



MCA Newsletter

CHRISTMAS

DECEMBER 2013

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Community Building	1
Calgary Chin	2
North Edmonton Ministry	3
Springridge	3
Calgary First Hymn Sing	4
Calgary Vietnamese	5
Calgary First	5
Edmonton Vietnamese	6
Foothills	7
IVEP Pastoral Assistant	7
Church Planting	8
Bergthal	8
Spirit Blows Where It Wills	9
Equipping Day	10
Pastors' Retreat	10
Hymn Crossword	11

Community Building Committee

Hello!

Don't forget to check the schedule to see when your turn is for creating a larger submission. If you feel stuck please check out the suggestions below for some guidelines on what makes a good article!

*Please note that all churches are welcome to share in each newsletter.

SUGGESTIONS

We would like to encourage you to think about these things as you decide what to submit:

- Updates and upcoming events
- Encouragement and stories
- Spiritual insights, stories, and commentaries
- Youth activities
- Congregational priorities and new program initiatives
- **Photos!** (Max 3/church)
- Hilarious jokes, anecdotes, and informational bits
- Length:
 - 1/2 page (300 words) is an excellent small addition.
 - 1 page (600 words) is a great larger addition.

Thank-you so much for all your wonderful articles! It has been a pleasure creating a space for churches to share and connect. Next up: Spring Edition!

Allison

March

Trinity
Lethbridge
Edmonton Chinese
Camp Valaqua
Rosemary

June

Edmonton First
Bergthal
Calgary First
Calgary Chinese

September

MCA Moderator
Holyrood
Springridge
Calgary Vietnamese
Calgary Word of Life

December

MCA Area Minister
Foothills
Tofield
Edmonton Vietnamese
Calgary Chin





▲
WORSHIP SERVICE AT CAMP VALAQUA

"I strongly believe the women's prayers made our church stronger, more faithful and with fewer worries."

How Blessed Are We?

PETER SANG
CALGARY CHIN

Greetings to you all in Jesus' name!

This is a great opportunity to show how the Chin Church has been blessed every moment since we were established in 2011. This year, the Chin church has experienced many spiritual and physical activities such as Vacation Bible School, crusades, joint worship services, confession training, leadership training, and English classes.

On March 24, Willard Metzger visited the Chin church and shared his wonderful thoughts, encouraging words and support. It was good to hear Doreen and Hugo Neufeld's "Mennonite Confession Training" on May 5 and 26. This summer was special for our children because they learned and experienced God's immeasurable love from Foothills Mennonite Church's VBS program. About thirty participants including children, volunteers, and parents enjoyed the opportunity and one of the volunteers told me, from her heart, that "it was powerful." We had another dedicated preacher from Ottawa and we organized another VBS week from August 5-11. How blessed are we?

Foothills Mennonite Church gave us a great chance to worship with them at Camp Valaqua on September 14. The adventure of Camp Valaqua reminded us of our home in the Chin state of Burma which is similar in a beautiful, natural, wilderness setting. This was a wonderful day with a yummy lunch and great hospitality. The

Chin people spent most of their time canoeing. Pastor Leng Nawn Thang had the privilege to share how the Chin people came through many difficulties and how God has guided us to Canada. We are thankful that Foothills Mennonite Church arranged a full subsidy for registration, food and bus rental for VBS and also for worship at Camp Valaqua. How blessed are we?

This year many dedicated speakers delivered the word of God. We had a one-week crusade with Rev. Leng Thang in April, a two-week crusade and leadership training from Rev. Hre Mang from Indianapolis in June, and two weeks with Atlanta Rev. Khaw Lian Uk in October. This year we had one newborn member and two youth baptisms. Pastor Leng and his wife Hin Tida are truly devoted to our Sunday school classes of about 25 children. Some of the youth actively worship with their musical talents and we hope more young people will come to love the church. The women's group regularly spends the entire Saturday evening gathering, sharing their daily experiences, happiness and sorrows, and praying for various agendas at home. I strongly believe the women's prayers made our church stronger, more faithful and with fewer worries. How blessed are we?

Brenda Tiessen-Wiens's tireless volunteer time with a small English class has significantly changed some of our personal lives, and we hope her commitment will continue to improve not only our Eng-

lish skills but also our professions. How blessed are we?

I remember when I was a child in Burma, my family waited every year and anticipated the best way we could celebrate Christmas. According to Chin beliefs and traditions, Christmas was the most exciting and special event of the whole year. This year we have planned a special celebration called "Sweet December" with another Chin church on December 1. The Sunday school usually has Christmas caroling, and typically we have a special worship service and meal on December 25. Almost every year, individual families have brought the Christmas meal and this year two families have already booked Christmas and New Years meals and covered other costs. How blessed are we?

