



March, April, 2019 VOLUME 2 EDITION 4

LIFE WITH US

At Niagara United Mennonite Church

Together

I will sing with you, my family; will you sing with me?
I will sing with you my family; will you sing with me?
The notes won't always come out as I'd like
But I will learn to see the log in my own eye.
God, I'll surrender
Bring us together,
Bring us together.

I will sing with you, my neighbor; will you sing with me?
I will sing with you, my neighbor; will you sing with me?
My words will be imperfect, but I'll try
Bringing my assumptions to the light, I'll pray,
God, I'll surrender
Bring us together,
Bring us together.

I will sing with you, my rival; will you sing with me?
I will sing with you, my rival; will you sing with me?
Difference is a place where God is found.
In seeking peace, we're walking onto holy ground
God, we surrender
Bring us together,
Bring us together.

We will sing our song together; sing in harmony.
We will sing our song together; whether two or three.
Jesus feels our pain; he sets us free.
The Spirit's given us this song of hope to sing:
God, we surrender
Bring us together,
Bring us together

~ Nathan Grieser (used by permission from composer & poet)



The song “Together” on the title page of this newsletter was written by Mennonite pastor and music leader, Nathan Grieser a few years ago. This is what he said about the song:

The song “I Will Sing With You” emerged from a theological disagreement that I had with several congregants when I was pastoring at Sunnyside Mennonite Church. These folks were people in my own congregation, whom I cared about, but with whom I disagreed.

Out of that experience I felt God inviting me to what I started calling confident humility – this idea that my opinion and interpretation was valid, but that I also needed to create space for the opinions of others, to stay in relationship with them and love them, to discover what I might learn from them.

It was out of this “aha” moment that “I will sing with you” was born. I believe that our sung worship has the power to shape our identity, to shape how we look at one another. This song invites us to surrender to God, be open to those who see things differently than we do, and lift our own voice in confident humility. When we look at others wondering what we can learn from them, rather than how we can challenge them or correct them or fix them, our communities grow closer and stronger.

This song was featured at the Mennonite World Conference in 2015, and was introduced to Austin and me when we attended the Laurelville Music and Worship Leaders retreat in January. It’s also a candidate song for “Voices Together” which is the name of the next new hymnal collection, the successor to our well-loved, 1992 blue hymnals, anticipated to be released next year.

~ submitted by Rachael Peters

The Laurelville Music and Worship Leader’s Retreat



On the weekend of January 11-13th, Rachael and I had the opportunity to go to Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania to the Laurelville Retreat Centre for a Music and Worship Leaders’ retreat. This retreat was a chance for Mennonite churches from all over to gather in one place for a weekend of recharging, learning some new music and ways to lead worship, singing some old “heart songs” as they called them, and as a whole, getting a feel for the new hymnal called “Voices Together” as it’s in

the process of being created.



Rach and I packed up our things into Rach’s truck on Friday morning and headed off on our road trip with a stop at Timmies before we crossed the border. As much as I was looking forward to the retreat, I was equally as excited for the road trip part! Road trips are just the best. Rach packed amazing snacks for us, and with a great playlist and comfy clothes, we were off and away.

The retreat was such an awesome opportunity to get a taste of what the new hymnal will look like, and exposed us to some incredible new songs and new takes on familiar ones. The musical talent all in one place is just so inspiring at Laurelville. With seemingly no effort at all, hymn sings sounded like a professional choir, with everyone attuned to beautiful harmonies.

The Voices Together hymnal has an amazing collection of both hymn-style songs and more contemporary music, and it became obvious very quickly how much energy and hard work has gone into making it. My all-time favourite one that we learned at Laurelville is a song called “I Will Sing with You”. We actually ended up singing that new one in church a few weeks ago, and I find it so soul-filling. Rach and my favourite line from it is “I will sing with you my family; will you sing with me? The notes won’t always, come out as I’d like, But I will learn to see the log in my own eye”. The melody is so beautiful, the words so tangible, and we feel so lucky to have been supported in going on such a worshipful retreat.

Rach and I had the chance to go to a workshop which taught us how to match text to tunes. We learned that there's a whole section in the back of our blue hymnal with references to interchangeable words and melodies!! Rach of course had a better musical grasp on this concept, but it was neat for me to be exposed to it as well, and very inspiring to see such talented leaders teaching us new ways of combining music to make it more meaningful to us. We also learned about the importance of singing songs in other languages and of exposing ourselves to other culture's music, as this is how we can grow in appreciation for one another and become even more connected as the body of Christ.

Overall, we left the retreat feeling so lucky to have an automatic extended family within our Mennonite churches as a whole. To come together to learn new worship, to sit through seminars, to eat meals together, and to relax together was such a gift. Thank you, thank you, thank you for supporting us in attending the retreat!!

~ Austin Penner

Additional Comments from Rachael:

I echo all of Austin's thoughts on the retreat. The 5-hour drive there and back flew as we chatted, took in the beautiful rolling hills, and sang along to some of our favourite music. The workshop portions were so well-planned and the leaders were knowledgeable, interesting, and so passionate. The worship sessions were planned with such intentionality and skill. And as Austin also mentioned, it never ceases to impress me what it sounds like when 200 music leaders join their voices together. It's really an instant professional choir! There is something so powerful about singing enthusiastically together. Strangers become family, personal divides are crossed. It makes the name of the new hymnal ("Voices Together") all the more meaningful.

