

*I am the Vine you
are the branches.
Whoever lives in
me and I in him
bears much fruit.
However apart
from me you can
do nothing. John 15:5*



Sept. Oct. 2018 VOLUME 5 EDITION 3

LIFE WITH US

At Niagara United Mennonite Church

Tree Song - Ken Medema

*I saw a tree by the riverside
One day as I walked along
Straight as an arrow
And pointing to the sky
Growing tall and strong
How do you grow so tall and strong
I said to the riverside tree
This is the song that
My tree friend sang to me.
Chorus:*

*I saw a tree in the winter time
When snow lay on the ground
Straight as an arrow
And pointing to the sky
And winter winds blew all around
How do you stay so tall and strong
I said to the wintertime tree
This is the song that
My tree friend sang to me.
Chorus:*

*I saw a tree in the city streets
Where buildings blocked the sun
Green and lovely I could see
It gave joy to ev'ryone
How do you grow in the city streets
I said to the downtown tree
This is the song that
My tree friend sang to me.*

*Chorus:
I've got roots growing
Down to the water
I've got leaves growing
Up to the sunshine
And the fruit that I bear
Is a sign of life in me
I am shade from the hot summer
sundown
I am nest for the birds of the heaven
I'm becoming what the Lord
Of trees has meant me to be
A strong young tree*

CCLI Song # 12688

Ken Medema "Tree Song"

For four decades, Ken Medema has inspired people through storytelling and music. Though blind from birth, Ken sees and hears with heart and mind. His ability to capture spirit in word and song is unparalleled. One of the most creative and authentic artists performing today, Ken custom designs every musical moment of his performance with brilliant improvisation that defies description. With an ever-growing circle of friends around the world, Ken's vocal and piano artistry and imagination have reached audiences of 50 to 50,000 people in 49 United States and in more than 15 countries on four continents.

From the time he was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1943, Ken has been unable to see with his physical eyes. His sight is limited to distinguishing between light and darkness and seeing fuzzy outlines of major objects. "As a kid I was not widely accepted," he says, "and I spent a lot of time by myself. Because I have lived with some degree of being different all my life, I have some sympathy for people who have been disenfranchised, whether they have been disabled or politically oppressed or whatever."

A wonderful metaphor for following God's plan and grounding one's self in the firm foundation of faith. "Tree Song" tells about a tree growing tall and strong in differing circumstances, some ideal and some not so ideal.

Singing our stories, inspiring hearts Ken@kenmedema.com

The **TREE** is also a wonderful metaphor for life through the ages—the Anabaptists are the **ROOTS** of our Anabaptist/ Mennonite faith. Our Mennonite forebears in Prussia, Poland, Russia are also part of the **ROOTS & TRUNK** of our TREE, providing us with examples of living out our Mennonite Faith. We as the present generation of Mennonites have the responsibility to be the **BRANCHES & LEAVES** of our Faith Tree as we interact with society around us. Follow the articles in this newsletter to find examples of the parts of our TREE.

By Kathy Rempel (co-editor)

OUR ANABAPTIST *ROOTS*

(narration by Rita Epp)

- as celebrated with singing & narration on March 4, 2018

The **Anabaptist movement** began 493 years ago on the evening of January 21, 1525, and this evening we have come together to commemorate our forebears and to celebrate the rich heritage they have left us. Yes, it is a heritage of bloodshed and persecution, but also a heritage of joy in a pure faith grounded in the word of God.

The fabric of our Anabaptist story is interwoven with singing. From the beginning, hymn singing became an integral part of Anabaptist worship. Did you know that at least 130 Anabaptist hymn writers can be identified by name, with hundreds of hymns having been produced in a relatively short period. While singing often had to be done in secret because of persecution, it became an important factor in Anabaptist evangelism.

We want to highlight the lives and contributions of several of the early Anabaptists who forged the way, against incredible odds, to be obedient to Christ's teachings. We also want to remember the many other martyrs who suffered and died for the testimony of Jesus, their Saviour. We have lit a lantern as a symbol of their courage, faith and sacrifice. Beside the lantern is a copy of the Martyrs Mirror, which is a record of the path of the early Anabaptist martyrs. We pray that the reflections and songs we share will bring to life the sacrifices made, the steadfast faith grounded in the Word of God, and the unwavering commitment to an all-encompassing love which takes up its cross with joy, which gives everything in the service of God.

Felix Manz

Felix Manz, the son of a catholic priest was born in Zurich around the year 1498. There is evidence that he had very good knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Being educated, he joined those who were studying under Zwingli but soon became disgruntled with Zwingli's ideas of reform and his insistence on maintaining the practice of infant baptism. Manz and others made several attempts to plead their position and their beliefs, but to no avail and a complete break with Zwingli soon followed. The first church of the radical reformation was formed.. Because of his efforts to spread the Anabaptist vision, Manz was imprisoned several times. On March 7, 1526, the Zürich council passed an edict that made adult re-baptism punishable by drowning. On January 5th, 1527, Felix Manz became the first casualty of that edict, and the first Swiss Anabaptist to be martyred. His crime? Obstinately refusing "to recede from his error and impulse". At 3:00 p.m., as he was led from the Wellenburg Prison to a boat, he praised God and preached to the people. A Reformed minister went along, hoping to silence him, and hoping that he would recant. Manz's brother and mother, on the other hand encouraged him to stand firm, and suffer for Jesus' sake. He was executed by drowning in Lake Zürich. He remained faithful to the end and his last words were, "Into thy hands, O God, I commend my spirit."



Dirk Willems

The story of the Anabaptist martyr Dirk Willems never ceases to amaze me, and it has captured the imagination of many. Willems was born in a town named Asperen, in the Netherlands, and was baptized as a young man, rejecting the infant baptism practiced at that time. This action, plus his continued devotion to his new faith and the baptism of several other people in his home, led to his condemnation and subsequent arrest. Willems was held in a palace which had been turned into a prison. He escaped from the prison by letting himself out of a window with a rope made of knotted rags, dropping onto the ice that covered the castle moat.

Seeing him escape, a palace guard pursued him as he fled. Willems, due to the very meagre rations in prison crossed the thin ice of the pond safely, but the heavier pursuer broke through.

Hearing the guard's cries for help, Willems turned back and rescued him. It is said that the guard pleaded for mercy for Willems, but was forced to re-arrest him. This time the authorities threw him into a more secure prison, a small, heavily barred room at the top of a very tall church tower. Soon he was led out to be burned to death.

Some residents of present-day Asperen, (none of them Mennonite), regard Willems as a folk hero. A Christian, so compassionate that he risked recapture in order to save the life of his drowning pursuer, inspired respect and remembrance by these people. Recently Asperen named a street in Willems' honor.

The song, Who now would follow Christ in love is from the collection of songs found in the Ausbund – still used today in the Amish communities. Its title probably describes the contents of the hymnal best : the title goes like this (Several Beautiful Christian Songs Which Were Written and Sung Through God's Grace by the Swiss Brethren in the Passau Castle Prison). Listen to the beautiful, haunting melody that so clearly depicts the compassion of the early Anabaptists



Love Your Enemies and Bless Them That Curse You

Maria and Ursula van Beckum

Anabaptist women were essential for the survival of the movement. Women secretly carried messages, wrote letters of comfort, extended their homes for meetings, took care of their brothers and sisters in hiding, and evangelized whenever they had a chance. We must remember that the 16th century was very much a male controlled society, yet Anabaptist women, in the midst of this environment held worship services, taught the Scriptures, distributed the Sacraments, were Elders and prophets, went on evangelistic tours, debated with theologians – and yes, they died for their faith. About one-third of the 930 martyrs listed in *Martyrs mirror* are women.

Listen to the story of Maria and Ursula van Beckum.

Maria van Beckum, is one of the best-known martyrs among the Dutch Anabaptists. Maria had joined the followers of the Anabaptist movement and consequently, because of her faith was driven from her home by her step-mother. She found refuge with her brother, a nobleman, but in May 1544, at the instigation of a relative she was arrested. Ursula, her brother's wife, remained loyally at Maria's side and shared her fate.

Repeated attempts by priests to swerve Maria and Ursula from their faith failed. After a half year's imprisonment the heresy court condemned them both to death. They were burned at the stake on 13 November 1544; first Mary, then Ursula. Many wept when the two bade each other farewell. After a prayer, Maria, as the record states, went to the stake with indescribable joy. Maria and Ursula's steadfastness made a deep impression in the surrounding area. According to legend, the stake to which Maria was bound began to grow green and to blossom, and tradition has it that until well into the 19th century the Mennonites of the city of Hengelo regularly planted a green branch on the site of her execution on the anniversary of her death.