We want to express our sincere gratitude to all of you for your support and prayers. Especially, we thank the Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church who allows us to use their sanctuary free of charge. It reminds us that we are not strangers, we are not alone and our worship is more secure and comfortable than before. Let's keep remembering to pray for each other to become more faithful servants and grow in kindness among our neighbors. I hope God's blessings are constantly flowing, not only for the Chin Church, but also in everyone and let's thank God with our hearts this Christmas and New Year.

How blessed we are!



North Edmonton Ministry

LOREN & DONNA ENTZ

Two years ago we met a couple, "H" and "S", in our apartment building. They were from Iraq but had lived many years in Iran. One day they showed me the pottery piece that they place on their prayer mat when praying, exposing to me their Shiite identity. I couldn't go very deep with "S" in friendship, because her English is very limited. But Loren met "H" one day and he asked we pray for a job for himself and for his son who was unemployed as well. We prayed and shortly both had jobs. Since then, they have moved up the street, but they always bring gifts of gratitude on all Muslim holidays. When the youngest, a high school student, "A", came with a full armload of groceries for us, we welcomed him in for a visit. He had recently done a field trip to various religious cen-

tres, and in response we explained that our faith has Jesus central.

Recently Loren met "S" at the bus stop. She was shaken that day with the news of at least fifty killed in Iraq on their most holy day. So that evening I called to give my condolences. "S" was not yet done her evening prayers so "A" took the chance to ask more questions. He asked me why Jesus died, which Muslims and the Qur'an clearly deny even happened. I said we believe that God allowed his death so that we could return to a right relation with God. But also when Jesus called the religious people of his day to be faithful and return to true submission to God, that it got people so upset that they had him killed. "A" was sharp in saying that he thought the Romans were involved too, and I agreed. Then I

spoke to his mother and from our sharing of family news, they promised to send Baklava pastry with us to celebrate Christmas with our children. They are still showing appreciation for the blessings our prayers brought to their life. We ended up promising "A" that we would take him to church sometime.

Mennonite Church Alberta recently and graciously paid my way to the Church Planting Congress. A pastor, Bob Roberts, said that when he meets pastors, he doesn't ask them how their church is doing. Instead he asks them how their city is doing. "Are you being a blessing in your neighborhood and city in an Abrahamic way?" "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Gen 12:3b



Springridge

HAROLD SCHILK

Cosmetic surgery is not for the faint of heart. While most of us are accustomed to the well-earned lines of experience on our faces, when it comes to church buildings – that is another matter.

This fall the worn and pitted siding which has protected our church for many a year was stripped off, the underneath covered in protective wrap, and a bright new white vinyl

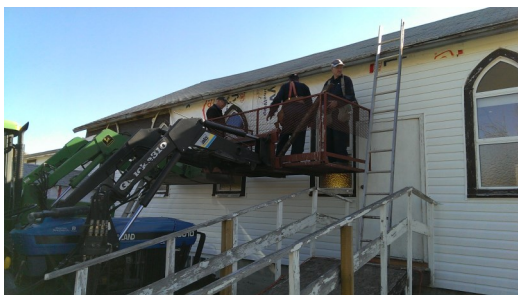
siding applied. Thanks for the many hands who pitched in with equipment, skill and finances. Even though some trim work remains, the old church now appears much younger and brighter in appearance – almost wrinkle free.

The other item of note for sharing is that our pastor (that would be me) had a two week experience travelling to China on a pastor's exchange. Sponsored by Mennonite Church Canada and the Anabaptist-leaning group China Vision, I had a very stimulating experience with pastors from Ontario west (plus Macau Witness missionaries George and

T o b i a Veith). Our capable and generous leaders

were Jeanette Hanson and Hongtao Yin who introduced us to Chinese culture and the rapidly expanding Chinese church. A return visit from the Chinese pastors is being planned for this coming spring. On November 3 I was our congregation's missions speaker and presented reflections and images of an experience which I am still mentally unpacking.

Blessings to all of you as you unpack the arrival of our Lord and the opportunities of the new year.



Lethbridge

RUTH DUECK



September....summer is over...our 10:00 a.m. worship service with our coffee time afterward has ended. Sunday School classes started on September 8. We have classes for pre-school children (ages 3-4), primary children (kindergarten – gr 5), junior youth (gr 6-9), and high school (gr 9-12). There are two adult classes as well; one class uses the adult study curriculum and the other is a study of the book titled “What we talk about when we talk about God” by Rob Bell. We have some excellent teachers who facilitate stimulating discussions.

