

This Issue's Theme . . .

GENEROSITY

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."

- John Wesley,
from Letters of John Wesley



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Life With Us

At Niagara United Mennonite Church

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GENEROUS EYES

by Dori Zerbe Cornelsen

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. — Matthew 6:22

Mrs. Potato Head understands the power of non-verbal communication. I laugh every time I remember her in the outtakes of the 1999 movie *Toy Story 2* helping Mr. Potato Head pack for the mission the toys are about to undertake: "I'm packing your extra pair of shoes. And your angry eyes, just in case."

Our eyes are powerful. They can communicate emotions that our words may not express. Perhaps it is the

power of non-verbal communication that Jesus was trying to express when he said that the eye is the lamp of the body.

We shouldn't be surprised that during Jesus' time, people understood differently how the eye worked than we do today. Then, people believed that humans were able to see because light

came out of the eye at the object to be seen. So, what the eye saw depended on what kind of light was inside a person.

From this ancient way of knowing, what can we learn about making a greater connection between our inner lives — thoughts, attitudes, desires — and the way we see the world? Perhaps our seeing really does expose the light or darkness within ourselves.

Joshua Becker, a self-described writer, blogger, speaker, pastor, husband, father..., maintains a website he calls

Becoming Minimalist. There, he blogs to inspire readers to pursue their passions while owning fewer possessions.

Some time ago, Becker wrote a post about 9 ways generous people see the world differently. All nine are worthy of contemplation but his reason num-

ber 5 struck me: "They trust others. Generosity always requires trust." While some people may use a lens of suspicion to assess individuals and institutions asking for their support, generous people are more likely to get to a place of seeing that their resources will be used wisely.

In this way, Becker writes, generous people are optimistic because they choose to believe in others.

I would suggest another side of trust revealed by the vision of generous people: a belief that God has provided resources enough for all. People who

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Continued...

Continued from the front page > > >

live generous lives trust that they don't have to worry and store up just for themselves (also words of Jesus that surround the saying about the eye found in Matthew 6). They find themselves in faith communities that encourage trust in whatever circumstances they face.

If we take Jesus seriously, learning to let go of treasure and worry can lead to our bodies being full of light from which we can cast a gaze of generosity. In other words, generosity is in the eye of the giver.

I like the way Becker ends his blog post: "Our world is desperately seeking cheerful and generous givers... They inspire us. They push us forward. And their view of the world is one I desire to further grow in my own life." Amen to that.

The treasure worth keeping

You are the God of full pockets
and the God of pockets zipped shut;
the God of empty pockets and pockets
with holes,
the God of inside-out pockets,
and pockets stuffed with treasures.
You are the God of our pockets.
You came to show us that life is not to be
pocketed
but to be given freely, joyfully,
sacrificially.

You are the God of full hearts
and the God of hearts that are empty;
the God of hard hearts and closed
hearts,
the God of the heartsick
and those who have lost heart.
You are the God of our hearts.
You came to show us that we need not
be disheartened
by the stress of financial worries.

You who know our inmost being,
connect our hearts with our pockets.
Be the pacemaker which fills our lives
with the steady rhythm of generosity,
our pockets opening and closing in love.
Even after a lifetime, they'll still be filled
with grace,
pressed down, shaken together, and
overflowing.
That's a treasure worth keeping.

NUMC Ministries...

A behind-the-scenes look into the role of our Treasurer...

It has been an honour to be entrusted by my church community to serve as Treasurer for two three-year terms.

Many people find numbers boring, finances challenging and money a topic to be avoided at all costs. I like money. Accountability is very important to me and numbers are a significant measure of success. Managing finances under difficult circumstances is one of my strengths. This gives me the necessary skill set to be your church treasurer.

Even with this skill set, however, I faced a huge learning curve when I accepted the position for the first time 9 years ago. The treasurer is elected to serve on the church council and a member of the executive leadership team that is responsible for making very significant decisions that affect the entire congregation and sometimes even the wider community.

So what exactly does the treasurer do? It starts with paying bills on a weekly basis, routine bookkeeping, administering the payroll and related duties. Financial reports are presented at the monthly church council meetings. Often there are additional meetings for the executive. The treasurer works with the various committees of the church to come up with the overall church budget and is then responsible for administering that budget and keeping everyone on track.

Once a year there are important filings to be made with the government such as the Charities Return that is required to maintain our charitable status and the HST rebate return that allows us to get our HST refund. Important decisions and financial updates need to be presented to the congregation at membership meetings several times a year.

The requirement to make these presentations was a big challenge for me at first, but I am thankful to have mostly overcome that universal fear of public speaking as a result of being forced to do it. Another important function is ensuring the accuracy of your income tax receipts and signing them. Actually, I use a signature stamp.

The part of the job I liked the least was begging for money to meet the budget at the end of the year. During my second term I undertook several initiatives to educate you about the need for regular contributions and to encourage a mindset of generosity. I saw some limited success as a result of this effort.

The treasurer position is a very time consuming one, but I have enjoyed serving you in this way. In conclusion I would like to remind you of the words in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, that we are Christ's body and each of us has a distinct part and function.

Whether through music, children's ministry, teaching, sewing blankets, cooking or baking, leading worship, preaching or prayer, there is a place for you to serve! I encourage you to use your gifts and talents for the betterment of our church community and to the glory of God!

So if you were wondering what the Treasurer does, now you know!

A Letter from Jesus

Ruth went to her mail box and there was only one letter. She picked it up and looked at it before opening it, but then she looked at the envelope again. There was no stamp, no postmark, only her name and address. She read the letter.

Dear Ruth:

I'm going to be in your neighborhood Saturday afternoon and I'd like to stop by for a visit.

Love Always, Jesus

Her hands were shaking as she placed the letter on the table. "Why would the Lord want to visit me? I'm nobody special. I don't have anything to offer."

