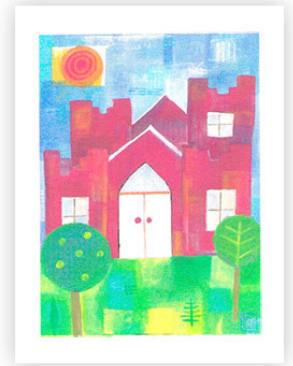


INSIDE...



Niagara United Mennonite Church

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Individual Highlights:

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Excerpt from Church Council Chairperson's opening address at Annual Membership Meeting

It has once again without a doubt been an exciting year here at Niagara. The 2013 annual booklet is full of events, news, happenings, blessings and dreams – please – I want to encourage all of you to read it from front to back.

We do not have the time to read every page, however I would like to highlight a few items that are suited for our thoughts here tonight.

I do not know it is the first time or not, but this past year the Spirit Council and Church councils have intentionally met together several times to explore better ways of doing things – better ways of communicating, and most notably better ways of building healthier leadership for our Church and community. To help us in these matters we are blessed with resources from the MCEC head office and together it has enlighten our minds and thoughts and at the very least challenged ourselves to take a look and get a better understanding of our responsibilities and roles. Our pastoral team works very hard at getting many things in order and in tune and continues to keep our Church family household together and focused on the right screen, or path - they continue, (and we are blessed to have them), they continue to do the tasks that are required to teach us, console us, share our joys, often showing us what we have to be joyful for, and of course comfort and respect our last days or our days that we need comfort... They are not our Fathers or Mothers...they are our brothers and sisters. They feel everyday challenges and stresses like the rest of us. They need our praise, our prayers, our support as much as we do or more – please think and pray for them often...

At first thoughts – I look back at 2013 and think that it has been a fairly normal year...then after reading the all the reports listing in the booklet – it brings back many memories of a great year – a year that we can be thankful for and a year that we all can feel the blessings brought to us from our Lord!

If you can remember back to last January, I mentioned that we had 4 brand new births in the first month of 2013 putting our younger married members up for a record breaking goal of 48 – with great regret I must inform this membership - this goal was not met – we were however blessed with 10 little bundles of joy! - I don't know that we need to form a committee to look into what went wrong.....perhaps we will wait and see what 2014 brings...

We also baptised 13 new brothers and sisters in the Lord and transferred in to our membership another 7, 20 young adults committed themselves to each other with 10 weddings – with all of these exciting additions we must remember the 16 that left there earthly bodies here to explore a better place and join the many others with our Heavenly Father above.

Our Deacons, Sunday School program, and many other councils, committees and programs continue to be blessed by a younger generation willing to learn from the older members as well bring fresh insight to keep the Church family together and focused, thank you very much for answering the call.

Our building continues to age yet is in good repair thanks to efforts of our many talented staff and volunteers – again thank-you – it does not go unnoticed!

Our Family here at Niagara continues to be blessed with music and musical talents that keep our ears attentive with joy – thanks to all of the various group and song leaders for this wonderful way of praising our Lord. Many others work with joyfulness in making quilts organizing books, visiting other members, serving many events organizing prayer or Bible studies, and working together in various mission opportunities – great things come from any and all efforts.

Lastly – I think that I can speak for all of us here and throw out a big thank-you to John Tiessen, Harold Neufeld and the rest of the 75th anniversary crew – it has been a wonderful year long celebration and the focus of to God be the glory rang true in the message. I can hardly wait for the DVD. Again – I encourage everyone to read the whole book!

Leaving note:

This brings my term to a close. It has been an enjoyable 3 years working together with all the council members, the entire pastoral staff and all the members here at Niagara. The support that I have received will not be forgotten. I have tremendous faith in the future of our Church, and its members.

Thank-you, Don Willms





February at a glance ...

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|--|--|--|---|---|-----------|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 10:00 am Udo Woelke 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks | 3 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young Women's Bible Study 7:30 pm Male Choir Practice | 4 9:00 am Women in Service Quilt 7:00 pm Church Council Meeting | 5 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting | 6 | 7 7:30 pm Sr. Youth | 8 |
| 9 No German Service 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks | 10 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young Women's Bible Study 7:30 pm Male Choir Practice | 11 9:00 am Women in Service Quilt 7:00 pm Welcome Centre Group Meeting 7:00 pm Worship Committee Meeting | 12 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting | 13 7:00 pm German Choir 8:00 pm Choir Practice | 14 10:00 am Seniors' Valentine's Day Time Out at Pleasant Manor | 15 |
| 16 10:00 am Ramona Neufeld 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks | 17 OFFICE CLOSED 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young Women's Bible Study 7:30 pm Male Choir Practice | 18 5:30 pm Women in Service Potluck Dinner 7:00 pm Spiritual Council Meeting | 19 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting | 20 8:00 pm Choir Practice | 21 7:30 pm Sr. Youth | 22 |
| 23 No German Service 11:00 am John Tiessen | 24 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young Women's Bible Study 7:30 pm Male Choir Practice | 25 9:00 am Women in Service Quilt 7:00 pm Annual Membership Meeting | 26 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting | 27 7:00 pm German Choir 8:00 pm Choir Practice | 28 7:30 pm Sr. Youth | |