As Austin also mentioned, I was also very impressed by the amount of intentionality that has gone into creating this new songbook collection. I have a deep passion for the rich, four-part, chorale-style music that fills our 1992 hymnal. At the same time, there is so much beautiful non-chorale worship music as well. There is contemporary praise and worship music, but also a vast middle ground, whether it be songs like what we often find in our green and purple books, or other unique songs that fall somewhere between the hymn-style music and the Hillsong-style contemporary music. It is here that I find myself most interested, bridging the gap between old and new.



While about 50% of the new hymnal will include many of our favourite 'heart songs' from the 1992 hymnal, the other 50% is where we'll see some new music come in. In this 50% is where we'll likely see some new middle ground songs appear.

An example of a 'middle ground' song from the 1992 hymnal is "Lord you have come to the lakeshore". It has a Spanish origin, and although it would have been new to many of us when the 1992 hymnal was released, it's now considered a heart song to many Mennonites, who identify with the allegorical lyrics, and beautiful calming melody.

One 'middle ground' song that is up for consideration in the new hymnal is "As the wind song through the trees" which is a piece that we've introduced into our congregational repertoire in the last few years. We often sing it on Pentecost Sunday as the song focuses on the Holy Spirit with lyrics like "As the wind song through the trees, as the stirring of the breeze, so it is with the Spirit of God..."

Regardless what the new hymnal brings when it's released in the fall of 2020, attending the retreat gave Austin and me a huge appreciation for all the work that has gone into creating this new songbook. Although I was intrigued by the idea of a new book when I heard about it a few years ago, I'm now greatly anticipating its release, and looking forward to perusing the new collection of future heart songs for the next generation.

~ Rachael Peters

The Gift of Church Family
By: Ellery Rauwerda

Today I was invited to join the ladies quilting group for a pizza lunch, an offer I could not refuse! I went down from my office at 11:30 and joined one of the three round tables set up in the first floor common area. The tables were set with red and white napkins in keeping with Valentine's Day, each one intentionally and beautifully folded. Desserts included a napoleon made and decorated to the nines by Mrs. Griese, and a delicious, plummy platz by Mrs. Kopeschny.

I stayed for just a short while, listening to a devotion read by Mrs. Dau, chatting with Mrs. Gade about the youth work I've been doing, and above all, feeling a sense of *home*. Some of these women I know well - friends of my grandma's, past Sunday School leaders - and others I hardly know at all. Yet sitting in their midst and enjoying food and fellowship around a table filled more than my stomach; it filled my soul. It filled me with gratitude for *belonging*, for the gift of being born into this community. This community of Mennonites, with such deep heritage and roots. This community that speaks German as much as English, that sings and prays and shares meals together. This community that values relationships and cares for others, whether it be the youth director upstairs or those in need of the warmth of a sturdy, handmade quilt at night. This community that refused to let me leave without at least two helpings of dessert, that knows me even if I don't know them, that asks about my life, that blessed me through lovingly prepared food and heartfelt fellowship.

What a gift and an honour to be born into this family, this church, this community. And what a privilege to be reminded of that gift through something as tangible and soul-filling as a Tuesday pizza lunch invitation.



Hello Church Family

Just wanted to say hello! We miss you guys and our entire church family! Just talked to Frank Siemens this morning. Wonderful way to start my day! Just an update on us, Chris was accepted to Ottawa University for this coming fall. He's currently doing online courses and looking for a part time job. Anita and I are currently looking for part time jobs. Joyce is still adjusting to her new high school. Megan came up for family day weekend, and it was great having the entire family together again. We love the house, neighbourhood and area. Lots of snow!! We are currently going to a Baptist Church in Cornwall. We feel very st home there. The people are very friendly and we both feel God's calling us there. No church will replace what we left behind. We see you hired new caretakers. That's great! Hope it works out for everyone. Also a new minister too! Say hi to everyone for us!

Blessings

Jeff and Anita Friesen



Is this also part of the administrator's job description, Emily—quilting? Or is it just another one of your many and varied talents? What will it be next? We appreciate your involvement & enthusiasm!

Lending a Helping Paw

Every Monday, after his breakfast and walk around the block, my dog Oliver gets in the car and goes to work. Of course he doesn't do this on his own, but with me, as we set off on our weekly visit to Pleasant Manor. Oliver is a therapy dog and since last fall has spent Monday mornings sharing his unconditional love with the many special residents at the home.

When our family decided to get a dog eight years ago, I never imagined taking on this type of volunteer work, but seeing how much happiness, love and smiles Oliver brings to our family, I felt I wanted to share this with others. Since the beginning, he has always had a special rapport with people. More than once on our walks, he has spotted someone half a mile away and sat down firmly, waiting for the person to come by. Despite my efforts to continue our walk, he sits and waits, almost insisting that they will surely want to pet him. What has surprised me is that sometimes the people he chooses to wait for have either just lost a dog, or someone special in their life. It's almost like he recognizes that they need his friendly, tail wagging greeting at that moment. The connections can be brief or turn into a thirty minute conversation, but the impact is the same and people remember his name and tell me "your dog just made my day".

