

Ecclesiastes 3:1

To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under
the heaven



Nov. Dec. 2018 VOLUME 6 EDITION 3

LIFE WITH US

At Niagara United Mennonite Church

How long, how long 'til this world is free from suffering?
How long, how long 'til blessed peace will reign?
How long, how long 'til the pow'r of love will come
And heaven's will is done?
How long? How long?

How long, how long 'til ev'ry gun is silenced?
How long, how long 'til hate and war shall end;
'til ev'ry battle's thunder will fade to blessed peace
And sounds of war will cease?
How long, how long?

Press on, press on, let faith and hope sustain you.
Press on, press on, keep working for the day
When all of God's children will live in peace as one.
Until that new day comes,
Press on, press on.

Send me, send me to work for the kingdom.
Send me, send me to go and live for peace.
Until the love of heaven to earth shall descend
And peace will reign again,
Send me, send.

Press on, press on.
We will sing a peaceful song!
But still we're praying on,
How long, how long?

- words & music by Pepper Choplin

PROGRAM

PRELUDE - *Themes from Dr Zhivago & Ein Leichte s Konzert*
by Gustav Hollaender Anzhelika Kuznetsova
& son Yelysei Khmyrov-Kuznetsov, Susan McVean

CHOIR
"Who is so Great a God" by Dmitri Bortniansky

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN (standing)
"Grosser Gott Wir Loben Dich" Verse 1 in German
"holy God we Praise Thy Name" Verse 1 in English

INVOCATION (remain standing) Randy Klaassen

MOMENT OF SILENCE In remembrance of the many victims

RUSSIAN HYMN from Mennonite Hymnal
"God the Omnipotent" by Lvov Russell Braun, Carolyn Maule

RUSSIAN FOLK MELODY (see insert for text)
"Der Rote Sarafan" by Varlamo ff Renate Klaassen, Elizabeth Pereira
Shirley Dick, Alan Teichroeb

PRIMING THE PUMP OF GIVING John Giesbrecht

CHOIR
"How Long" by Pepper Choplin Soloist Kira Braun

PRESENTATION
"Doors closed - Doors opened"
by Government Lead Senator, Ottawa Senator Peter Harder

CHOIR
"Deutsche Messe" by Franz Schubert
Soloists Kira Braun & Yelysei Khmyrov-Kuznetsov

INTERMISSION - 15 minutes

RUSSELL BRAUN & CAROLYN MAULE
"The Minstrel Boy - English Folk Song" by Benjamin Britten
"In diesen Heiligen Hallen" by Mozart

PRESENTATION
"Out of the Ashes of Revolution - Into the Promise of Canada"
by Mennonite Historian, University of Winnipeg Professor Aileen Friesen

OFFERTORY Medley of our Hymns of Consolation & Inspiration
Kathy Rempel

- Opportunities for giving:
1. The ongoing work of the Mennonite Centre in Molochansk, Ukraine
 2. University of Winnipeg retrieval of KGB victim files project

RUSSELL BRAUN & CAROLYN MAULE
Impromptu self announced

CHOIR
"Pacem" Latin Traditional, music by Lee Dengler Violinist - Lolita Hale

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN
"Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah" Verse 1 in English

CLOSING REMARKS Randy Klaassen



Russell Braun



Anzhelika & Yelysei

100 years

Tears of Grief 1918 Tears of Gratitude 2018



"TELL US OUR STORY"

In music & word

How shall we sing the Lord's song In a strange land?

Psalms 137

CHOIR DIRECTOR: John Rempel **ACCOMPANIST:** Kathy Rempel
John & Kathy Rempel are a music team with many years experience leading a variety of choirs in Canada, Germany, Botswana, and Paraguay. Presently, they lead the Niagara Community Male Chorus, and are part of the music team at Niagara United Mennonite Church.

PETER HARDER is a Canadian former senior civil servant and deputy minister who was named to the Senate of Canada to represent Ontario on March 23, 2016. He serves as the Representative of the Government in the Senate.

RUSSELL BRAUN is a Canadian operatic lyric baritone and Juno Award winner. Much sought-after as a soloist and for opera roles worldwide. He is married to pianist Carolyn Maule, with whom he performs regularly. In 2016, he was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Canada.

CAROLYN MAULE is much in demand as a vocal accompanist. The Canadian pianist has worked with renowned artists and is often heard in recital with her husband, baritone Russell Braun.

AILEEN FRIESEN is an assistant professor and the co-director of the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg. She is also the executive director of the Plett Foundation. She has travelled extensively in Ukraine and Russia and has conducted both ethnographical and archival research in these countries. Aileen grew up listening to stories about Russia from her maternal grandparents who left the Soviet Union in the 1920s. This family connection has nurtured her interest in Russian history.

ANZHELIKA KUZNETSOVA is a conference interpreter in Odessa, Ukraine. She is also a choir member at St Luke and St Valentina Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Odessa. Anzhelika and her family are long term family friends of the John Giesbrecht family.

YELYSEI KHYMYROV-KUZNETSOV (son of Anzhelika) is a grade six student at State Stoliasky Music Boarding School in Odessa, Ukraine with violin instructor Ekaterina Skrypak.

Out of the Ashes of Revolution and into the Promise of Canada

~ Prof. Aileen Friesen

Introduction

We are gathered here today to recognize and remember an event that transformed the trajectory of our families, which forged a new path for our community. There are moments in life that forever change, for better or worse, who we are. For our community, the Russian Revolution is one such event, a moment in time, with repercussions that still reverberate. We are not here today to reminisce, but to remember. To remember is to bear witness to the pain, to contemplate difficult decisions made, to acknowledge adversity weathered, to be thankful for unforeseen blessings bestowed. But to remember is only possible if we know our own history. So tonight, together, we will take a journey through our encounter with the Russian Revolution.

It is important to remember, and is easily forgotten that 1917 consisted of two revolutions. The first, the February Revolution, witnessed the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the end of the Romanov dynasty that had ruled Russia for just over three hundred years. It was Catherine II, a Romanov through marriage, who first opened the doors for mass foreign migration into the southern steppe of the empire in the mid-18th century; Mennonites joined the influx of migrants soon afterward. Out of the two original settlements, Khortitsa and Molochna, grew thriving communities that spread across the Russian empire. Hard work, in combination with fertile land and a booming wheat market, would propel Mennonites into an era of prosperity. No longer the quiet in the land, they entered politics, becoming mayors of major cities in south Russia; they started successful enterprises with business transactions reaching into the millions of rubles; they expanded their local educational system, in addition to sending their youth, both men and women, to universities in Europe and the imperial capital of St. Petersburg.

Life was not perfect. Don't let the photographs of neo-gothic and neo-classical mansions, of multi-story brick mills, of grand estates fool you, this was not a paradise that we lost. Land hunger divided Mennonites into the haves and have nots; religious divisions tore apart families; quaint and quiet Mennonite villages were transformed almost overnight into multi-ethnic and multi-confessional industrial centres complete with barracks for wearisome Russian, Ukrainian, German, and Mennonite workers. By the late nineteenth century, as the empire lurched and swayed towards greatness or catastrophe, Mennonites did not stand on the sidelines, aloof and separated from the realities of modernity; even along the fruit treed streets of Mennonite villages, we can find signs of the deeply embedded tensions that existed in the rest of the empire.



The start of the First World War papered over these differences and tensions, at least in the beginning. Mennonites joined others in pledging their loyalty to the state, to the defense of the fatherland, donating money and goods to the war effort. Young men, eager to be useful while remaining true to their beliefs, joined medical trains, treating the war wounded.

It is hardly a wonder why Mennonites, along with millions of other war weary souls in the empire welcomed the collapse of the Romanov dynasty in February of 1917. Mennonites joined in political debates about the future of Russia, embracing the ideas of "freedom, equality, and fraternity" proclaimed in the streets. For Mennonites, a decentralized democratic republic was the only way to achieve these goals. For many of their Ukrainian and Russian neighbours, true equality could only be achieved with a government that acknowledged the necessity of the redistribution of land.

Anarchy /Civil War

It would be the second revolution, the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917, that brought Vladimir Lenin to power and ushered in a new world order. Some celebrated the revolution as the overthrowing of a corrupt bourgeois culture that lived off the exploitation of workers. Others viewed this event as momentary madness that would never last; a fleeting moment that too would pass before life returned to normal. And yet, it never did. The Bolsheviks engaged in a social and economic experiment that would define a century. After capturing the Winter Palace and arresting the Provisional Government, they declared power to now be in the hands of the people.