Conrad Grebel

The Grebels were a prominent Swiss family for over a century before Conrad's birth. His father Jakob was an iron merchant and served as a magistrate, and an ambassador to Zurich. Conrad Grebel, born in 1498 is often called the "father of the Anabaptists" His baptism of Georg Blaurock in the home of Felix Manz in 1525 is considered to be the first adult baptism in Zurich AND Georg Blauroch was the first person to receive adult baptism. Grebel was also considered to be the first to clearly point the way away from Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli's church. He and a handful of others marked the road into the free church of voluntary commitment, brotherhood, and full evangelical discipleship. Many were afraid to adopt the full New Testament ideal because they felt it could not be carried through in practice, Grebel on the other hand acted. He believed that the truth commands, it does not merely advise. For him the kingdom of God was to be built here and now in the fellowship of believers. He would spend the next several months preaching the need for repentance and baptism with much success in the area of St. Gall Switzerland. (Some estimate that as many as 500 persons were baptized in St. Gall.) In October of 1525 he was arrested, imprisoned, and sentenced to life in prison. Friends helped him escape in March of 1526 and he continued his ministry until he died of the plague later that summer.

Today, Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo is named for Conrad Grebel. Its mission statement reads: "The mission of Conrad Grebel University College is to seek wisdom, nurture faith, and pursue justice and peace in service to church and society."



Menno Simons

Menno Simons was born about 1496 in the little village of Witmarsum, in the Dutch province of Friesland. His parents were most likely dairy farmers. He was a man of simple, direct thought and warm character, who had great influence on the Dutch Anabaptists. He had become a priest at the age of twenty eight, but recognized laid-back and self-indulgent living in himself, and the other clergy, Doubts about the literal transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ caused him to read some of Luther's tracts and study the New Testament which he had been afraid to read up to that time.

Then, after a tailor by the name of Snijder, was executed for having been re-baptized as an adult, he began to question the right age for baptism. He decided to rely on Scripture alone for answers. From this time on, he became an evangelical preacher.

It is believed that Menno Simons prevented the collapse of the northern wing of the Anabaptist movement in the days of its greatest trial, and built it up on the right Biblical foundation. He did this as its leader, speaker, and defender as he journeyed from place to place, and through his simple writings. I want to share this paragraph with you in his own words, of life for him as a defender of the Anabaptist movement.

I, my poor, feeble wife and children have for eighteen years endured extreme anxiety, oppression, affliction, misery and persecution, and at the peril of my life, have been compelled everywhere to live in fear and seclusion; we must look out, when the dogs bark, lest the captors be at hand. While others are saluted as doctors, lords and teachers by everyone, we have to hear that we are anabaptists, hedge preachers, deceivers and heretics, and must be saluted in the name of the devil. While others are gloriously rewarded for their services with large incomes and easy times, our recompense and portion must be fire, sword and death.

Menno Simons died in Germany on January 31, 1561 at the age of 65.



Closing Comments

And so, this evening we have reflected on a faith that **was** worth dying for, and today surely worth our living for, since in this part of the world we live in freedom without fear. If that should change, I ask myself the question 'Would I be able to go forth cheerfully with the assurance of Heaven? What would my faith be like?'

As their voices have gone silent, it falls upon us to know our history and our heritage, to share the stories that have been told and take the time to remember.

Let us pray – Lord it is our prayer that the words and songs sung and spoken were acceptable in your sight and that they have instilled in us **unity, hope** and **passion**. Unity so that the church may be one, Hope to renew our faith, and passion to fill our lives as we seek to reveal Christ's love to those around us. Amen.

~ compiled & submitted by Rita Epp

Anabaptist Heritage Concert
 St. Catharines United Mennonite Church
 Sunday, March 4, 2018 7:00 pm

Come, come ye saints Wm Clayton, Esther Wiebe

Invocation - Rita Epp

O power of love Gerhard Tersteegen, D.S. Bortniansky
 From the depths W.F. Jabusch, Esther Wiebe
 A servant in your heavenly house Pepper Choplin

Reading - Felix Manz

Holy Spirit, faithful guide M.M. Wells
 Send forth Thy Spirit F.J. Schuetky

Reading - Dirk Willems

Who now would follow Christ Ausbund, J.H. Moyer

Reading - Maria & Ursula Beckum

Lieber Vater, hoch im Himmel A. Franz
 (*Renate Klaassen*)

Living stones M. Houser Hamm

Offering - Rachael Peters

Reading Conrad Grebel

Shepherd Psalm D.&J. Hall, M. MacDonald
 So lang mein Jesus lebt N.A. Titoff

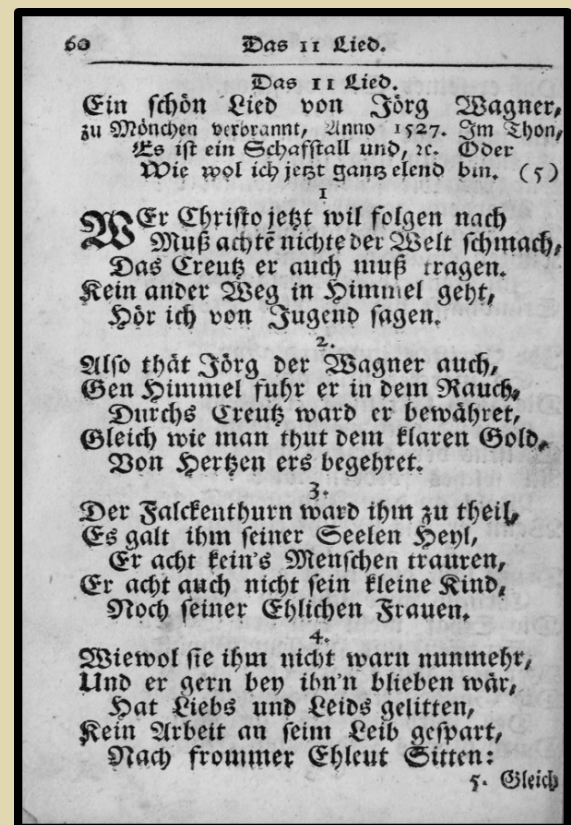
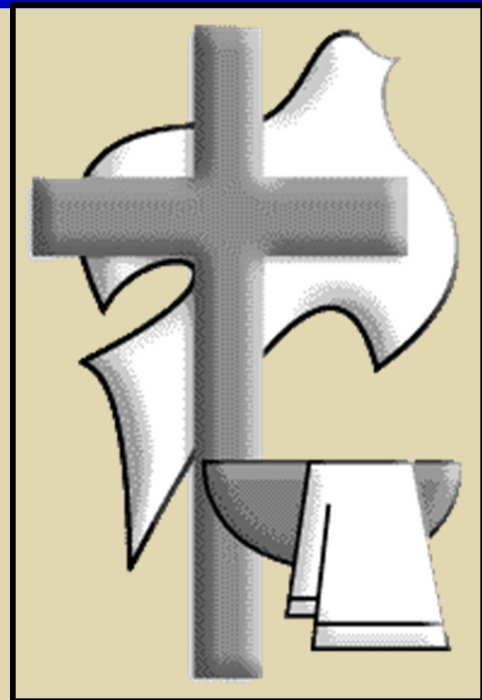
Reading - Menno Simons

How long? Pepper Choplin
 Ein reines Herz H. Neuss, Esther Wiebe
 O joyous light of glory Athenogenes, A. Gouzes

Closing - Rita Epp

Heav'nly Father, we beseech Thee J. Crosby, R. Lowry

Reader – Rita Epp
 Flautist – Molly Enns
 Accompanist – Kathy Rempel
 Director – John Rempel



Book review: 'The Russian Mennonite Story'

Jul 16, 2018 by [Rich Preheim](#)

According to popular lore, the sojourning Mennonites in Europe found refuge in Russia, where they flourished until 1917, when the Russian Revolution unleashed horrific persecution of these peaceful, faithful people. But *The Russian Mennonite Story*, a new collection of lectures by the late historian **Paul Toews**, demonstrates that not all is as it seems.

"The Russian Mennonite Story"

For example, on April 19, 1918, as World War I was moving toward its conclusion and socialism was on the rise in Russia, Mennonites in the Molotschna colony joyfully welcomed German soldiers occupying the region. While Ukraine was staunchly anti-German, the Mennonites heralded their arrival as fellow German *volk*.

"The entire cohort — some 700 to 800 men — was put up for the night [in private homes] in [the villages of] Halbstadt, Neuhalbstadt and Muntau," one church member reported, "and we showed them all of the love and friendliness of which we are capable."

By embracing the invaders, the Mennonites drew the ire of their Ukrainian neighbors. As a result, Toews argued, the Mennonites became not simply unfortunate victims of persecution but contributed to their own troubles. "To think of the story in terms of pathos is comforting to us," he said. "It reinforces the notion of Mennonites as martyrs. . . . And yet we need to acknowledge that Mennonites were not simply hapless victims; choices engender consequences."

Toews' willingness to push beyond the historical comfort zones makes *The Russian Mennonite Story: The Heritage Cruise Lectures* a valuable contribution. A longtime history professor at Fresno (Calif.) Pacific University, Toews gave the lectures annually between 1995 and 2010 on Mennonite heritage cruises up the Dnieper River to the sites of the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies. He died in 2015. The lectures were prepared for publication by **Aileen Friesen**, who holds the J. Winfield Fretz Fellowship in Mennonite Studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont.

