

Sept., Oct., 2019 VOLUME 6 EDITION 4

Life With Us

At Niagara United Mennonite Church

In His Time

**In his time, in his time
He makes all things beautiful
In his time**

**Lord please show me everyday
As you're teaching me your way
That you do just what you say
In your time**

**In your time, in your time
You make all things beautiful
In your time**

**Lord my life to you I bring
May each song I have to sing
Be to you a lovely thing
In your time**

**Lord please show me everyday
As you're teaching me your way
That you do just what you say
In your time**

- Diane Ball

- CCLI # 25981



Daniel Janzen	Rachael Peters	Renate Dau Klaassen	Chris Hutton
<i>Lead Pastor</i>	<i>Worship & Engagement Coordinator</i>	<i>Assoc. Pastor German Worship</i>	<i>Pastor of Youth & Young Adult Ministries</i>

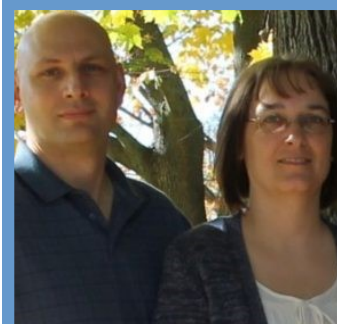


Ana Elijah Leopold Daniel
 Janzen

I grew up in the Niagara Region, and studied locally at Brock University before attending seminary at Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto. After school, I went to serve with Mennonite Central Committee in Sarajevo, Bosnia, where I met my wife, Ana. We, eventually, found ourselves ministering in a church in northeast Saskatchewan and, not long after, parenting. And now, here we are, back home... sort of. ~ Daniel



Emily Fieguth
Office Administrator



Zach & Nancy Dube
Caretakers



New Year, New Stories ~ Chris Hutton

Donald Miller once said that stories are powerful because they have the potential to change lives. When we overcome something with others or we experience something with others, we lay the groundwork to learn and experience something precisely through the power of our story.

As I entered into our youth ministry this past year, I quickly began to build stories.

If you heard me preach back in July, you would have heard some of the stories we made as our Sr. High Youth lugged two couches all around Old Town on a Friday night. 6 of our young ladies hauled a big couch all around tourists, restaurants, and shops while making new friends along the way. Two of our guys cleverly used straps to ease the work of carrying around their own couch. We made stories that we'll tell for a few years to come.

As I think about a new year in youth ministry, the first thing that comes to mind for me is: "What new stories are we going to make this year?"

Maybe when you think back to your own youth days, you have stories of your own: stories of adults who cared about you and wanted to hear your story; and stories of friends who you uncontrollably laughed and cried with.

Maybe you need some new stories just like these in your life? Maybe you could help our youth today to experience stories just as you did?

If so, we could certainly use your help in our Sr. High youth ministry. Our teens love it when adopted grandparents, adopted aunts and uncles, and adopted brothers and sisters give of their time to care about them and model a life that follows Jesus.

Let me tell you, our teens are hilarious, fun-loving, introspective, insightful, and eager to experience the world. I guarantee that if you hang out with us long enough, you will make some interesting stories; and quite possibly, some of those stories will also change lives along the way.

If you want to know more, you can reach me at chris@redbrickchurch.ca.



"Called to be servants in our community" ~ Rachael Peters

In February of this year, the young adults of the church were invited to a brainstorming meeting to discuss our front lawn, and ways that we could encourage the community to use our space. Our goal was threefold:

1. To bless and show love to our community
2. To embody the characteristics of Jesus
3. To put our mission statement ("Called to be servants of Christ in our community") into action

Over the course of a few hours, the white board was filled with creative and exciting concepts that could bring our church community outside its doors to enjoy our green space, and also welcome the wider Niagara-on-the-Lake community to make use of our lawn as well.

One of the goals we established is that we wanted to plan something that could be implemented this year for enjoyment in the summer of 2019. This meant that some of our more creative and elaborate ideas were shelved for the time being, and the concept of picnic tables seemed like a great first step.

As planning for our build day started to fall into place, we felt the support from the rest of our community, cheering us on and supporting our efforts. First of all, Church Council showed us their support by okaying the project in the first place, providing the funding we needed to take the project on. When it came time to decide on paints and stains, we were incredibly lucky to have the expertise of Brian Penner to not only help us figure out what kind of paint and stain would be best for our project, but also make a run to Home Hardware to pick products out. Leading up to our build day, Ruth Willms offered to bring our building crew a morning snack - what a treat! We felt so supported and affirmed.

On a bright May morning, the work began. The six tables were built in three hours, and after a lunch break, the painting crew arrived. As a lovely mid-afternoon surprise, Lucy Harder stopped by with some donuts for the painting crew. Wow! The young adults were well looked after, that's for sure! The tables were finished about two hours later and are now proudly displayed and waiting for use out on our front lawn. We were so excited to give the tables their first real use at our community picnic in June. What a great initiation!



From brainstorming to completion, over 20 young adults have been involved in this project, and the ideas to expand on the front lawn initiative in the future are still swirling around in our minds. But for now, grab your friends and family and bring an after-church picnic. Or join a few tables together (they're on wheels for a reason!) and bring your committee meetings outside. Or just grab a coffee and a buddy and watch the sun set over the vineyards.



Looking for Ministry Leaders

Three years ago Rudy and Sharon Dirks stepped away from the leadership of our church and we began a process called the Transitional Pathway led by our Intentional Interim Pastor David Lewis. This time of transition was an opportunity for our congregation to see where God was calling us into the future.

This process took us through an intentional interim plan that included 4 transitional group meetings and 100 days of prayer. The result was four main initiatives that were affirmed by the congregation and some have already been implemented:

Pastoral Profile for Lead Pastor
Intentional Equipping
Restructured Worship Service
Restructure Leadership

The Restructured Leadership initiative included the following recommendations:

Senior Pastor with leadership, big picture view
Associate Pastor that includes young adult discipleship
Worship Co-ordinator
Administration
Review the leadership structure of our church. Consider a leadership council/ church board instead of a church and spiritual council that provides continuity, leadership and oversight

We then formed our **Restructure Leadership Group** to review the last item. We found that although our structure served us well in the past it was bureaucratic and not well connected to the ministries of our church. The group recommended a re-organization where ministries become the focus of our church and we establish ministry leaders or chairs for each of these ministries. The ministry leaders would co-ordinate the activities of their ministries and represent them at a new **“Church Board”**.

Church ministries would be organized as follows:

Spiritual Life Ministry

Includes Funerals, Care/Visitation Ministry, Pre-marriage, Wholeness through Christ, Communion and Catechism

Engagement Ministry

Includes Life Groups (small groups), Pioneer Clubs, Junior Youth, Senior Youth
Young Adults Ministry, Seniors Tea, Bulletin, Special Events, Adventsfest

Worship Ministry

Includes Music, Worship Leaders, Ushers, AV Team, Nursery, Preaching, Welcome Centre, German Worship Team

Service Ministry

Includes MDS, MCC, Benefit Shop, Westview Relationship, MCC Relief Sale, 10,000 Villages, Newark Neighbours, Red Roof Retreat, Refugee, Salsa

Education Ministry

Includes Lighthouse, Library, Adult Learning

Facilities Ministry

Includes Facilities, Yard Maintenance, Custodial Staff, Building Projects

Ministry leaders or Chairs are new positions in our church and should be filled with members that have the spiritual gifting and passion to lead them. They would attend **“Church Board”** meetings as required to represent the needs of their ministry and help develop new directions.

The Chairs of these ministries would have **church staff / partners assigned** to mentor and/or walk alongside them during their term. **Church staff / partners include our Lead Pastor, Youth & Young Adults Pastor, Worship Co-ordinator and Associate Pastor German Worship.**

We ask that members who feel called, prayerfully consider becoming a Ministry Leader/Chair. We have a couple of people that have expressed interest and look forward to more that would help energize and transform our ministries here at NUMC.

We would like to see these positions filled in time for the Fall Membership Meeting and start in their new position in February, 2020. Feel free to speak to John Tiessen or myself if you have any questions about these new positions or the proposed structure.

Submitted by Rick Froese

Transitions

~ Waldo Pauls

My role as a pastor has involved many transitions in the course of my career. The obvious ones are locations as we've served in six churches over the past 43 years which meant living in six different houses in three provinces. Fortunately, my last five assignments since 1996, which included a chaplaincy position and a year of service in Haiti, allowed us to keep our home base in St. Catharines. With changing churches and locations this also meant transitions in friendships and relationships which has both positive and negative features. We've had the benefit of learning to know a great many new people in each location but the volume of new relationships has meant that we often didn't have the time or the energy to continue to cultivate past relationships. Over time most eventually would be only occasional electronic contact.



As in most of our jobs, the way of doing things also involved transitions. In 1984 a church member who had become enthralled with Apple computers, purchased an extra computer called an Apple IIC which was their first portable computer. He presented it to me on condition that I wouldn't reveal his identity. Coming from his position in government it was his feeling that as a pastor I needed to be up to date with technology and this was certainly an upgrade over the typewriter. Books were one of my greatest sources of information in my pastoral role and I often purchased one per week to aid in sermon preparation. In the past two decades as the internet gradually became the most efficient source of information, I have been divesting myself of my library and offered dozens of books to my last two congregations upon my departure. In concluding formal ministry at NUMC I have left several shelves for Daniel and Chris to utilize or donate to the Christian Salvage Mission which sends them for use overseas.

Another transition in my earlier fifteen year Edmonton experience was to lead a church plant. After seven years as senior pastor in the mother church they gave their blessing for a new beginning and pledged over \$100,000 toward a new building when that time would come. The formative group challenged me to lead them and we spent our first two years meeting in a strip mall not far from the famous West Edmonton Mall. I discovered that there are many ways to be a church and relating to the other tenants in the mall became an obvious focus in this new beginning.