While news spread of unrest in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the reality of the regime change only became apparent in January of 1918 in the colonies of Khortitsa and Molochna. Armed men, part of the Red Guards, arrived in the Khortitsa colony, confiscating money, horses, and weapons from Mennonite households. To ensure full payment, members of the Red Guards took hostages from among Mennonite leaders. Millions of rubles had to be collected from the wider community to secure their release. Extortion combined with claims of justice for past crimes pitted people against each other. In Halbstadt, arrests ended in executions, with a number of Mennonites and a Russian boy losing their lives. Recollections from that period identify a man with the last name Kroeger as participating in these executions. The appearance of Mennonite names among those supporting Soviet power should caution us against viewing this period in a simplistic light.



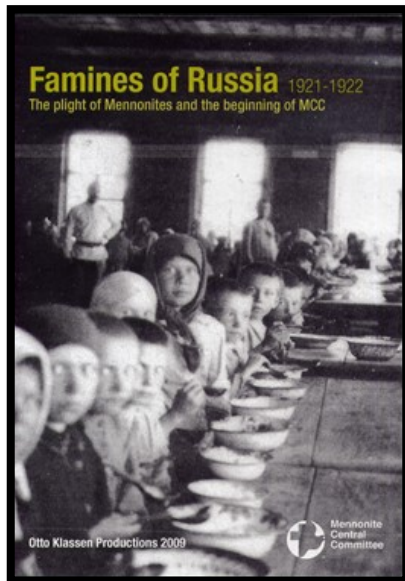
Abram Bergmans's estate on the Verona River
In Ekatarinoslav province

The arrival of Austro-Hungarian and German troops at the end of April halted, ever so briefly, the control of Soviet power in south Ukraine. Mennonites welcomed these troops as liberators from the arbitrary rule of an illegitimate government, embracing them with food, music, and joy. Their Ukrainian neighbours did not do the same. Under this occupying regime, Mennonites would establish self-defense units, the Selbstschutz, ostensibly to protect people and property; though for certain units, confiscation and retribution also formed part of their repertoire. Heavily armed Mennonite men patrolled the streets becoming symbols within the community of either how bad things had become or how far Mennonites had strayed from their values.

But the worst was yet to come. By the summer of 1918, this south Ukrainian steppe disintegrated into a dizzyingly complex and brutally violent civil war. Mennonite villages, caught between the Red and White Armies, terrorized by anarchists and bandits, could find no relief from the violence. It was a time of mass panic, of confusion and rumours, of fear and exhaustion. Villages burned to the ground, children spent terror-filled nights in the field, and entire families were massacred.

Famine Relief

By the fall of 1920, the Civil war had been decided for much of Ukraine, with the Red Army victorious. Devastated by violence, we did what we have always done in untenable situations—we relied on God through each other. Desperate for help, Mennonites reached across the border and across the ocean to coreligionists in Europe and North America. The needs of Russian Mennonites dovetailed with a growing sense among American Mennonites that they were called to do more than sit on the sidelines as the world destroyed itself through senseless war.



It is astonishing to read in newspapers from that time how readily Mennonites in North America put aside their differences to join in a unified effort to help us. The gravity of the moment was not lost on them—only by working together could they tackle the extreme suffering of the Russian Mennonites. This suffering only deepened after the civil war, with the outbreak of Typhus, and the onset of famine. Many of our relatives were saved by the relief kitchens established by what would become the Mennonite Central Committee, which fed not only Mennonites but also others in need. Even with their help, hundreds of Mennonites perished from starvation.

Leaving Russia

But feeding the hungry was not enough. While the Bolsheviks liberalized their economic policy to aid in the reconstruction of war torn regions, a sense of disquiet still pervaded. In overcrowded villages, teeming with refugees, it was not certain how Mennonites could establish a basic standard of living, let alone rebuild their once prosperous communities. Only in unifying, only in organizing into the Union of Citizens of Dutch Lineage, could Mennonites convince the Soviets to allow them to tackle two imperative tasks: rebuilding Mennonite agricultural life in Ukraine and immigrating to Canada.

Mennonites managed to achieve the impossible, the exodus of a third of their population during the 1920s, only because

community members were willing to undertake the burden of leadership. Men and women made tremendous sacrifices, including people of Ukrainian and Russian heritage, often endangering their own lives for those of our ancestors.

Mennonites in Canada also contributed to this leadership. I love this quote from Henry H. Ewert, a Prussian minister and educator who ended up in Manitoba. He wrote during this time: "...the Mennonites of Russia find themselves at the pre-



sent time in an unprecedented condition of need. If they are to be helped, it must be done in an unprecedented manner."

Most of us did not flee with the shirts on our backs. This was an organized process. But it is important to remember that at this point, life in the Soviet Union was not great, but it was stable. The terror of collectivization and dekulakization were still unknown. And this helps us to understand why people chose to stay and why it was so emotional for others to leave. I often share this story from my own family—my maternal great grandfather had no intention of leaving the Soviet Union. He knew the culture, knew the land, he thought he could build a life for his family in Ukraine. He didn't want to travel to an unknown place, to be surrounded by a language he didn't know. He left because my great grandmother told him he was going. Their early life in Canada was not easy. My great grandfather never experienced the promise of Canada. But his children did, as did his grandchildren, and his great grandchildren. This is the essence of this story so often missed: the sacrifices made for future generations.

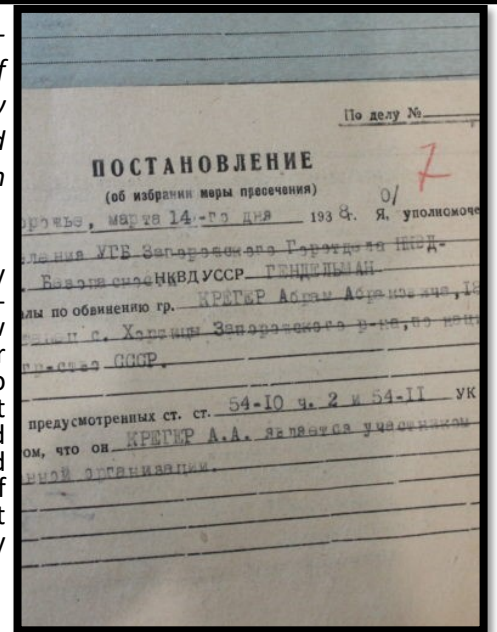
Those who Remained

Those who remained, the majority of Russian Mennonites, experienced a very different fate. While we built churches and spiritual communities, they watched their ministers exiled, their pews confiscated and finally, their churches closed. While we educated our children openly in the faith, they spoke of God only in whispers; and while we lived in safety and security, they witnessed their fathers disappear into the night, never to be heard from again. So many families lived with the pain of these unanswered questions; the pain of not knowing, the inability to move on, to close the wound.

And today I want to share with you an example from your own community, in fact, from the very church community of St. Catharines United Mennonite. On the most recent Mennonite Heritage Cruise, Harold Thiessen visited the archives and found the interrogation file of his grandfather, Johann Thiessen. Many of you likely know Harold (brother to John Thiessen of NUMC) or you remember his grandmother Helena or his father, Gerhard, who was a deacon and lay minister of SCUMC. The Thiessen family would arrive in Canada after the Second World War, like so many others, as displaced peoples

What does the file tell us? It took only 29 days to tear apart this family. On 13 December 1937, the NKVD started a file against Johann Ivanovich Thiessen accusing him of “systematic counter-revolutionary activity and nationalistic propaganda;” by January 11th, he was executed. On the pages of his file, we can follow the story, the search and arrest of Johann, the interrogation, the gathering of evidence from people in his own village against him, his coerced confession, his execution and finally his exoneration.

I can't speak to what it means to hold a document that chronicles the demise of my grandfather. I can't speak to what it means to imagine your father or grandfather during that week in Soviet custody, the beatings, the starvation, the uncertainty of how this will end, the fear for one's own life and the sorrow for what might happen to your wife, your children when you are gone. And I certainly can't speak to what it means to spend a life time not knowing for certain what has happened to your husband, what happened to your father. My grandfather, Henry Becker, made it out in 1925. He lived to the ripe age of 86, farming his land and ministering his flock in freedom. I could have written an entire section about the “Promise of Canada”; I could have spoken of the churches, the communities, the schools, that we built across this country, but these brief examples of Johann Thiessen and Henry Becker illustrate most poignantly of why we should think of the 1920s immigration to Canada with thanksgiving.