Going to Pleasant Manor to visit the residents is no different. As soon as he walks into the space, he is immediately greeted with smiles and hellos and he in turn, repays them with nuzzles, leaning into them as if to give them a hug. He is particularly patient with those suffering from Alzheimers, who repeatedly ask for his paw or want to pet him over and over. What I've found most fascinating is that for those still able to speak, they may not remember much anymore, but they always remember the dog they had. One of the most moving experiences was when one resident, after months of Oliver visiting, finally reached out to touch him. The first time there was no expression. The next time it happened again and



then there was a small smile. Then, the third time, he waited and she reached out herself. When I asked her "Isn't Oliver soft? Do you like Oliver?" she looked at us both, then at Oliver and then to me and smiled and said "Yes!" This moment was small and fleeting like a leaf lifted and carried away by the wind, but the impact was memorable and I was reminded that the essence of a person remains. Just sometimes it gets trapped under illness. Oliver doesn't see the illness though. He just sees someone who can use a friend and a loving touch and that is a lesson to remember.

These short Monday visits have become more meaningful to me than I anticipated. It isn't always easy work. Seeing people in the last season of their life or suffering from Alzheimers, I am even more aware of how short time is and how the body will change and how memories and abilities can be lost. Knowing this makes me even more present to each moment and thankful for each day. It becomes very clear that the most valuable gift you can give someone is time and compassion. Oliver is a great teacher because he always has time to meet you where you are in your life, without hesitation or judgement. He celebrates the ordinary moments and will always gladly shake your hand.

~ submitted by Marion Griesse & Oliver



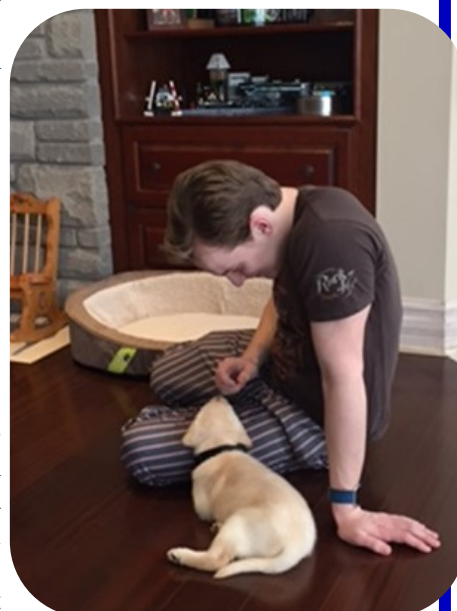
Hello, my name is Pacey and I am an 8 week old yellow lab. I am a future Dog Guide from the Foster Puppy Programs from the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides. The foster puppy program is the first step in becoming a Dog Guide. As a puppy I was born at the Lions Foundation facility in Breslau, Ontario. When I was about 6 weeks old, I came to live with my human foster family, the Fieguths'. They are a lovely family who wanted to have a dog but were unsure about a long term commitment. They heard about the Foster Puppy program through Dog Guides of Canada, filled out an application, had a home visit and 8 days later, I moved in. When I grow up I hope to be a service dog for someone with a medical or physical disability.

Now there are few things you should know about me. First, I have a few rules that my human family agreed to before I could live with them. I came with a wonderful training manual on how to raise me. My human mom says she wishes the babies had come with one of these - apparently raising children is challenging and a manual on this would have made things easier. Now seeing as I am still a puppy, I like to do puppy things like chew on shoes, nibble on hands and leave presents on the carpet. It seems my presents are not appreciated, my human mom makes that funny face where her eye brows go up, that means naughty puppy in human language. She makes the same face at the teenage puppies that live in the house when they leave their dishes in the sink.

I also have to stay on the floor, no furniture or beds, barking too much is discouraged as well. These are the rules because when I grow up and become a service dog, I need to be a respectful and well behaved dog. Over the next year I will learn to be housetrained, learn my manners, basic obedience and socializing. Socializing is my favourite thing, like going to offices, shopping malls, and public transportation. The only thing I don't like is going in the car, I keep trying but right now it is a little scary for me.

Every day we work on my skills, but every four to six weeks I have to go to puppy classes in Oakville or Breslau. This is also where I see the Lion Foundation in-house veterinarians. My human can also pick up some more food that is donated by Pet Valu. Let me tell you, I work really hard at my training. Every week I am trying to learn a new skill or command.

I have to pass both a physical and soundness test, as well as a temperament test before entering the final training program. When I am about 1 year old I will start my special skills training, I could end up training for any one of the seven different programs.



Dog Guides Canada trains seven different types of Dog Guides:

Canine Vision Dog Guides For people who are blind or visually impaired

Hearing Dog Guides For people who are deaf or hard of hearing

Service Dog Guides For people who have a physical disability

Seizure Response Dog Guides For people who have epilepsy

Autism Assistance Dog Guides For children who have autism spectrum disorder

Diabetic Alert Dog Guides For people who have type 1 diabetes with hypoglycemic unawareness

Support Dog Guides for use by professional agencies with individuals in traumatic situations



Sometimes I come to work with my human mom, Emily. She works in this huge building called NUMC. It has lots of stairs, I don't really like stairs, but I am getting better at them. Now that my legs are longer, I can get up and down the steps. I love all the people there, everyone comes to see me and tell me how cute I am and how well behaved I am. That makes me feel good, I have worked hard at my training so I can be welcomed in places to practice socializing. It is one of the most important skills I can learn. Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me there.

