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MENNONITE BRETHREN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

NEWSLETTER

VICTORY FELLOWSHIP: THE FIRST TEN YEARS

Victory Fellowship, an English-speaking congregation in Quebec, was begun through the efforts of workers of the Canadian Sunday School Mission. They began a Sunday School in Waterloo, Quebec in the local Elementary School in November of 1972. This Sunday School had been preceded by several years of home Bible Studies, as well as several summers of VBS work in the area.

During the summer of 1974 several students from Columbia Bible Institute served in the area, through VBS, under the leadership of Sig Polle. This group explained Mennonite Brethren and Anabaptist distinctives to those participating in the Sunday School program. James Carter, who had been leading the venture for C.S.S.M., felt the time had now come for a church to be established.

In the following months dialogue took place between participants in the Sunday School and representatives of the Mennonite Brethren Conference. On June 15, 1975 a charter membership service was held and 21 people formed the new church, calling it Victory Fellowship Church (I John 5:4; I John 1:7). They then voted unanimously to request admission into the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. On July 8, 1975 the church was accepted into the Mennonite Brethren Conference at its Regina convention. One month later, on August 10, 1975, the church held its first baptism with seven individuals witnessing of their faith in Christ Jesus.

On September 1, 1975 George and Ruth Wiens from Linden, Alberta assumed the pastoral responsibility for Victory Fellowship. Sunday morning services continued to be in the Waterloo Elementary School and many of the weekly Bible Studies, Prayer Meetings and Young People's Meetings took place in the Wiens' home. This was indicative of the effect the Wiens family had on the congregation. Their hearts as well as their home were opened to many individuals in the church and community. Families were regularly invited for Sunday dinner and a good afternoon of fellowship and singing. George often ministered through music when visiting families and nursing homes and it soon became an important link in bringing a song of praise out in others, too. In response to the loving example of the Wiens family, Victory Fellowship learned to appreciate more fully the family feeling of living united in Christ as they practiced being aware of and meeting the needs of others on all levels.

The first Annual Corn Boil was held a few weeks after the Wiens' arrival. Hot, buttered corn was served beside a large circus tent and followed by a program of music and testimony, sharing the gospel and the joy of Christ with those who attend. The Annual Victory Fellowship Christmas Banquet was also begun during George's ministry. The focus of both of these events was community outreach and many persons were introduced to the gospel and to Victory Fellowship in this way.

There were many tests of faith during these formative years of the congregation. Even as leaders like George Wiens and David Taylor nourished the congregation, Satan bombarded the fellowship and God tested the faith of those who believed. Participants in the fellowship underwent severe trials such as suicide attempts, rebellious children, unfaithful husbands, virtual poverty, imprisoned spouses, unemployment, drug abuse, marriage break up and an infant death. The testimony of those who went through it is, that in everything God proved more than sufficient.

George and Ruth returned to Linden in July 1977 and David Taylor assumed the interim pastoral responsibilities in addition to his full-time teaching duties. Dave and Ruth Taylor took over where the Wiens' left off and opened their hearts and home as the Wiens had done. The first sign of expansion beyond the Waterloo area emerged as a Ladies' Bible Study began in Cowansville.

During this time the church was forced to move from its meetingplace in the Waterloo Elementary School to a new location near Knowlton. Gospel Recordings of Canada operated a base for producing evangelical records and cassettes in its Knowlton office and the facilities were large enough to accommodate the Sunday morning services which began there November 1, 1977. This location proved to be beneficial as a central meetingplace for several years as the group expanded to the Cowansville area.

Using their gifts, Dave and Ruth taught the group to exercise Christ's love, ministering to one another as members of the same body. As a result several persons accepted the Lord and nine persons were baptized during the Taylor's ministry.

In June 1979, Rod and Julia Zook arrived to assume the pastorate of Victory Fellowship. The church continued to carry on the ministries of earlier years and the attempts to secure a permanent meetingplace were re-doubled as it became clear that Gospel Recordings would not be a permanent home; and yet no suitable building or property could be found.

A baptism was held June 30, 1980 and three persons were added to the church.

In February 1980 Gospel Recordings of Canada returned to Toronto and most of the staff which had been worshipping and serving in Victory Fellowship returned with them. Fred and Mary Penner remained behind for eighteen months assisting in Sunday School and Discipleship ministries. Fred Penner instructed four men in a comprehensive discipleship course during this time and several of these men are beginning to be the backbone of the continuing congregation.