Conclusion

The generation that experienced this period of our history is gone; the generation with any direct memory of Russia is fading. Why does this matter? It matters because in many ways, we as individuals and as communities are the product of these shared memories. Many of the paths taken, many of the choices we have had the privilege to make are predicated on these historical moments. **To forget is not only to erase our individual family stories, but also to live without gratitude to the men and women who in a moment of intense turmoil, did their best to answer God's calling to live by faith.**

~ compiled by Kathy Rempel with permission from Prof. Aileen Friesen

In his presentation, “**Doors closed, doors opened**”, Senator Peter Harder said, “Governments sometimes **make** mistakes.... And sometimes governments **correct** mistakes”.

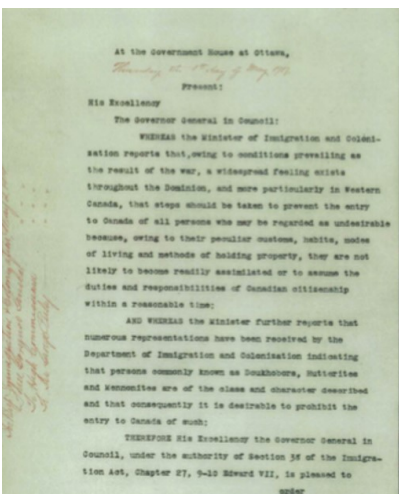
In May 1919, the Canadian government sanctioned an **order-in-council** that Doukhobors, Hutterites and Mennonites would not easily be assimilated into Canada and should therefore be prohibited from entering the country. These groups were seen as undesirable, Harder said, because of their customs, habits, modes of living and methods of holding property.

This **order-in-council** was rescinded in June 1922, allowing Mennonites to immigrate to Canada. This decision allowed many of the parents and grandparents of those assembled here (SCUMC) come to Canada, a decision that changed the course of many lives.

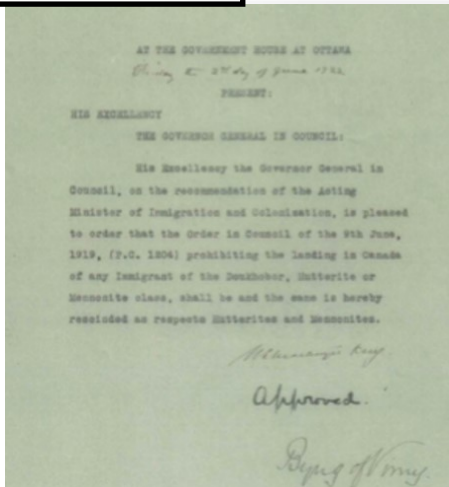
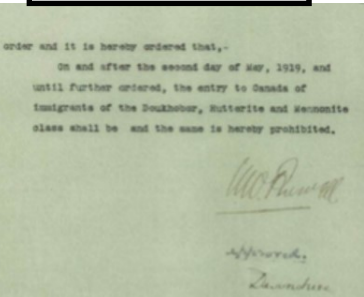


Sen. Peter Harder

Order of May 1919 rescinded—June 1922



... & Mennonites prohibited—May 1919



To everything there is a season...

My Favorite Season ~ Emily Fieguth

Can you have a favorite season? I usually find the one I am in is my favorite. Likely because I am looking forward to the happy memories of that season from my past. My memories all stretch back to those crazy holidays when my Aunts, Uncles, Cousins and Grandparents would all gather for family holidays. Playing in the basement of Gerald and Gladys's house. Homemade pinatas, swinging sticks around a low hung ceiling with blind folds on. Surprisingly we lost no eyes just a few ceiling tiles. Sneaking cookies and Pop Shoppe pop. Grandpa used to give all of us Grandkids \$5 to walk to the candy store, this was in the mid 1970's, \$5 was a lot of money. Now that I am older, I think I understand why. Poor man just wanted an hour of quiet in his house. Bonus was sending us home wired up on sugar. A win for Grandpa and us grandchildren.



Recently I spent the weekend at the cottage enjoying all the beauty and splendor of northern Ontario. The crisp fresh air, the crunch of leaves as we hiked through the forest. Fall, yummy fall. Turkey, mashed potatoes, cabbage rolls and perogies. Then as the nights get longer, the temperature drops and we move into a paradise of crisp white snow. Ice skating on the lake, skiing, snowmobiling and of course, Christmas dinner and a house full of family and friends.



Then just as I tire of the cold and slush, out come the spring bulbs, the warm breezes and I am out in my garden getting ready for planting. Spring brings the Easter bunny, perogies and a house filled with family and friends.



Then the wet of spring is replaced by the hot days of summer. Ice cream from Dairy Queen, warm nights around camp fires and of course a house filled with family and friends. Then just as I think I cannot bear another hot summer night, the cool winds of fall begin to blow and the cycle begins again.



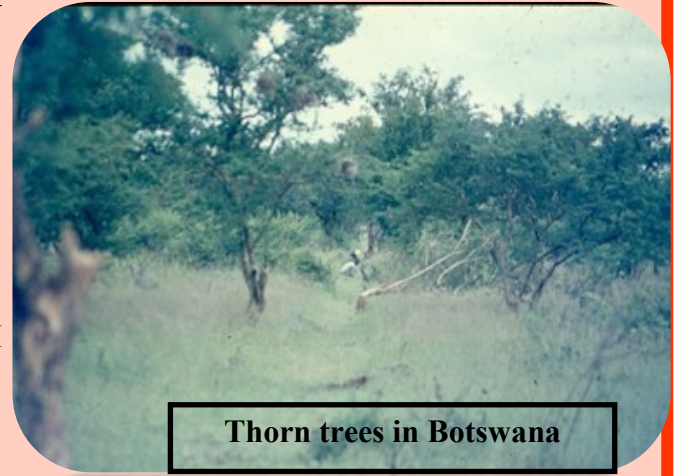
Yes the seasons mean family, friends and food to me. It is when we stop every few weeks and enjoy the moment we are in. Appreciate the love that surrounds us and most of all, the magic and beauty that is in each and every season.



What happens when there are no seasons?

~Linda Pankratz

Well, that really never happens, does it! There are always seasons – but in the part of the world that I chose to compare our seasons here with there was only hot, and cooler! Botswana, Africa, is full of thorn bushes because of the heat and dryness. Instead of the four seasons that we are familiar with, there were only two specific times; namely, the dry season and the wet season. Some years they never see the wet season so you basically have one main season which is dry and hot and long. I remember the year when the rains didn't come and our very bodies cried for *pula* (rain).



Thorn trees in Botswana

When we came back to Canada after three years of living in Africa I appreciated our four seasons so much more. The Winter is crisp and fresh and most of nature dies, or goes into hibernation. The Spring wakes everything up and it's so refreshing to see new growth and things coming 'alive'. Summer is such a beautiful time of living and playing outside, gardening and reaping what was sown. The color green is so vivid and the sunsets so peaceful. Fall comes and decides that it's time to put everything to bed. The colors are vibrant, the harvest moon is low and the gardens go back to the ground. Winter has come again! Really, I believe that is why our time goes so quickly – because the seasons change before our eyes, and sometimes before we want them to come.

The question of which season is my favourite is impossible to say. It's like the seasons of my life. Every day is new and has its own beauty. As long as I can see our Creator in it and know that He has everything in order such as the moon, the stars, the sun, the seasons, then the day that I am in is my favourite season. Sometimes I get stuck in a season and don't want it to change but then I would be back in the 'Africa' scenario. Thorn bushes not becoming anything spectacular. Sometimes I hear people say that they would love to be back in their twenties, a season in their lives they find young and fun and exuberant. The ironic thing is that when 'we' were there we were waiting for our seasons to change, be it career, dating, marriage, significant moves, etc. We were young plants waiting to become more the 'bush' we were meant to be. I am, personally, really enjoying where I am right now, a mature bush in a garden that's been around for a while. I know that some day I will be taken out of the garden for a younger bush to take my place. That season, my friend, is going to be the most spectacular of them all as it will be the most beautiful culmination of all the seasons together, Heaven!