Here are some things you can do to help me learn my manners:

1. Don't pet me when I am wearing my training harness.
2. When I have the harness on I am working.
3. If my human says it is okay and I am out of my harness, we can play. I like to play fetch or have my belly rubbed. Currently my favourite is Mr. Rempel. He gives the best belly rubs!!
4. Sometimes, I get a little too excited – sorry - but the best way to tell me no, is to tuck your hands in your armpits and walk away from me. I know that the cold shoulder means I should not do that again.
5. I know some human's do not like puppies or dogs, I understand, we cannot like everyone all the time. If I am in the office, I will hang out a sign to let you know I am in the building. Just let my human handler know you would rather not have me out, it's okay, it won't hurt my feelings. I actually like having a little kennel time, I get a treat when I go into the kennel and all my favourite toys are in there.

Now here are some interesting facts about the Lions Foundation Club and Guide Dogs...

Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides is a national charity. Its mission is to assist Canadians with physical or medical disabilities by providing them specially trained Dog Guides at no cost. Founded in 1983 by Lions clubs from across Canada, its first program, Canine Vision, trained and matched Dog Guides with Canadians who were blind or visually impaired. The foundation has since built its capacity to include seven programs to meet diverse needs. To date, Lions Foundation of Canada has matched Dog Guides with more than 3,000 Canadians from every province and territory.

Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides does not receive any government funding and relies on the support of fundraising events and donations from service clubs, corporations, foundations and individuals across the country



All Dog Guides, including training and accommodation at the school, are provided to qualified applicants at no cost

- It costs approximately \$25,000 to provide each Dog Guide
- To offset part of this cost, the Lions Foundation seeks sponsors for each Dog Guide team. Sponsorship costs are: Hearing \$4,000, Canine Vision \$6,000, Diabetic Alert \$8,000, Support \$9,000, Service \$10,000, Seizure Response \$10,000, Autism Assistance \$12,000
- After a dog completes the four to six month training program, a successful applicant comes to stay at the Oakville training facility for one to four weeks to work with their new Dog Guide and establish the bond that is necessary for the team to succeed
- After graduation, follow-up visits and communication between the graduate and the training staff is maintained to ensure on-going success
- A working Dog Guide is permitted in all public places. The dogs have been trained to travel on all forms of public transportation
- The Dog Guide's attention must be on its handler at all times therefore people are not permitted to pet or distract a Dog Guide while it is in harness

Submitted by: Pacey & his human family Harry, Emily, Braeden & Logan Fieguth



Mennonite Disaster Service

MDS (Mennonite Disaster Service) was started by an Adult Sunday School class in 1950 in Heston, Kansas. At about the same time a group of Mennonites in Manitoba were talking about how they could organize their mutual aid efforts. Out of this, MSO (Mennonite Service Organization) was born; by 1952 they became MDS, and in 1955 became part of MCC. By 1966 the Red Cross officials expected MDS to show up at the scene when natural disasters

occurred. In 1993 MDS incorporated as a non-profit organization and separated from MCC (who continue to respond to international disasters).

MDS relies on some 4000 volunteers from Mennonite, Amish and Brethren in Christ churches to carry out its ministry to communities and families hit by disaster in the United States and Canada.

The aim is to assist the most vulnerable community members, who would not otherwise have the means to recover. MDS provides the skills and labour needed to respond, rebuild and restore. This service touches lives and nurtures hope, faith and wholeness.

~ Submitted by Esther Willms

MDS – Utuado, Puerto Rico

Back in early fall, I happened to be watching a TVO special on Puerto Rico. It started with the devastation brought on by Hurricane Maria in 2017, but as the program continued, it went on to say that the Puerto Ricans themselves felt very let down by the U.S. government, not just in hurricane relief but in everyday life. Very little had been done in the way of upgrades for decades, and poor hydro, water and sewer systems were the norm. For some reason, that drew me to inquire about the possibility of volunteering in Puerto Rico. I contacted MDS and was told that nothing was yet in place for January/February of 2019. There were opportunities in the Carolinas, Texas, and Florida, but I held off, hoping that something would become available in Puerto Rico. After about a month, I received an email; MDS had their leadership in place, and yes, Puerto Rico was available. I responded with a yes! January 12 – 26th were the dates I committed to and before I knew it I was off to Utuado, a small town up in the mountains of central Puerto Rico (no, not near any beaches).



Week 1: The first week there I worked along with four American men from Goshen, Indiana. We did rebar/concrete work for a few days, but after they found out I was a painter, I switched to help paint the newly reconstructed church. We focused mainly on the exterior that week. Working with conservative Mennonite American Trump supporters was challenging. I realized over my time in Utuado that I am very happy and proud to be Canadian (this fact I kept to myself, of course). Two local women cooked for us and the food was very different. We had a lot of root vegetables, chicken, thin soups, and local fruit. One morning for breakfast a stainless metal bowl was put down in the middle of the table. We all sat up in our chairs, peering over the edge of the bowl. Wow! It was full of boiled wieners, two shades of greige. Well, at least we had a choice. Buns arrived a short while later and I guess condiments were not appropriate for breakfast.