Toews' explorations of Mennonite interactions with Russian society also make the book valuable. The popular image of the Russian Mennonites as isolated, pastoral separatists is misleading. Their success in business, agricultural manufacturing and flour milling is already fairly well-known. Less commonly known is Mennonite participation in politics. Mennonites held the highest positions — including mayor, in various cities — and two church members even served in the Russian Duma (parliament) in the years leading up to the revolution.

One Mennonite in 1905 started a political party with the cumbersome name, "The Union of Freedom, Truth and Peace: Forces Against All Violence, Proponents of Unceasing Civil, Economic and Moral-Spiritual Progress." It was usually shortened to "The Union of Freedom."

Russian society affected Mennonites in various ways. Many church members left their villages for major metropolitan areas for university or seminary education or for work. Upon returning home, they would often push for change, as

well as introduce new fashions and understandings of Mennonite relations with the Russian environment. Some advocated for land reform, a key issue for the Bolshevik revolutionaries and one that hit close to home for Mennonites, who owned more than 3 million acres, including a number of large estates.

Toews takes the Russian Mennonite story into the 21st century, touching on a renewed church presence in Ukraine

and new interest in the Mennonites by Ukrainian and Russian scholars. Much new research has been facilitated by the opening of former KGB archives in Ukraine, a cause Toews enthusiastically promoted.

Another strength of the book is its marvelous use of photos, capitalizing on a priceless trove of archival collections in the United States and Canada. The ample number of photos gives *The Russian Mennonite Story* a coffee-table-book quality.

Maybe the only problem with *The Russian Mennonite Story* is that it leaves a reader wanting more. Though the book packs a great deal of information and insights into fewer than 100 pages, Toews didn't produce a general survey of the Mennonites in Russia. His lectures were just one part of a larger program. And he died before the lectures could be updated or prepared for publication. As a result, *The Russian Mennonite Story* underscores the need for a more comprehensive history. In the meantime, Toews' lectures are indispensable for understanding the story of Mennonites in Russia.

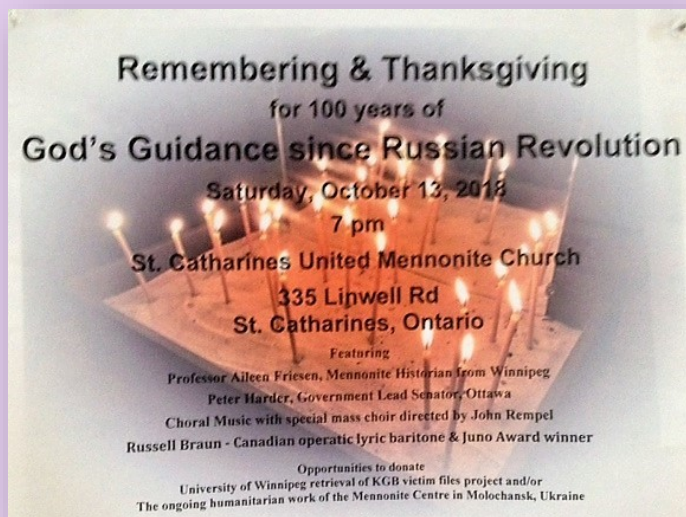
Rich Preheim is a writer and historian from Elkhart, Ind.

Paul Toews was a professor of history at Fresno Pacific University. Toews published widely in the field of Mennonite history and devoted nearly two decades to locating, identifying, and reproducing tens of thousands of documents from Russian and Ukrainian archives. For sixteen years, Toews shared his interpretation of Mennonite history through these lectures with participants on the [Mennonite Heritage Cruise in Ukraine](#).



Aileen Friesen is the inaugural J. Winfield Fretz Visiting Research Scholar in Mennonite Studies at Conrad Grebel University College. She has presented and published on themes related to Mennonites and Russian Orthodoxy. In addition to contributing an introduction, she judiciously edited Paul's text and selected the pictures included in this book.

Dr. Friesen will be guest speaker at the "Remembrance" service.



When John & I were asked to lead the choir for this “Remembering & Thanksgiving” event, I expressed my ignorance about the purpose of such an occasion. I knew that the Russian Revolution began in 1917 & that the Russian government changed over from Tzarism to Communism at this time. As a result, our Mennonite parents & grandparents suffered a lot in Russia. But why should we remember & focus exactly on 1918? My knowledge covered mainly the persecution during the 1930’s, including the incarceration & killing of my own Opa. So I decided to do some research on the happenings during 1917 onward in Russia & Ukraine. I found the perfect source for this research: “The Russian Mennonite Story” by Paul Toews & Aileen Friesen. This book was lent to us by John Giesbrecht, the main mover behind the “Remembering” service. Once again, I thought that some of our newsletter readers may be interested in some of this same research.

Terms like “**Treaty of Brest-Litovsk**”, introduced to me by my husband, John, were not familiar to me, and yet this treaty affected our Mennonite forbears in Russia/Ukraine in serious & deadly ways. I will include a small quote from the above mentioned book in this article to give you a taste of the very interesting and very accessible information about our **ROOTS** in the “old country”.

“In April 1918, a train filled with German troops arrived at the Halbstadt railway station in the Mennonite Molochna colony. They appeared as a result of the signing of the **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk**, which ended the Russian- German hostilities and recognized Ukraine as a sovereign state. Following the October Revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks understood that they consolidate their power quickly by extracting Russia from the carnage of the First World War. Before the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia had been allied with England and France (and later the United States) against the Central Powers (chiefly, Imperial Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire).

A number of the forces, however, conspired to undermine any claim to national sovereignty in Ukraine. The Central Rada (Parliament) of a Ukrainian government based in Kiev signed the **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk**. On the same day, an alternative Ukrainian Bolshevik government based in Kharkiv drove the Central Rada out of Kiev. In other words, at this point, the contest between independent Ukraine and one subservient to the new Bolshevik regime in Russia was already underway. The only way that the fledgling Ukrainian National Republic could survive was with German assistance. In return, Germany, suffering from the allied blockade, expected Ukraine to supply it with grain and other foodstuffs. Amidst this revolutionary and contested environment, the Central Rada was ineffective in supplying these materials. Hence, in April 1918, the German army deposed the Ukrainian government and installed one favourable to themselves. Along with the installation of this government, troops from Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire occupied key parts of Ukraine. The Halbstadt Secondary School (Zentralschule) greeted German soldiers at the railway station with a rendition of “Deutschland über alles” (“Germany above all Others”), as young Mennonite women served these new arrivals with platters of Zwiebach and Schinkenfleisch. For Mennonites, this was a joyous moment for a number of reasons. First, they believed that these men would provide relief from the scourge of lawlessness, anarchy, and banditry that had enveloped much of Russia and Ukraine following the Bolshevik takeover of power. Second they feared the rising socialist tide in the local Ukrainian and Russian population, who had a strong desire for land. Finally, some Mennonites felt an affinity with the German cultural identity represented by these occupiers.

Yet, this enthusiastic welcome proved a tactical error in the long term. While Mennonites demonstrated a strong political sophistication in late Imperial Russia, they also showed blind spots. Ukrainians and Russians, many of whom bitterly opposed foreign occupation and supported the reforms promised by the Bolsheviks, witnessed their fellow citizens embracing foreign troops. Undoubtedly, this seemed to confirm earlier prejudices about Germans promoted by Russian nationalists and fuelled by years of war.

(quoted from The Russian Mennonite Story p. 40, 41)

The above book will be on temporary loan in our church library for you to scan.

And so, on **October 13, 2018**, we will **remember** the trauma of those times, and the many victims of the years following; and also “**give thanks** for those of our forbears who made the daunting decision to leave house and home, country and culture to launch into the deep of totally unknown destinations”. - John Giesbrecht

(The above article was compiled by Kathy Rempel)

The Wisdom of August

For as long as I can remember I have had mixed feelings about the month of August. A bit like the month of December, before a new year begins. For me, August signals the happy times like our annual family cottage week on Golden lake, evening dinners outside, floating in cool water on sticky, windless afternoons and easy going days with the kids. But as mid-August arrives, the subtle reminders that the summer is winding down begin to reveal themselves. Another season is coming to an end. Days will become shorter, the warmth of summer will give way to crisp autumn mornings, the flowers in my garden will soon sleep, and the kids will return to school. The time of change is beginning – and change means letting go and accepting what will come. Change is natural, of course, but not always easy to navigate as it can bring with it much uncertainty. My age and life experience have helped me get better at leaning into the unknown, as have prayer and practicing my art on a daily basis. I am also always open to being inspired by others' knowledge and words.