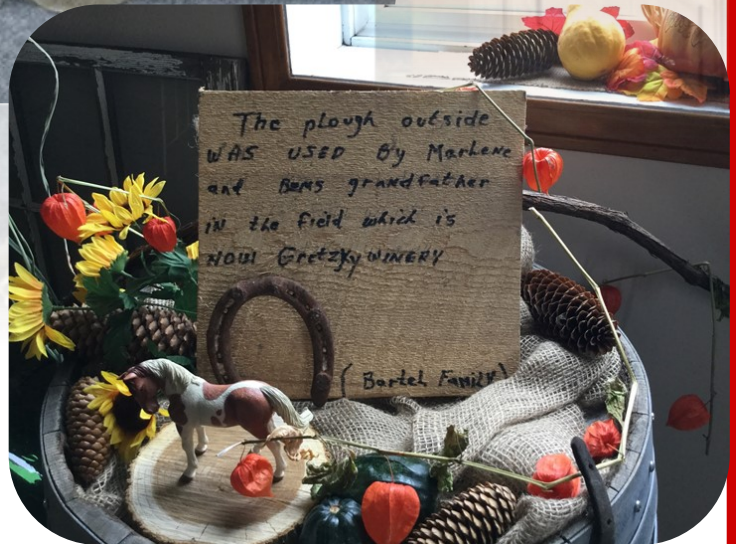


Our beautiful seasons of colours



For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.
Ecclesiastes 3:1





The Old Plough

When I was a young boy living where Marlene and I now live (on Concession 6), I remember seeing a short elderly man with a mustache riding his horse past our house. You could hear him coming down the road, clip clop, clip clop. My parents would say, here comes Opa Bartel riding his horse. Little did I know that someday I would end up marrying his granddaughter.

Fast forward into my high school years. I started dating Marlene and the rest is history. I was now in the Bartel family. As I explored her parents' property, I came upon an old rusty plough leaning against a tree. I asked Marlene's mom if I could have this piece of history. She said yes, so I was on my way to start filling up our barn with antiques (some people call this junk).

Fast forward again. Marlene and I were asked if we could do some Thanksgiving decorations at church. Well, again the rest is history. We collected (I collected) so much stuff over the years that we had no problem finding ways to decorate the church for Thanksgiving. The plough outside the church was used by Marlene and Ben's grandfather to plough the field which is now Gretzky winery.

In conclusion, there are so many things to be thankful for we had no problem getting into the spirit of Thanksgiving. Our motto has always been "We give thanks with a grateful heart."

Thankfully submitted!
Dick Heidebrecht

Our Senior Youth are back at it again this fall! We kicked off the year with the annual welcome back party at the Willms'. This was followed by an Iron Chef cook-off, with pasta being our ingredient challenge. I must say, we have some budding chefs in our community! Special mention to **Logan Fieguth** for his advance preparation which landed him the award for most visually appealing dish. We saw a record-breaking group of youth out for the Warner Ranch Haunted Hayride, and were grateful to some awesome parents for helping us out last minute to transport our crew to and from the ranch! Our annual "Grumbler" brought out not only a great group of youth, but also some awesome new sponsors! We're thrilled to welcome Rachel and Eric Froese to our team this year.



Last week was the first of our monthly joint events with Bethany Mennonite church just up the street. Bethany hosted this one, and took on most of the planning for an evening of fall and halloween-themed festivities.

Our connections to Bethany run long and deep, and so it feels quite fitting to start building ties between our youth groups. We are hopeful that this more consistent relationship will provide space for new ideas to blossom and new friendships to grow.

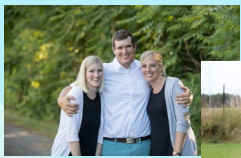


We've been exploring a resource called *The Bible Project*, which is a video series that explains how to read the Bible, and goes through the books of the Bible as well. The videos are short and packed full of relevant and insightful information. This is an awesome resource for anyone interested in exploring the Bible, and it's completely free! Visit www.thebibleproject.com to see what we're learning at youth, and maybe even learn bit yourself!

Our group dynamic changes - sometimes dramatically - from week to week. We've had huge fluctuations in every aspect - in the faces we see, in the numbers we experience, in the unfolding of an event. This is okay; we gather each week whether we see 3 youth or 30, and our biggest hope and prayer is that each and every person who walks through our doors leaves knowing they were, and are, warmly welcomed and highly valued as a part of our ever-evolving community.

We are grateful to our church family for the prayers, words of encouragement, and offers of assistance. We are excited for what the coming weeks and months hold for us as we continue to explore ways to grow our relationships with each other, with our community, and with God.





A look back
at

RED BRICK CHURCH SUMMER WORSHIP



A couple months have passed since we wrapped up the Summer Worship Series. It is amazing how time flies so quickly! I'm thankful that Kathy and Lani have asked me to reflect on this summer, even though I'm already thinking about getting my Christmas decorations out! To set the stage, I was contacted by Rachael Peters in April on behalf of the Music Committee. I haven't been involved in music for several years, however they thought my organizational skills would be an asset and so, after praying and talking with Curt, I decided I would give it a try. This would give our hardworking volunteers a sabbatical for the summer and would expose us (I hoped) to a variety of different forms of worship through music. As usual, you never quite know what God will do with what you offer Him, and I am so delighted with how this summer music series developed.

One of my goals was to attempt to get as much variety as possible, so we could all at least find one musician or group who we felt drew us in through their style of music—from gospel to contemporary worship to folk to acoustic, from youth to those who have been leading music for over 50 years, from those within our church community to those from different cities. I was amazed how God placed each of these on our stage this summer. I would love to hear which group particularly spoke to you (or should I say "sang to you") this summer and why!

Overall, I spent ninety-eight and a quarter hours working on contacting groups, creating promotional materials, coordinating with hosts and more.

In total, I contacted fifty-four different musicians or groups, nine of whom led us in music throughout the Summer and three who led us during the Fall. Beyond this, connections were developed with other groups, churches and ministries whom the future Worship Coordinator can contact for later opportunities.

But that's just what happened on my end. My eyes were opened again to just how much time, energy and heart our volunteers give us each Sunday...

... from our AV team who came in early on Sunday mornings and even on Saturday evenings, changing over between German and English services with lightning speed and adapting to different groups and their respective needs each week

... to our worship leaders who guided our guests through the order of worship and took the time to pray over our services

... to the ushers who opened windows and brought us all water (remember how hot some of those Sundays were?!)

... to the wonderful people who stepped forward to host our guest musicians overnight or for lunch

... to each one of you who took the time to greet our guests and made them feel welcome, and to each of you who supported us in making this vision a reality!

I look forward to what God has in store for us next as we wait patiently, pray and praise together!

~ Jolien Carter



Spotlight on Italy ~ by Ron & Laury Riediger

One of the most awe-inspiring things you can experience when travelling is the sheer beauty of landscapes and blending of the land and water surrounding you. Laury & I are generally campers, but this summer, for the very first time, we left Canada and travelled to Italy during the intense heat of summer. We love heat and summer-time and both these components were magnified in the blistering July all over Italy! We had a very busy and full 3 weeks by plane, train and automobile! Our brother & sister John & Janet Willms were so happy to be our travel partners!

Venice Canal



Our travels started in Venice, a city with views of water everywhere. We then flew to Naples and a one night of adventure there. We then drove out to Pompeii on-route to the Amalfi Coast. After the Amalfi experience, we went by train from Naples to Rome. After that, it was by train to the Tuscany region where we stayed at a vintage Italian villa about a ½ hour out of Florence. We then travelled by rental car to the West Coast and stayed in a campground (we had to do some camping at least) near the city of Livorno. This allowed us to make day trips to the Cinque Terre and the city of Pisa. Then we returned our rental car to Florence and took the train up to Milan and then hopped on a connection train to Lake Como! A train ride back to Milan and then across the north of Italy to the outskirts of Venice, on the mainland ended our amazing journey!

Over 21 days of sight-seeing and moving around, it would be impossible to tell every story and experience we had in a condensed format. So I would like to share 3 special occasions where I felt like I was totally immersed in the land.