With that thought, Ruth remembered her empty kitchen cabinets. "Oh my goodness, I really don't have anything to offer. I'll have to run down to the store and buy something for dinner." She reached for her purse and counted out its contents. Five dollars and forty cents. "Well, I can get some bread and cold cuts at least." She threw on her coat and hurried out the door. A loaf of French bread, a half-pound of sliced turkey, and a carton of milk... leaving Ruth with a grand total of twelve cents to last her until Monday. Nonetheless, she felt good as she headed home, her meager offerings tucked under her arm.

"Hey, lady, can you help us, lady?"

Ruth had been so absorbed in her dinner plans she hadn't even noticed two figures huddled in the alleyway. A man and a woman, both of them dressed in little more than rags. "Look Lady, I ain't got a job, and my wife and I have been living out here on the street, and, well, now it's getting cold and we're getting kinda hungry and, well, if you could help us, Lady, we'd really appreciate it."

Ruth looked at them both. They were dirty, they smelled bad and frankly, she was certain that they

could get some kind of work if they really wanted to.

"Sir, I'd like to help you but I'm a poor woman myself. All I have is a few cold cuts and some bread and I'm having an important guest for dinner tonight and I was planning on serving that to Him".

"Yeah, well, okay lady. I understand. Thanks anyway." The man put his arm around the woman's shoulders, turned and headed back into the alley. As she watched them leave, Ruth felt a familiar twinge in her heart. "Sir, wait!". The couple stopped and turned as she ran down the alley after them. "Look, why don't you take this food. I'll figure out something else to serve my guest." She handed the man her grocery bag. "Thank you, Lady. Thank you very much!".

"Yes, thank you!". It was the man's wife, and Ruth could see now that she was shivering. "You know, I've got another coat at home. Here, why don't you take this one". Ruth unbuttoned her jacket and slipped it over the woman's shoulders. Then, smiling, she turned and walked back to the street...without her coat and with nothing to serve her guest. "Thank you, Lady! Thank you very much!" Ruth was chilled by the time she reached her front door, and worried too. The Lord was coming to visit and she didn't have anything to offer Him. She fumbled through her purse for the door key, but as she did she noticed another envelope in her mailbox. "That's odd. The mailman doesn't usually come twice in one day." She took the envelope out of the box and opened it.

Dear Ruth,

It was so good to see you again.

Thank you for the lovely meal.

And thank you, too, for the beautiful coat.

Love Always, Jesus.

The air was still cold, but even without her coat Ruth no longer noticed. What is generosity? Is it something

that keeps us from feeling guilty about what we have and others don't? Or is it something we do because it gives us brownie points to 'get into Heaven'? Or is it something we do to get that warm and fuzzy feeling? Does it always show itself in monetary ways? Or is it something that is just part of some of our personalities and not part of others?

The Wikipedia defines Generosity as, "the habit of giving without expecting anything in return. It can involve offering time, assets or talents to aid someone in need. Often equated with charity as a virtue, generosity is widely accepted in society as a desirable trait."

I was asked to write about Generosity in light of the Nominations Committee. This was not a tough assignment at all. In fact, I am overwhelmed by the generosity of people in giving of their time in our church community. So many people are willing to step up to the plate and help; or continue in their role that they have had for the past three years; or, step into a new role to give them a change but still be a volunteer. There are so many other places in the church that people do not 'sign' up for a year, or three, and yet they come to the church early in the morning; during the day, or in the evening after a long day of work and do different types of 'jobs' that affect the whole ministry of the church. This is something that has always impressed me even before we returned to this church.

Generosity; the habit of giving without expecting anything in return. To me, it's not something that is always planned or thought out. It's a way of life - it's being where Jesus wants you to do His work, whatever that may be. Be it giving money, time, or necessities. It's being a follower of Jesus and letting Him 'flow' through me.

Submitted by Linda Pankratz

I retired in June of 1999 and after taking a month to travel, following the Oregon Trail to the Pacific with my wife and our two grandsons, I was looking for a volunteer job. I heard that the Cancer Society was looking for drivers to take patients to the Henderson Hospital in Hamilton. I applied and was hired immediately. That was 15 years ago and to this day I can't think of a volunteer job that could be any better.

The only thing that was not to my liking was that the person in charge of organizing the drivers (dispatcher) here in Niagara at that time, an older man, would often call me late in the evening to drive the next morning or in the morning to drive in the afternoon. After almost a year of that I heard that the Red Cross was also looking for drivers. The Red Cross was very organized and I started with them in May 2000. They usually tried to give us three days notice and often called on Friday to schedule the appointments for the following week.

The other difference with the Red Cross was that they would take people with various ailments to hospitals or to doctor's offices anywhere within a few hours drive. Hamilton and Port Colborne have so far been the most frequent destinations, but I have also been as far as Kitchener, Guelph and even London and many, many trips to Toronto. I've probably been to most of the hospitals in Toronto.

There are so many interesting people who require a ride for so many various reasons. Some no longer have a driver's license, some have eye trouble, some have no family in the area and others are handicapped in one way or another. I'd like to tell you a short story about a couple of my patients.

When I was called to drive a young man, whom I will call Joe, to Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto he was living with his parents in St. Catharines. Joe told me his story. He had been living in Mississauga and working for a car rental company. His girlfriend was working in a donut shop next to his rental company compound. One evening a customer who had car trouble had called him at home to come to the office to give him another vehicle. When Joe arrived at the compound he noticed the donut shop next door was on fire. He jumped out of his car and ran into the blazing shop. He couldn't see anyone at the counter so he ran into the kitchen area. Fortunately no one was there, his girlfriend had already left, but as he turned to leave the kitchen a propane tank exploded in front of him driving him back. Somehow he managed to get out. He was looking back when the blast hit him so the front of his face was not too badly affected, but the side of his face and the front of his whole body was severely burned. The first time I picked up Joe he could hardly walk. He was wrapped like a mummy. At the burn unit at Sunnybrook they would unwrap him, treat the burns and wrap him up again. He suffered incredible pain and severe itching underneath all those bandages. They had to make a complete suit for him at another location in Toronto to cover the burns. I took him back a number of times and we actually became good friends.