As people sometimes question me about our various transitions, they wonder how I would compare congregations. I could also include denominations as I moved from the MB fold to MCEC in 2007. I would say first of all that I have thoroughly enjoyed all of my assignments and denominations, including three years in a Lutheran church during my seminary years in Fresno California. In each new role I tried to assess how my gifts could assist in what was most important for that situation. Although there are similarities in every church setting there are also differences as each one has its own DNA and personality. I have felt at home at NUMC from the very first Sunday and one element was the fact that you were willing to respond to my attempts at humour. Communication is essential in any setting and being able to hear and understand a congregation's particular need at that moment - as well as feeling that I am being heard when I speak are central. I've been impressed with the wide range of very capable people in this church with music and worship being a priority that receives prime focus. Hiring Rachael as the Worship and Engagement Coordinator was an example of embracing new ideas in ministry and the restructuring process also indicates a willingness to move toward helpful transitions.

As the church goes forward, I believe there will need to be a greater emphasis on developing positive interactions with the local community and an emphasis on being both friendly and sensitive as these relationships are fostered. An excellent pastoral team has been put into place but now the real work begins on the next chapter for the church. Support your pastors and leaders in their roles, pray for them, and take courage in using your own gifts to be involved. I'm sure that the road won't always be easy but if Christ remains at the center - then all things are possible. If the future at NUMC also includes bringing AC into the sanctuary - then that would be another welcome transition from my perspective!

This past Saturday (2015) my wife, Sue, and I attended the 49th annual edition of the New Hamburg Relief Sale. Among other things we saw a quilt with African themes sell for \$42,000, followed by a rousing rendition by the crowd singing “Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow.” This has not always been the universal response to Mennonite relief sales.

Relief sales on behalf of Mennonite Central Committee began in Pennsylvania in 1957. By the time Ontario began its relief sale, seven others were in operation in North America. J. Winfield Fretz, the Conrad Grebel College president, proposed in 1966 that Ontario Mennonites also hold an “ethnic fund-raising festival.” Ward A. Shantz, a successful Waterloo County dairy farmer, accepted the challenge and chaired the committee for fifteen years until his death in 1982. A Mennonite ethnic festival implied food and handicrafts, especially quilts. It also meant the sale relied heavily on women volunteers who created the products to be sold. Fretz asked Margaret Brubacher to help. Brubacher had experience with the Women’s Missionary and Service Auxiliary (WMSA) cutting room, which interacted regularly with congregational women’s groups. She agreed to head the relief sale’s women’s activities committee, and by October 1966 she had arranged for nine congregations to help. Mennonite Disaster Service would erect tables, tents, and chairs. Mennonite women also helped with publicity for the first sale by donating a quilt to Ontario Premier John Robarts two weeks before the sale. On May 27, 1967, the first sale at the New Hamburg arena and fairgrounds attracted ten thousand visitors and raised over \$31,000 for MCC. One hundred thirty-six full-size quilts and sixty crib quilts were auctioned that year, though the 1967 sale prices did not achieve the prices of later years. The average full-size quilt sold for just under sixty dollars and the average crib quilt for twelve dollars. The highest-priced quilt was \$240.



Threads of AFRICA

Food also became a relief sale staple. By 1968 MCC Ontario chair Aaron Klassen reported sales of thirty-two hundred chicken legs, 260 strawberry pies, two thousand other pies, a smorgasbord for one thousand persons, as well as pancakes, apple fritters, zwieback, and other edible goods. Although the sale continued to grow through the years, it faced criticism. Some Mennonites believed the sale pandered to North American consumerism in the face of suffering in other parts of the world. This criticism returned when the More-With-Less Cookbook, which lauded reduced consumerism, was published in 1976. But the relief sale worked because of all the volunteer labor and donation of goods that would be sold, frequently to members of the Ontario Amish and Mennonite community. Other relief sales also emerged in Ontario, though New Hamburg remained the largest: the Black Creek Pioneer Village Relief Sale held near Toronto (1967), the Leamington-area sale and auction (1970), and eventually another in the Aylmer area (2001). In 1982 an Ontario Mennonite relief heifer sale was launched, following the pattern of the other sales.

In 2015 the relief sale raised over \$350,000 for Mennonite Central Committee despite being interrupted by a torrential rain storm early in the afternoon. The over 30 food venues included Hispanic pupusas, Hmong spring rolls, Laotian sausage and sticky rice, as well as traditional fare like fleish peroski, vereniki, strawberry pie, watermelon and rollkuchen, summer sausage and tea balls. Two hundred quilts and wall hangings were auctioned, and events included a “run for relief.”

Pork (Bacon) on the Bun

How did our church get involved with the “Bacon on the Bun” project at the Mennonite Relief Sale in New Hamburg and what does it mean to us today?

Around 1969, a lady from Kitchener (I think her name was Mrs. Snyder) came to the Bethany Mennonite Church to promote interest in the project. The Mennonite Relief Sale started in 1968. Because of my general interest in MCC, I attended that particular meeting—and so did Jake Enns from Enns Battery and Tire. The meeting did not go very well because few people had anything innovative to contribute. All of a sudden Jake gets up and says “We have Hans Wiens here, he can do a barbecue!” Well, has it ever happened to you that you were an innocent bystander and all of a sudden you are the centre of attention? That is what happened to me.

But now I must tell you why Jake knew that I could do a barbecue, especially one that can feed 2,000 people in seven hours. But it needs at least 22 volunteers. As most of you know, I was a pork producer for many years (47 years actually) and in the sixties there were a number of pork producers in our county. We called ourselves the “Lincoln County Pork Producer Association”. Nowadays, it’s called “Niagara North”.

One of the things we did was to promote the use of pork. In that process, we built a barbecue with a great capacity. With it we went to many functions to fry peameal back bacon, served on a bun, to promote our pork.



1986

Pork (Bacon) on the Bun cont'd

At the Virgil Stampede and at the Mennonite Relief Sale in New Hamburg, we are still doing it after 50 years. My family missed only one sale in all those years. Because of the many pork producers, we always had many volunteers to help with special events. Political rallies were our best events. Mostly we served the Progressive Conservative Party, but we also fried for the Liberals!

This is the information you should know to understand how things develop in our lives and in our community. From the beginning in 1969, we had three churches to help with money and volunteers. Besides our church and Bethany, we had the Virgil Mennonite Brethren Church (now Cornerstone) to supply money and volunteers. A friend of mine, Walter Goertzen, was a pork producer (besides many other things). He was a member at Virgil M.B. He persuaded his church to participate. We received money and volunteers for many years. Our church had many very dedicated Relief Sale volunteers—even such as Helmut Boldt who was at the Relief Sale in New Hamburg on the day his first daughter was born.

In the early years, we were the biggest food supplier at the sale next to fried chicken, which was also big. Over the years, more and more smaller vendors came in and our participation was a smaller part of the whole event. But now that trend is reversing. Many small vendors cannot cope with all the new Health Department regulations. We, in contrast, have observed regulations and are in the position to remain an important supporter of the Sale.

In conclusion, why is the Mennonite Relief Sale in New Hamburg one of my “Passions”?

1/ The Mennonite Relief Sale shows the world that we care about people. We collect \$325,000 in seven hours, the bulk of it from quilts, to give all of it away to the poor.

2/ A lot of this money comes from visitors of the Sale who are buying our goods, but would otherwise give little to charity.

3/ We are showing the general population who we are and what we stand for in terms of compassion for the less fortunate.

~ Submitted by Hans Wiens

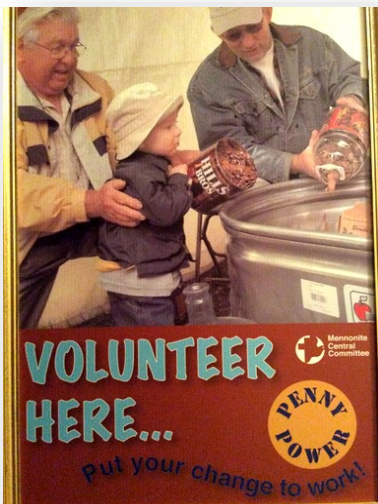


2000



In 2005, Micah, son of our daughter Carolyn, helped Opa empty pennies into the big container at the MCC Relief Sale.

In 2006, Helmut's brother Henry was shocked to see a large picture (poster) of



Helmut and Micah with the pennies. He asked for a copy of the print, but the people in charge wondered why he wanted it. His answer was that Helmut was his brother and he had died in January of that year. Of course he got a copy, which he framed and gave to Micah who was proud to have such a big picture of himself with Opa!

~ Marlies Boldt

(Note that accompanied this picture from Carolyn)

That's my dad with his grandson (my boy) Micah Stewart.