During our 5 days in the Amalfi coast area, we heard about a walking trail that skirted between the cliffs and the water in the upper area of Amalfi. The trail was called The **Path of the gods** and it started just outside the main courtyard of a town called Agerola. What was so unique was that there were amazing views of the hills and water below, and you would come upon

ancient caves used by hermits in the 16th century as cells for their church of St. Barbara! Soon after, a young man (we later found out was travelling from Colorado) who could have been a spitting image of a young Jesus came along and told us how much further we would have to hike to get to the lower town of Praiano!

Path of the gods



Hiking in Cinque Terre

Another great day was our trip to the **Cinque Terre!** In English it translates to “the Five Towns”. It was so cool to travel there by train from La Spezia and then hop on and off and go to all the towns, four of them that are situated right by the rocky cliffs, nestled in so tightly, and the one town Corniglia, way up high overlooking the majestic Ligurian Sea! Each town was connected by a path and we managed to take a hike from Vernazza up to Corniglia and then down to **Manarola!** The hike took us well over 2 hours and it was so incredible! When we stopped at the 1st town of Monterosso al Mare, we saw a wicked rain storm that when it abated, created 2 to 3 water-spouts that looked literally like “**tornados over water**”. None of us had never seen anything like this in our lives!

Waterspout at Monterosso al Mare



Again, great food and experiences took place in Rome, Tuscany region, Livorno and Venice, too many to tell, but I will tell about a true highlight for me and one for our group of 4. This is where I have to debate whether the one experience was more memorable than the other, so I will tell both! They are both tied for top notch days; 1st was a day trip to the Island of Capri and 2nd, spending time in the Lake Como area. Walking around the



View from Anacapri

town of **Anacapri** on the island was so cool and swimming in the ocean just off the island was amazing! Taking the ferry boat between all the towns around Lake Como and playing tennis way up in the town of Perledo was absolutely breathtaking!



Tennis by Lake Como

Westminster Abbey

~ by Ruth & Al Teichroeb

Alan and I had a unique opportunity this past August when we went to Hastings, England to attend the wedding of Thomas Janzen to Ally Proudfoot. Thomas is the son of Henry and Debbie Janzen and grew up in our church.

Although the day was rainy, the celebration was beautiful! Most of the wedding traditions were very similar to Canada, and we enjoyed getting to know the British way of life from Ally's family and friends. Thomas and Ally are currently living in Oxford. It was such a wonderful way to start our trip.

From Hastings we rented a car for a few days. We drove to the Cotswolds, which is the area of thousand year old thatch roofed cottages, pastures lined with stone walls, and cows, sheep and horses grazing peacefully. Very picturesque!

Then we spent a day in Bath, where the Romans discovered hot springs during an invasion in 60 - 70 AD. Here was a majestic cathedral that we explored, from the balcony walk ways in the heights of the dome, to small side chapels where famous royalty from the past were interned in elaborate casings. We also enjoyed their Evensong service. It consisted of an excellent choir singing Bible passages, and spoken readings and prayers. There were maybe 75 people in attendance, and it was a peaceful yet joyous worship experience.

The next day we took the train into London. Because of our Bath experience, (and the fact that William and Kate got married there) a visit to Westminster Abbey was on our list. There are different ways to see this cathedral. You can buy a ticket and take the tour, or go to one of the services for free. On a sign outside we read that there was an Evensong service at 5:00, so we quickly decided to do more sightseeing and come back for the service.

When we arrived back around 4:30, I noticed a line up forming of about 50 people. This piqued my curiosity as the cathedral was huge, and I didn't think it would be full to overflowing for a mid week evensong service. But, maybe I was wrong. I went to the gates and asked the guy in robes that looked in charge if they expected this service to be full. I asked if they ever got too many people and had to turn people away. He looked at me very seriously and replied "We *never* get too many people". "Why then are people lining up to go inside", I continued.

He told me that the first 75 people or so got to sit in the actual Quire seats at the front of the Abbey, with the choristers. Well, this had me excited and I asked if he thought we would get into that area. My tall husband dutifully waved back at me from his spot in line, and the guide said he thought we would be able to sit in the quire. He had a small smile on his face as I thanked him and took my place back in line.

The doors opened, we were ushered in and got to sit in the last of 3 rows on one side of the quire. There were individual hard wooden seats for about 50 people on either side of the isle. The seats in front of us were oddly left free, and I remember wondering why. People kept coming in and were being seated in chairs in the large area (the Apse) between the quire and what we would call the front of the church. We guessed around 500 people. This was very different from our Bath experience.

I had about 10 minutes to take in my surroundings; ornate wooden carvings between the seats, with an opening so you

could see your neighbour, small lights and a wooden shelf to hold music in front of each seat, a larger, much more ornate alter at each side of the quire, the vast height of the domed ceiling, and the massive concrete columns. It made you feel so small, yet in awe of these structures that were built so long ago, with minimal equipment. And they were built by people who worshiped the same God that we worship today.

While I was dreaming of the monks that must have sat in *my* very seat, hundreds of years ago, I heard male chanting in the distance, coming ever closer. The service was starting. A quire of about 12 men in robes, came down the isle and took their places in the remaining empty seats.....right in front of me!!

The music was truly inspirational. Each voice was a Jonathan Bradnam, a confident soloist, and the songs they sang, without any instrumental accompaniment were intricate pieces that kept me riveted, and it was all happening right in front of me!

Like in Bath, there were Bible readings and prayers in between scripture in song, and at the end of the service, when the men walked out singing, people stayed in their seats until you could no longer hear the music. It felt like everyone reflected on what they had just seen and heard, took a big breath and then carried on with daily life as they left the Abbey. I was grateful to God for this experience.

On our way out we looked around a bit, and surprisingly saw the crypt of Charles Darwin and Isaac Newton. On the floor was a new grave stone, dated June 2018, of Stephen Hawking. This was very intriguing given that from what we knew about Hawkins he was an atheist, now buried in Westminster Abbey. So Al asked one of the attendants. He politely explained to us that after a person dies, his family can petition to the Dean of the Abbey to have their loved one buried in the Abbey. Al asked some more questions which the man seemed reluctant to answer.

Finally he told us that the best person to answer our questions was the Dean of Westminster Abbey, Dr. John Hall, and he just happened to be in attendance today, and was greeting people as they left the building (he is also in the Royal wedding video!). His stature is very similar to Alan's, and from my vantage point (looking waaaay up) I watched as these two men exchanged ideas. Dr. Hall explained in very brief terms that families can petition for their loved one to be buried in the Abbey, and that the approval of this request is made solely by the Dean (which in this case was himself).

"Anyone can make this request?" Alan asked.

"Anyone" came the reply.

"What are the criteria?" Al continued.

"There are no criteria."

"How does the decision get made on who can be buried here?"

"I make the decision!"

"Do many people get approved?" queried Al

Looking Alan straight in the eye, he curtly replied, "NO".

As the Dean's answers became shorter, it was apparent he was not interested in further conversation on this topic so I told him how much we had enjoyed the service, grabbed Al and left.

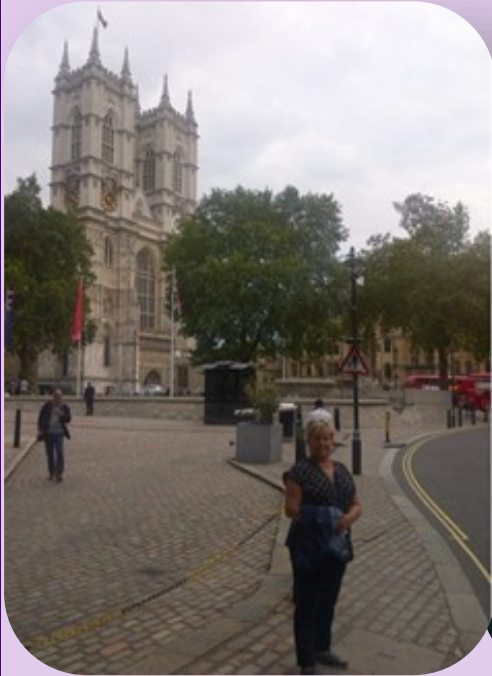
Once home, Al did some online research and it seems that there is a spot in the Abbey where a number of famous scientists are buried, in an attempt to promote links between scientific discoveries and religious beliefs.