Another case was a lady, I will call Ann, who lived in St Catharines and was dealing with kidney failure. She had to go to the hospital 3 days a week for dialysis. Ann was in her late fifties and was waiting for a kidney transplant. She was finally called to come to St. Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton to receive a new kidney. A couple of days later I picked her up to go home and then took her back every couple of days for monitoring and adjustments to medications, etc. Her ankles were very swollen and she could hardly walk. Even after two weeks the swelling wouldn't go down. The next time Ann came out of the hospital she was smiling. She told me that we all have a thyroid and also a para-thyroid. Some years before she had half of her parathyroid removed in an operation. The doctor told her that the new kidney didn't know that she only had half a parathyroid. Evidently they had to educate the new kidney (apparently through medication) and within days the serious swelling in her ankles was gone. I still take Ann to Hamilton for other appointments and she can now laugh about her kidney experience.

I have found the Red Cross to be a wonderful organization. To work for them is not only rewarding because of the appreciation shown by patients, but to experience the good feeling of being of service to many who could not afford a taxi both ways. Quite often there are opportunities to witness for my faith, and the long drives allow for some lengthy discussions. I would strongly encourage anyone who wants to volunteer and likes driving to call the transportation department of the Red Cross. They are always in need of drivers and would welcome you with open arms.

Submitted by: John Harder

Reflections

... How did that go??

In the month of December we have had the wonderful experience of delivering poinsettias to some of our church members. Every year I try to find a different demographic of people to bless during this season on behalf of the visitation ministry of the church. The best thing about it is that the people who help with the visiting come away more blessed than the ones who got the visit! How is that? I'm convinced that when we are entering a home in the name of Jesus, we enter into a holy experience where the Spirit of God comes in a profound way. The words shared, the blessing given, the prayer left, or just a small token brought, are all part of God's divine presence among us. Many of our church members are involved in this kind of ministry in either an official or unofficial capacity. There are the deacons and

pastoral folks, but also the car-drivers and food-bringers and the phone-call makers and the invitation-givers who are part of the body of Christ being just that- Christ's living body!

The visitation ministry has, over the last 10-15 years largely been carried out by the person who is now the Minister of Pastoral Care. There are a lot of care needs in a congregation this size - even those who don't attend regularly. Visiting every single church member herself is not possible, and Sharon has been relying on a lot of extra help and support. In the next few months we would like to take some time to consider how we can care for each more effectively and with greater intentionality.

Submitted by Sharon Dirks

Junior Sunday School Department chose to support our local charity, Project Share, for this season's community outreach. We are so encouraged by the enthusiasm of the children! We ran a competition for 4 weeks. Whichever class collected the most number of non-perishable food items would win a Chocolate Milk and Donut party. The third floor was buzzing with excitement as the weeks passed and the numbers grew on our food chart. Our Grade 6 class collected a whopping total of 94 items and finished the year off with an awesome party! Second runners up were the rockin' Grade 4's with 54 items. In total, the Sunday School collected 310 food items. Our thanks go the generous families that helped make this possible!!

Submitted by Sarah Froese



Candle Light Choir Performance, Sunday, December 21, 2014
Photo Credit: Erika Janzen



Youth Turkey Supper, Friday, December 12, 2014
Photo Credit: Lani Gade

Congregational Response



For February's issue we are looking to include love stories from our congregation. Please share with us a personal story: how you met your partner, a most memorable date, how you knew it was "it", how your love stays strong through the years, whatever resonates with you as a good love story!

Please forward your contributions to either Lani Gade or April Michon by January 15th.

Your Partnership with Prison Inmates in Botswana

Submitted by Rudy Dirks

Our mission partners, Nate and Taryn Dirks, are leading a Bible Study, along with some young African Indigenous Church leaders, in Gaborone, Botswana. Over the last few months of 2014 they were teaching the same biblical timeline that we were studying in our sermons from January to November. In December they held a graduation for 40 inmates who had studied the whole timeline, and gave out certificates for the course. Nate and Taryn asked me to send greetings and encouragement to these new believers for their graduation ceremony. Here are the greetings I sent on behalf of our congregation:

Dumelang Ba ba Rategang ba Modimo, (Greetings to you who are loved by God)

Word of your faith in Jesus has travelled all the way to Canada. Nathan and Taryn (besides being my son and daughter-in-law) are also supported by our congregation, and have been sent from Canada to be partners in the gospel of Jesus with you. Neither prison walls, nor the ocean, can separate you from the love of Christ, and from our love for you as our brothers and sisters in Christ.

During the time that you have been learning the biblical timeline in Gaborone, we have been teaching the timeline to our church here in Canada every Sunday morning. In this way you could say that you and we have been learning from God together.

As you receive your certificates and graduate from this course, on behalf of Niagara United Mennonite Church I congratulate each one of you on your diligent study of God's Word. May the stories of scripture, and the truth of God's Word be anchored in your hearts and minds, so that your faith in Jesus grows strong, and so that you may know the power of the Spirit of God in your life.

Our congregation thanks you for the pictures which some of you drew and sent to us with Taryn's mother. Our missions committee is discussing how best to use these pictures for God's Kingdom here.

A Modimo a lo segofatse, et lo kgotatse mo go Jesu Kereste. (May God bless you and encourage you in Jesus Christ)

Moruti Moeti (ebong Rudy Dirks) (Pastor Sojourner/traveller is my Setswana name)

Congregational Response

Responding to the personal impact of 2014's sermon series, God's Story: Our Story

It is that time of the year again when the Nominating Committee is looking for volunteers for the many serving opportunities we have at NUMC, and they have a hard time filling all the positions. Why is that?