We said our fond farewells to two of our voluntary service workers, Christianna and Michelle, who were returning to Germany. Stefan and Isabelle opted to extend their stay in Canada; Stefan renewed his contract with “Streets

Alive” and Isabelle is now involved with L’Arche as a full-time assistant. While we were saying farewell we welcomed 3 new volunteers: Daniel from France, and Luise and Damaris from Germany. The arrivals and departures overlapped during a 2 week time period, so there were many trips back and forth to the Calgary airport!

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was held in Lethbridge on October 9-10. This was a good opportunity for some of us to listen and learn about the legacy of the Residential school system and the impact it had on individuals. These hearings play an important role in the Mennonite church’s ongoing quest for social justice, especially in our local community.

On October 18-19 our church hosted Dr. Norman Wirzba

(from Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina) to speak on the theme “God’s vision for a reconciled creation”. He provided good insight into creation being a part of God’s world and our role in creation care. There was open and often controversial dialogue!

The month of November seems to be a time where many of us are involved with Christmas season preparations. The Sunday school is busy with rehearsals for the upcoming Christmas program, musicians are practicing, and actors are busy memorizing their parts. The Sunday school program is always presented in the evening of our annual church Christmas banquet; and both of these events are a special part of our Advent.



“Hallelujah” from
Handel’s Messiah
“..almost raised
the roof.”

First Calgary Hosts

ED KAUFFMAN

Inter-Mennonite Hymn-Sing

The sanctuary at First Mennonite, Calgary rang with song on Sunday evening, December 1, as over 200 people from at least five congregations in Calgary came together for the annual Inter-Mennonite First Advent Hymn-Sing. Choirs from Foothills, Calgary Vietnamese, Trinity and Abbeydale

as well as the bell choir from First, shared in the evening along with spirited congregational singing led by Jacob Wiebe and accompanied by Elsie Wiebe. An offering for MCC Global Family partner, HEPAC, raised over \$5,000. The service ended with a volunteer choir, directed by

Harvey Driedger, singing “Hallelujah” from Handel’s *Messiah*. As someone commented, “It almost raised the roof.” Everyone was invited to bring a plate of goodies to share, and there was abundance, as people mingled for fellowship following the service. It was a wonderful way to begin the season.

Calgary Vietnamese

CHAU DANG

English Ministry

God has blessed this past month of October with many blessings of answered prayers within our church! We are grateful for much good news of how the Lord works, whether it be through healing, through the act of worship and prayer, or through new people and new jobs. This has been a great start back from the summer, and even though seasonally, we are heading towards a long road of winter and cold misery, our church still remains in joy and love!

We would love to share some of the great news that has been happening!

After considering many choices and much discussion, our church has

officially chosen a name suitable for our English congregation! We have voted on...

LIGHTHOUSE COMMUNITY CHURCH!

Lighthouse has actually been the name of our English fellowship group for the last few years. Lighthouse reflects our church's mission of being the 'light of Christ', to be a welcoming home to those who may need it, and to be a church that will strive to serve those around us. May the Lord lead us in the direction He wants us to go.

Back in June we made plans to meet with a pastoral candidate for our English Congregation - our congregation has been without a pastor for approximately two years. God has done amazing things in our church through the people and our

leaders, but now, in His perfect timing, he sent a candidate with whom we went through the interview process at the end of September-beginning of October. After much discussion with our congregation, Board members, Search Committee, and the Vietnamese Board of Elders, we sent him a letter of invitation to become our pastor - as we all agreed that he would be the right fit for our church. Shortly after, we received an acceptance call from our NEW CVMC ENGLISH PASTOR, Enoch Chee! Praise the Lord for God hears our prayers and knows our needs. He will take on the position as our English Pastor in mid-November. We would like to thank everyone who has kept us in their prayers!



Calgary First

RITA FISS

On September 29, First Mennonite Church turned the clock back to recognize Jacob Wiebe's 50 years at First Mennonite Church. During the worship service, Jake delivered the message titled, "It's Been a Privilege," making that his 2422'nd time preaching at First Mennonite! His first visit to FMC was on July 2, 1963 and he commented that a number of people still sit in the same pew now as they did back then!

The first message Jake ever delivered at FMC was on Romans 8: 28, the same passage that he used at this celebration. This time, though, he preached in English, not German.