One of my favourite books this summer was “The Wisdom of Not Knowing” by Estelle Frankel. Not knowing what's next can be a place of fear for many of us, but also the beginning of something new and exciting. It is how we approach the unknown - that space between where we have come from and where we are heading - that shapes our outlook and influences our well being. Ms Frankel offers many good lessons in her book, but one that resonated with me the most is the practice of being in the moment and staying curious. Like a blank canvas, where there is uncertainty in our lives, there is also great possibility. In the moment of not knowing, there is opportunity to learn. Just like a book - when you begin the story, it is unclear, but as it unfolds you are taken on a journey and the story has more meaning.

As I sit writing this in the blue shade of our backyard trees, surrounded by a chorus of cicadas and crickets and embraced by the late summer warmth, I am trying to pay attention to August's beauty. I am appreciating the moments, my kids, the food on our table, the colour of the sky. And I am staying curious and open to what the new unfolding season may bring.

~ submitted by Marion Griesse



Ladies Breakfast

~ Emily Fieguth

group is made up of members, friends of the congregation, ladies from the community, visiting family members or friends. Really, it is just any lady who likes to socialize, have a few laughs and enjoy the company of friends over breakfast. All are welcome and are encouraged to bring a guest!

When asked, Siggy Wiens says "I don't remember exactly which year the "Ladies Breakfast" first started, but it was around the time that our children started school. Robert our son turned 40 this year - psst don't tell anyone! So I would say it's been close to 35 years. When we first started meeting we would get together at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Course from September through to June and break for the summer. It was a wonderful support system for young moms! Over the years the locations have changed, but the friendships have remained!"

So in the beginning, the group met about 8 times a year. In recent years, due to the popularity of the breakfast, we meet 12 times a year, not missing even one month! The group was encouraged by Sharon Dirks and Audrey Dau took on coordinating the dates and places for a time. Emily Fieguth then took on the coordinating for several years. Currently, Linda (Henry) Friesen coordinates the gathering.

We have moved around several times to different locations. After the Golf Course in the beginning, Ladies Breakfast moved to what was then Lawrenceville and when it closed, we moved to the Red Rooster. When they closed, we moved to the Husky Restaurant on York Road and that is where you will find us each month.

We have around 15 to 30 ladies attending, with ages ranging

On the first Thursday of every month, ladies from Niagara United Mennonite Church gather for breakfast. The group is made up of members, friends of the congregation, ladies from the community, visiting family members or friends. Really, it is just any lady who likes to socialize, have a few laughs and enjoy the company of friends over breakfast. All are welcome and are encouraged to bring a guest!

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across several decades. Sometimes new mothers bring along their babies. I can attest to actually eating a hot breakfast when my boys were little ones. The Omas played pass-the-baby while I enjoyed my breakfast! They have also been my source of parenting advice as my boys went through their various growth stages or issues with school. There is something about a seasoned mother and/or retired teacher who can see the big picture (side note they were always right!!).

As a group, the age differences don't matter, nor do the varied background histories. We find lots of common topics to discuss. There are times when we finish breakfast, start chatting and next thing you know, it is lunch time.

This is such a wonderful ministry as well. For some in our group, they are living alone and the breakfast is an opportunity to get out to see old friends and perhaps make some new friends. I love to hear the stories of the ladies older than me, especially about their youth. We have some pretty awesome women in this congregation. They inspire me with their stories of perseverance and how they can find the good in life.

I am so thankful for this time. Sadly I don't make it to every breakfast, but I try to be there as often as I can. I encourage any ladies of any age to join us. First Thursday of the month, 9:00 a.m. at the Husky Restaurant. If you would like ask Linda (Henry) Friesen to add you to our email blast, feel free to do so. You will then receive the reminder email each month and should

there be a change in location or date, you will also be notified. I promise, it will be a great breakfast-time!



PEACH—colour of the day

33km

It was a year or two after we had bought our motor home in 2000, the same year our family of 5, completed an epic 1 month trip to the coast of Vancouver Island and back. The Labour Day long weekend was approaching and we were making plans.

For some years after Daniel was born, Eric, Rebecca and I would put together our back packs, and go Bruce Trail hiking, for the 3 day weekend before school started. All our lives, even as kids we walked the Bruce trail from Queenston to Fireman's Park quite regularly, and it was always a bit of a dream of mine to walk the whole trail, Queenston Heights, on the south end of the trail, to the Tobermory on the tip of the Bruce Peninsula at the north end of the trail. An End to End hike it is called.

We started by purchasing a Bruce Trail guide and hiking all the local trails (Current edition is 29, I have 12). Once the kids could walk for an hour or 2 we started with Sunday afternoon walks from Fireman's park onward. Typical walks would be maybe 2-5 kilometers, with as many of the Willms kids/cousins and moms and dads that could make it. Past the old canals, through St. Catharines and the KEG, when it was still a falling down and dilapidated mill of some sort, fed by a network of canals, past Brock University and over to Decew Falls.

All these walks got me even more interested in longer walks, and I slowly bought the equipment we would need for say a week end hike. A light weight 4 man tent from Mountain Equipment Company. Large and small backpacks for the kids. Light sleeping bags and inflatable ground mattresses, 1st aid kits. Cooking gear, light weight plastic cups and utensils, and most important water bottles. By the summer of 1996, a year after Daniel was born it was time to do some serious planning. Since Daniel was still too young, and we were not going to carry him, it was decided that for the 1st few trips Esther would not join us. It would be Rebecca, Eric and DAD.

I chose the Labour Day long weekend, because there is a lull there in our farming schedules, it's still nice and warm (darn right hot some years), and it gave us 3 days of hiking. The trick was to not make the daily distance so long that the kids would be worn out. It needed to be enjoyable.

As I planned these trips the biggest issue was finding an overnight camping spot. The trail is set up for serious hikers who walk 20-30km per day, not dads with kids walking 10km at the most. As well Eric and Rebecca were still quite young, 10 and 8 respectively, and would be able to carry perhaps their own clothes, their own water, and a couple of other things, and that was it. Managing the weight of each pack took some effort, as no matter how I worked it, my pack still came up to around 40lbs. (there were a couple of times, late in the day, when I found myself carrying all 3 packs).

Our 1st trip, we camped on the back end of the vineyard owned by Marv Krilick in Vineland (that night we met Walter Fast, a school teacher principal who was related to us – we had inadvertently set up our tent on his property, not Marv's). Another year I found a conservation area to camp on and called the area supervisor to get his permission, which was a good thing as we were confronted by a hostile conservation officer, whose hostility vanished once we mentioned the name of his supervisor. One weekend we even camped in the back yard of my second cousin, David Fast who was away for the weekend and lived at the time a scant 1.5km off the trail.

The upshot of all this was that really understanding the section of trail we would attack for the week end was vitally important. Finding camp sites, arranging drop off and pickup transportation, knowing where fresh water could be found on the trail

(having enough water but not too much as it is the heaviest thing you carry is very important), packing the absolute min amount of gear, praying for good weather – in other words very careful planning was paramount.

In the end we hiked this way for at least 4 different Labour day Weekends making it up to Albion Hills, before life-changing priorities, you know, other things got in the way.

By the time Daniel was old enough to hike with us, we had already missed a couple of Labour Day hikes.

It was the summer of 2003, Daniel was 7, and Esther

and I were wondering if we should plan a Labour Day Bruce trail hike. That was when we received a clear indication that the Bruce Trail was the thing to do that year.

Having paid good money for a Bruce Trail guide several years earlier, I was on the Bruce Trail email list, and received trail updates, as well as general trail information.

The trail is broken up into 9 sections. Each section has a club that looks after that part of the trail. For instance, the Niagara club looks after Queenston to Grimsby. Each club's biggest job, is to look after trail maintenance. Keeping the trail markings clear, removing dead trees, fixing washouts – that sort of thing. Most clubs will also run one or more End to End (ie not the whole Bruce Trail End to End but their section, End to End), hikes per year.

By Mid August of 2003, even though it was on our TO DO list, no plans had been made for a Labour Day hike. Then it happened. The clear indication arrived in the form of an email from the Beaver Valley Club. The club was running an End to End hike on Labour Day long weekend. I showed the email to Esther. This meant – all the planning was done for us. We simply had to sign up. Daily transportation was provided so that as you completed the days hike, your car was there waiting for you. Water and cooling stations were set up all along the hike. Trail monitors or stewards were stationed along the hike, should there be any safety issues. It was done. We simply needed to find accommodation. This was quickly solved, after I googled camp grounds in the area, and made reservations for our motor home at Meaford Memorial Park, on the shores of Georgian Bay, maybe 20 min from Owen Sound and perhaps 30 minutes from the end of each day's hike.

We had only a few minor concerns, which after some consideration, were quickly dismissed. The kids seemed interested, and we convinced them that it would be fun – except Eric, who wanted to stay home. So Rebecca, Daniel, Esther and our dog April, were on board.

The second issue was that the distance was a bit daunting, about 75km end to end, with day 1, Saturday being 33km, followed by 25km day 2 - Sunday, and only 17km day 3 - Monday. We convinced ourselves that it was a bit of a stretch for us – but doable. (at the time I was jogging at lunch – 8km 5 days a week – so I reasoned that day 1 at 33km, would be the same as 4 days of jogging – a piece of cake).