Dad was always teaching the next generation, by example, the importance of helping others

1999



Vareneki

COURAGE FAITH HOPE

Anabaptist Heritage Concert
St. Catharines United Mennonite Church
Sunday, May 26, 2019, 7:00 pm

I Will Serve the Lord all my days Nancy Price, Don Besig
Introduction/Opening – Rita Epp

Great Jehovah Pepper Choplin
Nimm Jesu meine Hände Julie von Hausmann, Philip
Silcher

(Renate Dau Klaassen)

Neta – story of someone left behind

Now thank we all our God M. Rinckart, J. Cruieger
Auf ewig bei dem Herrn arr. Esther
Wiebe

Natasha – a journey to freedom

Bless thou the Lord, O my soul M. M. Ippolitof-
Ivanof
Holy God we praise Thy name Te Deum Laudamus
Fairest Lord Jesus arr. Derek
Hakes

Offertory – Janzen Family Strings (proceeds – MCC, where needed most)
A child's plight

Shepherd Psalm Don & Jaree
Hall
Jesu joyaunce of my heart G.R. Woodward, J.R. Ahle, J.S.
Bach
(Debbie Krause)

Closing remarks – Rita Epp

Pacem traditional Latin, Lee Dengler
It is well with my soul G. Spafford, P.
Bliss

Director – John Rempel

Accompanists – Kathy Rempel, Rachael Peters

Janzen Family Strings – Margaret Janzen - Piano
Jake Janzen - violin
David Janzen - cello
Jonathan Janzen – viola