Happy wedding bells for

Thomas Janzen & Ally Proudfoot

in Hastings England



Westminster Abbey



Book Corner ~ by Debbie Fast

A Most Noble Heir ~Susan Anne Mason

“When stable hand Nolan Price learns from his dying mother that he is actually the son of the Earl of Stainsby, his plans for a future with kitchen maid Hannah Burnham are shattered. Once he is officially acknowledged as the earl’s heir, Nolan will be forbidden to marry beneath his station.

Unwilling to give up the girl he loves, he devises a plan to elope – believing once their marriage is sanctioned by God that Lord Stainsby will be forced to accept their union. However, as Nolan struggles to learn the ways of the aristocracy, he finds himself caught between his dreams for tomorrow & his father’s demanding expectations.

Forces work to keep the couple apart at every turn, and a solution to remain together seems further & further away. With Nolan’s new life pulling him irrevocably away from Hannah, it seems only a miracle will bring them back together,”

He Gave Me A Song ~ Music & Lyrics by Eric Goerz

A collection of original Gospel songs & hymns.

The Gift of Christmas Past ~ Cindy & Erin Woodsmall

“At 27, Hadley is still trying to get free of the weight she’s carried all her life – entering foster care at age 5, getting arrested at 17 for arson, & losing her boyfriend, Monroe, when she needed him most.

Monroe never wanted to walk out on Hadley. He’s understood her, from her desire to help children with speech issues to her intense temper. But when she was arrested, he became haunted by what he knew & convince his only choice was to end their relationship.

Almost 10 years later, Hadley & Monroe are both specialists in the field of speech therapy. They meet again ... thrown together to help a 4 year old girl who’s been rendered mute after being rescued from an apartment fire.

Years of secrets & anger beg to be set free as Hadley & Monroe try to push aside past hurts & find common ground in order to help the traumatized young girl & her family.

Can the love of Christmas past drift into the present, bringing healing & hope for all?”



My name is Reagan Fast, and I am 13 years old. I also have autism and cannot converse like you, when I speak I sound like a 2 year old child who is learning to speak. Since pre-school I had always been in self-contained classes because I could not communicate, not even my body language could show people I understood them. My body always betrayed me. When I was ten years old I learned to communicate using a method called Rapid Prompting Method. It was not a quick process, but over many months I was beginning to control my body and impulses better to use my letter board and share with others that I was intellectually intact. It wasn't until coming to the middle school that I was in regular academic classes. I was so happy to be in classes that taught and challenged me. In addition to learning new and wonderful things, middle school has taught me how to have courage and be resilient through difficulties, such as being around people who don't understand me. I am always trying to find a way to be not Autistic, Having autism is a very strange life to live: I have a mind that understands everything people say, yet I live in a body that makes me seem uninterested and distracted. Although I can use my letter board or iPad to communicate, I am still working on generalizing my abilities with other people...it is much harder than it seems I am so thankful for teachers who have been able to see the real me through the façade of autism.

You may be wondering at this point: [How is this Reagan Fast connected with our church community?](#) She is the granddaughter of Alfred & Elly Fast from Grand Island NY, and the grandniece to Erika & Frank Siemens from NUMC. WNY news did a special report on Reagan, and part of it is copied below.

WNY Girl With Autism Helps Others Find Their Voice

WNY Girl With Autism Helps Others Find Their Voice

Author: Melissa Holmes

GRAND ISLAND, NY - For many with autism, their thoughts and feelings stay locked up inside forever because they are unable to speak. Now, thanks to a breakthrough learning method, a 13-year-old girl from Grand Island has found a way to express herself and her words are powerful. She's now using one of her talents to give back and help others with autism find their voices, too.

As a toddler, Reagan Fast wasn't meeting her milestones and she was diagnosed with delays at age 2 and autism at age 3.

"She would have behaviors and outbursts and things that were just very difficult. We could tell she was struggling and that's hard to see. Hard to watch," said Reagan's mother, Rebecca Fast. Reagan was able to learn some words, but she was not conversational. Reagan's parents, Rebecca and Egon Fast, said the hardest part for them was not knowing what she wanted, and who she really was.

"Did she have a favorite color? What were her favorite foods? What activities were her favorite? You just don't know how to help your child because she seemingly didn't understand what we were saying, and we certainly didn't know what she was trying to communicate to us," said Rebecca.

Those secrets were finally unlocked when she turned 10-years-old, and the family took a leap of faith and brought her to Austin, Texas, to meet with Soma Mukhopadhyay, the woman who developed a learning technique called Rapid Prompting Method, or RPM.

"Our very first day, we could not believe what was coming out of our daughter," said Rebecca. "We still can't believe it."

On day one, Reagan was multiplying two-digit numbers in her head, without ever taking a math class. She also wrote this poem:

*A bird was flying, sun was shining.
Bird saw a tree, and a bee.
Bird saw a cat, she was fat.
Bird saw a mouse climbing a house.*

Those simple questions Reagan's parents once asked, could finally be answered. She told them her favorite color was blue, her favorite food was soup, and her favorite activity was swimming.

When WGRZ's Melissa Holmes asked Reagan how it made her feel when she could finally communicate, Reagan wrote the following response on her iPad: *"I am so grateful for RPM. My life has been transformed from a life of being trapped in a body that is uncooperative and unpredictable, into a new life that gives me hope and a future of possibilities. I will always have challenges, but I now have the tools to communicate and show everyone that individuals with autism have a purpose and much to offer the world."*

From an email from Reagan's mom: [In May of 2017, I decided that I wanted to help Reagan with her motor skills and also find something that we could do together that did not involve iPads or other electronic devices. So, I found that we could both learn to make knitted hats on a loom. It was something she could do to strengthen her motor skills and she would have a product at the end. At the same time, I and some other mothers organized a charitable group called Buffalo RPM. Reagan's school was having a Bazaar in December and told the students that they could sell something that they made there. Reagan wanted to sell her hats, but give all the proceeds to Buffalo RPM to help other individuals with autism learn how to communicate. She made almost \\$1000 to donate.](#)



~ submitted by Lani Gade (a Fast family friend)

The two Sisters

Do you know these two ladies? Some of you do, but for the rest of you, let me tell you a little bit about them. They are Maria Dyck and Susanne Janzen. Mary is 93 years old and Susanne is 91. I meet Susanne sometimes early in the morning on Line 1



when I go for my walk. While I'm still trying to wake up to begin the new day, she is already half ways to her sister Maria's house on Grange Crescent, with her walker mind you. Every Monday and Tuesday she leaves her place at Pleasant Manor at 7:30 sharp. When it rains, Erika, Maria's daughter picks her up. But the problem with that is she says, that Erika's clock is a bit slow.

So what is happening on Mondays and Tuesdays and why just these two days? That's because these two ladies like order and routine in their schedule. That's how they are most productive. And that is important to them. So Monday and Tuesday mornings are quilting time for them. Ever since their ladies group, Verein Nr.3 retired, these ladies kept quilting at Maria's place and bring their finished products to church where Women in Service still sew blankets for MCC. That's where I spotted Maria one morning, bringing a big bag of finished quilts to add to ours. She needed more batting, but the rest of the materials the two sisters provide and donate.



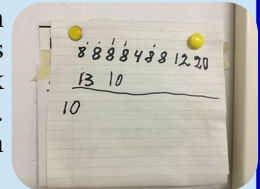
So one Tuesday morning I visited the two ladies at Maria's place. Susanna's Mercedes (walker) was parked outside the door, and the ladies were already in full swing.

They take great care to use only new or almost new materials. For this, Erika drives them around. They used to go to Hamilton for fabric to get it cheaper, but now the situation is a bit different. Some time back Maria's son Henry passed away and left her some insurance money. Well, Maria says she doesn't need that much anymore and Erika looks after her quite well, so the two sisters say Henry is paying for all the fabric. Besides, they say, MCC has looked after them in times of need; it's time to pay back.



Then they tell me their story how MCC helped them out of Berlin to make it onto the first transport ship for Paraguay. That is quite a story how MCC helped a big group of Mennonites out of the isolated Berlin right after WW2. (Read Peter Dyck's book "Up from the Rubble") They left Berlin with absolutely nothing, and on the ship MCC provided each one of them with a quilt made by Mennonite women in North America. Maria brought that quilt along when she came to Canada. Eventually they used it in the trailer. On my insistence Erika dug it up and I was amazed how well it was stitched and preserved.

Susanna and Maria sew one blanket on Monday, one on Tuesday, so two blankets a week. They don't take any summer break and last year they sewed 107 blankets. Every delivery to church is marked down on a list.