On September 13, 1981 Victory Fellowship took a bold step after much prayer and deliberation. The search for a meetingplace had again proven fruitless, and new participants were attending from greater distances, so it was decided to form two Sunday morning worship groups to meet in Waterloo and Cowansville respectively. It is anticipated that these two worship groups can more effectively serve these communities by worshipping in these centers and the prayer is that a greater possibility of establishing congregations in Waterloo and Cowansville will emerge. There have been a number of significant influences on the congregation which have affected growth of the church in this area. Chief among them has been the anglophone exodus from Quebec. Although there continues to be a significant English population in this area, all too

frequently members and participants in the church have been required to leave. In the past years alone more than twenty adults have left the congregation with most of them moving to other parts of Canada.

Use of the Gospel Recordings facilities and the ministry of Gospel Recordings staff in the church blurred the distinction between Victory Fellowship Church and the mission for the congregation and the surrounding communities. Considerable effort has been spent in searching for a meetingplace, and the lack of a meetingplace has hindered creation of a community identity and a feeling of permanence to those of the congregation.

During recent years, however, there has been growth in the church of a kind which can serve as a foundation for years to come. There is an emerging understanding of the responsibilities of the local church. Local leadership and teaching abilities are developing. With that comes an increased awareness of needs and confidence in dealing with difficult situations. The Lord still tests the church and continues to prove himself sufficient to meet each need. The spiritual needs of Quebec continue unabated in this decade. May the Lord continue that work which he has begun, and as he builds his church may it be faithful in bringing honor to his name.

Contributors: Jane Page, Howard and Marsha Picken, Sue Singfield, Fran Dickinson, Ethel Sturtevant, Alice Whitcher.

The writers are Rod and Julia Zook. Rod presently serves as the pastor of this congregation. He comes from Minot, North Dakota and has attended Winkler Bible Institute and Goshen College receiving degrees from MBBC and the University of Winnipeg in 1978.

Julia (nee Penner) comes from Winkler, Manitoba. She attended Winkler Bible School for 2 years and served one year, teaching music, with the Janz team at their school in Germany. The Zooks have one daughter, Krista, age three.

ADDRESS OF JACOB PETERS 1877

THANKING THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT FOR SETTLEMENT PRIVILEGES

In 1877 Lord Dufferin, the Governor-General of Canada, visited the newly established Mennonite Community in Manitoba. For these early Mennonite settlers this event was exciting and of unusual significance to their pioneer community.

During this visit, on August 21, 1877, two major addresses were given. One by Jacob Peters (1813-1884) and one by His Excellency Lord Dufferin. The Dufferin address has been reprinted before but the Peters address is relatively unknown. In a paper prepared by William Schroeder of Winnipeg entitled "Lord Dufferin's Visit to the East Reserve" he has included the entire address of Jacob Peters (pages 3-5). By special permission of the author the address is reprinted below.

"To his Excellency Lord Dufferin, Governor General of the Dominion of Canada:

In the name of all the Mennonites who have emigrated from Russia, we greet you most humbly.

When the Russian Government informed us six years ago that they were about to violate the agreement made with our grandfathers under the Emperor Paul, which exempted us according to our religious belief from all military duties, we were obliged to look for new homes under a government which we might trust would keep their promises, allowing us to worship God according to consciences and exempting us from the duty of carrying arms.

We were unable to secure the privilege of practising our religious beliefs under European Governments and therefore our eyes were turned to America.

We had heard of the United States from agents sent among us, and some of our people settled in that country. In the year 1872 Your Government sent our Friend Mr. Hespeler to us in Russia, who offered us homes in your country. In the year 1873 we sent a delegation to visit this country, and also the United States, and some of us who sign this were members of that delegation. They travelled over the greater part of this province, and far into the west. They were treated with all kindness and consideration by the Government, and thereby the opportunity was given them of seeing and examining for themselves; and before they returned to our people in Russia, the Government repeated the promises which had previously been sent to us through Mr. Hespeler.

The delegates were in a position on their return home to inform us that the advantages which this country offered, excelled even the representations made, and therefore they had no hesitation in advising us to come here.

From that time emigration commenced and has continued up to the present time. We now count about 1,072 families and next year we expect a further addition of our friends.

We are pleased to be able to state that we are satisfied in the highest degree with the country and the soil, and also the manner in which the Government has kept their promises to us.

Your Excellency has now the opportunity of seeing for yourself what we have accomplished during our short residence. You see our villages, our fields and our bountiful harvest - witnesses in themselves that the capabilities of the country have not been misrepresented to us.

Under the guidance and protection of Divine Providence, we have every reason to look forward confidently to great future prosperity, our villages multiplied and our herds increased.

We are contented and willing to obey the laws of the land, but we cannot reconcile our religious belief with the performance of military duty.

We have full confidence in the continuance of the good faith you have kept with us and with thankfulness we acknowledge the fatherly care which is being bestowed upon us, as also for the assistance in advice and deeds we are daily receiving through your Government Commissioner and our intercessor.