Stories – Rita Epp

~~~~~  
**On Sunday, May 25, 2019, we celebrated our 4th Heritage Day Concert. With choral music, congregational singing and interwoven stories we honoured our forbears who suffered for their and our faith.**

## Introduction

**It has been said that “A people who do not have the dedication to record their history will lose the benefit to make their history worth recording; and a people who are indifferent to their past cannot hope to make their future significant.**

And so we are here to ensure that the Anabaptist story is not forgotten, but that we benefit from the courage and faithfulness of our forebears. Knowing our stories sets us on the road to knowing who we are, to knowing that we should be thankful and honour those responsible for our being able to meet today, in peace, in security.

The Anabaptist story began in 1525, and we have been reminded of those who led the way against incredible odds to be obedient to Christ's teachings. The story, however does not end there, and tonight we want to fast forward to the time of turmoil for our people in the early to mid 1900's in Soviet Russia. Intolerable persecution in the 16th century caused Anabaptists, mainly from the Netherlands, to flee to Poland, settling in areas near Danzig. In the later part of the 18th century, due to religious intolerance, many Mennonites began to move to Russia, at the invitation of Tsarina Catherine II. At the start of World War I in 1914, about 110,000 Mennonites lived in 56 colonies in Russia. With the Russian Revolution in 1917 came periods of chaos, persecution and loss. Anarchists caused many deaths during the Civil War that followed. Then came devastating famine and disease. Thousands of Mennonite men — fathers, brothers, uncles, sons — were sent to Stalin's work camps leaving “women without men” to ensure the safety and survival of families. Mennonite women — mothers, sisters, daughters, grandmothers had to assume roles traditionally reserved for men in their trek to freedom. They fought for their family's survival against unbelievably difficult odds, and many made it safely to Canada or Paraguay. In his book “Up from the Rubble” Peter Dick notes that the ratio of women to men on their journeys from the refugee camps was approximately 2:1. Others, however, either willingly, not knowing what lay ahead, or by force, ended up returning to the chaos they had fled and experienced insurmountable hardships as those “left behind”.

As we reflect on our story, we want to share a glimpse into the lives of 2 women, representative of the brave and courageous Mennonite women of that time. One on her trek as someone left behind in the Soviet Union. And one on her trek to Canada. We also want to remember the many children, who so tragically and innocently suffered during this time. Hymns were central to faith and culture of the Mennonite refugees and are fixed deep in the hearts of the survivors. Peter Dick tells of the time he was sent to bring a group of refugees to a central location. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack until he suddenly heard 4 part harmony singing of a beautiful hymn. Those are Mennonites he told the driver, and indeed, they were, and were rescued. Hymns such as Take thou my hand o Father (Nimm Jesu meine Hände) stir memory and emotion for those of us who grew up in the families of our refugee forebears.

As we share in the stories and songs, we pray that they bring a new appreciation for the sacrifices made and the unwavering testimony of **faith, courage and hope.**

Let our prayer be that of a song based on the powerful hymn “Guide me Oh thou great Jehovah”

*Lead me Great Jehovah*

*Guide me over this desert land*

*Find me, wandering and weary,*

*I will hold dearly your guiding hand - Amen*



## Neta – left behind in the Soviet Union

“Living in the village as a child was wonderful, especially on a Sunday morning,” she wrote. “Everyone walked slowly to church. The atmosphere was quiet. The acacia tree-lined streets were clean and beautiful. Singing rang out from the church and church bells chimed.”

The bells fell silent during the revolution of 1917-19. “People left for the Crimea with wagons piled high with their belongings,” she wrote. “Others thought the revolutionaries would not harm them, but when these men came, everyone and everything were fair game. They took all the food and clothing and ripped up the feather beds so that feathers stuck to their muddy boots.” The day Neta’s family was forced off their property, they beat her parents because the revolutionaries wanted her sister. They lined the whole family up against the wall and threatened to shoot them.

The family fled many times from that point to avoid persecution. Neta married, and she and her husband wanted to move to Canada in 1929, but Neta’s father-in-law tried to discourage them.

“Everything we own we have brought together with our own hands,” he said. “No one can be that evil that they would take this away from us.” Neta was anxious and sad about leaving. Nevertheless, the young couple went to Moscow, hoping to secure exit documents, but they were denied. They moved back to Neta’s father’s home, where life was bleak.

In 1932, the family fled to a village in the “safer” region of Siberia.. They went to work in a Siberian forest. After some years, they moved back to their village and soon were engulfed in the chaos of World War II. In the fall of 1943, German forces retreated ahead of the Russian army reclaiming Soviet territory. Mennonite villages were uprooted as all Germans were forced to leave Ukraine. Neta’s husband was conscripted and died in combat.

Neta and her children became part of the Great Trek to Poland on Dec. 20, 1943. Of the Mennonite migrations, this Great Trek, including about 35,000 Mennonites, has been recorded as the most difficult and dangerous. Many people died of disease along the way or were killed by the Soviets or partisans. They had already suffered many hardships, and most of the able bodied men had already been murdered or exiled. The families therefore consisted of an unbalanced number of women, old men and children. After the war, Russia demanded that its citizens return.



Artist—Anita Willms Stephen—used by permission

Neta and her four children were shipped to Siberian labor camps in cattle cars. For 11 years, they worked for starvation wages. Neta wrote: “I have no anger in my heart when I write about this, but my spirit aches desperately. I would rather trust in Bible verses such as Hebrews 13:5, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ Whether naked or well-fed, what we went through was God’s way for us. We must continue to *thank God with all our hearts and hands and voices*.

Neta lived to see the end of Soviet communism, which had caused her so much suffering. In 1992 she watched on television as American evangelist Billy Graham preached to more than 100,000 people in Moscow.

In 1993 she wrote that when she thought about the past she also looked forward to Eternity when she would see God and “in the light of truth .. understand why He led her in these ways.”

## Natascha – From 18 years a refugee to freedom in Canada

Natasha writes: We managed to survive the assaults of the Russian revolution, the constant demands of the soldiers of the white and red armies during the civil war and the night raids of the bandits who raped, pillaged and killed with abandon. We survived the ensuing famine, the decimating typhus epidemic, the restructuring under Lenin’s new economic policy. But we did not survive Stalin.. Overnight prosperous farm families were uprooted to make way for collective agriculture. We were loaded onto trains going one direction only. North to the prison camps of the Siberian gulag. I was the oldest child of 5 and my father’s right hand. We felled trees and broke off the branches. The logs became crude shelters and the branches became mattresses.

We cooked outside over an open fire in one kettle suspended from a tripod. We were starving. Children foraged in the woods for edible weeds for soup, we chewed bark and grass; nettles were like spinach. The young and old died quickly. I remember our commander mocking that his duty was to keep us and our duty was to escape. Eventually I did escape. As a young woman, with no resources and no identification papers I wandered into a little town. Predictably, I was arrested and imprisoned for having escaped the labor camp. My prison sentence was 2 years of hard labor. Natasha's time in the prison was brutal and she almost died several times, yet she survived. Her story continues. Upon my completion of my prison term, I knew I would be sent back to the slave labor camp in Siberia from which I had originally escaped. Should I go back? What about my family? Were they alive? An opportunity presented itself and once again I fled. I had no idea where we were or near what town our prison lay. I searched for railroad tracks as I knew they would lead to a town. One evening, I reached a train station, exhausted by fear and constant running, numb with cold and desperately hungry.

Once again I was asked for papers I did not have. I fled the station and found a spot in the forest to say my last prayers. Death would come easily I thought as I sank gratefully into the soft inviting snow. I wrestled with God. I couldn't grasp this. My grandfather had been a preacher, my father a choirmaster and church leader. Our home had been peaceful. Where was God now? Solemnly I made a pact with a God I had not addressed in a long time. I promised I would thank and praise him all my life if he gave me the chance. I promised I would help others and do good at every opportunity. An amazing thing happened. It was as if the heavens opened and I saw God and the angels. A voice seemed to whisper – you are my child, Get up, Shake the snow off your clothes and walk to a place I will show you. He led me to a family who helped me to escape – the old man said softly – God go with you. God! I had been experiencing God's help, he still cared about me, he was still with me. Tears of relief flowed unendingly. God had not forsaken me. The song "*Grosser Gott wir Loben dich sprang to my mind*. A hymn we had so often sung in better times.

God did not forsake Natasha, though her struggles remained, she eventually left the refugee life behind and was sponsored to come to Canada in 1948. Although her first home consisted of a shack with cardboard walls, every day she was thankful for the roof over her head, for peace in this country. Her life as a refugee was over and the roots went down strong and deep. This time for good. Her favourite Bible passage remained Psalm 103 -

*Bless the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;*

## A child's plight

Let us consider for a moment the experiences of children whose parents were arrested or who ended up themselves in the prison camps in Siberia.. Children of people categorized by the soviet party state as enemies of the people shared their parents' fate. In just 1937 and 1938, a conservatively estimated 1.4 million children lost a parent to execution. Of the 20 million people convicted of crimes and sent to corrective labor in the 1930s, roughly 40 percent were children. Our Mennonite forebears were classified as enemies of the people and their children are among those statistics. Those left behind without anyone willing or able to take them in ended up in orphanages, or found themselves on their own, having to grow up quickly and cope with adult situations and responsibilities. Here is one story  
The Place – Stalin's Gulag – Siberia.

Father died of cold and starvation, mother died a few months later of exposure and disease. That left us 4 children as orphans. My brother 12, and I at 14 had to continue to work in the slave labour camp, chopping trees and preparing them for export. Every day we walked past our mother's body which lay outside in the snow for weeks with many other bodies stacked like cordwood until spring thaw permitted digging of a mass grave.

My 2 younger siblings were shipped to an orphanage at the train terminal approximately 20 kilometers from the prison camp and barely survived there. I visited my siblings at the orphanage – their heads were shorn and clothes were of burlap sacking. They had been separated at the orphanage, and were desperately lonely and confused. My little brother was very ill, and I could tell he would not survive much longer. Although children that were unable to work received no rations at the labor camp, I arranged to take both children back with me. I carried my little brother the 20 kilometers, and my little sister walked most of the way. My brother died shortly upon the return to the labour camp, but my little sister, who was too young to receive rations in the camp became very resourceful to stay alive. She searched with a stick through the ash piles and cooked a soup with potato peels she found. Mice and any other rodents provided necessary sustenance to stay alive. In the late evenings, we spent time remembering our lives in our village, and tried to remember Bible verses and songs we had been taught. A favourite was the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm – "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Somehow, by the grace of God we survived that horrible time. Many perished and those who survived carry forever the scars of their childhoods.

***Gentle Shepherd, Lord of All –  
In your care I'll never want.  
Lay me down in pastures green,  
Guide, protect, supply my need.***

(The above stories, based on true experiences,  