Susanna's granddaughter from Alberta even came here to learn how to quilt.

They are done by noon and Susanna makes her way back to Pleasant Manor for lunch. If she is lucky, she says, she gets a doggy bag, and everybody laughs. They say they never had a squabble. What a blessing!

~ submitted by Lani Gade

Harold's Happenings

The Edenites were building... from the November 10, 1974 bulletin: "It has been announced earlier in the year that Eden Christian College is engaged in an expansion building program. Though out the years many of our young people have attended this institution. This year more than sixty out of 315 are United Mennonite adherents or members of the five peninsula (U.M.) churches. An appeal is going out to support this venture. Total cost of the expansion is \$327,000 of which \$200,000 has already been raised. To date, our five United Mennonite churches have contributed a total of \$1950 to this project."

In the same bulletin... apparently Rev Martin Sawatzky had other plans... "**Your Pastor's Statement of Intention** : After much deliberation and careful consideration, I have decided not to renew my term of service as leading minister and pastor of this congregation, the Niagara United Mennonite Church, due to the fact that I want to continue my studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York."

Finally, December 14, 1975: "Let us send greetings to our voluntary service workers who are not able to fellowship with us during the Christmas Season: **Willi & Linda Pankratz**: Botswana, Africa. Willi works as a surveyor and Linda as secretary to the MCC Director. **Olga Rempel**: Winnipeg, Manitoba, as a cook and a counsellor in a home for delinquent boys."

Peter P. Dirks 100 years in God's Hands and counting

My parents Peter H. Dirks and Katarina Goerzen were married in the Yazykovo Mennonite Colony on January 4, 1918. They met like I met my wife, Marie. Father had gone to New York (Russia) to finish his high school education. He lived at the home of Peter Goerzen and fell in love with his daughter Katarina. *I left my home to finish my high school education, boarding at the home of Dr. Johann Kroeker and there I met his daughter Mary.* Surrounded by the atrocities of World War 1 no photos were taken of my parents' wedding, yet my brother Henry has compiled our family history from diaries and letters, to which I refer to in this historical overview of my early life.

I was born on October 15, 1918 in Nikolaipol, Russia (now Ukraine). A year later my family needed to escape to Suworowskaya, after Nestor Makhno and his gang of bandits began to murder Mennonites in the Chortiza region. In the end, 827 Mennonites lost their lives at the hands of these men. Father had kept us safe. My father taught school in our new community and my sisters Tina and Marichen were born there. In 1922, the Nikolaifelder Congregation sent a letter of encouragement to my father to join the pastoral ministry. Later he was honoured by a call to serve the Suworowskaya Congregation and my father began to preach.

However, these were troubled times making pastors and teachers a special target of the bandits that moved about communist Russia. In 1924, Father made plans to leave for North America to continue to keep his family safe. They collected a few belongings and many books and we set out by train through Latvia and Germany to Holland

Arriving in Holland my sisters and I were suffering from the measles and our plans to set sail for Canada were delayed by six weeks, during which time father was convinced to join 49 other Mennonite families heading for a warmer climate in Mexico. We set sail on the Leerdam part of the Holland America Line and landed in the Port of Tampico, Mexico in September 1924. Later that year my sisters succumbed to what my mother referred to as a "lungenentzündung" and they were buried 9 days apart in December of 1924. That Christmas, I was an only child again. Father began communicating with the editors of the Mennonite newspaper *Der Bote* and the Canadian Mennonite Conference to learn more about Canada and the opportunities it would hold for our family.

We left the *Hacienda las Animas* near Irapuato behind for a better life in Canada. We arrived in Gretna Manitoba in February 1926 and in March 1926 my sister, Erna, was born. In that same year, JP Klassen formally ordained my father as a minister and we became members of the Schoenwieser Mennonite Church (now the First Mennonite Church) Winnipeg. My father tried many new professions in Canada however he set his sights on learning English and returned to the teaching profession. We returned to Gretna, I was now 11 and attending public school. My brother Henry was born in 1929 and we moved back to Winnipeg for father to finish his teacher train-



ing. A teaching job in Plum Coulee put us on the road again. We lived in North Kildonen and Niverville. Our final roots were laid down here in Niagara, starting in 1941, when a former student from the Ukraine invited Father to become a pastor here at our church.

Father bought a 10 acre plot of land on Lakeshore Road. The house is still visible behind the four now large pine trees I planted in the 1940s. In 1942, I received my first letter to report for enlistment in the Canadian military. Father applied to the courts for an exemption so that I could continue to help him on the farm. It was granted and he paid \$25/month to the government for this exemption. Then in September of 1943, I received a court order in to report to Chalk River's "10 mile camp". I joined other conscientious objectors to work in the logging industry. The trees we felled were cut into four foot lengths and sent to Ottawa for heating fuel. My father, still busy on our poultry and fruit farm, applied for another exemption to bring me home. Again it was granted and father paid the \$25/month required for this exemption. Dad sold the farm and began his printing business on Creek Road. I was hired by General Motors to work in the foundry for the hefty sum of 35 cents an hour. The conditions in the foundry led to some health problems, so I left there to work in construction at the Queenston Power Plant.

I met Mary Kroeker, my wife, in 1936 when our families visited together in Steinbach. My mother and her father had attended the same school back in the Ukraine. Although I had graduated from a 2 year program at a business college, I went to live in Mary's family home to complete my high school education. I shared a room with her brother George. In 1951, Mary's family drove to Niagara for a visit and we were reacquainted. Our courtship was carried out through letter writing and was supplemented by several weekend road trips to Winnipeg, in my 1951 Plymouth coupe. I proposed to Mary on the banks of the Niagara River. I was 36 years of age and thought, "I better do it now". We were married at the First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg on November 14, 1954. In my haste to get to the wedding on time I got a speeding ticket in Iowa for \$11. It was a "pay it now or spend the night in jail situation"... so I paid the fine.



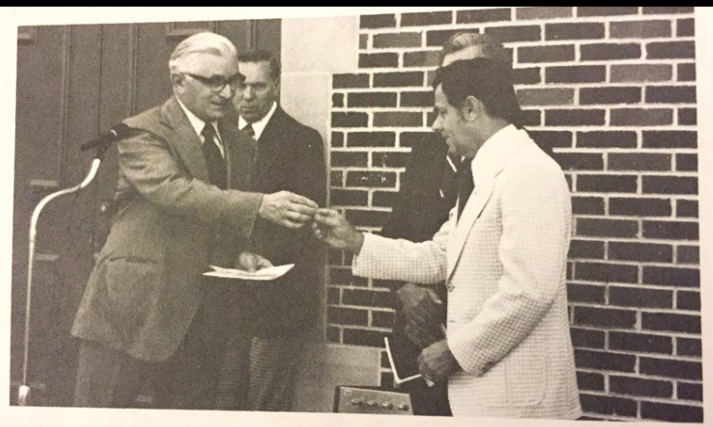
After the wedding festivities we drove to Niagara where we enjoyed another ceremony, here at Niagara United Mennonite Church, with local family and friends. Our two children Susan born in 1955 and Peter John (1958) remain active members of this congregation.

I am a builder by trade, and have worked in many different cities. Marie made a home for our family in Sudbury,

Sault St. Marie, Toronto and St Catharines. I was able to employ many members of our congregation when they immigrated to Canada. Many of them, after leaving my employ, began their own businesses.

In 1966, I was honoured to be asked to supervise the construction of the auditorium and the education wing. I supervised the building of the front narthex of our church, in 1977/78. When I installed that elevator, I do not believe or ever thought that I would ride it up to church services during my 100th year.

Over the years, I was not only concerned with the



Peter P. Dirks handing over the keys of the narthex to Arno Bartel, chairman of the Church Council at the time of dedication of the narthex.

physical space of our church setting but also its spiritual foundation. I have taught Sunday School and served on many committees and boards for our church. As secretary of Vineland Mennonite Home for the Aged, I was able to put my knowledge of construction and love of service to good use outside of our church walls. My greatest honour was serving as deacon for our church.

In my life, I have seen many changes but one thing that never changes is God's love for us. His protective hand is over us as we travel this world seeking safer shores and a better life for our families. For those who are looking for some tangible advice to living a long and healthy life, I would suggest honey. My father and I were beekeepers and I take a tablespoon of good pure local honey every day.