| Sunday Dates | Prayer Requests: Please pray for and with the Church | Ministry Notes: This is how your financial support of Mennonite Church Canada is ministering...from across the street to around the world! | News/Announcements: Stay in tune with the wider church |
|----------------|---|--|--|
| Feb. 2 | Pray for the Holy Spirit's leading in more than 100 Mennonite Church Canada congregations who are discerning scripture in community by studying the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) 5 documents. | With your help, Mennonite Church Canada is helping to build strongly rooted, fruitful connections among new pastors through the new Transitioning into Ministry (TiM) program. With on-line technology new pastors and an experienced pastor/coach connect virtually for reflection, discussion and support. Thank you for supporting new pastors. | Make a difference as Christ's hands and feet in the world by visiting Mennonite Church Canada's online donate page. Practical projects for real transformation! donate.mennonitechurch.ca/home |
| Feb. 9 | <p>Bock Ki Kim and Sook Kyoung Park (Shalom Adonai Church, Ont.) are Witness workers serving with the Korea Anabaptist Center in Chuncheon, South Korea. Pray that their personal visits and seminars will be an encouragement to the growing network of Anabaptists in South Korea.</p> <p>During February and March Jack and Irene Suderman are providing leadership training and Bible teaching to several church partners in Philippines, China and South Korea. Please pray for energy, passion, and safe travel as they train leaders in the global church.</p> | Your gifts are helping Mennonite Church Canada host the first ever urban Native Assembly in Winnipeg on the campus of Canadian Mennonite University, July 28-31. Thank you for your support of this significant relationship building event! donate.mennonitechurch.ca/project/indigenous-assembly | Looking for a speaker for a special event or a workshop? Check out Mennonite Church Canada's Speakers Bureau for a list of leaders with a wide variety of specialized gifts and perspectives. www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2250 <p>Coming in April: Two new books in the series With the Word focusing on Genesis and Mark. Draw closer to God with this Anabaptist devotional series designed for either individual or group study. Each book is made up of eight easy-to-use sessions and seven short devotionals: www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2264</p> |
| Feb. 16 | Mennonite Church Canada workers Darnell and Christina Barkman (Emmanuel MC, B.C.) give leadership to Peace Church Philippines, an emerging congregation in Manila. Thank God for a core of dedicated members who are committed to living out peace theology. | Pastor Nhien Pham, based in Vancouver, BC, is jointly appointed by Mennonite Church Canada and the North American Vietnamese Mennonite Fellowship to build relationships and encourage the Mennonite Church in Vietnam. Thank you for supporting this vital ministry. | Begin planning Vacation Bible School with MennoMedia's Welcome! Give and Receive God's Great Love. This year's curriculum highlights Bible stories about God's people who showed hospitality and welcome to others: www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2265 |
| Feb. 23 | On Feb. 27, Kara and Jerry Buhler (Mount Royal MC Sask.) conclude their term of service at Bethlehem Bible College (Palestine). Pray for new opportunities to reflect on their experience and share what they have learned. | Your generous support of Mennonite Church Canada's Resource Centre is bringing Anabaptist inspired faith values to thousands across the various streams of Christian expression. Thank you for your support of this important ministry. donate.mennonitechurch.ca/project/rc-aquisitions | Call for Artists: The Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery invites artists to submit artworks for consideration for a national exhibition to take place during the assembly. More info at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2266 |



Sharing Corner ...

As You Go, by Tim Froese, Executive Minister, Mennonite Church Canada

Although there remain many unknowns in this New Year we can be quite certain that life will remain full for many of us.

Deep hopes and best laid plans are often subject to life as it happens, whether it is unexpected news, a surprise conversation, or the necessary adaptations we as Canadians need to navigate our winter weather. It is in the uncertainty of daily life that I am inspired by Jesus of Nazareth, who lived a very purposeful life but yet was beset with numerous interruptions. And although Jesus' mission could have been completed without bringing along a questionable assortment of disciples, Jesus saw fit to share both his purpose and his interruptions with his disciples. And it is often in the context of these interruptions that we see and hear Jesus clearly.