were researched & compiled by Rita Epp)



## Zwieback and leprosy ~ by Marlena Fiol

The beat-up diesel pickup truck sputtered as it came over the hill into view. A half dozen men in torn filthy shirts stood in the bed of the truck, passing a bottle around, their fists pumping the air, yelling, "*Lepra de satán . . . que mueran todos . . . guerra contra satán.*"

Clara jumped to her feet, nearly tripping on the long canvas apron tied around her waist. With her left elbow, she pushed aside a strand of long brown hair that had escaped her kerchief. Who are they? She dropped the trowel still dripping with adobe sludge from the last brick she was setting, and stood, staring, her mouth agape.

Could she run? Escape? She jerked her head around to take in the rubble of recently cleared land, the thatched-roofed lean-to stacked high with adobe bricks, the tarp on the ground behind her covered with plaster, and the partial wall to her left. There was nowhere to go. Her heart began to race. I knew I shouldn't have . . . Clara swallowed hard.

The truck slowed as it approached the white woman covered in mud, a dark kerchief haphazardly tied around her head. The men thrust their fists at her and their voices rose to a wild crescendo. "*Lepra . . . que mueran . . . trabajo de satán . . .*"

Following the driver's lead, a few of them jumped to the ground, grabbed rocks from the truck bed and moved toward Clara. Still shouting, they held the rocks high over their heads. She backed up, grasping her apron as though it might shield her from the angry, foul-smelling men. Her thoughts began to race.

"John, where are you when I need you? What have we gotten ourselves into? I know the Mennonite mission sent us here to do the Lord's work, but this . . . this . . ."

Clara's lips trembled. She knew her husband had again gone out on horseback, as he had so often, scouring the land in search of cast-out lepers. She knew he probably wouldn't be back for days. Without taking her eyes off the men, Clara sensed by her side the presence of her Paraguayan brick-layer who spoke some English.

"Francisco," she asked between clenched teeth, "who are these men and what do they want? What are they shouting about?"

"They're from Itacurubí, *señora*, just up the road from us here at Km. 81, and they're saying that you will not live and that they'll destroy this leprosy hospital you and your husband are building. They refuse to let you bring lepers into their neighborhood."

The men pulled more rocks off the truck bed. Francisco continued to translate, "They're saying that they've brought these rocks to destroy you and your satanic work here at Km. 81."

Clara's chest constricted and her hands shook. She wished she knew how to speak Spanish. Surely she could explain the Lord's work if she did. Explain that she and the young Dr. John had left their home in the U.S and brought their family all the way to Paraguay to combat this dreaded disease. That they were here to help.

She took a deep breath and slowly turned back to Francisco.

"Please ask them if they would like to have some coffee and *zwieback* (a Mennonite bread)," she said.

Francisco raised his eyebrows, but relayed the message. The men stopped shouting. Still grasping their rocks, they stared at her. Silent.

Slapping her hands against the sides of her apron to remove some of the mud, Clara walked toward the lean-to where she kept what little provisions she had.

"Here, I have this thermos full of iced coffee and these are *zwieback* that I baked yesterday. You probably don't know what *zwieback* are . . ."

In her nervousness she forgot that they didn't understand a word she was saying. "Um . . . Francisco, please tell them I'd like to pray with them before we eat?"

(Zwieback cont'd)

The men didn't move, their dark eyes darting back and forth between their driver and the white woman who offered food and wanted to pray with them after learning that they were here to kill her and destroy her property.

Clara clasped her trembling hands together.

"Lord, we thank you for your love and protection. Bless this food, we pray, in Christ's name. Amen." She held out the bag of *zwieback* and motioned for the men to come.

The driver said something to the men and one by one they dropped their rocks. They ate *zwieback* and drank iced coffee with Clara and then quietly left.

They never returned.

That was 1952. In the decades that followed, John and Clara Schmidt gradually built trusting relations with their Paraguayan neighbors. And whenever possible, they reintegrated leprosy patients back into their communities, a revolutionary practice the medical community now embraces and has attributed to their visionary leadership.

I know this because John and Clara were my parents, and Km. 81 is where I grew up.

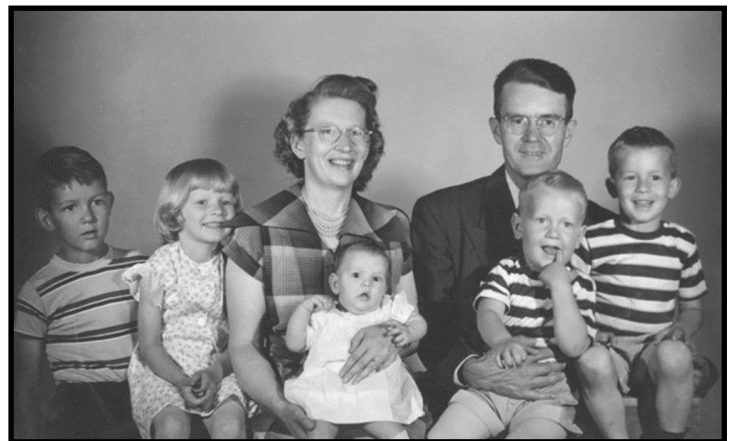


John and Clara Schmidt in 1952 at the Km. 81 leprosy station construction site in Paraguay. — Marlena Fiol

*Marlena Fiol, Ph.D., is a storyteller, scholar and speaker in Tucson, Ariz., and Eugene, Ore., whose writing explores the depths of who we are and what's possible in our lives. Her essays and blogs are at [marlenafiol.com](http://marlenafiol.com).*



**My father — front left. My mother — front right. The day after their wedding, at the Newton, KS train station, leaving for Paraguay in 1943**  
~ Marlena Fiol



**Dr. John & Clara Schmidt Family at Km 81 in Paraguay**

*The above story is an excerpt from Marlena's upcoming memoir **Love is Complicated: A Memoir of Healing**, to be published in Spring 2020. I was given permission by Marlena to share the above story in our newsletter. I follow her blog regularly and find her articles thought-provoking and meaningful. If you, as readers would like more information about Marlena or her memoir, please check out her blog or contact me.*

~ submitted by Kathy Rempel (co-editor)



## A History of Helping Artisans

Ten Thousand Villages began in 1946 when **Edna Ruth Byler**, a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worker, visited volunteers in Puerto Rico who were teaching sewing classes in an effort to help improve the lives of women living in poverty.

From this trip, Edna brought several pieces of embroidery home to sell to friends and neighbours. The pieces became quite popular and she soon added cross-stitch needlework from Palestinian refugees and hand-carved Haitian woodenware to her inventory.

In the early 1970s, the flourishing project moved out of Byler's basement and became **SELFHELP CRAFTS**, an official MCC program. Thousands of loyal customers and volunteers have helped to build this program into the strong alternative trading organization that, in 1996, became known as Ten Thousand Villages.



### 1969

After over two decades of committed service and improving the lives of hundreds of the world's most impoverished families, **Byler**, part-time director in the U.S., retires.  
*(And she finally gets her basement back!)*

### 1970



The organization moves to the Material Aid centre in Ephrata, Pennsylvania and is named **Self Help Crafts of the World**

### 1972

**Altona, Manitoba** becomes the location for the first MCC retail store to sell Self Help Crafts. Two years later, a U.S. store opens in Bluffton, Ohio with **10 to 12** stores opening every year for the next decade.



### 1981—1984

**Self Help Crafts Canada** opens its headquarters and store in **New Hamburg, Ontario. Catherine**

### 1985



While a U.S. trade embargo wouldn't be lifted until 1996, **Self Help Crafts Canada** becomes first North American organization to import handicrafts from **Vietnam** and **Laos**.

### 1996

"**Ten Thousand Villages**", inspired by a Mahatma Gandhi quote, is chosen as a new name.



**TEN THOUSAND VILLAGES®**

Mahatma Gandhi quote: "...India is not to be found in its few cities but in the 700,000 villages...we have hardly ever paused to inquire if these folks get sufficient to eat and clothe themselves with." To us, each village in the world represents a unique and distinctive people, offering extraordinary products born of their rich cultures and traditions.

### 2016

Thirty-five years after opening its headquarters, **Ten Thousand Villages Canada** celebrates a milestone. Now with **37** locations in Canada and more than twice that number in the U.S., the fair trade organization is poised to grow the North American market for artisan products from around the world.





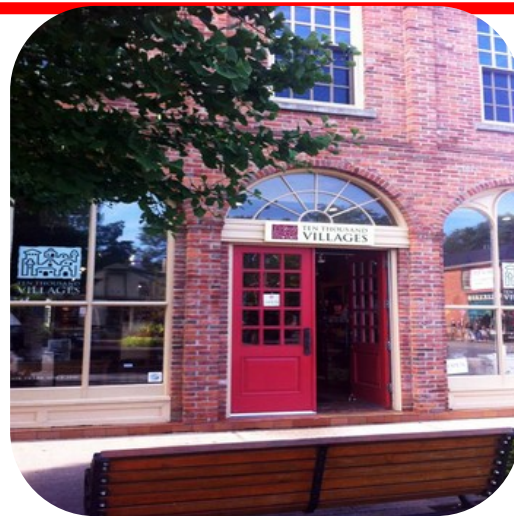
# TEN THOUSAND VILLAGES®

## Niagara on the Lake

Ten Thousand Villages in Niagara on the Lake has been a fixture of the Old Town core for 33 years now. Formally known as, MCC Self Help Crafts, Ten Thousand Villages Niagara was founded by five enthusiastic women, Iola Tiessen, Liz Fast, Lucy Harder, Katy Ewert, and Hertha Boese. TTV has come a long way over the last 33 years, starting out in the back part of a building where Andres Cleaners was located on Queen Street. Now, in a prime location on the corner of Queen and Regent streets, the **NOTL location is the top performing store in all of Canada**. With the bustle of tourists throughout the summer season and the build up to Christmas, TTV in NOTL gets more foot traffic than any store in Canada. The store focuses on educating shoppers on Fair Trade and the importance of knowing where the product you're buying is made and who makes it. When shopping with TTV you know you can shop with confidence! The store samples their fair trade coffee and tea every day. They also started carrying a ladies clothing line, by Mata Traders, this summer. The NOTL location and the Winnipeg location are the only stores that carry the line. At this time, the store has a staff of 30, 24 of whom are volunteers and 6 paid staff. TTV would not be successful without their dedicated volunteers!

**Currently TTV is hosting their annual September coffee sale. Receive \$4 off any 454g bag of Level Ground coffee, September 6-15.**

~ submitted by Teresa Friesen (Manager)



Cool Fall evenings are on the way. Scarves & shawls will keep you warm & cozy!



Jewelry—so much for so little!



**Coffee Sale**  
- more than 10 varieties of amazing Fair Trade Coffee!



Mata clothing

Watch for more upcoming sales!



Christmas Joy!



-and at the end of the day, someone has to balance the cash drawer. Hopefully, the sales have been good!

*Empowering makers around the world.*

~collected & compiled by Kathy Rempel



## Life in Niagara on the Lake in 1939

The last Newsletter writing was from a newspaper article from the May 15, 1939 edition of “The Niagara Advance And Weekly Fruitman”. The article was called “Investigation Promised Mennonites By Attorney General”. For some reason or another, my dad got and kept this particular edition of the newspaper. I have no idea where he got it from, but anyways, it does make for some slightly amusing reading. Other than local Mennonites protesting an illegal arms search at the Niagara Mennonite Church (i.e. our church), what follows is some lighter points of life in NOTL circa May 1939.

Probably the biggest Niagara news of the time was the impending Royal visit of King George VI, Queen Elizabeth (the Queen mother), Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret. It was the first visit of a reigning monarch to Canada. The royal couple arrived by train in St. Catharines on June 7, 1939, and then took a 30-minute scenic drive to Niagara Falls through Port Weller, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Queenston. The Niagara Advance dutifully anticipated the Royal visit with reports on itinerary (King George To Broadcast Five Times During The Tour), accompanying royal attendants (Queen Brings Two Ladies-In-Waiting With Her), fanfare (RCAF Fighter Planes To Escort King And Queen) and even the jewelry the Queen would be wearing (Queen Bringing Finest Jewels).

From the Front Page: Poland’s Trade Minister Alexander Bobkowski, together with 500 of his compatriots from many parts of Ontario, gathered at the St. Vincent De Paul Church on Sunday, May 14. Bobkowski had a great desire to visit Niagara, where the Polish army trained during the Great War. He urged the Polish people in Canada to be loyal citizens of Canada but not to forget their homeland.

From the Local Happenings Section: “During the past week, it has been reported that several people have found their summer cottages damaged. It has evidently been the work of destructive youths as an example of this was found at the Fairweather cottage where verandah lights had been smashed.”

Used trucks are for sale on Page 2: Call General Motors Products Of Canada. Spadina Avenue, Toronto. Phone WA. 1831. \$275.00 for a 1933 ½ Chevrolet Panel Truck, but \$475.00 for a similar type Ford.

Finally, from the “Social and Personal” section: “Mr. and Mrs. Irving Cohen and two sons of Toronto visited Mrs. J.H. Tobe over the weekend. (This tweaked my interest because my mom (Frieda) worked at Tobe’s on Lakeshore Road for some time. Seems to me that Natalie Lammert did too.)

*I thought it is an interesting sort of contrasting picture: while a May 1939 edition of the Niagara Advance is filled with happy reports of royalty visiting, and the social pages publicize who visited whom and for how long, and advertisements promote consumer goods for sale... : that half a world away in Europe, in May 1939, most of the rest of the world was preparing for total war.*

*~ submitted by Harold Neufeld*

### Debbie’s Book Corner

The Girl from the Train  
Irma Joubert

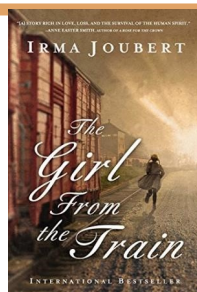