Here is what I have experienced since I was asked to serve as a worship leader in the German Service back in 2006 or so. For me, my faith was totally private; I did not talk with anybody about my belief; my prayers were only silent. Nobody could really tell how I felt and how close I was to God or if I was even close to Him at all. However, all of this has changed since then. I have had to learn to open my heart and my innermost thoughts to anybody who attended the German Service. I started to read much more in the Bible; I read more Christian articles; I had to, and still have to, educate myself much more about Christian life. There was no Sunday School where I lived. All this has given me to feel much closer to God, I am in contact with God much more than I ever was in my life.

And this is the essence of my writing: *"I have received, and I continue to receive so many blessings through the work I am doing for the Church that I feel I need to pass this on".*

Every baptized member is a part of the Body of Christ, part of our congregation and as such we have promised: "to support the Church through our abilities, spiritual gifts and finances". Either when we transferred to this Church or during the baptismal instructions. The more members we have actively involved in the Church, the more vibrant is our Christian life, the closer we feel with God.

In conclusion, if someone nominates you for a service opportunity in church, do what has helped me. Don't answer right away but say: "let me first pray and think about it, then I will call you back with my most likely positive answer".

God Bless you,
Gunnar Doerwald

We have recently done our fall book buying, so look for new books under the window & on the table. We also have a suggestion box so if there is a book you would like us to get, just let us know.

We are faced with so many challenges these days. Here are some books that might be helpful to you in dealing with these challenges.

The Best Yes: Making wise decisions in the midst of endless demands

Author: Lysa TerKeurst

"Are you living with the stress of an overwhelmed schedule and aching with the sadness of an underwhelmed soul?"

"Lysa deals with a universal condition. She calls it 'the disease to please.' Those of us who are afflicted will find her counsel timely & practical." Max Lucado

Parenting your powerful child

Author: Dr Kevin Leman

"Dr Kevin Leman offers a practical action plan to redirect your child's power surges into positive traits that will prepare your child for a successful, happy and productive adult life. With these simple but effective techniques, you can transform your home from a daily battle zone to a safe and peaceful place."

True Love Project:

How the Gospel defines your purity

Author: Clayton & Sharie King

"The world will tell you that sex is everything and comes with no boundaries. But God's plan is different. He loves you and wants more for you and your relationships than what this world has to offer. So He'll continue to call you to purity and True Love Project offers a battle plan to get you there."

The Fugitive - by Myron S. Augsburger

It's 1544. Menno Simons, a leader in the new - and persecuted - free church movement, is on the run from authorities in the Netherlands. With a price on his head, he stops to catch his breath on a darkened farm. He prays, "Lord, what do I do now?"

Myron Augsburger's historical novel recalls Menno's life - from Catholic priest to radical reformer to hunted fugitive.

Submitted by Kathy Rempel

Did you know? Submitted by John Rempel

January is the anniversary month of the death of Felix Manz, a founder of the Swiss Brethren congregation in Zürich, and its first martyr. Manz gained a thorough knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He and his associates broke with the reformer Zwingli on issues of tithes, the Mass, and the practice of adult baptism. In addition they refused to have their children baptized. Manz, a well-educated and eloquent man, devoted himself wholeheartedly to persistent and courageous efforts to live out his Anabaptist faith, resulting in repeated arrests, imprisonment, and escapes. This pattern continued until his final imprisonment in the Wellenberg jail. On January 5, 1527, he was sentenced to death by drowning. As he was taken from the jail to the Limmat River, he cheerfully praised God in a loud voice and assured the crowd gathered on the banks that he was dying for the truth. As he went into the water, he sang in a loud voice, "In manus tuas, Domine, commende spiritum meum" (Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit. Luke 23:46).

Felix Manz is the author of the Anabaptist hymn I sing with exultation (HWB#438), which is sung around the world. Most likely this is one of the original fifty-one hymns of the Ausbund of 1583. Other hymns in our hymnal that originate in the Ausbund are O Gott Vater (HWB#33) and its English translation, Our Father God, thy name we praise (HWB#33). This is the second hymn in every Amish service. In a conservative Amish service it takes twenty minutes to sing all four verses; eleven minutes in less conservative congregations.

Who now would follow Christ (HWB#535) was written anonymously to commemorate Jörg (Georg) Wagner, a spiritual leader of the Anabaptists, who died a martyr's death in Munich in 1527. The original version had twenty-seven verses. Here is the original second verse

Also that Jörg der Wagner auch,
Gen Himmel Fuhr er in dem Rauch,
Durchs Creutz ward er bewähret
Gleich wie man thut dem klaren
Von Herzen ers begehret.

Accordingly Jörg Wagner also
towards heaven rose in smoke
Through the cross he was pre-
served

Gold, just as gold is purified,
from his heart he this desired.

Sources:

The Earliest Hymns of the Ausbund, edited by Galen A. Peters
Martyrs Mirror, Hymnal Companion, Hymnal a Worship Book

**This month's submission is from
Debbie Fast**

Spotlight on....

The Botswana Babes



It was early in the year of 2012 when my daughter and son-in-law, Taryn and Nathan Dirks, announced to me that they were moving to Africa for a three year mission assignment. Sensing in me an equal fear of both separation from my daughter and flying, my three good friends, Luanne Kulchar, Erika Froese and Sandra Fossey each independently approached me expressing their willingness to travel with me to Botswana should a visit to my daughter be in my future.

The "Botswana Babes" were born. Over the next 2 years, after many pizza and wings planning sessions and discussions with our travel agent we were ready to depart on Sept. 22, 2014 with a return date of Oct. 15, 2014. The lessons learned and the experiences shared in that 23 day period were many.

We flew 6 1/2 hours to London and stayed for a day and a night in an attempt to orient ourselves to the time change and basically allowing me to get my feet on the ground for a time before heading off for the 11 hour remaining flight to Johannesburg, South Africa before boarding the twin propeller plane for the 1 hour flight to Gaborone, Botswana.