Our mission as the church is also done in the context of regular life, of interruptions, busy-ness and other plans. It is done "on the run." Jesus echoes this reality, saying "as you go" before he shared his final command to the disciples to in turn "make disciples." This is a word for each of us, not just those inclined or paid to do so. Contexts, personalities, and circumstances may change, but as I go I have found the following elements to be helpful in seeking to be a faithful witness in calling and shaping others in following after Jesus:

Trusted Authority: A relationship with Jesus requires both trust and an acceptance of authority. Jesus himself is aware that the authority was given to him by the Creator. In today's diverse world we are challenged to identify a common basis for authority and even more so, one that is trusted. In the past we might have relied on common culture, history, people in positions of authority, the church and/or Scripture as authoritative. Now, we need to realize that the life and words of disciples are more important than ever. As disciples, you and I are key persons in fostering trust and credibility while reflecting a trusted authority beyond us and identifying that trusted authority as God through Jesus Christ.

Good news embodied and spoken: When I lived in South Korea, one pastor told me that good news for the Korean people was to receive a blessing, both spoken and material. We live in a more diverse culture and so good news may be different for different people. It may be healing, hope, acceptance, forgiveness, or authentic relationship in community. The writings of the 4 good news-ers (gospels) remind us that good news can be as much about healing and joy as it is about denying ourselves and taking up our cross. Good news ultimately leads us to Jesus and to God.

Invitation to journey together: What some call conversion others may refer to as the dynamic between belief, behaviour and belonging. What appears to be needed is a voluntary action that puts some things aside in order to follow authentically, involving heart, soul, mind and strength. This is not just our work, but the mystery of God's Spirit in expanding the trust, authority and good news into actions of the individual will and the beginning of a shared journey with Christ. As disciples, we, like Andrew, have an important role of introducing others, like Simon Peter, to Jesus.

Spirit filled life: Recognizing, strengthening, affirming and releasing the gifts of the Spirit in each follower of Jesus is an important aspect of being part of a believers' church. The trust of Jesus in calling each of us as disciples to make disciples is echoed and reinforced with the 24-7 presence and gifting of God's Spirit within and among us. The diversity and need in our world is matched by creativity and resources of our Creator's Spirit. And

it is the community that helps us identify, accept and affirm the gifts for service. The question of how we empower one another to disciple making is for each community. What would it look like if we began to view baptism as ordination for ministry?

Loving community: There are 59 “one another” passages in the New Testament, most including a verb in the command form. Life together is essential for trust, authority, learning the fullness of good news, for journeying together, and for receiving and sharing the gifts of the Spirit. Ultimately, it is the best context for “making disciples,” where they can be taught to observe all the things Jesus commanded us. The advantage of a community where love shapes our relationship is that “everyone will know we are Jesus’ disciples.”

As you go forward in 2014, may you be encouraged and blessed as you make disciples.

February Birthdays ...

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3 - Helene Peters (81) | 5 – Hertha Neumann (82) |
| 8 – Mary Goertz (83) | 9 – Hannelore Enss (80) |
| 9 – Lena Van Bergen (81) | 21 – Elizabeth Friesen (85) |

Other news...

Women’s Retreat: *February 28-March 2, 2014 at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp*. Skating on the lake, relaxing in the sauna, enjoying a massage, snowshoeing through the woods, stargazing on a horse drawn sleigh ride and savouring exceptional food. Resource person Tanya Dyck Steinmann. For more information and to register visit www.slmc.ca/retreats or call [519-422-3200](tel:519-422-3200)

2014 CMU Essay contest for High School Students interested in the Humanities is accepting submissions. The contest invites students to engage with important questions about literature, visual media and international development. Prize money will be awarded. Visit cmu.ca/become.php?s=counsellors for full details. Essays are due March 31.

RSB International Study Tour: Europe / April 27 - May 11, 2014. Join the Redekop School of Business at CMU for an exciting 2-week study tour looking at business, politics and culture in Europe. Visit cmu.ca/business.php?s=studytour for more details.

Ancient Stones, Living Stones: The Holy Land in Perspective. Join CMU Professor Gordon Matties on his eighth study tour to the Holy Land (April 28-May 19, 2014). Register now; space is limited. For details, see cmu.ca/studytour

Visit the following website <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/> to learn more about Mennonite Church Canada. Also visit our area conference’s website, <http://mcec.ca/> to learn more about Mennonite Church of Eastern Canada.

*If you would like to submit any photos or articles for the newsletter, please contact the office at 905-468-3313 or e-mail at office@redbrickchurch.ca. **Deadline for the March newsletter is February 26, 2014.***