Jake was Ordained on September 10, 1967 and for the first few years he held the title of Angestellte Arbeiter (Hired Worker) becoming the Lead Minister in 1969. He held that position until 1993. At FMC, Jake was involved in 96 weddings and was a part of 201 funeral. Since 1995, Jake has been pastoring at Calgary Christian Assembly, a non-denominational Chinese Christian Church.

Jake's challenge to each of us is to use the gifts that God has entrusted to us and to see that as a privilege. He has always preached the Gospel according to three basic guidelines: preach what the Bible says, preach the whole Bible, and preach with

courage, conviction and confidence. He shared that he was privileged to participate in a multitude of special moments in the lives of individuals and families in the church; including being at the bedside of people as they breathed their last breath, leaving this life and entering eternity.

Jake's message concluded with a thank you for the love and support over the years; for allowing him to fulfill God's will in his life in this congregation. He reminded us that God works for the good of those who love Him and you are called according to His purpose.



▲ JACOB WIEBE

Edmonton Vietnamese

THOMAS PHAM
KUEN YEE



CHURCH DEDICATION CEREMONY

"We
would like to
thank all of our
guests for
coming and
for their
congratulatory
gifts as
well."

This Christmas, we celebrate and rejoice as we reflect upon the fact that God has given to us His Greatest Gift, the gift of His Son, "who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) It is truly amazing that the Birth of Christ symbolizes the hope of eternal salvation. Here at Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church, as we marvel at God's Greatest Gift, we recognize that He has blessed our church with an abundance of great gifts that are very special. Most recently we recount three of God's special gifts.

1. God's Special Gift of a Church.

Beyond our dreams, we have been able to purchase our own church building this year. Many members worked tirelessly to beautify, remodel and enhance the church structure in order that we may dedicate it back to God. After 8 months of hard work, we held a Church

Dedication Ceremony on Saturday, September 21st, 2013. We would like to thank all of our guests for coming and for their congratulatory gifts as well.

2. God's Special Gift of Professional Performers.

Singers, Hoang Nam Nguyen and Quynh Nga Nguyen graced our stage and spearheaded our Evangelistic Outreach on the evening before our church dedication event. The grandeur of their performance lifted our hearts to God and gave us a glimpse of worship in heaven. This event ushered in two converts to our faith by the end of the evangelistic concert.

3. God's Special Gift of Faith and Spiritual Gifts.

We hosted the Student and youth Alphacourses in our church and we had twenty in attendance. In terms of evangelistic outreach, it did not prove successful because our

group was unable to invite non-believers. However, these two Alphacourses helped the youth to build their faith by coming to a deeper understanding of the basic tenets of their faith in Christ. Also, the venue offered the opportunity to develop the spiritual gifts of leadership, teaching and hospitality. It was an event that unified the youth and allowed deeper bonds of love and friendship to develop, as we spent a night and a day at Camp Nakamun, learning about the Holy Spirit. During this time, we also went rock climbing in the frigid, crisp November weather; thus, for most participants, this was a brand new experience they will never forget. Out of the twenty people who enrolled in Alphacourse, four of them (Esther Pham, Rebecca Pham, Austin Huynh and Duy Tang) had perfect attendance to all the teaching sessions, including those sessions at Camp Nakamun.

As we reflect upon all of God's special gifts to us here at Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church, our hearts have been challenged to provide a special monetary gift this Christmas to the Vietnamese Churches in Vietnam and Cambodia. Recent flooding and the after effects of a hurricane have been great setbacks in ministry for these churches. Donations to the work of Witness worker, Pastor Nhien Pham, in Vietnam and Cambodia can be sent to Pastor Thomas.



L to R:

Dr. Vernie Yee • Esther Pham • Rebecca Pham •
Austin Huynh • Pastor Kuen Yee

Missing: Duy Tang



Foothills

KATE JANZEN

This past year at FMC has been exciting for us working in the Out Reach area. Historically there have been unsuccessful attempts to involve the University Heights Community Association and the University of Calgary, but doors have begun to open. The president of the UHCA in dialogue with us came up with a proposal where the community would use our facilities for some important planning meetings. The UHCA does not have a building for meetings. New development proposals were being discussed and many community members became quite concerned about how these new developments would affect them. There were many meetings, and each time they used our building care was taken to leave the

church clean and tidy. When the discussions were over, city hall, developers, and community members had a very difficult time coming to a good agreement. There is a worry about high density housing and increased traffic. Some of these discussions are ongoing but there is some resignation to the fact that the community will experience big changes. In appreciation of the community support from our church, a community committee organized a potluck dinner in our church. There was a huge turnout and the church was warmly thanked for the hospitality.