~ submitted by Peter & Linda Dirks

November Birthdays

Jessie Bartel: 93 (11/2/25)
 Helen Wall: 88 (11/6/30)
 Gerhard Hummel: 84 (11/7/34)
 Irene Penner: 83 (11/16/35)
 Alex Fast: 80 (11/17/38)
 Siegfried Wiens: 85 (11/24/33)
 Susanne Janzen: 92 (11/27/26)
 Gunnar Doerwald: 84 (11/28/34)

60th Wedding Anniversary

Werner & Marlene Fast
 11/15/58

December Birthdays

Ursula Hummel: 80 (12/1/38)
 Margaret Goerz (Eric): 83 (12/6/35)
 Adine Enns: 82 (12/9/36)
 Egon Epp: 89 (12/9/29)
 Irma Epp: 87 (12/12/31)
 Henry Schroeder: 85 (12/14/33)
 Henry W. Epp: 81 (12/15/37)
 David Wall: 91 (12/15/27)
 Werner Griese: 81 (12/16/37)
 Marlene Fast: 82 (12/18/36)
 Henry Martens: 82 (12/27/36)
 Therese Bergen: 87 (12/30/31)



On October 23rd this cake for mysterious reasons landed in our church. The "Ladies in Service" that were quilting on that morning enjoyed a good portion of it and so did quite a few other people that came to church that day. Lesson is: come to church, you never know what blessings you might encounter.

(Thanks Emily!)



“MOPS International encourages and equips moms of young children to realize their potential as mothers, women and leaders, in relationship with Jesus, and in partnership with the local church.” – Mops mission/vision statement

At MOPS, we gather and support moms. We believe in the simple but revolutionary idea that remarkable things happen when moms come together, face to face. That’s why we rally women to come together in their own neighborhoods and help each other through this thing called motherhood, one gathering at a time.

Our acronym stands for “Mothers of Preschoolers” because we began in 1973 when a group of moms of young children banded together to share their lives and parenting journeys. The first MOPS meeting took place in February in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. For two hours, while their children received care, these mothers talked, laughed, ate, passed a basket for childcare expenses, had a craft demonstration and ended with a short devotional. In this humble beginning, the seeds of the MOPS concept and format were planted. Through friendship, creative outlets, and instruction, the women began to understand that “mothering matters.”

In 1981, MOPS established a Board of Directors and incorporated first as MOPS Outreach, and later as MOPS, Inc.

In 1988, MOPS expanded beyond US borders and was re-

named MOPS International, Inc. to reflect the international impact of the ministry. As MOPS grew, so did the need for a chartering process, additional resource materials, and a paid staff.

Over the past forty-five years, MOPS has expanded our reach to include moms with older kids, partnering with churches and organizations worldwide to equip and encourage moms in more than 60 countries.

In response to suggestions from a couple of our NUMC young moms to facilitate some regular mom connection and fellowship time, myself and Kathe Wiens explored and then initiated a MOPS membership where the curriculum is set and meetings are planned out for us. We have a devotional time and watch a video featuring a speaker presenting on topics relevant to every mom. We then have opportunity to engage in conversation revolving around questions pertaining to the presentation. This wonderful program is meaningful to the moms and relates to everyone in some way. We are not a big group, at this point and we are looking to welcome any mom looking to belong and fellowship with other moms. Most recently we have a couple of mentor moms that have come on to the leadership alongside us. We are so honoured to have the help of volunteer babysitters without whom we would not be able run this program.



MOPS

MOPS has been a fantastic experience for me. After our gatherings I feel so empowered and uplifted. It means so much to me to have a great group of ladies to share and converse about our stage of life as Moms. It has been so great to be able to develop friendships through this group at our church. I am so grateful for the leadership and also sincerely appreciative of the helpers in the nursery who care for our children while we have some time as moms to stop, have a cup of coffee, and really connect to God through conversation and prayer.

~ submitted by Emma Thwaites





"Hats off" to another Breakfast



Once a month some ladies of our church get together for breakfast. Usually there is a theme. September was hat day. I did not have a hat so Margie Enns brought me one. I once had a hat and that was when I got married, for my going away outfit. I don't remember wearing it often. So there we were at Husky's 20 plus ladies with all kinds of different hats, old hats, new ones, small and big hats, and I am sure there was a story behind each hat. Anne Marie Enns told us about hers. It was an interesting morning. Lani had fun taking pictures and getting some of us to write about HATS. Hedy Kopeschny



My hat was given to me by friends from Israel. It had the logo of the Jewish National Fund on it. The JNF is an organization that develops land, plants trees, and establishes parks in Israel, and one of my friends is a museum director in Tel Aviv.

When I went on a trip to Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries in 2014, I needed a sun hat. I just didn't think it would be a good idea to wear one with Hebrew writing on it, so I took the label off.

My friends wish they could visit Lebanon, too. I hope that peace will come to their part of the world so that they will have the opportunity.

In some ways Lebanon reminded me of Israel, and there are many places of interest that are mentioned in the Bible. Long, long before the current borders were drawn, Jesus visited the territory of Tyre and Sidon (cities on the shore of the Mediterranean that you, too, can visit to this very day) and in Old Testament times, a poor widow hosted the prophet Elijah in the nearby town of Zarephath.

It is easier to cut a label off than it is to sew one back on. For that reason, my hat is now a completely generic one. When I wear it, usually only I know where it comes from and where it has been. It reminds me of my friends, of sun and palm trees, and of the smallest things we can and must do to keep peace.



~ Greta Wiens



Hat Story ~ Annemarie Enns

I chose to wear a very old hat to the Ladies Breakfast for fun! As you can see from the picture, this hat was purchased in the early 1960s for my son Rudy when he was about 4 or 5 years old. It completed an outfit that was a cowboy suit and used for playing "Cowboys & Indians", which was popular in those days. It was probably purchased at Kresge's Department Store on St. Paul Street. I think I kept it for nostalgic reasons. It stayed in the dress-up box and has been used for Halloween and worn by many children and grandchildren. I can't believe this hat

is almost 60 years old. Fond memories of time gone by!



My Lady Diana Hat ~ Margie Enns

In the early 1950s, my teacher at V.P.S. gave us the opportunity to connect with a penpal in the United Kingdom. I naturally jumped at the chance because I loved to write letters. So for over 65 years I have exchanged letters and emails with my penpal Linda from London, England. Over the years we have gone on trips together as well as visiting each other in our homes.

When her daughter got married it was a time of Lady Diana hats and so it was only fitting that I purchase one to wear at this wedding in England. For some reason, I haven't been able to send it to the Benefit Shop and so it sits in my closet as a reminder of the wonderful time we had at the wedding in the U.K.

Happy Hat ~ Hilda Kroeker

My hat was bought about 20 years ago. It is my vacation "sun hat" and travels with me whenever I go south because it can be folded, squished and regardless of how I treat it, it comes out looking like it went into the suitcase. It is my happy hat, since I love sunshine and it travels with me to sunny destinations.



Its very rare to find me outside without a hat. Approximately 15 years ago I was diagnosed with skin cancer on my face. Many surgeries followed and treatment is still ongoing. A protective hat when outdoors is a must for me. Over the years I've acquired a variety of hats which I choose from based upon the seasons and the weather. Several years ago my daughters dressed up my blue Tilley hat with a blue scarf (blue is my favourite colour). This combination of blue hat and scarf have become part of my identity and is my particular favourite. While you can see me wear it regularly when I'm outside, a flip through the family vacation photo album will show that it has traveled to Hawaii, Arizona, California, and Florida. I wonder where it will turn up next?
~ Lori Dyck



My hat was a gift from my niece in Brasil!!! About 10 years ago and I'm saving it, hoping to go back for a visit and wear it....in the beautiful Curitiba sunshine.

~ Anneliese Pankratz



I wore the hat I "borrowed" from my daughter's extensive collection. She worked at the Beau Chapeau for several years and learned millinery (the art of hat making) through workshops in the Shaw Theatre costume department. When she got married, we held an afternoon tea bridal shower, inviting everyone to come with a fancy hat. This particular one fit me just right. We used my mother's collection of porcelain tea cups and had a wonderful time. I'll always cherish this hat for the special memories of that day.
~ Renate Dau Klassen



LIFE WITH US NEWSLETTER

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