Oh, life in Utuado.

The work days were warm but progress was being made. The new concrete stage at the front of the church was completed and painting was well on its way.

Week 2: In between weeks we were taken back to San Juan on Friday evening. There, we stayed in a guest house provided by MDS. Saturday, the Goshen group was taken to the airport for their flight home. (Why did I volunteer for that second week?? I must admit that home was looking pretty good.) On the bright side, I had Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday morning in San Juan before heading back to the mountains.

I did go to the beach on Saturday, went to a Burger King, and just hung out. Saturday afternoon I went to the airport to pick up the next set of volunteers, a group of Weaverland Mennonite men from upstate New York. Later that evening, plans were being made for the next day – church, lunch, and then off to Utuado.

The guest house was owned by a great guy named Johnny. We got talking and he asked me if I kayaked. I said no, but would love to give it a go (in my mind I pictured a nice tropical lagoon – oh how serene). Plans were made to leave at 5:25 am, get to the beach, and start kayaking. This was the morning before the full Blood Moon. The next thing I knew I was kayaking on the Atlantic Ocean in the moonlight, heading for a little island 1½ miles off shore. The waves were a little bigger than I anticipated, and the island actually consisted of only jagged rocks, so no rest stop. The moon was setting and the sun was rising – was it ever beautiful! By now it was 7:55 am and we needed to

get back. Johnny and I loaded up the kayaks and headed back to his place. Later that morning we attended a Spanish speaking Mennonite church in San Juan, had lunch, and then headed off to Utuado again.

The next week was very similar to the first but no boiled wieners. Friday afternoon came and it was time to head back to San Juan. Yes, I was going home this time!

As I reflect on my time in Utuado, Puerto Rico – the work, the volunteers, the local people, the island itself – it makes me very grateful for my life. I went to Utuado to help, and in the end I was the one enriched. Would I do MDS again? Yes, in a heartbeat!

~ Brian Penner



IGLESIA EVANGELICA MENONITA INC.
CAMINO DE VIDA, UTUADO, P.R.
FORD

Conrad Grebel Chapel Choir sang in our service on Sunday, March 3. One of the choir members was the recipient of the 2018 Agnes Giesbrecht Choral Scholarship. She had notified John Giesbrecht of Vineland of the choir's visit, so that he might choose to attend NUMC on Sunday. The student was anxious to thank him in person for the scholarship. John was in the audience, and this meeting meant a lot to him because the scholarship is a wonderful legacy of his much-loved wife Agnes, and through its monetary contribution, the award supports choral music in the Mennonite tradition, which is very close to John's heart as well!



The recipient is far right front

Agnes Giesbrecht Choral Music Scholarship



Agnes (Braun) Giesbrecht - 1926-1999

The Giesbrecht Scholarship Fund supports and promotes choral music and training among students enrolled in the Music Programme at Conrad Grebel University College and pursuing studies at the University of Waterloo.

This award is given to:

- Students who have a strong academic record, are actively involved in the Music Programme, possess excellent vocal skills, and demonstrate a keen interest in choral music, including the Russian Mennonite choral music tradition.
- A member of the Chapel Choir who will serve as assistant to the Director of the Chapel Choir during the tenure of the award, normally being one academic year.

Amount: one award of approx \$1000

Agnes Giesbrecht Choral Music Scholarship

Agnes Margaret (Braun) Giesbrecht was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, the third of 11 children of Jacob J. and Sara Braun. Her parents were of the German-Russian Mennonite background, having left Russia in the mid 1920s. Agnes was born 2 months after her parents' arrival in Canada.

Agnes acquired some of the best of that surrogate, antecedent Slavic soul, namely her love for and expertise in various needlecraft arts, highlighted by her particular skills in "tatting" (an example of which is seen in the background.) In addition, she developed a love of singing by way of her rich, but not dominating, alto voice. Agnes originally developed her voice in her high school years in Gretna, MB. She continued her choral pursuits in various mixed and ladies' church and community choirs.

She married John B. Giesbrecht of Vineland, Ontario in 1949 and shared a love of music with him and their son and three daughters. She nurtured her own and her family's faith in this setting and in the Vineland United Mennonite Church.

During her high school years, Agnes had developed a close friendship with Professor Helen Martens, who became the first head of the Music Department at Grebel. These connections, as well as their children's attendance at the College and a grandson's affiliation with the Chapel Choir there, make this award a "natural fit" for a modest memorial of Agnes' life and musical interests.

May the harmonies giving rise to this family effort ring on in the forms loved by the person in whose memory it is established.

Ark Encounter

Throughout my days as a Sunday School student here at NUMC and my teaching years as a Sunday School teacher, the story of Noah's Ark and the Flood has always intrigued me. How big was the ark and how did he build it? How did Noah fit all the animals on board and care for them at the same time?

Well, we were privileged to travel to Williamstown, Kentucky, an eight hour drive from here and see a full size Noah's ark that has been built to answer all our questions.

Ark Encounter is a theme park that opened in Grant County, Kentucky on July 7, 2016. The centrepiece of the park is a large representation of Noah's Ark based on the Genesis flood narrative contained in the Bible. The ark is 510 feet long, 85 feet wide and 51 feet high.

As we entered Noah's world aboard the massive ark, we toured three decks filled with world class exhibits. The stunning visuals answered our many questions while we walked along side Noah and his family.