Another community initiative came from the university just a few blocks away. A program called 'Home Away' pairs up foreign grad-

uate students with folks in churches who are willing to spend time together learning about Calgary customs, church life, and other family events. Our church has seven families who agreed to be friends with these foreign students. On Nov. 10, this group gathered at our church for a potluck dinner. We were 45 in number with only one family absent. We sang the doxology and welcomed everyone to the table. The food was delicious! Chad invited us to some hilarious activities followed by a crokinole tournament. Before we left there was an invitation to our new friends to attend the Christmas choir program in a few weeks.



▲ DOUG,
JOSUÉ, &
CHAD

IVEP Pastoral Assistant

Foothills

Greetings in Jesus Christ to you. I was born on March 8th 1987 in Djigouèra (a village in Burkina Faso, Africa). I am the youngest child of nine children. My family belongs to the Mennonite Church in Burkina Faso.

I went to elementary school in Djigouèra for seven years and I went to Orodara for ten years to attend high school. I passed my entrance exam for university in Bobo-Dioulasso. I have been studying English at the University of Ouagadougou. I have also been attending Bible school there as well.

I have temporarily stopped my studies to take part in the International Volunteer Exchange program (IVEP). This is a program of MCC that offers one year terms from

August to July. It helps many young people like me from many countries to travel so that we can gain new experiences and strength to serve God in love and peace over the world.

I work at Ten Thousand Villages on Crowchild Trail two/three days a week as a volunteer and at Foothill Mennonite Church the remainder of the time as a pastoral assistant. At Ten Thousand Villages I do many activities: I help customers find the product they are looking for, I help to unpack new product, and I sell.

At Foothills Mennonite Church I am part of the pastoral team along with Pastors Doug Klassen and Chad Miller. I have been going on visitations with Erwin Strempler and Jenny Hiebert. I have also been part of the Young Adult Bible Study group. I have shared my testimony

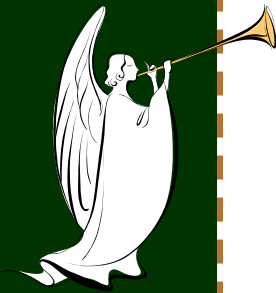
JOSUÉ COULIBALY

in Youth Sunday School, I sing in the choir and often play the drum in worship.

I enjoy my work at both of these places. I can see God's love through my co-workers, my host family (Shami and Deanna, Ethan and Kai Willms), and all of the volunteers and the people in the church. I have experienced the love and peace of the people and enjoy sharing my life with them.

The biggest difference here in Canada compared to my country is the change of temperature!! But I am warm enough. May God richly bless all of you. I look forward to meeting many of you at inter-church events, at pastor's gatherings, and at the conference meetings in the spring.





“..We often
choose whom we
want to share
the gospel with,
or we are
reluctant to
'go'”.

Church Planting Congress 2013 Report

BY KEN &
JODI TSE

Even with the right kind of training and coaching, not everyone can be a church planter. Church planters possess certain personal, ministerial, and intrapersonal characteristics that make them unique. As our church is currently recruiting a church planter to expand our English ministry in reaching out to non-Chinese, what we have learned from this Church Planting Congress gave us valuable insights on the type of person we are looking for, and how we can support him/her to increase the success rate. We were reminded to be Kingdom citizens looking at the big picture; we are to start a church in the world, not for the world. We have to have a kingdom mentality; we are here to build God's kingdom, not “my” church.

We have to do church differently these days because the world is continuously changing. We have massive churches, yet its conversion growth rate is only 1.8%, while Muslim's growth rate is 224%. There is urgency here; we have to do something for the kingdom.

One way is to seek out potential church planters, pastors, and leaders “hidden” in our churches, so that we can mentor them, support and empower them to use their gifts to serve in our churches, in our communities, and in the world.

Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations, and we are to take discipleship seriously. However, it is very hard to “give up everything” to follow Jesus, especially when people of today value security and comfort. Many churches are spending more time planning the worship service than reaching out and discipling. Many Christians have become consumers, looking for the best entertainment the church has to provide. Sadly, when we look around us, many of our friends and loved ones are still non-Christians. If we were to do according to the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations, we'll end up with intercultural churches. However, we often choose whom we want to share the gospel with, or we are reluctant to “go”. Each follower of Jesus Christ has

the responsibility to be His witness. To make disciples of all nations also requires us to have an open mind, to learn of other cultures, and to accept them into our churches.