We signed up online, paid our money, and pulled some small back packs together. Since everything was planned we would not need our full hiking gear. HaHoo – an easy walk, no 40lb back pack – 10lbs at the most.

Once we had the hike booked, some of my sibs started doing some planning, and they booked camp sites for the long weekend about 2 hours drive to the east of our hiking trail. We considered changing our plans but decided a hike would be better for us. Not wanting to miss out on anything however, we booked a camp site for Friday night with the sibs, and made plans to break camp early the following morning, in order to get to our Bruce Trail end of day point (where a bus would bring us to the start of the day's hike), for 7:30 on the Saturday morning of the long weekend.

Looking back at all this I just shake my head. WHAT were we thinking. I guess we were still in our 40s and anything was possible, just a matter of agreeing – “let's do it!”.

The motor home was packed up, some breakfast and dinner meals for the motor home were planned (lunches would be snacky things on the trail), 1 water bottle was located (the trail stewards would have lots of water, drinks, orange slices etc, for us), and a small back pack was located for our lunches. We were good to go.

Friday night with the siblings as usual was fun. We were careful not to stay up too late around the campfire, or indulge too much in food and drink, and were in bed before mid night. And then the real fun began.

The alarm went off at 4:30. Job one, was an easy one, get the motor home disconnected and ready for travel. At the same time Esther took our beloved family dog April for a quick walk. This is when the 1st disaster struck. “ERV” said Esther, “she's gone”. April was a small (I use the word was, as she just passed away this past spring after serving our family loyally for 18 years) Carin Terroir, that Esther chose for her color – dark brown - so that farm dirt would not show up on her. At 4:30 in the morning, in a slumbering camp ground, at 12” off the ground, a dark brown dog running around loose, chasing every interesting smell, is a bit of work to find. Not wanting to wake up the whole camp ground and not wanting to trek into the poison ivy infested woods we carefully circled around looking for her, while silently praying that the skunk we had seen the night before had left the area. By the time she found us, our plan to be at the trail beginning was 30min behind schedule. Making up time in an aging motor home is a challenge.

As luck would have it, we found ourselves in one piece, 3 hours later, at the pickup point for 7:30 Saturday morning. We were the last ones to enter a bus of some 30-40 eager hikers – a full bus. Esther had managed to get our packs ready along the way, the kids were awake – and had visited the bathroom in our motor home, and we were once again, good to go. As we looked around the bus, we noticed one couple younger than us. Then there was Esther and I with Daniel, around 7, and Rebecca at 17. Everyone else was older – much older it seemed to us at the time – 60 to 70 years old. As we would soon find out, age meant nothing. These folks were fit, and were serious hikers.

The bus took 30 minutes to get us the 33km to the start of the day's hike, right on time for 8:00am. If we played our cards right, we'd be back at our motor home by 3:00 or so, then off to our camp site, and a leisurely meal of salad, chicken and potatoes, which I would barbeque, with perhaps a nice glass of wine. We were in fine spirits. The stress of being late, and possibly missing the bus, was happily all behind us.

We had ended up in the front of the bus and were among the 1st to get off. We collected Daniel, our lone back pack, a trail guide

and a couple of other odds and ends. We were not prepared for the rush behind us. Those “old folks” more or less flew off the bus. We had to step off to the side to get out their way. They were throwing on their packs, setting up their walking sticks, heading straight for the trail, with their heads

down in determination, already up to trail walking speed. No good mornings were said. All we saw was grim determination on each face. We did not know it at the time, but we would never see them again. They all finished the 33km hours and hours before us.

In no time at all, the bus was empty and heading home, and we were in the parking lot alone, with the other younger couple. We said good morning and headed down the trail. After 20 min we were ready for a rest and sat down. That is when we heard a click thump, click thump, click thump. Coming along the trail towards us was a sight to behold. The Beaver Valley section of the trail is nothing more than that. A trail. Never wide enough to walk 2 abreast, well treed, and very rough in places. Lots of ups and downs. Lots of rock and boulders. In some cases, stone stairs. In all of this, coming towards was an elderly hiker and his wife (they must have been late and missed the bus). As I looked closer he had heavy knee braces on each knee and was walking with a set of lightweight metal crutches. “Click – thump” he went as he absolutely marched down the trail. A slight nod to us with their heads as they passed and they were gone. We never saw them again either.

The rest of that day's hike is a blur. The stress of being late and missing our bus, was soon replaced with the stress of being the last hikers on the trail. What follows may not be 100% accurate but is close enough that you will have an understanding of how things went. The trail was actually very lovely with many, many beautiful look outs over Georgian Bay. Some of these heights that we were on, are what we would see in the distance as we looked out over the bay from the vantage point of the Goerz Neufeld cottage at Cawaga Beach. However, we had no time to stop and look. We made it to the first check point or refreshment station by 9:30am, only a paltry 5km from the drop point. Wow we have 28km to go.

At the 10km mark, both Esther and I were starting to have unvoiced complaints. Daniel and Rebecca's voices it turns out were fine, as each was capable of verbalizing their complaints. “Dying of thirst”, 10 minutes after leaving a rest station, “My feet are sore”, “my back aches”, “I'm tired” all the things Esther and I fully understood, were hashed out in detail.

By 3 in the afternoon, with 23km behind us and 10km to go Rebecca was done. At the next rest station, she was transported back to our motor home by the friendly trail stewards who were happy to get another hiker off the trail. The stewards are responsible for keeping track of every hiker until everyone is accounted for and off the trail at the end of the day. Daniel in spite of his complaining, was still in the game. He had heard that completion of the 3 day hike was rewarded with a Beaver Valley End to End Pin, to be proudly worn on a Bruce Trail ball cap.



Esther and I were ready to buy him one but decided if Daniel was willing so were we. So on we went. Daniel at some point found new energy, and at one point was almost jogging down the trail. But after another 5km with at least 5 more to go, even he was losing energy. The lure of that End to End pin was no longer enough to keep him going and he developed a new strategy. He started to ask us something which we had to ask him to repeat until we finally understood what he was getting at. "Mom and dad" he said. "Promise me something – anything – if I finish the walk". "What do you mean Daniel" we asked. "Well promise me an ice cream or anything – YOU DON'T HAVE TO GIVE IT TO ME – just promise it to me". He had figured out he needed more incentive.

At 6:00pm with dusk approaching and 2km to go we came to a road crossing on the trail. Here we found a trail steward waiting for us. It was not a rest station. He was there to make sure we were ok, and to perhaps convince us to take a ride to our motor home with him and clear off the trail. Well after 31km and only 2 more to go, even with dusk at hand, all 3 of us agreed that we would have none of it. On we went. And of course, we made it. There was of course a steward there waiting for us who was pleased as punch to cross us off the list, and tally up the hikers. He then took off in a cloud of dust. He had not anticipated being out there that late, and it was a holiday long weekend after all. There were no high fives, as we approached the camper, in the early dusk, with nothing but grimaces on our faces. We got into the camper, wondering and shrewdly calculating where we'd find energy to get to our campsite, unpack, get setup and most troubling, make dinner. That worry was quickly replaced with a new one. As I slowly climbed into the captain's chair and gently lowered myself into the sitting position, I eagerly cranked the engine. I heard nothing but that clicking sound that brings nausea to one's stomach, and a foggy cloud to one's brain. My heart sank. The battery was DEAD. I didn't have the energy to wonder what happened, to ask who was responsible? Was it Rebecca?

I looked up and down the road to figure out where we actually were as we had arrived just after dawn. (2 days later after reviewing the days events, I concluded that arriving early in the morning, after traveling with the lights on, I must have forgotten to turn them off, in the hectic rush of disembarking the camper, and loading ourselves into the bus). There was one house in sight. It was our only hope. We were far out of any cell tower range, and as mentioned previously, the last trail steward had departed in a flash as soon as we were out of the woods.

The house belonged to a farmer who was truly a farmer. Happy to help, grinning from ear to ear, – tractor and booster cables at the ready, and able to drop everything and come running over to bale us out.

In no time at all, we were up and running and checking our maps, and back to our previous worry about making dinner.

It was obviously time for another new worry, which happened about 10 minutes down the road. An OPP officer waved us over onto the gravel shoulder, along with other vehicles. I should have known what was up. I was sure I had not been speeding, but I had not really been paying attention to my speed either, as my mind was still cloudy with fatigue and dead battery syndrome. "Esther, what's going on? What does this guy want?" She knew what he wanted, but before she could answer, he was at my window and he needed only 7 words to let us know what was on his mind.