But with my friends reassurance and my constant reciting of both The Lords Prayer and the 23rd Psalm we found ourselves in bear hugs with Nathan and Taryn at the airport. We all packed ourselves into their SUV (Taryn in the back with the luggage) and set out to see what Missionary life was all about.

We learned the length of God's reach, in our impressive visits three Saturdays in a row, to the First Offenders Prison. The questions in my mind were "How effective

would my daughter be in ministering to male inmates?", "How safe could she be?" What we learned was that God was sitting amongst us under the worn and patched tent in the heat of that prison yard. The inmates refer to Nathan as "The Man of God" and their joyous voices singing in unison of their love for Christ, many with a new found love, was infectious. The feelings of gratitude and respect for Taryn and Nathan were evidenced on their faces with every Bible lesson learnt and every home made cookie and glass of juice that was passed around. This ministry has grown from a handful of inmates to about 60 regular attendees. Helping these men with both their spiritual lives and with their worldly lives in terms of helping them find acceptance in their culture after release was a powerful thing to have witnessed. We learned compassion for the sometimes forgotten in our visits to the "I AM Special" school for special needs children where Taryn is trying to show the senior youth group the importance of giving of their time to visit, interact and teach these beautiful children even after they themselves return home.

We learned of the "Love thy neighbor" open door policy of the Dirks household, especially to their senior youth groups, with people coming and going all day and night. At times exhausting for us but taken in stride for Nate and Taryn who would supply meals, or internet time or help with homework or just offer an ear when needed.

We learned an obvious passion for Nate and Taryn is the building of the Futsal Project and Playground in the heart of Gaborone. They are literally building a playground out of dry desert dust. Seeing the joy on the faces of the children as they watched a new piece of playground equipment being installed, hearing their laughter playing on the simplest piece of equipment, humbled us into seeing that "more" is not always better. The community centre that Nate and Taryn have in their minds eye will provide a transition place for these playful, fun loving children as they grow up. From the playground to the adult sports and gathering spot that will teach them that community and relationship need not depend on the darker side of the encroaching bar scene but rather on the teachings of the Bible to "love thy neighbour" and "Do unto others"

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Botswana Babes continued...

We visited the village of Molepole where Nate and Taryn stayed their first month in Africa. We met their African mother Mme (pronounced Ma) Moweti who welcomed us into her home and fed us delicious thick bean soup and fresh bread. I presented her with a black and white dolphin necklace, one mother to another. The dolphin is a peaceful, family oriented mammal but is the only mammal in the ocean that can kill a shark by persistent head butting if it threatens its family. The black and white dolphin symbolized that family need not be defined by colour, and we presented her with our home made clothing lovingly donated by Canadian friends for the children of her church.

We learned that we will never complain if Pastor Rudy goes over his allotted time for a message again after sitting 3 hours in 36 degree heat in hard plastic chairs while attending St. Michaels Apostolic Church. They were very appreciative of the lovely plaque that was sent on behalf of Pastors Rudy and Sharon and the congregation of NUMC.

We learned, in Africa, nothing is ever easy, and waiting is the norm....arriving at the Botswana boarder to enter South Africa for our Safari adventures, we waited to fill out declaration papers, have our passport stamped, only to return to our car, drive 500 ft to start the process all over again at the South African border and the same thing on the return trip, each taking about 45 minutes.

But most of all we learnt that Africa is a beautiful place of natural wonders, majestic animals and filled with a people that are friendly and welcoming to strangers. They are curious to learn new cultures and eager to form relationships.

I know I was changed in meeting the Batswana and their beautiful country, and I as a mother and my friends as church members, are proud of the work being done to spread the word of God to such a welcoming people.

Contributed by Sheryl Lepp



Surprisingly, Prison Experience became the Best Part of Trip

Having always been peripherally interested in mission outside of Canada, my trip to Botswana, and specifically to the home of Nathan and Taryn, afforded me a first hand insight into the mission experience.

I have always thought of mission as being very tangible and the harder one worked and the more that one accomplished, the more successful the mission. As it turns out, that is not how it works. The development of relationships and their sustainability is the focus. Along the way, playgrounds are built, people learn new skills and tangible things are accomplished, but the piece that is of greater value is allowing people to see God's light, which is easily done when you interact with Nathan and Taryn.

The prison mission was the one thing that, in my heart, I did not want to participate in on any sort of emotional level. I wanted to bake the cookies, but keep the prisoners at a safe distance.

Imagine my surprise when the prison experience became the best part of my entire time in Africa. It is where you can see the power of God at work in the lives of these men. It was also under the hot sun in a dusty, broken down tent, sitting on rickety wooden benches that I experienced God's presence in a very significant way.

I believe God shows up when we gather in our churches as well, but how often are we distracted by the comforts found within our churches that we do not experience God fully? I am in no way suggesting that we get rid of those comforts, but we should be mindful of their unimportance as we gather and invite God to join us.

Should the opportunity present itself again, we will not hesitate to return to Botswana.

Contribution by: Sandy Fossey, on behalf of all of the Botswana Babes

Reflections on Church: A Week with Urban Expression

About a month ago, you would have found me sitting with a cup of peppermint tea in a church in the small town of Cobridge, England. This church had four walls, long windows, and high ceilings. In place of pews, however, I sat on a well-worn second hand couch. As I looked around, I found toy boxes where the pulpit might be and family photos in place of an altar. Lining the back of one wall were cardboard cut-outs of the faces of each member of that church – about 15 in total – completed by the members themselves. The smell of home-made pizza wafted from the kitchen, where our hosts were preparing a true feast for us that evening. Looking around that space, my mind began to open as I considered what a church looks like. *Is this living room that I find myself in, in a complete stranger's home, truly church?*

This was one of many questions that arose during the weeklong learning excursion that eight young adults embarked upon, along with MCEC's congregational ministries leader, Jeff Steckley. On October 4th, we caught a flight to London, England, to explore Urban Expression, a ministry rooted in Anabaptist theology and focused on bringing creative and relevant expressions of the Christian church in under-churched areas of the inner city. Urban Expression recruits, equips, deploys and networks self-financing teams, focusing on values rather than goals or agendas to bring the message of Christ's love to "under-churched" communities.