People tend to value results over relationships. We have to build believers up, not to manipulate them into serving the church, or burn them out in doing so. As each servant serves the Lord, results will vary, and we are not to compare or compete with each other. We are to be faithful in our job, and doing it with gratitude, because faithfulness is success.

We had the opportunity to visit a few Chinese churches in the Greater Toronto Area and talk to some Christians in the area. It is very positive to see the Chinese churches there are very involved in the community and that the Mandarin-speaking congregations are growing rapidly. In fact, many Chinese churches are looking for pastors. We pray that God will rise up more believers to receive training and serve in the church full-time.



Bergthal

NETTIE HILDEBRANDT

It's November, and what a change in weather! Nov. 3 and Nov. 10 were blizzard Sundays, so going out wasn't an option. But our church was open, and there was a message!

This past summer one of our young people graduated as a nurse and her first assignment was at High River hospital, Lauren was excited, but what an experience awaited her - water, water, water and more water; the river had burst its banks!

Lauren has kept a diary of her daily trials, no drinking water, not much food, they felt left out, and no communication!! When would help come? Thank you Lauren for a very interesting message, you had for us that Sunday morning!

On Nov. 23, 7 pm, we had Kim Thiessen's new CD release and concert fund raiser. It was a beautiful evening! Her newest CD is titled: “Even In The Smallest places.” This coming Sunday, Dec. 1, is the

beginning of the Advent season; a time of preparation for Christ's birth! Christmas is just around the corner, what an exciting time of the year! Let us not forget – “Jesus is the reason for the Season”! How exciting it must have been for the lowly shepherds to hear the beautiful message: “a Saviour is born in the town of Bethlehem, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill to men!” sung by heavenly angels in the sky!

Merry Christmas to everyone and have a healthy and happy New Year in 2014.



The Spirit Blows Where It Wills

D.E. HUBERT

ADAPTED BY:
DAN GRABER

There is a line across Africa, just below the Sahel, where aggressive, militant Islam and Christian groups are butting up against each other. On the west end of this very porous line, in Nigeria, we have news reports of the murder of 40 students in the dormitory of an agricultural college. In Jos and Kano, MCC has been working on the peace agenda for many years. Sudan has recently divided and the new country of South Sudan is emerging roughly along this line. In Ethiopia, the country of the largest Mennonite Church in the world, there is an uneasy truce along this line. In Kenya, al Shebab has recently attacked a large shopping mall and killed at least 67 shoppers.

Muslims are the majority on the north side of this line and Pentecostal Christians are a major force on the south side. Neither is particularly amenable to laying down their guns and finding better ways of resolving differences. It would be tragic if the wars of religion in Europe, and particularly the 30 years war between Catholics and Protestantsⁱ, were repeated in Africa over the next century.

In the Levantⁱⁱ the hostility between Muslims and Christians is not abating either. The Coptic Church in Egypt experiences stress, and Christian minorities in countries like Iraq, Iran and Pakistan are experiencing persecution. In the West Bank, the exodus of Arab Christians continues, as it does in Iraq. In North America, attitudes toward Muslims are hardening and Muslims increasingly experience discrimination and hostility.

It is in this milieu that the larger Mennonite Church is attempting to spread the Gospel of Peace. Reference has already been made to these efforts in Nigeria. These efforts are also ongoing in other parts of the Sahel. In the West

Bank and Lebanon MCC has had a peace presence for many years. The exchange of scholars between Iran and Canada is unique and now has a history of more than a decade. These exchanges have attracted much attention, as did the invitation of the President of Iran to dialogue with Mennonites.

Often the Canadian Mennonite carries stories of the interaction of various Mennonite congregations with Muslims, and Mennonite settlement agencies in Montreal, Kitchener-Waterloo, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver have extended the hand of welcome to countless numbers of Muslim refugees. The response of these Muslim refugees to Mennonites is overwhelmingly positive. These interactions have built large reservoir of credibility for Mennonites in the wider Muslim world and gives Mennonites the opportunity to be heard in the Muslim ummah.

In the mid-1960's in Indonesia, the government initiated a pogrom against so called communists, who, coincidentally were largely of Chinese origin. During this time the small Mennonite community gave refuge to those being persecuted and killed, often at some danger to themselves. After the pogroms ended and a new government came to power, the Mennonite Church in Indonesia experienced a significant period of rapid growth. One of the reasons given was that the actions of Mennonites in giving refuge to those being persecuted was seen as a genuine act of compassion rooted in their faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit used the actions of these faithful people to build the Kingdom of God.