“As World War II draws to a close, Jakob fights with the Polish resistance against the crushing forces of Germany & Russia. They intend to destroy a German troop transport, but Gretl’s unscheduled train reaches the bomb first.

Gretl is the only survivor. Though spared from the concentration camp, the orphaned German Jew finds herself lost in a country hostile to her people. When Jakob discovers her, guilt & fatherly compassion prompt him to take her in. For 3 years, the young man & little girl form a bond over the secrets they must hide from his Catholic family. But she can’t stay with him forever. Jakob sends Gretl to South Africa, where German war orphans are promised bright futures with adoptive Protestant families, so long as Gretl’s Jewish roots, Catholic education & connections to communist Poland are never discovered. Separated by continents, politics, religion, language & years, Jakob & Gretl will likely never see each other again. But the events they have both survived & their belief that the human spirit can triumph over the ravages of war have formed a bond of love that no circumstance can overcome.”

Chosen People  
Robert Whitlow

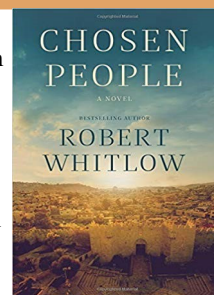
“During a terrorist attack near the Western Wall in Jerusalem, a courageous mother sacrifices her life to save her 4 year old daughter, leaving behind a grieving husband & a motherless child.

Hanna Abboud, a Christian Arab Israeli lawyer trained at Hebrew University, typically uses her language skills to represent international clients for an Atlanta law firm. When her boss is contacted by Jakob Brodsky, a



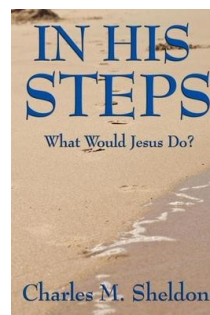
young Jewish lawyer pursuing a lawsuit on behalf of the women’s family under the US Anti-Terrorism laws, he calls on Hanna’s expertise to take point on the case. After careful prayer, she joins forces with Jakob, & they quickly realize the need to bring in a third member for their team, an Arab investigator named Daud Hasan, based in Israel.

To unravel the case, this team of investigators travel from the streets of Atlanta to the alleys of Jerusalem, a world where hidden motives thrive, the risk of death is real & the search for truth has many faces. What they uncover will forever change their understanding of justice, heritage & what it means to be chosen for a greater purpose.”



In His Steps  
What Would Jesus do?  
Charles M Sheldon

“When a homeless man confronts the parishioners of First Church of Raymond with their lack of Christlike mercy, the trajectory of their lives is forever changed. Embarrassed & convicted, Pastor Henry Maxwell challenges the congregation to commit to a full year of life beyond Christianity as usual. Before every decision, they will ask themselves one question: What would Jesus do? But the congregation finds that this is easier said than done, as family strife, politics & scorned lovers test their resolve – and they soon see how a simple question can cause major ripples far beyond their quite church.”



~ Debbie Fast

### MDS Lafayette, Louisiana. March 2018

On the days of August 12,13 of 2016, over 20" of rain fell on the Parish of Lafayette in south central Louisiana. This was referred to as a "1000 year event". The area is perfectly flat and just barely above sea level. With no place for 20" of water to go, 30,000 people were evacuated, and 146,000 homes were damaged.

In January of 2018, Esther and I made plans to meet up with some of our Willms sibs and extended families in April, in Florida and thought we might first spend a week or 2 doing some MDS work. We called our MDS friends in Winnipeg, in La Crete AB, and in Minnesota, to see what was happening with them and MDS in March, and found out they all had no MDS plans for that time.

So we would be on our own. We called MDS directly and volunteered for Lafayette for 1 or 2 weeks. We were told, the site had enough volunteers, but would be put on standby, as often people schedule themselves in, and find out later they can't make it for any number of reasons.

A short while later we were contacted by the Lafayette MDS office staff, and told we could come for the 1<sup>st</sup> week of our request, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> week was full. That was fine with us, as our plans were flexible. A week later the office manager Ann, called again. They were quite full, but they would find space for us someplace, and they could use us after all, as they were lacking crew leaders for the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, and we would fit that bill, since we would have a week of experience behind us and would know the sites and clients.

It was mid-March, and once again Esther and I found ourselves at the Peace Bridge border crossing, armed with our MDS volunteer invitation (NOT WORK INVITATION), at the Lafayette disaster site, and were fully expecting to spend a couple of hours at US customs, working through the US parole procedure (some of you will recall that on our previous trip in 2017 to Greenbrier WV, the border guards almost made Esther a US citizen). Using the tried and true strategy of only answering questions asked, we showed him our NEXUS cards, answered that we were going to Louisiana, and with no further questions asked or answered, were promptly sent on our way in a matter of less than 30 seconds.

Let me tell you about some of the great people we met.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> week - where is Jesse?

We arrived in Lafayette, to find that our office manager and site director were Anna and David from Manitoba. They are retired farmers who now rent out their land. In summer they still run a business harvesting flax residue, the material left behind after the flax seeds are harvested. This they sell to folks who process it into the paper used for printing money, pretty much a niche market. Prior to retirement, David and Ann had done many years of MDS leadership volunteering in the winter months, typically going for 2 months intervals. In recent years he had a bad bout with colon cancer, which he survived, but now lives with a colostomy bag. They are down to doing 1 month stints now, taking a break, and then perhaps doing a 2<sup>nd</sup> one month trip. David, has become a bit of an inspiration for me. In spite of his obstacles, he's still MDSing, and one of the reasons, along with many others, that Esther and I hope to work as longer term MDS volunteers.

Another interesting long term was Barbara, also from MB, only 30 miles from where Ann and David live. They had never met back home but were now good friends down in Lafayette. She was retired, needed a purpose in life, and thought she'd give MDS a try. This was her first trip and she was our assistant cook.

I've heard since that she took some more MDS leadership training to become a site office manager. Her father was a farmer, and unpaid, lay minister. He, with 3 other pastors, had a rotation of 4 churches they each spoke at, every Sunday. Some churches were over 2 hours away. He was still doing this only 10 years ago. A rather staggering commitment to one's faith.

Denis, my 50ish something, crew leader, who had signed up for a 1 year tour with MDS, after some personal issues caused him to spend time on reflecting life, was from Washington State, but born in Rochester, and knew Niagara well. I hope to see him here sometime. In week 2, I found out from the Washington State people that Denis is involved with 1<sup>st</sup> Nation's issues, helping them with public demonstrations, to the point that he has some legal issues in front of him, as the result of some of the demonstrations, he was involved in. I found him to be a very interesting, reserved, thoughtful and kind person who loved to play his guitar, in a kind of folksy genre of music.

Cindy and Denis from North Carolina, arrived the same time as us. They are emergency staff, who get called when a site is short on leadership for a week or 2. She was head cook. Back home he is in the renovations business with his brother, and dropped a couple of projects in his brother's lap, to come help out, as the site was short a cook.

Dale, a local guy was at site every week from Monday to Thursday. Friday he stayed home to do his wife's bidding. He was born in Virginia and worked in Bolivia with MCC during the Vietnam War, his way to avoid the draft. While there, he fell in love, married, and now lives in Lafayette with his wife. He spent his career in the "oil patch" working on rigs out in the Gulf of Mexico. We spent many pleasant breakfasts, listening to his stories of life on the rigs. His wife being Bolivian knew where the best Yerba, for Matte, was to be had locally, and he brought us in a supply one day, to keep us going through our time there. He had only recently learned MDS was in Lafayette, via conversations with his folks back home in Virginia and had only joined up in the last 3 months. He was a big help to the project director, as he knew where all the best local stores were and knew the construction inspectors as well as local regulations, and contractors.

Then there was Jesse, an Amish 20 something guy from Virginia. He taught us all about horses and buggies and how to get them warmed up and rolling down the highway. One evening I asked him where he lived, then Googled in with satellite view. He got very excited as I showed him his house and property from 1000ft up. THEN, I switched to street view, and I thought he was going to fall off his chair. We found his road side fruit and vegetable stand and he showed me how he sits in behind it in the shade while waiting for customers to come by. You can kind of see his legs in the Google view.



Jessie, my Amish friend's fruit stand from google street view.



You will notice that in the MDS site picture for the week, his jacket and hat are in the picture, beside me, but no Jessie. **Where is Jesse??** Apparently, avoiding pictures is an Amish rule of some sort. An interesting side story here was that once a year his whole family, brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces, pack up, get on a train and head to San Diego California, a trip of several days. There they cross into Mexico, and get all their health and dental needs attended to.

This spring we received a post card from him, wishing us well. He was on his way to Mexico, to get some further medical issues looked at..

The houses we were repairing were all over Lafayette and neighboring villages, in the Parish, but the MDS quarters were in the back of a church compound, mostly in a larger reception hall used for weddings etc, and the surrounding buildings and cabins. Short termers, like Esther and I are used to living in separate guys and gals bunk rooms. Typically long termers get a room to themselves.

For some reason, David and Ann, our site directors, had decided to clear out a storage room, in the reception hall where we all ate our meals, and we had a room to ourselves – very nice, unexpected, but very nice. Most MDSers are in bed by 10:00, and Esther and I are no exception. One evening, the hall was shut down, all MDSers in their rooms, the whole area on dim night lights. Esther and I were in bed, dozing, off, when we heard the reception hall, big entrance door open. Some quiet conversation. The distinct sound of flip flops carefully treading in our direction. Not making a sound Esther and I both wondered who's feet belonged with those flip flops? NOT, an MDSer for sure.

The flip-flops sounded louder and came closer. Maybe they'll veer off to the kitchen, or the snack area. That makes sense. Then, some more mumbling. Suddenly our bed room door, no our store room door, swung open. The full storage room lights came on. AHHHHHHH, came from many mouths.

I'm not sure who was more surprised.

Esther and I cowering in bed.

Or the mom with her kids, looking for some props for the Sunday morning worship service, in the storage room (not in a bedroom) and all they see are two oldies in bed staring at them. This all made for good stories at the breakfast table.



*Week 1 volunteers and no Jesse. I am sitting on one arm (of many) of a 350 year old oak tree in the middle of the church compound. As you can imagine it is a very revered tree and is absolutely spectacular, very reminiscent of the "old oak" in Choritiza. Jesse of course was off to the side, kind of giggling at the use of his hat and vest.*

Well by this time you must think all we do is have fun at MDS. There is some truth to that, or we would not keep going back for more.

Esther and I were split up (this of course makes sense, because we were both to become crew leaders in charge of different clients and crews the following week). I ended up mostly with Denis and Jesse, and spent most of that week and the following week at Miss Shirley.

We did spend a couple of days, finishing up at the house of a kindly gentleman, who unfortunately was a bit of a pack rat. His house was built on a concrete slab – which made things a bit easier as there were no joists to rot out. (Most houses there were built on top of 2 concrete blocks placed strategically throughout the building.) MDS had redone the whole interior and had spent a lot of time, moving all his STUFF from room to room as they moved through the house renovating whatever needed it (he was living elsewhere but showed up every day). By the time I got there, I finished up a pesky plumbing problem, in his bathroom, and we started to move all his stuff back into the correct rooms. A day later our site director, signed off on a completion notice and we were done.