"Good evening Sir. Have you been drinking". Esther and I turned to each other and could not help but burst out laughing. It did not take long, till we had the officer on board and fully

understanding of our situation. He was so intrigued with our story, I don't remember him even asking for my driver's licence. Then all our dinner worries vanished, as he presented us with a reward for being such good motorists on a dangerous long week. The reward was nothing less than enough, totally free, MacDonald's coupons to feed our whole family, (now I was sure he liked our story), redeemable at the MacDonald's, just up the road, about 15 minutes from our camp site. Esther and I thanked him as we grinned from ear to ear. No fiddling with a fire and the B-que, no salad creation, no chopping and dicing of vegetables, just good old, highly processed cheesy, dripping with mayonnaise, beefy hamburgers, salty, covered in catch-up fries and sugary, creamy cold milkshakes. PERFECT. At the MacDonald's I carefully parked at the outside edge of the parking area and Esther & I were eager to hop out of the camper. The trip down the road including the encounter with the Police Officer had taken about 30 min. As we gingerly stepped out of the camper we found that we could no longer walk. Both of our hips were locked up. The first 20 steps out of the camper took about 2 minutes as we would take a couple of steps, hold on to something, and take a couple more. We were stunned. How was it possible that we could be so sore. By the time we were inside, we were still suffering but somewhat capable of walking.

The MacDonald's was doing a brisk business redeeming coupons, as it appeared we were not the only ones who were good drivers that evening. We were ok with the wait, just happy to pick up our dinner and get over to the campground.

We arrived after dark and quickly got set up and demolished our dinner. It was not long and we were dreaming the dreams that come from exhaustion.

The next morning, we were still very stiff but much happier. The very easy and mutual decision to abandon the Sunday hike was made about 30 seconds after we stuck our toes into the waters of Georgian Bay on a lovely sandy beach, very reminiscent of the beach at the Goerz cottage. By Sunday afternoon, lying on the beach, we gave up on the Monday hike as well. Even Daniel had forgotten about the End to End pin and was happy to go body surfing in the gentle but rolling Georgian Bay waves.

It would take us 11 more years and a lot more preparation, until we tackled 30km hikes again. It was in Portugal on the Camino Des Santiago, but that is another story.

~ submitted by Erv Willms



One of the outlooks over Georgian Bay from the trail. This is a Beaver Valley Ski Resort slope in the foreground.



The days of satellite schools in Niagara

I don't have the wit and humour that Lani Gade has in telling a story as to keep an audience laughing and captivated so I didn't think my memories would be of much interest to you, the reader. However, as I thought about the subject I thought perhaps some of you may be interested in the satellite schools that were around in the 60's which have now been turned into storage facilities, cultural centres, and even homes.

My public school years were spent at Brockview School at the corner of Line 3 and Concession 1 (which, by the way, used to be called Rail Road because of the train that went along it). It is now a Croatian Centre. My school consisted of four classrooms, 2 grades per room, a Principal's office, and girls' washroom and a boys' washroom. Across the road sits a building that is now a home but was the first Brockview School where my 3 older siblings attended. We didn't have a gym so the choices of activities were outside in the playground, usually getting ready for the 'big' Field Day which was held at Niagara District High School (which is now the Royal Elite International Academy) on East and West Line and Hwy 55. The 'big' Field Day brought together many of the surrounding schools. Volleyball was another competitive sport which brought us together.

The surrounding schools were Parliament Oak School which is now closed (on King St. in Niagara), Maple Leaf School (now a storage facility on Creek Road and Line 6), Bethel School on Queenston Road (which is now Life Abundant Church), Virgil School on Creek Rd. (which is now a facility for Gateway Church plus many other venues), Butler School on East & West Line (which is now Old Colony Christian School), and St. David's School on York Road (the only one still functioning as a school, for now). The competition between schools was fierce and we loved it. Once we graduated on to Grade 9 it was nice to befriend the kids we played against in years passed.

Those days were different as we had to walk (or run like crazy) to catch the bus at the end of our road. If we missed it we would have to walk the miles to get to school. In my case, my brothers and I had to walk past a home that housed kids that had something against us and always hid and threw stones and fruit at us as we walked by. That 'home' is now the Marynissen Winery on Concession 1.

I smile at my days at Brockview School. That's where I learned the lessons of getting along with kids and playing sports, feeling free as I swung on the swings and went flying off the teeter totter (after the person on the other side didn't feel like teetering anymore!). That's where I sat on the swing and heard the news on that fateful day that President Kennedy was assassinated. That's where I earned a red 1st ribbon for high jumping, only to have gotten sunstroke while practicing for the 'big' Field day. That's where a lot of who I am probably culminated. Those days of small schools are gone but the memories still linger in many of us.

~Submitted by Linda Pankratz

Teaching Memories – Marlies Boldt

After graduating from Teachers' College in Hamilton, I applied at the Grantham School Board for a job. One of the questions asked was, "What religion are you?". Upon answering that I was a Mennonite I was told that I would teach music and religion. Thankfully I could sing and teaching Bible stories was comfortable for me!

My first class was a Grade 4/5 split at Maywood Public School. Surprisingly, this was the classroom of my own Grade 4 teacher (when I was a student in Vineland); she was transferring to another school. Three years later I moved to Port Weller School, again into the classroom of this same Grade 4 teacher who was now retiring!

At Maywood I wanted to get the boys interested in school, so I developed a list of hockey teams that were trying for the Stanley Cup. The side blackboard became a record of the games played with the boys gladly keeping it all up-to-date (the funny thing was, they never knew I had absolutely no knowledge – and very little interest!- in hockey!!).

At Port Weller there was a swampy ditch beside Lakeshore Road where the boys liked to play at lunch time. One of the more "difficult" boys came to me after the noon bell with a bag in his hand, "look what I found", was his comment as he opened the bag to show me a snake curled in the bottom! I am not fond of snakes but was not going to show my feelings, so I said to him, "oh, that is a good one, but you'll need to take him back to his home since he won't like it in the classroom". As he walked into the cloakroom I overheard him say, "she wasn't even scared!". What a disappointment for him (and a miracle for me that I didn't scream!).



Later, at the end of my teaching career, I started to supply teach. When supply teaching at Virgil or Butler I frequently had discipline problems, but since many children were from Mennonite families I played the "Mennonite Game" with questions like, "Is your mother so-and-so?". This often led to improved behavior quite quickly.

BACK TO SCHOOL

Hi, my name is Marlene Bartel. I am 6 years old and I'm waiting for the bus to take me to my first day at Virgil Public School. In my school we don't have Kindergarten yet. I am really shy, and more than a little bit scared! I am also worried because we speak mostly German at home, and I'm not sure I can say what I mean.

(a few weeks later)



There are still lots of things I don't understand but I am so happy that my teacher, Mrs. Adine Enns, speaks German too. She helps me be less afraid and is very patient. During the school day, we sit quietly in rows, each of us at our own desk. We don't move around or speak, unless we put up our hand and ask for permission first. We have recess once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Skipping rope is so much fun. For the lunch hour, my Mami packs a ham and lettuce sandwich, a cookie and an apple into my square, metal lunch box. Sometimes, on a really special day when my Dad has a day off, he picks me up so that I can have a hot lunch with my parents and little brother at home. I LOVE those days!



(later that year)



We are really looking forward to presenting our play, "The Elf and the Toadstool" in front of the whole school at an assembly (what did that mean again?...) The class will also sing a few songs for the parents. My teacher says I have to sing a solo with Bobby, in front of the whole school. I will have to try to get out of that!



I love the days like "Open House", when parents can come to the school. When my Mami comes into the classroom, I think she is the most beautiful lady in the world! I heard we get report cards soon. I'm not really sure what that is, but some of the kids seem to be nervous about it. I hope my parents will be proud of me. Pretty soon I will be in Grade 2. I wonder who my teacher will be? I wonder where I will sit? I wonder so many things.....

(submitted by Marlene (Bartel) Heidebrecht, just a few years later..... and still wondering about a lot of things!)



Virgil P.S. Gr. 1 1962—1963 Teacher: Mrs. Adine Enns

MEMORIES

~ submitted by Margie Enns

Once again September has arrived and with it the memories of the good old days.

Other than one traumatic experience I had when I first started grade one in 1948, I can honestly say I thoroughly enjoyed my time in school.

Let me explain. The day before I was to start grade one, my dad decided to shave my head because my hair was rather thin. Why he waited until the start of school, I will never know. I remember hiding but to no avail. The first day of school can be difficult for any child, but for me it was devastating because the children didn't know if I was a boy or a girl. Needless to say, my hair grew back and from that time on, my school experiences were always positive.

Because I enjoyed school so much, my life long dream was to become a teacher. When I got my first teaching job assignment, I couldn't believe I was getting paid to do something I enjoyed so much. I took a leave to have my family and went back years later to do supply work. I spent 45 years as a supply teacher and met many students during this time. It is a joy for me to meet the students who have crossed my path and to see what they have accomplished.

One of the funniest things that happened to me during my teaching career was the day a grade one student approached me on the school yard. He asked what grades I taught and I answered "grade 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8". He looked at me with his big blue eyes and said "Wow, you must be smarter than all the other teachers. They can only teach one grade!"

When I think back on my career, my prayer is that I have made a positive difference in the lives of those I have taught, be it in school, in D.V.B.S or Sunday School.