In Edmonton the Mennonite Church of Alberta has appointed Donna and Loren Entz to work among Muslim people of Edmonton.

To my knowledge, Donna and Loren are the only church people in Edmonton involved in such a ministry, this despite the fact that Mennonites in Edmonton constitute a tiny, tiny fraction of all the church people in Edmonton. My observation is that they have made a significant impact on the way many from Edmonton's Muslim view Mennonites and Christians. The work of Donna and Loren dovetails with the work and witness of the Edmonton Mennonite Center for Newcomers and together this enables Mennonites to punch way above our weight. (...to use a very unMennonite metaphor)

Several years ago the Holyrood Church began attracting increasing numbers of Sierra Leonean refugees. These refugees are largely of Pentecostal background. As they worshiped with Holyrood people, they began to drink from the fountain of peace theology. They were attracted by this theology, and wanted to share it with their countrymen and women in Africa. This led to an invitation to Werner and Joanne De Jong to travel to Africa to share this peace theology with the Pentecostal Church in Sierra Leone. They have now already made four trips to Africa and their ministry is having a powerful impact among Sierra Leonean Pentecostals - another example of the Spirit blowing where it wills.

The work of Donna and Loren is part of this larger work of the worldwide Mennonite Church in its interactions with the Muslim ummah, from Africa to the Levant to North America. Where and when the Spirit will use this work to build peace and bring new life into being is not for us to say. It is our duty to be faithful in our calling to witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ and to pray that the Spirit will use this witness to bring forth new life in its own time, perhaps even along the line of confrontation that runs all across Africa.

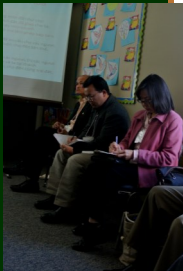


i The wars from 1618 to 1648 depopulated large parts of Europe before governments came to the conclusion that they couldn't carry on and agreed on an arrangement to live in peace.

ii Here used to include the Middle East up to and including Afghanistan and Pakistan.

MCA Equipping Day 2013

DOUG KLASSEN



Beginning something new - it is always a risk. Who will come? Will it go well? Will we cover expenses!?! But what is the church to be if it is not a risk-taker? A number of years ago CMA Ministers and Deacons meetings were dropped in the hopes that something new would emerge. Thanks to Dan Graber's encouragement, that new thing happened on November 9.

Already back in June, Dan asked Pastor Chau Dang of the Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church and I to consider co-hosting a resourcing day that would bring leaders together from across Mennonite Church Alberta. Chau suggested that we host the event on the November long weekend, as that would make travel possible for more of the Vietnamese Church members from Edmonton. Chau also offered to arrange for a Vietnamese lunch to be catered.

After months of planning and the involvement of dozens of people to help organize, 90 people gathered in the sanctuary of Foothills Mennonite Church to begin the day with

worship.

Five streams of workshops were then offered for the participants. The first stream focused on people, history and ongoing issues regarding Canada's history with residential schools and the current efforts with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was led by Ryan Dueck and Will Loewen with Yvonne Johnson (co-author of "A Stolen Life: the Journey of a Cree Woman" with Rudy Wiebe) joining to give personal testimony for the last session.

The second stream was led by Delmar Epp, professor of psychology at Canadian Mennonite University. His focus was on how our prejudices get in the way of the gospel's call to love all of our neighbours.

The third stream was led by Ed Kauffman of First Mennonite Church Calgary. Ed has years of experience as a pastor and also a conference minister. He led three sessions on effective Board/Council leadership in the congregation.

The fourth stream was taught by Pastor Tuyen of Philadelph-

ia. Pastor Tuyen also taught effective church leadership in Vietnamese and then in his last session discussed how outreach can most effectively happen in Asian neighbourhoods.

The fifth stream was brought by Gay Kauffman and Ruth Preston-Schilk. The focus was on Soul-Care. Church leaders can have all of the latest strategies, but if soul care is neglected, the church suffers.

We had very, very positive feedback on the whole day. Many said that they wished more from their church had come. But all of the participants left with many good stories and strategies for use in their church, and a warm sense of fellowship that was shared around the lunch tables. And the Vietnamese lunch was outstanding! Many thanks also to the volunteers from Foothills for the coffee and snacks.

Because of strong attendance, \$800 remains after all expenses have been paid. This money will go to scholarships/bursaries for the MCA Women's Retreat next spring.



TIM WIEBE-
▲ NEUFELD

MCA Pastors' Retreat

DAN GRABER

What do our immediate neighbors have to do with our congregations?