Then we moved to Miss Shirley's house. (it seems that down in Louisiana, all women regardless of marital status or age, are called Miss at least in the poorer areas we were in) MDS had redone her roof, and exterior siding, her kitchen, main bedroom and had a washroom to complete plus some other odds and ends. I did not know it yet, but I ended up spending most of my 2 weeks in that washroom. It was very tight, so a lot of the time I was on my own.

Miss Shirley was an elderly (this means older than me) very interesting lady. She was mostly blind, and her husband had passed away some 10 years ago. Her son Rodney lived at home with her, and seemed to have trouble finding work. Rodney, had a girlfriend, and a daughter by her, whom we met – all nice people. We would overhear, Miss Shirley chatting with her son's girlfriend – offering advice on many subjects. The whole time I worked there Miss Shirley was always home. This made work in their only washroom – shall we say interesting.

FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency – in the US they help if there is a disaster), and MDS had determined that the washroom, partially, as a result of the flood, needed to be rebuilt. I determined, in my mind, that 90% of the issues were present before flood. No matter, FEMA pays for materials, MDS for labour and for 2 weeks, I'm the labour – all good.

It was an adventure. With my trusty Jesse, at my side, we started to pull out the old tub and shower. It was the old cast iron style, and weighed a ton. There were 3 sets of doors to navigate to get it out of the house. It was a bit of a chore but with Rodney helping us we managed.

We piled all the debris at the side of the road. As a result of the flood, even a year and a half later, the city comes by once per week, with trucks and loaders, to take away mounds of garbage.

Next was the flooring. There were many layers – all rotten. Finally we got down to the toilet. It turned out that a previous reno (Miss Shirley told me her husband was planning on doing it before he passed, but never got to it, so she managed to get her brother in law to do it), had left the toilet too high. The wax seal was not engaged. (I'm not a plumber, but my Uncle Jake taught me that this is very important.) Since the wax seal was not really working, every flush moved a bit of water into the layers of flooring, and had started to rot not only the flooring, but the floor joists as well.

Did I say it was a mess? Did I say this was the only washroom in the house?

Once we got that deep into it, we were looking at replacing floor joists. I would arrive at site, and the 1<sup>st</sup> thing I would do is ask Miss Shirley if the washroom was good to go. If yes, off came the toilet, and it got moved into the hall. Then just before lunch the toilet would go back on again. After lunch back off. Plus the occasional emergency.

One day I timed myself. Without help, I could have the toilet which I had moved into the hall, back sitting in its place, connected to running water, and ready to be used, in 90 seconds. I can't be certain, but I believe that is an MDS record.

In the mean- time Esther was busy doing lots of caulking and trimming some windows, and building a wheel chair ramp with the other Denis, as they finished up a couple of houses.

The week went fast, and before we knew it, volunteers were leaving, and the weekend was upon us. We spent Saturday and half of Sunday, in the French Quarter of New Orleans, enjoying the jazz bands who were there warming up for the following week which just happened to be the New Orleans Jazz Festival. I knew folks from work who were there for the entire week enjoying the festival and of course all the Cajun food, that New Orleans is famous for.

That Sunday the new volunteers rolled in – well mostly flew in from Seattle. We found out that Darrel, age 83, used to organize 1 -3 MDS trips per year. He would try to sign up as many folks as possible from the surrounding churches in the Seattle area. (we also found out that we kind of knew Darrel and his wife Linda. It turned out that they were on the same Mennonite Heritage Cruise organized by Walter Unger, that we were on in September 2000, just after 9-11). Being in his early 80's now, he has handed this job of organizing, over to Kevin (a renovations contractor). They had a crew of 11 people from the Seattle area in Washington. One fellow's nickname was "Wizard". He was an IT specialist with Boeing (I have not asked him about the Boeing 737 MAX – it only came to me now as I was writing this).

Kevin the organizer, explained MDS to us this way. "We love MDS. They make it easy for short termers to volunteer. They are so well organized, have such good leadership, and find meaningful work, people who really need help." This comment was kind of directed at us because he thought that since we were crew leaders, we must be longer termers. We did not correct his perception, but it has since helped influence us.

There was also, Todd from Seattle, (a dentist with his daughter Kate), who meets his brother Tracy (another home renovator), from Tennessee once per year, on MDS trips. Plus Joe, an organic farmer from Kentucky, who goes MDSing with his son Jacob from Florida once per year. Just a whole lot of interesting people. Most of week 2, saw me in Miss Shirley's washroom. When we pulled out the tub we found termite damage under sections of the drywall right around the room, so we pulled that all out. Then we started to rebuild. First new joists and flooring, new dry wall where needed. Then the new one piece shower and tub unit. It took 3 guys, 2 hours to get it through the rest of the house and through the small door into the washroom. A lot of measuring, turning up- side down and wiggling. After this came plumbing (by crawling under the house), a new bathroom vanity, mudding, and painting. By Friday, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, I put the last coat of paint on, hung a fixture, added some new towel and toilet paper racks. Then a couple of hours of cleanup, and Miss Shirley had a livable house again.

Through all this I had at most 2 helpers and some days none as there was not enough space for 2 many people.

Now Esther, or rather Miss Esther as her crew took to calling her, on the other hand, was running a crew of 11 or more. She and her crew had a whole house to refurbish including kitchen, bathroom, living room and 3 bedrooms. The owner Miss Rita had to move in with her brother after the flood in 2016, but came by whenever she could. She was working 2 jobs to make ends meet.



*Miss Esther with Miss Rita's neighbor Bill, who kept an eye on the site, he made gumbo one day for lunch for the whole crew. It looked suspicious but was great, according to Esther.*



We normally like to go to MDS to chill out. You just do whatever you're told, and have fun chatting with fellow MDSers. You also chat with clients and get to listen to their interesting, often sad, sometimes funny stories. Play cards after dinner. All very relaxing. Now, we found ourselves making lists of materials required, planning work for all the volunteers, finding out about local building codes, meetings with the director after dinner, organizing tools, vans and transportation every morning and just generally being a little more stressed than normal. But all good.

Esther's crew from Seattle were generally very well off, and VERY driven. It took all of Esther's leadership skills (ask her about volunteer Joyce and the schinagans she put her through), to keep ahead of her crew. They desperately wanted the house to have a kitchen, washroom, and one bedroom, complete by the end of their week, so that Miss Rita, could move back home.

Then we found out that MDS was pulling out of Lafayette, at the end of that week. We were the last crew. Well then the Seattle volunteers were even more driven to get Miss Rita into her house and to push Miss Esther to make it all happen. They ended up working later than normal on Friday and had just about met their goal but not quiet. There was no water, and the bathroom floor was not complete.

That Saturday, Dave and I still had time to run out to Miss Rita's house and hook up the water, finish the bathroom, and generally have the house done enough that Miss Rita could move in. We felt comfortable that the remaining work would be completed either by a local contractor or some of Miss Rita's extended family. Miss Esther that evening, emailed her entire Seattle crew and told them the good news.





Miss Rita's completed kitchen with new lower units, repainted, original uppers and nice flooring.



Week 2 crew, mostly from Seattle

Summer is the slow time for MDS, with, depending on the number of volunteers, with perhaps only 5 sites being worked on. Then fall gets busy and in winter, especially January and February, they can have 17 sites, with over 200 weekly volunteers. This is why, being April, that the Lafayette site was being closed down. So Miss Esther and I decided to stay a couple more days, and help with packing things up. This was interesting, as you got some insight into all the logistics involved, and how all the trucks and vans, get back to home base in Virginia, full of tools, kitchen gear, and washroom, laundry and sleeping equipment. It was a great trip. Since then, Miss Esther and I have taken MDS leadership training in Pennsylvania. Esther will most likely start as assistant cook, and I will be a crew leader, hopefully for a 1 month term January or February, 2020.

~ Erv and Esther Willms

## Thwaites Family Story

My Grandfather, Reginald Francis Thwaites, was born in 1895 in Hastings, England. He was the 3<sup>rd</sup> child of 7 born to Stephen & Rebecca Thwaites. My Great Grandfather was not a wealthy man, he worked driving a one-horse carriage hauling and delivering mail. When he got sick and died at age 39 from Chronic Rheumatism, my Great Grandmother was left broke with 7 children to look after – an impossible situation. She ended up putting the boys into an orphanage– I can't imagine how terrible she must have felt with the youngest being only 4 years old at the time. Some of the boys went into the Barnardo Home and some of them went into The National Children's Home & Orphanage in London. Over the next few years, the boys were all shipped to Canada to work on farms, which was very common in England in those days.

My Grandfather came to Canada in 1909 at the age of 14. He left Liverpool on March 18, 1909 on the SS Canada, and arrived in Halifax on March 26, 1909. Then he travelled by train to Hamilton to stay at the affiliate home. His first family stay was in Wellandport with the Snider Family, who were grain farmers, and he stayed there for 2 years. His pay was room and board plus \$6/month.

After 2 years with the Sniders, he moved to Jordan Station and lived and worked with the Sylvester Kratz Family. This is where he learned to grow peaches and other fruit, which turned into a multi-generational business. My Grandfather thrived with the Kratz family, and eventually bought 10 acres from them so that he could start his own farm.

My Grandfather married my Grandmother in 1919. She was from a local farm family. They had 4 children, my father being the oldest son. My father moved to Niagara on the Lake and bought a farm in 1946 after his service in the Canadian Army. It is here that we have farmed ever since.

In writing this story, I have realized that our strength as a church, or as a community or country, doesn't come from our diversity like some of our politicians like to tell us. Our diversity is our background and our history. Our strength comes from shared experience. We share our Christian faith, we share our family's historical struggle to get to Canada, and we share our own lives here – living and work together, and going to school and socializing together in Niagara.



~ submitted by John Thwaites



## Our Sweetheart, Jack

Since asking for prayers for a surgery that Jack had back in July many people have asked about Jack and how he is. After Chris's moving sermon on Sunday, September 1, and after Lani Gade's persuasion, I am sharing a little bit about the life of our grandson, Jack.

Jack is the son of our middle son, Stephen, and his wife, Kim. They live in Oakville. On June 28, 2014, Jack was born, after 40 hours of labour. I will not go into great detail but Jack was lacking oxygen during the birth due to the refusal of a caesarean section. He was born with Cerebral Palsy, a condition marked by impaired muscle coordination (spastic paralysis) and/or other disabilities, typically caused by damage to the brain before or at birth. Jack is 5 years old and can crawl by pushing himself, cannot sit totally alone for a long time and is learning to speak. He goes through more therapy and stretching than is imaginable, goes to a private school and tries his hardest at whatever he does. He is very smart and intuitive. He is very loved by his parents and family.

Jack is such an adorable guy. He is like any boy who goes ballistic with cars and motors. He loves and is loved. When we see Jack he is just like our other grandchildren. Yes, he requires more work but doesn't have an attitude and is just as responsive as Rachel and Rebecca when it comes to hugs, attention, and ice cream! He and I love going to Harvey's and having a hamburger and fries and then a Gelato. And he will definitely let me know which flavour he wants. He says enough words that he can convey what his needs are. As was mentioned in Chris's sermon (that I mentioned at the beginning), my main concern is that people don't look at Jack's disability but that they look at his face and see the beautiful child inside. He loves playing with kids and it is an education for kids to learn to stay with Jack and not run away and play somewhere else. Jack cannot catch up. But he certainly will try. Jack's smile and laugh can