At seven stories tall and a football field and a half long, the ark is the longest timber frame structure in the world. You need time to go through so we allowed ourselves a whole day.

While in the area, we spent another day at the Creation Museum. This state of the art museum allowed us to venture through biblical history, enjoy stunning exhibits, botanical gardens and much more.

Both the Ark Encounter and the Creation Museum were amazing! We found them to be very interesting and definitely an educational experience for the whole family.

~ Margie Enns



NICKNAME

As the story goes, one day a friend of the family, Bob Foss, came to visit. He saw me (I was about 6 months old at the time -- see baby photo and its explanation) and said I look like a "little Mitzi". What he meant by that I've often wondered, but the name stuck [a cat or dog named "Mitzi"?] or could the "dancing legs" of Mitzi Gaynor have been a reason?]. So ... on this side of the Canadian/US border I am Laurene, but "over-the-border", family-wise, I am Mitzi.

The photo included in this write-up is around the time of my "Mitzi" nickname. The photo only came about because a "traveling" photographer came to the door when I was the only baby in the family at the time (late 1950's). My mother agreed to have my picture taken. I remember her saying that she felt bad about the soles of my shoes being dirty (probably were worn by most of my older siblings) but she had to quickly dress me up. I'm the only sibling (of the 9 of us) to have had a "professional" baby portrait! :)



submitted by Laurene Nickel

March Birthdays

Franz Friesen: 91 (3/8/28)
Jake Enns: 87 (3/12/32)
Alex Neufeld: 80 (3/12/39)
Maria Enns: 92 (3/19/27)
Waldemar Gade: 83 (3/21/36)
Manfred Runge: 81 (3/26/38)
Erika Martens: 88 (3/30/31)
Peter Siemens: 87 (3/30/32)
Catherine Wiebe: 96 (3/31/23)



April Birthdays

Waldemar Bartel: 81 (4/4/38)
Margarethe Neufeld: 89 (4/10/30)
Kaethe Riemland: 87 (4/14/32)
Norma Dau: 81 (4/15/38)
John Willms: 88 (4/15/31)
Bill Harder: 84 (4/22/35)

60th Anniversary

Gunnar & Gertraud Doerwald

Debbie's Book Corner

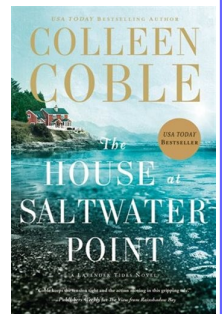
The House at Saltwater Point

~ by Colleen Coble

A Lavender Tides Novel

"Ellie Blackmore is making a name for herself as a house flipper. But when her sister Mackenzie disappears, Ellie can't focus on anything but uncovering what happened. Her only clue is the bloodstain on the deck of Mackenzie's boat. Ellie knows her sister isn't on the best terms with her ex-husband, Jason, but he wouldn't kill her – would he?

Coast Guard intelligence officer Grayson Bradshaw believes Mackenzie faked her own death after stealing a seized cocaine shipment. The problem is convincing Ellie, who seems to view him as the true enemy. Both Ellie & Grayson want truth, but truth – and family – is often more complex than it first appears. From international terrorism to the peaceful lavender field of Puget Sound, *The House at Saltwater Point* is a thrilling race to uncover the truth before it's too late."



In Places Hidden

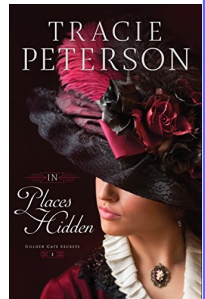
~ by Tracie Peterson

Golden Gate Secrets

"Camrienne Coulter's brother Caleb is a successful San Francisco attorney. But when 3 months go by without a word from the usually communicative Caleb, Camri boards a train to the booming West Coast city to find out for herself why he hasn't written. When she arrives at his home, nobody seems to know where he is, or what has become of him.

Camri's search for her brother leads her deep into the political corruption of the city – and into the acquaintance of Patrick Murdock, who Caleb successfully defended from a false murder charge. Getting to know this handsome Irish contractor challenges all of Camri's privileged beliefs, but Patrick is unshakably loyal to her brother, and he seems to know more about that happened to Caleb than anyone else.

As the two edge closer to the truth behind Caleb's disappearance, they risk angering the powerful forces that control the city. Can Camri trust Patrick to protect her from the dangers that lie hidden in San Francisco's backstreets?"



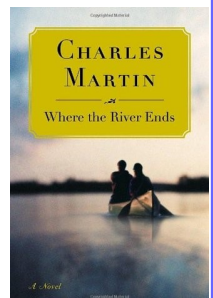
Where the River Ends

~ by Charles Martin

"He was a fishing guide & struggling artist from a south Georgia trailer park. She was the beautiful only child of South Carolina's most powerful senator. Yet once Doss Michaels & Abigail Grace Coleman met by accident, they each felt they'd found their true soul mate.

Ten years into their marriage, when Abbie faces a life-threatening illness, Doss battles it with her every step of the way. And when she makes a list of ten things she hopes to accomplish before she loses the fight for good, Doss is there, too, supporting her & making everything possible. Together they steal away in the middle of the night to embark upon a 130-mile trip down the St. Marys River – a voyage Doss promised Abbie in the early days of their courtship.