England at first seemed to me an odd place for us to visit. I knew that there was only a small Mennonite presence in England, and

was curious about what could be going on there that would make it worth the journey. By the end of the week, I had my answer. At a time when the church is struggling to maintain a relevant presence in the fast-paced world we live in, churches are facing new realities and challenges. It can be hard to know how to respond, yet Urban Expression is rising to that task. Their teams are deeply dedicated to living out the values and expressions of Jesus. Urban Expression holds strong to the values of humility, creativity, and relationship, believing, among other things, in the importance of community, hospitality, and simple living. It sounded so familiar to me – *were these not the very same values that I've grown up with as a Mennonite?*

Over the course of that week, we had opportunities to be hosted by four different Urban Expression teams. Between the neighbourhood walking tours, where community gardens flourished and abandoned playgrounds showed signs of revitalization; the meals shared around tables, from jellied eel to fresh baked bread; and conversations about everything from church-planting to pottery, I came to three very distinct observations about Urban Expression:

The success of church is not measured by the number of people that attend. Rather, it is measured by the quality of relationships that are formed. For Urban Expression, church is not just a place or a time; it is an expression, something to be lived out every day to those around us. Church can look like anything from cleaning the trash from alleyways to sharing community meals to leading parenting semi-

nars or rebuilding playgrounds.

Food and meal sharing are foundational to living out the Urban Expression values. In her book, *Urban to the Core*, Urban Expression founder Juliet Kilpin writes, "A theme that runs through all the different types of gathering is food. We have found that eating together and developing relationships and community seem to go hand in hand." In the short time that we spent with Urban Expression, hospitality and generosity was most prominently expressed to us through food. Barriers broke down as we sat in cafes, kitchens, or dining rooms. The theme of Urban Expression's annual conference this year was The Urban Feast, with a focus on the significance that food plays in the work that Urban Expression does. It was powerful to find such importance placed on something so easily overlooked.

Those serving with Urban Expression had a "glow" about them. These were the words of a fellow traveller, expressing my same thoughts about the people we met. Every person connected to Urban Expression exuded peace and joy. The work that Urban Expression does is not easy. The areas they live in are often overpopulated, ethnically and spiritually diverse, and economically disadvantaged, and their mission requires them to break out of comfort zones and extend love and forgiveness no matter how difficult. Despite the challenges, I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of love on us as visitors, and on the communities that these Urban Expression participants lived and served in.

Continued on page ## > >

I returned home nearly a month ago, but our experiences go through my mind daily. I believe that there is much to be learned from groups like Urban Expression. We already share such common ground in our foundational values – mutual beliefs in the tenets of Anabaptism bind us to groups like Urban Expression in powerful ways. Many of us are already hard at work, investing in our communities and finding ways to live out our Anabaptist beliefs. Since my visit with Urban Expression, I have felt challenged to push myself further; to seek new and creative ways to engage in the community I find myself in; to expand my comfort zone to reach out further; and to not just *attend* church, but to *be* church on a daily basis in some way – even if it is just over a cup of peppermint tea in the living room of a stranger.

By: Ellery Penner

Look for this article by Ellery Penner to appear in the Canadian Mennonite in a January issue.

*God has shown us the meaning of generosity
in the rich diversity of creation,
In the overflowing love of Jesus Christ,
In the never-ending gift of the Holy Spirit. God
has abundantly blessed us and called us
To be a community that honours each other,
To be servants to others with joy,
To share our love and material possessions.
Let us rejoice in what we have been given
And in what is ours to give.
-Sing the Journey #148*

Proud to be Part of the Family Business

If there's one thing I've learned while working for my parents this year, it is that the winter season is crazy! It's been kind of exhausting, but in a good way and the days go by fast. This year has been particularly busy for winter tires and it definitely feels like everybody has come at the same time to get their winter tires put on. I think it's because we got that first snow a little earlier than expected and everyone panicked.

In any case, it's been really great working at Enns Battery & Tire because I've been able to really apply things I've learned in University to my working life, and I've definitely learned how difficult it is to run a business. There are many details that I've overlooked when thinking of owning and running my own business and it's definitely a lot harder than I ever thought it would be. I've been tasked with a lot of jobs since I started working here in July, like updating our Health and Safety policy, making sure all our fire extinguishers are in proper working condition, and updating our CVOR (commercial vehicle operator) record. All things I didn't really ever think about needing to be done. I have also had a large learning curve, since while I

was doing all that, I was also simultaneously learning all about tires. I'm in charge of doing all our internet quotes, which has helped me to learn more about the different brands, sizes, and types of tires. And now I have had to learn about all the different types of winter tires and rims.

I also find it funny that I now answer phones and quote people tires because I used to hate talking on the phone. I was rather scared of it, but now my dad and I joke that I outsell him! At one point we had sold so many tires we did not have enough people to install them all. I've sort of taken over my dad's spot in the office. I even stole his desk, but he is definitely proud of me. I can tell because he's always telling people that I'm his daughter, and to ask me to quote them and that I'll help them out. For me it's kind of embarrassing when he's telling everyone I'm his daughter, but that's what dads are supposed to do. I have really enjoyed myself working for my parents, and even though I've already learned a lot, there's still a lot more to learn. I don't know if I'll take over Enns Battery & Tire one day, but for now I do love working there and I am definitely proud to be part of the family business.

Submitted by Julieanne Enns

Finding My Way...

Hi, my name is Eric Froese, son of Rick and Erika Froese. I have been asked to write a brief update on what I have been up to the last few years and what I hope to do into the future. I will mostly focus on the last few years after graduating from Eden High School.