light up the room. Jack is a 'light' to us. He shows us what God can create to humble us. He has been 'carefully and wonderfully made' (Psalm 139:14 I praise you because I am **fearfully and wonderfully made**; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.).

Jack went to the States in July for surgery to loosen up his muscles (in simple terms). The surgery went well and he is in braces. It is a little, but very important, step forward to helping Jack walk and use his hands. Thank you to all who prayed for our little Jack and have asked how he is. We look forward to bringing him to church soon.

~ Submitted by Linda Pankratz





## A LESSON FROM A LITTLE ONE

Renate Dau Klaassen

On June 2nd, NUMC celebrated the dedication of 5 little ones born into our church family, and shared a message on some of the lessons children can teach us adults. One lesson is that of perspective — the ability to see things from a whole new point of view, a fresh angle that becomes a shared experience of wonder and renewal.

My 18 month-old grandson Theo was outside one day recently, under the supervision of his uncle Daniel. There were some cars parked nearby, and Theo became particularly fascinated with something on the back bumper of one of them, looking closely, pointing, and saying “Eyes! Eyes!”



Daniel could not imagine what there would be on the back of a car that might resemble eyes to a toddler, and stooped down to look from Theo's perspective. This is what he saw!

As adult thinkers, conditioned by symbols & traditions, we see a crown, representing our country's identity as part of the commonwealth under the ceremonial rule of the British Monarchy. As a little fellow, just learning names for what he sees, Theo sees eyes!



We as a church, raised among the familiar practices, values, and vocabulary for who we are and what we do, may sometimes become oblivious to what others see, who are new in our circle, who didn't grow up in a church environment and aren't familiar with why we do what we do or believe what we believe. We can learn a lot about ourselves, by looking at our surroundings from their perspective, and consider what we need to explain, so it makes sense to them; what we should change, to make life among us more welcoming; and what we can simply laugh about or even celebrate!

Of course, now I can't help but see eyes on every Ontario license plate, and I think of Theo and smile! The little ones, the new-comers, the fringe-folks among us can change our perspective, and sometimes change is a really good thing.

*Never too old to learn or too young to teach!*

## “Walk a Mile in Her Shoes” Update...

Some time has passed since I introduced myself and told you about my participation in the Gillian's Place “Walk a Mile in Her Shoes”. For those who may not know me, I am Logan Fieguth. I am a 16 year old who attends Laura Secord High School and I have grown up here at NUMC.

**For 2019, I have been given the honor of being asked to be the Youth Ambassador for this event.**

As the Youth Ambassador, I am required to attend local events and speak about the role Gillian's Place has in our community. I was asked to participate in a photo shoot with the corporate ambassadors. I am responsible for planning a mini walk with my peers at Laura Secord High School, to be held in October. Of course, I also need to raise awareness and collect donations to raise the much needed funds to support the work Gillian's Place does in our community. In addition as Ambassador, I am expected to organize a fundraiser of my own. I have chosen to do a bottle drive collection from September 1<sup>st</sup> to October 5<sup>th</sup>. I welcome any and all donations of empty bottles that can be returned for deposit. We have set up a collection area at our house or let me know and I can come and pick up any donations you may have.



2019 will be my seventh year walking in pink shoes at the Pen Centre. I am proud every year to be surrounded by so many men and boys from our Niagara Community who come out to participate and show their support by taking a stand against violence towards women and children. This year again I am forming the team “**Logan's Well Heeled Walkers**”.

I would love to see the men and youth of NUMC join me.

You have been my role models and support system. I have watched the men (and ladies) around me as they volunteer to support the work of our church - how you lean on each other in a time of need. I learned from all of you at a young age what it means to be a volunteer and how rewarding it is to give of yourself to someone else. I have been influenced by my Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, AV team and musicians. You have all helped mold me into the person I am. Thank you. I welcome anyone who would like to participate in the walk or make a donation to contact me and I can send you the link to the sign up/donation page.

**Saturday, October 19th, 2019** will mark the 14th annual Walk a Mile in HER Shoes: The Men's March to End Violence Against Women. All proceeds to support the work of Gillian's Place. The event will take place at the Pen Centre, Event Court with registration beginning at 9:30 am. There will be guest speakers, entertainment, awards ceremony, food, drinks and so much more! Walk a Mile in HER Shoes ® is a symbolic march that gives men the opportunity to take a stand against the societal restrictions placed on women and specifically the issue of violence against women and children; it shows that men are willing to stand together with women in making the world a safer place for women and children. By taking part in the pledged Walk, you will be making a statement that violence against women and children is not just a women's issue - it's EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS and must be solved by the entire community.

***Walk the Walk. Make a difference. And let the "healing" begin!***

Contact me at: [fieguthe@gmail.com](mailto:fieguthe@gmail.com) or 905-468-9788

*Congratulations Logan for being chosen the Youth Ambassador. We are so proud of you! We need more young people like you to remind us “older folk” of our responsibility to also look beyond our church borders for important causes to support.* (LWU editors)



## Dessert and Music

In April, the Education Committee announced a “Dessert and Music” evening in our church auditorium. What an interesting idea, I thought, as we purchased our \$2 tickets in advance of the Saturday May 4<sup>th</sup> event.

Upon our arrival, it was clear that many others had thought the same, as the auditorium was filled to near-capacity, sitting around the round tables. The room was beautifully decorated, and the desserts were placed, buffet-style, along the side wall. Some of the desserts were not exactly “Mennonite”, as we had bumped into a few familiar faces shopping for sweets and supplies the day before at my favourite store: Costco! However, everything was absolutely delicious!

Shortly after the desserts were devoured, the music portion of the evening began, with entertainment presented by the NOTL Ukesters. This is a group of ukulele-playing members of a wide community, formed in 2012, who gather once a week on Sunday afternoons at the NOTL Community Centre. They are led by Alan Ash, and have varying levels of experience from beginners to advanced. They welcome anyone to join, and as they say, it’s all about having fun. Watching them perform, it was clear that they were doing just that!

Out of an enrollment of over 200 members, approx. 30 were there to entertain, and the stage was packed. We saw several familiar faces in the group, including our own Emily Fieguth, who was playing the bass ukulele. I thoroughly enjoyed their selections and was really impressed by the range of their repertoire including a lot of “Goldie Oldies” to recent pop songs. They sang and played with obvious joy, passion and skill, and a lot of smiles.

Their leader introduced each of the songs and quizzed us on the year that some of the songs were written. One of my favourites was ‘You are My Sunshine’. This is a song that I often sang to my children and now my grandchildren. Our table correctly guessed 1939 because we are brilliant (or rather, because it was written on the lyric song sheet that was placed on the tables for this sing-a-long).

**Overall, I would rate this evening as a Double D... Delicious and Delightful. I give it 5 stars out of 5. When is the next one?**

\*\*\*\*\*

~Erika Janzen



## The Bustard Islands

~ Erv Willms

Sometime this winter, I mentioned to John Bergen that I hadn't been up to the Bustard Islands, since the last time we went, ten years ago, and did we want to go again. We did. Scott MacGregor (David Bergen the dentist's assistant Jennifer's husband and intrepid outdoors guy and wine maker at Diamond Group the old 20 Bees winery) joined the 2 Bergen brothers, David (many of you will know him as the owner and lead dentist, in Virgil for many years of Stone Road Dental, he now has a small dental office above his garage in Port Dalhousie) and John (John has the bagel/bread stores in the Kitchener area that have no cashier as they work on the honour system), and myself, and we headed up.

The Bustard Islands are located just off the north shore of Georgian Bay, in the area of the mouth of the French River. Typical access is via canoe or boat, most likely leaving from either Britt or Key Harbour just off Hwy 69, about 4-1/2 hours from Virgil.



As you all know, spring this year was pretty much a disaster with loads of rain and cool temperatures. However as they say timing is everything. We had perfect weather. We drove up through monsoon conditions on a Wednesday in June, and spent the night at the Bergen family cottage in Sundridge. That evening we had a lovely sunset and thereafter 4 days of perfect conditions. We were in the islands on Thursday, and came back Sunday, again in monsoon conditions. Everyone up there said this was the 1<sup>st</sup> time they had 4 days of good weather in a row, since last 2018.

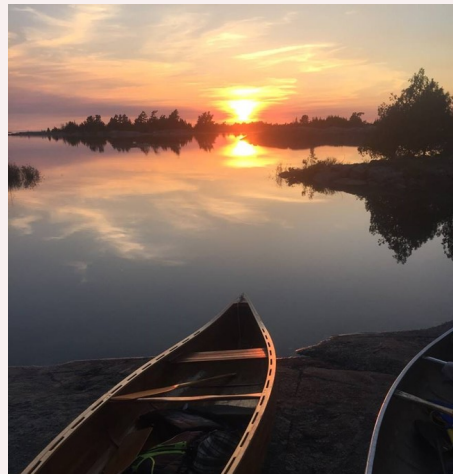
The water was at record highs and so all the small back channels were navigable. The heart of the Bustards is a paradise: a sort of convoluted Venice of the north. In an area of roughly 3 miles by 2 miles, sit 550 islands of rocky Canadian Shield scoured and sculpted by the last ice age, covered in places by pine trees that could easily be inspiration for the Group of 7 guys.

They are located about 2 miles offshore at the top of Georgian Bay. This is far enough off shore that there are no Black Flies. And mosquitoes, there are some

but mostly the breezes keep them away. The islands are rugged very few boats come in as it is easy to take out a propeller. Even in canoes we sometimes would get hung up on sub surface rock, in what looked like open water. As well, being islands, there are no portages, which allows for easier packing, and extra conveniences (ie lawn chairs, gourmet food, nothing freeze dried, – did I mention the Bergen brothers are both excellent chefs) to be brought along. Some of you will now doubt say that this is not canoeing, and I would not argue with you. It is however spending and enjoyable weekend in spectacular wilderness.

David knows the area well. He is part owner of Beganon Island. It was the summer cottage, for a wealthy American family in the business of among other things, making high end silver ware, who came north from New York every summer with their family and staff. Beganon, is a few km south of the Bustards and so David knows all the locals, and how to get about in the area. He arranged a water taxi out of Britt, just off highway 69, which took us in and out of the Bustards. These larger boats can easily traverse any rough waters.

It is possible to canoe into the Bustards from Britt, but it is also possible for Westerly winds to pick up on Georgian Bay, and either keep you on shore, or keep you in the Islands for days at a time. The water taxi dropped us in deep water at the edge of the island chain. Once there we were under the protection of island after island, where even big winds and storms, produce only small waves.



It is crown land and as such, no reservations are required. Our whole weekend there, we saw no one, although we did hear a small motor boat (with fisher men we summarize) but could not see it. Once in the islands, we paddled around with our heavily laden canoes, till we found our camp site (you have to have good topographical maps or you WILL get lost). There we pitched our tents, dropped our gear, and happily paddled around for a couple of hours, noting how high the water was, and what all had changed from our previous trip 10 years ago, at which time the water level was particularly low.

Our days ran something like this. Up for a breakfast of eggs around 8:00. Exploring via canoe from 9:00 till 12:00. Back for a sandwich lunch of bread, cheese and cold cuts, some reading, some mittagschlaf for a couple of hours, more canoeing and exploring from 3:00 till 6:00, back for some fabulous dinner around the fire, with dusk around 10:30, and off for a good night's sleep in our own tents (that right we each had our own tent).

**It was a spectacular weekend. Highly recommended.**



### 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](mailto:wlgade@bell.net)

Kathy Rempel | 905-468-3829 | [jrempe16@icloud.com](mailto:jrempe16@icloud.com)