- Did you know the Ten Commandments are about loving our neighbours?
- Did you realize our church programming can cause us to not be good neighbours?
- Did you know the way our

homes and neighbourhoods are constructed keep us from getting to know our neighbours?

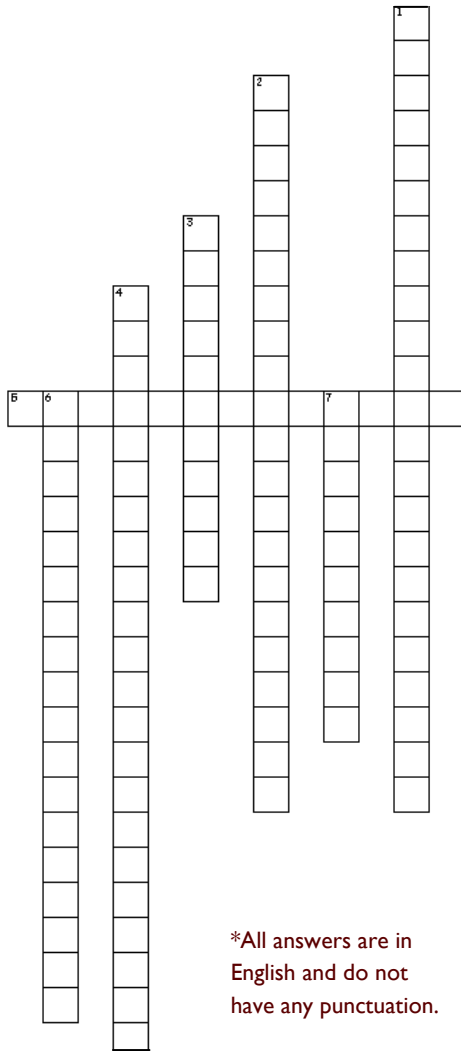
- Did you know it is always a risk that our busyness supporting para-church organizations can keep us from knowing our immediate neighbours?
- Did you know that many of

our congregations are attended by persons who don't live in the neighbourhood of their church?

- Did you know there is a tension between congregations as community and congregations relating to the communities their buildings are in?

Continued on Page 11...

Do You Know Your Christmas Hymns?



*All answers are in English and do not have any punctuation.

Across

5. Verse 3 Lyrics start with "No more let sins and sorrows grow.."

Down

1. Written by Charles Wesley, this hymn was regarded as one of the Great Four Anglican Hymns.

2. Es ist ein Ros entsprungen - translated in English as "a rose has sprung up".

3. Originally in German as Stille Nacht by Josef Mohr (1792-1848), an Austrian priest.

4. Phillips Brooks wrote this poem in 1868 after being inspired by the sight of Bethlehem during a Christmas visit.

6. Text is based on biblical prophecy (Isaiah 7:14) that states that God will give Israel a sign that will be called Immanuel (Lit.: God with us) Gaude! Gaude!

7. Cantique de Noël was composed by Adolphe Adam in 1847.

COMMUNITY BUILDING COMMITTEE

Will:

william.loewen@trinity.mennonitechurch.ab.ca

Allison:

allison.goerzen@gmail.com

Hartwick:

wiehlerh@shaw.ca



CONTACT PERSON

John:

jishelly@telusplanet.net

"A province wide
Christian Community
within the Anabaptist
Mennonite tradition."

We're on the web!

WWW.MENNONITECHURCH.AB.CA



MCA Pastors' Retreat Continued...

- Did you know most people don't know their immediate neighbours in any significant way?
- Where do unbelievers see followers of Jesus love each other – if we are not connected with them?
- Did you know that relating to our immediate neighbours requires a change in our regular priorities?
- What do we do about the tension between the demands of pastoring, all the other parts of our lives that we enjoy, and scheduling, making, finding time to hang out with our neighbours?

These and many other issues were presented or naturally came up as the pastors listened to Greg Brandenburg and Karen Wilk at the pastors retreat in October. Various pastors led us in devotions related to the idea of neighbouring, but most of the time was listening, dialoging and struggling with how to reach our immediate neighbours at the places we live and around our church buildings. Mennonites seem to do well at neighbouring people over seas and those who suffer disasters but not as well locally. The presenters were constantly being side tracked with questions and com-

ments as we wrestled with the Biblical command – "Love your neighbour", they are in the house next to you. Much personal sharing occurred within the context of this theme as everyone shared out of their own ministry situations. And we grappled with how to apply scripture to ourselves and our congregations. How well do we relate with our immediate neighbours so that we can serve and help and verbally share Jesus' love with those who live within a mile around us?