Kathy discussed with Vic the possibility of becoming a CPT half-timer. In March, 2011 she began three months serving in Kurdish northern Iraq and plans to return for another three months in the fall. At the beginning of her assignment, CPT was supporting the Kurdish people who were demonstrating in the public square every day, asking their government for an end to violence and corruption. After 62 days of non-violent protest, the government squashed the demonstrations and so the role of CPT became one of helping the Kurdish leaders decide how to make their voices heard in a way that no one would be killed.

Kathy has discovered that Kurdish northern Iraq is fairly stable and it's not a scary place. She is thankful for the CPT alumni who understand what she is trying to do and especially for a husband who is willing to have her go. She says, "My faith and what I read Jesus saying is that I need to be walking with people who are oppressed and working for peace. Even though I know I'm not going to bring about peace, I can help individual people on their journey toward peace. I am not going to change the Kurdish government, but I can help those who work with this daily know that they are not alone."

While in Iraq, Kathy will be posting on her blog at [www.goinceacenettopieces.blogspot.com](http://www.goinceacenettopieces.blogspot.com)

### *A ministry of encouragement* by Naomi Unger



When **Hinke Loewen Rudgers** was a student at Eastern Mennonite University, Virginia, in 1998, she went to the Middle East through its semester abroad program. That experience led to her passion for the region and a desire to return someday.

Ten years later, Mennonite Church Canada was considering a new placement in the Middle East. In 2008, after a period of personal

reflection and prayer, Hinke became a Witness Worker there.

The focus of her work for the last three years in Nazareth has been building up the Arab church and encouraging Christians within their congregational contexts. Hinke says, "It is a challenge to encourage a person of another culture but the challenge is one that we are all called to, whether in the Middle East or here in our own church body."

Her community activities included Friday night prayer vigils with Arab young people, attending Saturday evening services in a village church and participating in Sunday evening services at Nazareth Hospital. She volunteered at Nazareth Village and at SERVE Nazareth, a ministry of Nazareth Hospital, leading Bible Studies there and holding

weekly fellowship times for North American volunteers at the hospital. She studied Arabic and focused on developing relationships with women in the Arab Christian community.

Challenges for Hinke were being a newcomer and being single in a culture that relates mainly in terms of families. Therefore, entering into relationships was a necessary part of staying relevant in the community. The daily realities of living in the Middle East and in the city of Nazareth were also challenges.

But Hinke considers that, overall, her experiences have been largely positive. For her, highlights definitely include all of the relationships that she developed. Her involvement in the local church and its activities, such as youth group, kept her busy and in constant contact with friends. "I will never forget the moments I spent praying with others and building the global church just through listening and sharing."

Hinke is presently itinerating in Canada, sharing about the life of the Arab Christian church. People have responded well to the perspectives she brings. She can be contacted through Mennonite Church Canada at 1-866-888-6785. She hopes to return to Nazareth in the early summer of 2012.



**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

## *The 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 (from the top, left to right)



- ~ Waltrude Gortzen - [Waltrude@shaw.ca](mailto:Waltrude@shaw.ca)
- ~ Naomi Unger - [dnunger@sasktel.net](mailto:dnunger@sasktel.net)
- ~ Barbara Draper - [rbdrapeer@golden.net](mailto:rbdrapeer@golden.net)
- ~ Liz Koop - [koopfarms@becon.org](mailto:koopfarms@becon.org)

## *CHURCH CHUCKLES*

### *What are the Youth drinking?* by Naomi Unger

When I was a youth leader, I had the habit of putting unfinished lemonade or iced tea in the fridge after the evening snack was done. With youth group meeting every week, I didn't think the drink would get stale if it was tightly covered, plus I wanted to be a good role model in not being wasteful.



One Tuesday evening the youth thought the fruit punch tasted really odd. I drank some, too, and noticed an odd, soapy taste. Well, the Sunday before, there had been a pot-luck at church. During the cleanup, the kitchen sinks were full, so someone poured some of the pre-washing water into a juice jug that still had juice in it. This was to be taken to the bathroom to be poured out and then the jug was to be washed. But another women in the clean-up crew, who was unaware of that plan, simply covered the jug and put it into the fridge instead. "Now that's all ready," she said, "for youth group."

That Tuesday, we mixed more juice to fill up the jug in the fridge and served it. But what the youth really drank that evening was dish-detergent-flavoured fruit punch. Because I had been in the kitchen that Sunday, I eventually figured out what happened, but I didn't tell the kids (or the adults) until much, much later.

**VISIT OUR BLOG:** [www.mennowomencanada.blogspot.com](http://www.mennowomencanada.blogspot.com)

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE:** [www.mennonitechurch.ca/mwc/](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/mwc/)

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## *DID YOU KNOW....?*

In our April issue we asked "**Who was the first woman pastor ordained in MC Canada and how many are currently serving in our churches?**" Esther Patkau, author of *Canadian Women in Mission 1895-1952-2002* sent us an excerpt from her book titled *Ordination of women to the ministry* (pp. 153-154). It appears that Susan Gerbrandt (along with her husband Henry) was the first woman to be ordained on August 27, 1944. As to how many are currently serving: Of the 371 pastors listed in the Mennonite Church Canada Directory 2011-2012, are 95 women listed as serving as pastors, associate pastors, youth pastors, music pastors, etc. ON ~ 44, MB ~ 20, SK ~ 14, AB ~ 3, BC ~ 12, QC ~ 1. For more details please check our blog.

## *The ABC Thrift Shop Adventure*

*A great activity for children, youth groups and even adults to learn about thrift shopping. Set a budget (\$1 to \$5) or a theme with a specified amount and follow the ABC's of Thrift Shopping.*

**Ask a Volunteer** to tell them where the money goes and why they are a volunteer. **Be Respectful** by putting things back on the shelves. **Consider Carefully** how to spend your money. Will you buy one item with the whole amount or many items for less? A great way to educate the younger generation!

Read more about thrift shopping at Anglika Dawson's blog at <http://thriftshopperforpeace.wordpress.com>