- posing with Louise, Buddy & Kathy after my hair grew back



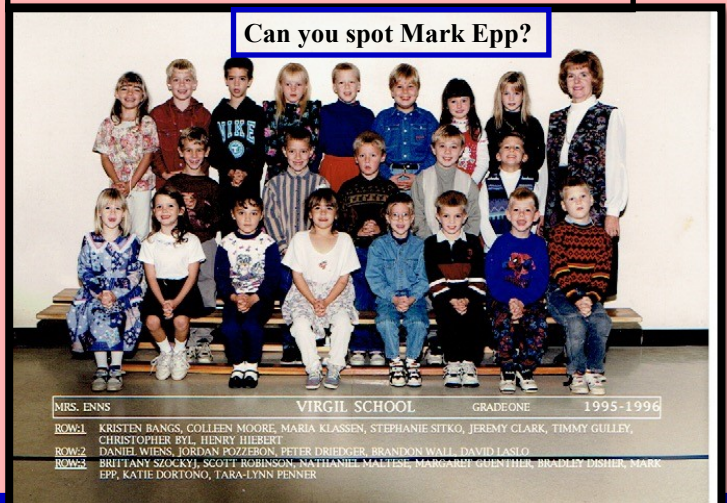
- riding to school on the handlebars of brother Art's bike - with Louise, Fred, Buddy, Walt, Mary



- later school transport in back of trailer or truck (Vic Baerg standing in front of trailer)



Gr. 2 with Miss Cameron & 14 students from NUMC Sunday School



MRS. ENNS VIRGIL SCHOOL GRADEONE 1995-1996
 ROW-1 KRISTEN BANGS, COLLEEN MOORE, MARIA KLASSEN, STEPHANIE SITKO, JEREMY CLARK, TIMMY GULLEY, CHRISTOPHER BYL, HENRY JHEBERT
 ROW-2 DANIEL WIENS, JORDAN POZZERON, PETER DRIEFGER, BRANDON WALL, DAVID LASLO
 ROW-3 BRITTANY SZOCKY, SCOTT ROBINSON, NATHANIEL MALHESE, MARGARIE QUINTELLER, BRANLEY DIESER, MARK EPP, KATIE DORTONO, TARA-LYNN PENNER

Mc Nab Public School S. S. No. 1 (1913) Grantham.

A little History:

By the 1840s there was a school house serving the children of the village of Mc Nab and adjoining parts of Grantham Township. It was located on the west side of Mc Nab Rd. just a bit south and east of the place where Lakeshore Rd. crosses Eight Mile Creek Rd.

The original school burned in 1913 and was replaced with a sturdy new one - room schoolhouse on the same site. It was made of red brick and had one single classroom inside, which the students reached through two separate doors, one marked BOYS and one marked. GIRLS.

The new brick school served a couple of generations of area children. A second classroom was added in 1946. The school closed in 1958.

My country school memories from the 1940s at Mc Nab

In the spring of 1947 our family moved from a small farm on Creek Road in Virgil to a much larger farm on Lakeshore Rd. Changing schools from Virgil to McNab was exciting but somewhat scary as well. I had attended Miss Fields grade 3 class in Virgil and my sister Frieda was in grade 6.

The location of Mc Nab school was very impressive, on the top of a hill surrounded by trees and bushes and an amazing playground certainly was a welcoming feeling. I have some fond memories of some very special teachers. My first teacher at McNab Mrs. Hiscott was kind, gentle, and caring, but firm. Then later Mr. and Mrs. Dudley, a husband and wife team came. This country school was a challenge. They not only disciplined, but taught us a lot in Home Economics with little or no supplies available. They were also very gifted in teaching all subjects. Some added information: on March 18, 1949 the parents and teachers of McNab school met at the school to organize a Home and School Association.



Mr. Dudley's Class

home, with a lovely apartment for his 94 year old mother, Pearl Fraser. In 2011 the Fraser family had a reunion for all who had attended McNab School, The reunion happened when Peter answered a knock on his door and a tough teen from yesteryear who had bullied him, had come to visit him. Now they were both married with families. They shook hands, and shared a lunch in their old schoolhouse. What an amazing example of forgiveness! Bullying was very common at McNab School; fortunately I was never bullied, but unfortunately I saw it happen too many times. The reunion was an amazing experience; recognizing each other after many years was very enjoyable. Fortunately I have known the Fraser family for many years and am very grateful for the information I received recently. The reunion project was huge but very much appreciated by all. The four short years at McNab will always be a memory!



Marg Goerz & Peter Fraser

~ submitted by Marg Goerz



I loved school so much that in all the 13 years I went to school, I did not miss 1 day! I was only 2 hours late once when it took awhile for my nosebleed to stop. My mother thought to pack it with snow (it was wintertime) -- it worked! I remember every teacher I had (mostly good memories). And my favourite books from the school library were biographies (read the whole shelf). I loved reading how famous/important people contributed to society.

Respectfully submitted by Laurene Nickel



My School Days at Virgil Public School



Marianne Epp & Hannelore (Goertzen) Harder 1 month before immigrating to Canada in Aug. 1952

My school days at Virgil Public School started shortly after my family, consisting of my mother and older sister, arrived in Canada from Germany in August 1952. We were enrolled by our sponsoring family from East & West Line, where we lived for our first six weeks. As all immigrant children at the time, we were placed into Grade 1, no matter what the age was. My sister, at the age of twelve was put into Miss Field's class and I was placed into Miss Twamley's class. We both did not know a word of English, and when Miss Twamley told everyone to "sit down", I did not understand her orders

and she came to my desk, took me by both shoulders and sat me down. Now I had learned my first two words in English. It took us both about three to four months before we were able to understand and speak English to some satisfaction. My sister soon was put in a higher grade. I was allowed to take out a lot of the books from the classroom library to read. This helped me a lot. I had started Grade 3 in Germany before our immigration, so I was able to read in German. These books were not available to the other children as they were still learning how to read. The school did not have a library at the time. My sister and I practiced speaking English at home.

Due to some circumstances, Miss Twamley was absent a lot of days that year, with various supply teachers filling in for her, and since I, as a nine year old, was the same size as the six year olds, I stayed in that class all year.



My Grade two teacher was Miss Cameron, and I don't remember any special privileges since I was three years older.

My Grade three teacher was Mrs Dueck, who I believe was also a supply teacher. Since she knew German, my mother was able to speak to her during a teacher/parent meeting.

At recess, the teeter totter was my favourite place to go to with some friends, as well as those swings with the heavy wooden seats. This playground equipment would surely be too dangerous today.



My Grade four/five teacher was Olga Dick, who had a long career at Virgil Public School. She taught so many children, and was well known by everyone. Her classroom was in the original first classroom of the school. I was successful in completing both grades in one year with her encouragement.

My Grade six teacher was Mr. Andrews, who must have had a personal problem during that year, as he took it out on all the students, giving a lot of detentions for minor disruptions, making the disruptive students stand in the hallway with their hands up for quite some time. Fainting spells, especially for the girls, were not uncommon. This was my worst school year. He divided his class up in rows of favourites to least favourites. At the end of this school year a lot of the students transferred to Col. Butler School on East & West Line, which opened that year.

Miss Caughill was a well known teacher, who I had in Grade 7. Two of my girlfriends, who were also from Germany, and myself, being slightly older than the rest of our classmates, requested permission from Miss Caughill to write the Grade 8 exams that Mr. Ring was giving to his Grade eight class. Permission was granted by these two teachers, and we were successful with the results of the exams. We were surprised when we got our last report card which promoted us to Grade 9. That meant not having the popular and strict Mr. Ring the next year and going to Niagara District High School in the fall. This was quite an abrupt ending to my school days at Virgil Public School.

~ submitted by Hannelore Harder

Memories of My First Day of Teaching

Styles of teaching in the 1960s were very different from what they are today. In those days kids sat in their individual desks, usually in 5 straight rows. Each child had his own reader, which in the primary grades included characters like Dick, Jane, Sally & Spot, the dog, & of course Mother and Father.

My first class was a combined grade 1 & 2 class of about 25 students in Merriton. We had been taught at teacher's college that when you had two grades in one class, the one grade was given seat work to do while the teacher taught a new lesson to the other class. So as an eager first year teacher, that is exactly what I set out to do on that first day of school. The grade one children were given a piece of seatwork with pictures on it and given instructions what they were to do. The grade two children waited for their lesson to be taught. It all sounded very good on paper, but no one told you that some children work faster than others. What actually happened was that by the time the last child got his paper, the first child put up her hand to say, "I'm finished". And the grade two class hadn't even started with their lesson. So of course I had to think quickly to be sure those finished early were kept busy with something else to do. I'm not sure what I did since it was so many decades ago, but probably I told them to look at their Dick and Jane Reader. Today I suppose they would use their Tablets or Iphone to keep busy.