I would say that the beginning of my life out of high school is best described as unprepared. I did not know what I wanted to do out of high school while I was still at Eden, and it resulted in me making a last minute decision based the courses (that I had taken at Eden) I found to be the most interesting. I decided that the field I wanted to pursue was Biology. So I signed up the night before the deadline to a few universities, and after a short summer working as a sailing instructor in Crystal Beach, it was time for my first semester in the Brock University Biomedical Sciences program.

I went through the first few months at Brock completely blind, never being 100% sure about anything I was doing. I was plagued by questions like: "When is this due?" "Am I aware of everything that has been assigned to me?" "When are the tests?" And most of all, "how does everyone know what is going

on all the time?" After the first semester of being completely unprepared and having a loose idea what was going on, I was able to start the second semester with a clean slate and the know-how to not have to ask myself those questions anymore.

After my first – and most stressful year – was done, I decided that Biomedical Science wasn't the right program for me. Biology, which appealed to me more, has the same 1st year course requirements as Biomedical Science; so the transition was very simple. So I began my second year in Biology, with none of the same stressors as in my first year, and I was able to focus more on what I was learning and less on just figuring out what is going on. I continued in Biology in my 3rd year as well, but I also took some Computer Science courses as my electives. It was soon obvious to me that these Computer Science courses were by far the most interesting to me and I decided that it was time for another change. I had taken Computer Science in 3 of my years at Eden, so I already had a strong background in the field and found it very easy to adjust to at Brock. I had also taken enough Biology courses to declare Biology as a Minor (so my first 3 years were *not* a waste of time) and a lot of the

required math courses were the same for both Comp. Science and Biology; so that transferred over too.

So now for the last year I have been solely focusing on Computer Science, and I am very happy with my decision so far. I am also working part time with my family at Mother-ease Cloth Diapers, where I am fortunate enough to do Computer Science related jobs such as: Web design, making promotional videos (which you can find on you-tube), packaging design, and other non-computer related jobs as well. Working with family is great because I can come into work on my own schedule and make my own projects that I feel will help move the company forward. Sometimes it can be a little frustrating working purely with family, because family isn't afraid to tell each other what they think. A lot of people are not able to find jobs in their fields and have to do unpaid internships, so I can consider myself very fortunate to have a paid position working for my family, and gaining experience in the field that I am pursuing.

In the future, I hope to finish my program at Brock and hopefully find a job in my field. My dream is to start my own company one day and be able to work from home, anywhere in the world.

What Child is This?

Jared played "What Child is This?" as our offertory song on December 14th. Please read below to learn more about this gifted pianist...

Name: Jared DiZio

Age: 11

Favourite activity: Origami

Favourite book: Lightning Thief

Favourite food: London broil with potatoes

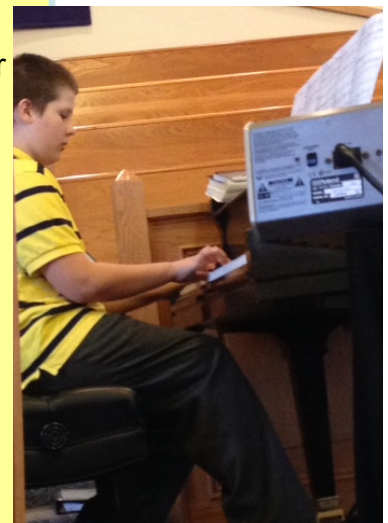
Favourite pet: My pet crab - Trevor

What I like to do: read books, minecraft building and Lego

My favourite experience: Our family trip to Mexico

What I want to be when I grow up: Architect or a lawyer

Parents' Names: Martha & Dave DiZio



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SA
				1 New Year's Day OFFICE CLOSED	2 @ 6:30 pm Youth Band @ 7:30 pm Youth	3
4 @ 10 am German Service—Hans J. Wiens @ 10 am Interactive Sermon @ 11:00 am Worship Service— Rudy Dirks	5 @ 7 pm Women's Bible Study	6 @9am Women in Service @ 7 pm Church Council Mtg	7 @ 6:30 pm Pioneer Club @ 7 pm Prayer Mtg	8 @ 7 pm German Choir @ 8 pm Choir Practice	9 @ 6:30 pm Youth Band @ 7:30 pm Youth	10 @ 8:30 am MBTI Workshop
11 @ 11 am Worship Service— Steve Cox	12 @ 7pm Women's Bible Study	13 @ 9 am Women in Service	14 @6:30pm Pioneer Club @7pm Prayer Mtg @7pm PCRC Mtg	15 @ 10 am Seniors Tea @ Pleasant Manor @ 7 pm German Choir @ 8 pm Choir Practice	16 @ 6:30 pm Youth Band @ 7:30 pm Youth	17
18 @ 10 am German Service—Renate Klaassen @ 10 am Interactive Sermon @11 am Worship Service— Guest Speakers- The Sudermans	19 @ 7 pm Women's Bible Study	20 @9am Women in Service @ 7 pm Spiritual Council Mtg	21 @6:30pm Pioneer Club @7pm Prayer Meeting	22 @ 7 pm German Choir @ 8 pm Choir Practice	23 @ 6:30 pm Youth Band @ 7:30 pm Youth	24
25 @ 10 am Interactive Sermon @11:00 am Worship Service— Rudy Dirks	26 @ 7 pm Women's Bible Study	27	28 @6:30 pm Young Adult Leadership @6:30pm Pioneer Club @7pm Prayer Meeting	29	30	31 Ellery & Mark Wedding

Milestones

Join us as we celebrate one another's special milestones!

The following members, who are 80 years of age and older are celebrating birthdays this month:



Eric Goerz turns 82 on January 1st
Else Ballau turns 88 on January 2nd
Victor Braun turns 87 on January 2nd
Rudy Wiens turns 89 on January 7th
Frieda Neufeld turns 81 on January 12th
Hermann Gau turns 81 on January 17th
Gunter Block turns 85 on January 18th
Frank Siemens turns 81 on January 19th
Jacob Epp turns 81 on January 21st
Anna Toews turns 93 on January 22nd
Nettie Rahn turns 84 on January 24th
Margarete Pauls turns 84 on January 28th

We wish you all much happiness and health on your special days!