Where the River Ends chronicles their love-filled, tragedy-tinged journey and a bond that transcends all."



~ Debbie Fast

A Taste of Syria.

In the last volume of the church newsletter, Greta Wiens reported on the “Food Fair” of Syrian food which had been presented by the Raad family on January 5 in which a variety of Syrian food had been sold to the public as business venture to test the feasibility of such a business. To all accounts, that had been a very successful first step, and Church Council, at its meeting three days later, wondered what else the congregation could do to help grow this business. The idea of having Iman cater a Missions Committee fundraising dinner was discussed and approved. Hopefully, this would introduce even more people to the delicious Syrian cooking Iman excels in, raise some funds for the Missions Committee, and provide her with some first-hand experience to the business side of catering.



Rachael & David got to enjoy the yummy fruits of her coordinating labours!

Once the idea had been hatched, Church Council contacted people who would support this idea, and turned the organization of the dinner over to them. With their enthusiasm, and with Rachael Peters playing the coordinating role as the church staff person, the bits and pieces for the dinner

came together.

Church Council saw the past pricing for one of these “fundraising” meals as a problem. At times in the past, full roast beef dinners, with desert being a phenomenal selection of tortes and other home baking, were priced at \$20 or less, and there appeared to be a reluctance for the congregation to support higher ticket prices. Clearly, under such a pricing system, the only “donation” was the labour which the ladies putting on the dinner and the bakers of the various desserts provided. The diners were getting a bargain and a half, and can’t really have been said to have “donated”, given the quality and quantity of the food which they typically consumed. Here, the intention was to pay for the food and labour provided by the Raads at commercial rates, so those had to be covered before there would be any funds raised. The tickets were priced at \$30 each, to allow the diners to share the donation privilege.

Imam was asked as to the number of diners she could serve, and advised 75, so ticket sales were limited to that number. Sales were a little slow at first, but on the cutoff date, we were all sold out, with a waiting list of salivating Mennonites.

The Saturday of the meal started with the delivery by the Raad’s of all the ingredients which would become the delectable meal to be served. Iman and her two daughters, Doha and Shem, then went to work to transform all those raw ingredients into the fine food which was served. They were helped in this preparation by some of the congregation, while other volunteers completed the table set-up, provided the decorations, and set up Amar’s art and the video presentation.



Some of Amar’s impressive art collection.

The Raads worked tirelessly from 9 AM until the food was served just before 7 PM. Syrian food is actually not only very delicious, but is also time-consuming to prepare. Like most cultures, Syrians value the opportunity to gather at a common meal with family and friends. The fear of the hostess that insufficient food has been prepared also appears to be a shared cultural value with Mennonites, and was solved by the simple expedient of cooking twice as much food as the diners could reasonably eat.

At the end of the day, after all expenses had been paid, a \$30 ticket ended up providing about a six dollar donation to the Missions fund.

Additional donations were raised by the sale of the surplus food that night and after the next day’s church service.





Those who attended reported that it was a great congregational experience. I think the Raads also considered this to have been positive for them as a family, and I believe that true sharing occurred between their family and our congregation. We look forward to more opportunities to share with them as we walk the road to their settlement in Canada together.

If you are hungry, or want more information, you can contact the Raads -289-990-8826/289-690-20195 or Syrian.food007@gmail.com.

**Q & A about Syrian foods & spices
with Bill, Imam & Muhktar**



~ submitted by *Wendy & Peter Janzen*



**A great venue for Theo to get
his exercise & bond with Oma!**

80 years ago

From the May 15, 1939 edition of “The Niagara Advance And Weekly Fruitman”, an article that I found going through my Dad’s stuff (how he got a hold of this, I’ll never know...)

Investigation Promised Mennonites By Attorney General

Because of rumours which have been circulated throughout this town about the Mennonite people who have settled here, The Advance has been carrying on an investigation and by interviews, gleaned a good deal of material. Some of the facts will be published in the next few weeks so that the Mennonite people may be better understood by all. It might be said that there is not been found one particle of truth to bear out the rumours that the Mennonite people display any pro-Nazi spirit. They deeply regret the insinuations and regret that police have carried out searches in their churches for dynamite and weapons. Messrs. Peter Wall, J.A. Dyck, and F. J. Andres received an audience with Ontario’s Attorney-General and presented a petition. The Attorney-General proved quite sympathetic and promised an investigation to find who is circulating the rumours and why police have conducted raids. It has been learned that the Provincial Police did not actually authorize these raids. The petition present reads as follows: “We, the undersigned members of the Niagara Mennonite Church desire herewith to bring the following to the attention of your honour: Having been admitted to this country in the years 1923-1929, a number of our people settled in the township of Niagara. A congregation was organized and the building of a church was commenced in fall 1937. This church has always been used exclusively for religious services. We soon became the object of continuous unfriendly rumours and acts, for instance, in February 1937, an attempt of arson in the church took place. Unfounded rumours have continued about supposed political meetings that have taken place in our church. These unfriendly acts climaxed in a recent search of our church for weapons, dynamite and ammunition by a police force. Members of our congregation consider this the work of malicious persons. This latest act gives us the impression that these hostile feelings are shared by the police authorities. We consider these acts unchristian-like and an insult to our congregation. It has always been our tradition to avoid publicity and we are now forced to depart from our principle to be “the quiet in the land.” Our feelings as Christians have been hurt that now we wish these matters to be investigated.” *Signed Messrs. Peter Wall, J.A. Dyck, and F. J. Andres*