~ Submitted by Rita Boldt

The Bell Tower in Preussisch Rosengart, West Prussia

The following story pertains to the Mennonite Church in the village of Preussisch-Rosengart, West Prussia.

This is the village where Egon Epp grew up.

The bell tower with three bells, situated next to the Mennonite Church, was an integral part of village life, however, the tower had a unique history.

A bachelor from a farm, perhaps his name was Claassen, was living near the farm of Otto Neufeld, or in a small house next to the farm. Around the turn of the century, he wanted to bequest his fortune to the Mennonite Congregation. But in doing so, he had one wish: The money was to be used to build a church tower. Unfortunately, it was not allowed for Mennonites to have sounding bells beside their churches, and thus began the difficulties for farmer Claassen.

Claassen found a friend, in Protestant Pastor Warm in Stalle, who actively supported him in his endeavour, so that the church authorities gave their consent, and farmer Claassen's wish could become reality. And so our Mennonite Church, perhaps the only one in the world, acquired a three-part bell ringing.

For us, who were born and raised in Preussisch -Rosengart, cannot imagine life in the village without the bell tower. Every evening the bells would ring to announce the time to quit working. In the summertime, during the long daylight hours, the bells would ring at 7 p.m. In the wintertime they rang already at 4 p.m. On Saturday evening the bells would ring to announce for the upcoming Sunday. On Sunday all 3 bells would ring before and after the church service.

If someone in the village had died, all 3 bells would ring in 3 regular intervals, regardless of which denomination the person belonged to. The complete bell ringing in 3 intervals also sounded, if someone in a neighbouring village had died, as long as he or she belonged to our congregation. A common expression at home was: "Go quickly to the bell tower, and inquire who had died." Once it really impacted myself. Since I was near the bell tower, I was told it was our Opa. He had died suddenly and unexpectedly. Everyone who was buried in our cemetery, was accompanied on their last journey by the ringing of the bells. Also every young couple was greeted by the bells at their wedding, upon entering and leaving the church.

I remember the church custodians were Dau, Breitfeld and Collin. They were also responsible for ringing the bells when required. Of course the bells had to be operated via ropes. Helpers for this task were always found quickly. I believe, almost every boy in the village had at one time or another helped to ring the bells. As a child, I had tried it also, but it was a bit scary, as the ropes would pull me up, if I did not let go in time.

On New Year's Eve in 1944/45, people from the village rang in the New Year, with a hopeful and heavy heart.

The roof of the bell tower was caved in. As I understand it, the bells were brought to the nearby city of Elbing after the war ended, but apparently they were returned again to the village at a later date. However, the sound of the bells was silenced in our homeland forever.



Else Kretzschmar-Epp (sister of Egon Epp)
(trans. by Bill Harder)

Happy Birthday Lori!

This woman from our congregation recently had a birthday. Do you recognize her? Dave Dick did - he spotted her on a recent CNN broadcast of Billy Graham's funeral. The network supplemented funeral coverage with footage from past Graham Crusades, including the Hamilton Crusade in 1988. Lori Dyck, and her family attended that event. As they sat in the audience at Copps Coliseum, Lori and her family had no idea that Lori had been captured on film. Imagine her surprise when Dave told her he had seen her picture on CNN!

On July 15, Lori celebrated her 85th birthday. While many of you have gotten to know Lori over the years since she joined our Church, you may not know how she typically celebrates her special day. Lori loves to swim. In fact, husband Jake fondly nicknamed her "Flipper". Twenty years ago she began what has become an annual tradition - jumping off the diving board into her daughter's pool. The jump is a personal victory and statement to Lori's health and strength. Well - she did it again this year at age 85 - twice.

And this year Lori marks another significant milestone - she will have been in Canada for 70 years! On August 28, 1948, Lori arrived in this country along with her mother and brothers Alfred and Walfred. She is so thankful to live in such a beautiful and peaceful country.

Happy Birthday, Lori, and congratulations on 70 years in Canada. May God continue to bless you and keep you. so you can take the plunge again next year.

~ submitted by daughter Rita Bishop



From the Archives: ~ Harold Neufeld

From the September 24, 1989 bulletin: "WEDDING: Peter Sawatzky Jr., son of Peter & Katharina Sawatzky and Anita Riemland, daughter of Victor and Kaethe Riemland, were married yesterday, September 23rd in our church. We congratulate them and wish them God's blessing and joy as they sojourn together." *That's 29 years married for the Sawatzky's. I wonder who actually did the sound set up and stuff at their wedding...?*

From September 12, 1993... if memory serves me correctly, this was really really interesting. A six week Bible Study Series where the lecturer was James Reimer (Professor at Conrad Grebel). The general theme was called "What Mennonites Believe". The first of the series was held on September 13 and entitled "God: He or She?". Other topics followed : "Sin: Are We Essentially Bad?" and "End of Time: Why Believe in Heaven or Hell?" By the way, a week later, the bulletin mentioned there were 80 people in attendance for the first session.

*Also September 19, 1993: "Thank you to: Peter Sawatzky Sr. for rototilling our lawn. Willie Goertz, Willi Janzen, Ernest Rempel, Jake Wiens, Jake Enns (Henry St.), and John Toews for rolling, raking and seeding the new lawn. **The Lord bless all and every one of you for your willingness and great effort for a job well done.**"*

Finally, the September 18, 1994 Bulletin announced: "Help Save Moms And Babies From Abortion". Join LIFE CHAIN. All you have to do is hold a sign that reads "Abortion Kills Children" for one hour with hundreds of other pro-lifers. Sunday October 2. A peaceful, prayerful witness to the truth along Lundy's Lane & Drummond Road, Niagara Falls."

July Birthdays

Anne Marie Enns: 83 (7/4/35)
Ingrid Reimer: 88 (7/12/30)
Lori Dyck: 85 (7/15/33)
Inge Enss: 88 (7/17/30)
Helene Nickel: 97 (7/18/21)
Mary Epp: 90 (7/24/28)
Erna Braun: 84 (7/26/34)
Erika Siemens: 83 (7/27/35)
Anneliese Fieguth: 82 (7/31/36)
Johannes Wiens: 81 (7/31/37)

August Birthdays

Helen Epp: 81 (8/1/37)
Carl Neumann: 93 (8/3/25)
Wilhelm Schimann: 84 (8/3/34)
Klara Wiens Knelsen: 82 (8/7/36)
Gerry Lamarre: 81 (8/13/37)
Louise Dyck: 91 (8/17/27)
Siegmond Bartel: 82 (8/24/36)
Eugene Blechner: 80 (8/27/38)
Elisabeth Rempel: 87 (8/31/31)

September Birthdays

Martha Bartel: 86 (9/8/32)
Mary Steingart: 91 (9/9/27)
Marie Harder: 85 (9/13/33)
Justina Klassen 88 (9/11/30)
Brigitte Ediger: 82 (9/14/36)
Henry Rahn: 84 (9/15/34)
Sinaida Enns: 94 (9/18/24)

October Birthdays

Eleonore Funk: 91 (10/3/27)
Katie Fieguth: 93 (10/6/25)
Hans Wiens: 84 (10/7/34)
Maria Neufeld: 84 (10/12/34)
Peter Dirks: 100 (10/15/18)
Elly Kopp: 86 (10/15/32)
Annie Falk: 91 (10/19/27)
Tina Siemens: 88 (10/19/30)
Orlin Epp: 81 (10/20/37)
Hans Hermann Dau: 83 (10/21/35)
Helga Rahn: 81 (10/26/37)
Elfrieda Braun: 85 (10/27/33)
Mary Pries: 80 (10/31/38)

25th Wedding Anniversaries

Wolfgang & Valerie Schmude
9/22/93

60th Wedding Anniversaries

Hans Ulrich & Anneliese Fieguth
9/18/58

Egon & Marianne Epp
9/20/58

Elvin & Irene Penner
10/11/58



Thanksgiving Hymn handwritten by
Erika Janzen, submitted by daughter,
Esther Willms

Danke für diesen guten Morgen;
" " jeden neuen Tag;
" , daß ich all meine Sorgen auf dich werfen mag

Danke für alle guten Freunde, (danke)
" o Herz für jedermann.
" , wenn auch dem größten Feinde ich vorziehen
kann

Danke für meine Arbeitsstelle,
" für jedes kleine Glück
" für alles Frohe, Heile und für die Mensch

Psalm 107:1
"Oh, give
thanks
to the
Lord,
He is
good;
For His
lovingkindness
is everlasting."

1 Thank you for giving me the morning,
thank you for every day that's new,
thank you for new things in store for me
and for work to do.

2 Thank you for all my friends and brothers,
thank you for everyone that lives,
thank you that even greatest enemies
I can forgive.

3 Thank you for many little sorrows,
thank you for every kindly word,
thank you that in the midst of trouble
sympathy is stirred.

4 Thank you, I see your word has meaning,
thank you, I know your Spirit here,
thank you, because you love all people,
those both far and near.



Church Picnic



MCC Relief Sale New Hamburg

LIFE WITH US NEWSLETTER

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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