****Reminder: If you have moved or changed any of your contact information, please alert the office so that our records remain current. ****

A look back to this day in our history...

January 5, 1527

Felix Manz becomes the first Anabaptist martyr, drowned in the Limmat River for rebaptizing Christians as adults.

January 7, 1979

Bulletin announced: "HELP FOR VIETNAMESE REFUGEES: Our committee would appreciate to know if anyone has a house for rent or is willing to be a co-sponsor, contributing from \$50 to \$100 per month during the establishment period, to notify Helmut Boldt, H.J. Wiens, Ola Rempel or Irmgard Penner."

January 15, 1549

Elizabeth Dirks arrested. An Anabaptist, she will make a good confession under severe torture before being drowned.

January 30, 1536

Menno Simons, a Roman Catholic priest, publicly renounces Catholicism. Baptized by the moderate Anabaptist leader Obbe Philips, he will become the successful leader of the Mennonites.

January 29, 1967

Bulletin announced: "The Ontario Temperance Federation has expressed deep concern and opposition to the auction of the Cabinet of the Ontario Government in introducing, for the first time in this century, the sale of beverage alcohol on Sundays in Ontario. We are asked to protest by writing or telephoning Robert Welch, M.P.P. for Lincoln."

14

January 31, 1561

Death of Menno Simons. This Anabaptist leader will give his name to the Mennonites. Surprisingly, considering the rewards on his head, he dies a natural death.

Contributions

Sharing
the
stories
behind
the
Milestones

My Wonderful Grandma Dec 5th
2014

My Grandma's name ^{is} Frieda Neufeld born January 12th. I think next year she is turning 81. My Grandma is special to me for many reasons. What I like best is when my Grandma always kisses and hugs me, and I know she loves me very much. What I also like is when we drink tea, and eat zwiebach together. My grandma makes zwiebach every Saturday and always has extras for us to take home. I like my zwiebach with butter and strawberry jam. One time when I was over at her house, my grandma had warm zwiebach on the counter. She offered me some and I landed up eating eight of them. The zwiebach tasted sooooo good. My grandma also plays the game TROUBLE with me and sometimes I win and sometimes she wins too. We laugh a lot during our game of Trouble. Sometimes we would play 7 games in a row. We always have fun. I love my grandma so much. I am thankful that we can spend time together.

Rita Pauls' 84th Birthday

Erin Jarrett

I would like to thank God for almost eighty-four birthdays, and for being with me all the time. He was with me in the valley and on the mountaintop, and I want to thank God for His wonderful promises. He said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you. I will be with you always. I have written your name in the palm of my hand, and no one shall snatch you out of my hand." And Jesus said when He went back to Heaven, "I got to prepare a place for you, and I will come back again to take you to be with me, for ever and ever." Oh, what a day that will be! I would like to share a prayer with you that has been a blessing to me as I hope it shall also be for you"

"I lift these hands, dear God, to you,
In praise and thanks for all you do.
You light the path through all my days,
and bless me with your loving ways.
I lift my hands, dear God, to you,
In troubled hours when joys seem few.
You bare me up on eagle's wings,
And see me through each test life brings.
I lift these hands, dear God, to you!
Please grant me wisdom—patience, too—
Then fill my heart with love and caring,
Precious gifts you've made for sharing.
Amen!

Then, as we await Jesus' return, let us put on the Armour of God that we may stand against the wiles of Satan. Let us put on the helmet of Salvation; thank-you Lord for your saving grace, the Breastplate of Righteousness; our righteousness is like a filthy rag, but clad in His we can appear before a Holy God. The Belt of Truth; let us always stand for the Truth, and it shall set us free. The Shoes of Peace; the Peace that surpasses all understanding but that which God may bestow. Let us speed on with the Shoes of Peace to proclaim the good news to others! The Shield of Faith, with which we can deflect every fiery dart of Satan, and the Double-Bladed Sword, which is the Word of God. Let us swing that Sword that Satan may not come near! Equipped with the whole armor of God, let us stand as true soldiers of the Cross! Hallelujah! He is coming! Hallelujah! He is Near!

Other News...

MSDEC Retreat: "The Gifts of Winter Spirituality"

Leader: Ardith Frey

Date: **Wed Feb 4, 2015**

Time: 9 am to 3 pm

Location: Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church

15 George St., Waterloo ON

\$25.00 payable to MSDEC at the retreat.

Bring journal and bag lunch.

Women's Retreat: February 27-March 1, 2015 at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. Skating on the lake, relaxing in the sauna, enjoying a massage, snowshoeing, cross country skiing or walking through the woods, stargazing on a horse drawn sleigh ride and savouring exceptional food. For more information and to register visit www.slmc.ca/retreats or call 519-422-3200

Fathers & Kids Retreat: January 16-18, 2015

at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp: Skating on the lake, building snowmen and igloos in the field, following animal tracks through the woods, roasting smores over the campfire, playing board games by the fire in the dining hall and just being at camp is loads of fun, but the best part is doing it with dad! For more information and to register visit www.slmc.ca/retreats or call 519-422-3200

VISITATION SEMINAR:

If you would like a part in the visitation ministry of the church, even a small and very casual part, please consider attending the visitation seminar which Sharon will be conducting on **Tuesday, February 10, 2015**. Please talk to Sharon if you would like to attend.

If you would like to submit any photos or articles for the newsletter, please contact any of the Newsletter Team of Editors:

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Kathy Rempel | 905-468-3829 | jrempe16@cogeco.ca

April Michon in the church office at: 905-468-3313 or by email at office@redbrickchurch.ca.

Deadline for the February newsletter is January 15th, 2014.



LIFE WITH US

NEWSLETTER

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