Next time... from the same issue: “Mennonite Leaders Offer Some Explanations To The General Public”

~ submitted by Harold Neufeld



The Lee family was among the first wave of Indochinese ‘boat people’ welcomed to Canada under a then-new sponsorship program. Their sponsors are still by their side. The Lees, who had been living in the Nong Khai refugee camp in Thailand, landed first in Montreal before flying to Toronto and travelling to the Crosshill Mennonite Church in Waterloo, where they were met by complete strangers. Jim and Rosella Leis as members of this group embraced the Lees. And they never let go. They have remained part of each others’ families up until today.



Ka Lee with sponsors
Rosella and Jim Leis



How Canadians opened their hearts to refugees.

Deal struck 40 years ago between church and Ottawa endures as beacon of hope.

Few government contracts have stood the test of time as well as a simply worded deal between Canada and its people that has not only lasted four decades but continues to bolster the country's reputation for compassion. The 11-page sponsorship agreement, signed between Ottawa and the Mennonite Church on March 5, 1979, in response to the 'boat people' crisis, became the blueprint for Canada's private refugee resettlement program that has allowed Canadians to play an active role in helping refugees start a new life here.

With the help of groups such as the Mennonite Central Committee serving as guarantors and administrators, Canadians have brought almost 350,000 refugees to Canada by providing the newcomers with at least one year of financial and social support.

During the Syrian refugee crisis, Canada has seen a renewed interest in private sponsorships, which accounted for half of the 60,000 Syrians resettled here; the rest were sponsored by the federal government.

In 1978, Ottawa passed a new immigration law with a provision to allow private sponsorships if Canadians would accept full responsibility for the refugees for a year. But there were no takers, said Mike Molloy, who was director of refugee policies in the Immigration Department at the time.

"Refugee advocates and churches were speaking against it and intimidating others not to get involved. There wasn't a single sponsorship application coming in," recalled Molloy, 74, who officially retired from the federal service in 2003.

"The Mennonite Central Committee was a gift. They came to us in late 1978 with a clear altruistic motivation. As a faith community that came here as refugees, they were confident and pragmatic. They played straight with us and we played straight with them." Canada had welcomed more than 21,000 Mennonite refugees from Russia in the 1920's and another 8,000 from Eastern Europe after the Second World War, and the community was eager to play a part in helping the boat people, said Bill Janzen, who was tasked by the Mennonite Committee with negotiating the deal with Ottawa in 1979.

"Our community was experienced in helping refugees get settled with jobs and a place to live. We had been active with our aid work in Vietnam since 1954. We sympathized with those fleeing from Communist totalitarian regimes," said Janzen, 75, who was MCC's office director in Ottawa in 1979.

"It's human nature to imagine the worst-case scenario and worry about any legal problems health and financial needs of the people they sponsored. That's why we decided to step up as an organization for them to fall back on and help them overcome the fear of liability."

With a mandate from his board to make a deal with the government, Janzen asked for a meeting with senior immigration officials on Feb. 2, 1979. He arrived in Ottawa with a rough outline with what would later turn into the 11-page agreement.

Gordon Barnett, an experienced government negotiator, was Janzen's counterpart at the bargaining table. He recalls, "It was a time when the Indochinese boat people were filling the news and the government was under undue pressure to do something. We were negotiating with the Mennonites and they were so willing to help. We met a few more times, and the deal was signed within weeks." The agreement laid out the eligibility of who could be a sponsor and the criteria to be sponsored, as well as the sponsorship process, roles and responsibilities.

The Mennonite agreement inspired 28 other church organizations to follow suit. By the end of 1979, 5,456 private sponsorships had been received for 29,169 refugees. In the end, Canada would roll out the welcome mat to 60,000 Indochinese refugees in the late 1970's and early 1980's, half of them through private sponsorships.

"When I look back on my career, this agreement with the Mennonites was something I really felt good about. At the end, we had a really well-negotiated document because what we negotiated was fair," said Barnett, now 75. "I thought that when the Indochinese refugee crisis was over, the agreement would become an historical document. I never thought it would go on forever. I'm just amazed that it stood the test of time and is still useful to this day."



*(Excerpts taken from the front page of the Sunday Star, Mar. 3, 2019
– by Kathy Rempel)*



Youth from SCUMC, NUMC, Bethany, and HMC gathered for a weekend of fun, food, and fellowship at the annual winter retreat

YOUTH IN ACTION



The mad dash for candy from our teeny pinata at "Nacho"



Preparing nachos for the nacho competition at "Nacho Average Nacho" Night (this one featured "Ellery & Mark's New Baby" - can



Keep Calm with Chef Logan.



Learning Smartphone Photography with Mark in a breakout session at the winter retreat!



Skating at Fort George - they opened the rink just for us!



Group shot of our Senior Youth skating night at Fort George.

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:
Lani Gade | 905-468-2316 | wlgade@bell.net
Kathy Rempel | 905-468-3829 | jrempe16@cogeco.ca
Niagara United Mennonite Church