We know of your Excellency's noble character for honor, truth, and condescension and feel ourselves honored and happy to be permitted to express to one so near her Majesty in rank and goodness of heart, our grateful thanks for many favors.

We welcome you in our midst and pray to our Creator to bless your Excellency and her Majesty the Queen, trusting that you will carry to her the expressions of our attachment, together with the interest we feel in everything which concerns the welfare of her person and her empire.

With our most humble feelings of thankfulness for the honor of your gracious visit we sign ourselves in the name of all our brothers."

Jacob Peters, Oberschultz
Peter Toews, Aeltester
Gerhard Wiebe, Aeltester
Heinrich Wiebe, Minister
Cornelius Toews
Jacob Friesen

ANECDOTES OF P.M. FRIESEN
NOTED MENNONITE HISTORIAN

My maternal grandmother, Barbara Dick (nee Boehr) came to the Ukraine from Alsace, France. She was a very devout Christian, attending the "Faith Conferences" held at Aparlee where her brother-in-law resided. Many of the ministers and evangelists that met there became friends of the family.

In 1912 my Grandmother died at the home of my parents, Abram and Anna Bergmann, where the funeral was held. They notified Peter Martin Friesen, who came to officiate at the committal service.

At this time it was forbidden to preach to the Ukrainian populace. Some Mennonites were banished to Siberia for such an offence. Brother Friesen had an opportunity at this funeral to give the gospel to the Ukrainian peasants, who lived in the village adjoining my father's farm. Many of these peasants were in my father's employ. As they gathered around the open grave, Rev. Friesen preached the Gospel in Russian, without being interrupted or harassed.

My mother told me about this. To her it was a fitting climax to my grandmother's Christian pilgrimage that a man like Rev. Friesen should proclaim salvation to the Ukrainian people at her graveside. For most of them this was the only time they ever heard the good news.

Written by Mrs. Irma Foth, Central M.B. Church, Winnipeg.

Mrs. Margaret Wiens of Winnipeg, 88 years of age, recently told Mrs. Irma Foth the following recollection of P.M. Friesen. Mrs. Wiens boarded at the home of the Friesens from 1907-1913 in order to attend school--the first years in Sevastopol and the last year in Moscow.

The Friesens had up to 20 boarders in their home at one time. She remembers Rev. Friesen as being strict, but very kind. If he has used a harsh word he would apologize to the young people. The Friesens were very poor, due (at least in part) to the extreme generosity of Rev. Friesen. He did not possess more than one suit, and if he got a new suit the old one was immediately given to some needy person.

Mrs. Friesen was an angel, according to Mrs. Wiens. She made it possible for her husband to pursue his work. Over all Mrs. Wiens remembers her years in the Friesen household as being filled with warmth and love.

TABOR COLLEGE PLANS NEW ARCHIVES

The diamond jubilee of Tabor College will be celebrated during the year 1983. This historical milestone will provide opportunity for the college family to reflect on the mission of Tabor in the past, present, and future. In support of Tabor's mission the Tabor College Board of Directors has launched a major campus expansion program. Included in the plans is a new home for the (Kansas) Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies.

Wesley Prieb of the Center notes that the college administration and the board deserves much credit for including the Study Center in the expansion plans. Historical sensitivity is most important in a Christian liberal arts college. It is their prayer that the new center will provide the historical and visionary rudder to help preserve and interpret the best thinking of M.B. leaders and to use the vision of the past to shape the witness and mission of the college in the future.

The floor plans are nearly complete. The new Center will be divided into four areas with a total floor space of over 3,000 square feet. These include an information center for the purpose of displaying the Mennonite Brethren pilgrimage; a work area for the director, staff and researchers; a room for published historical materials and storage space for unpublished and rare historical records.

RARE MOLOTSCHNA MAP FOUND

A rare map of the Molotschna Colony was recently found by John Reimer of Reedley, California, while remodeling an old house. The West Coast Historical Society (M.B.) restored the map and had a limited number of copies printed. Copies are available for \$25.00 plus handling charges. All proceeds of this map project will be applied to the translation of the appendices of B.H. Unruh's book, Die Niederlandisch-Niederdeutschen Hintergrunde der Mennoniten Ostwanderungen in 16., 18 und 19 Jahrhandert. This translation will be a valuable tool for family historians.

CORRECTION

The last issue of the Newsletter was incorrectly numbered. It should have read Vol. 4 No. 1. Sorry for the error!

BOOK REVIEW

Heinrich Woelk and Gerhard Woelk. Die Mennoniten Brudergemeinde in Russland 1925-1980: Ein Beitrag Zur Geschichte. Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought, No. 4. Fresno: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1981. 229 pp. Reviewed by Abe Dueck, MBBC faculty.

Die Mennoniten Brudergemeinde in Russland 1925-1980 is a very interesting and remarkable account of the experience of the M.B. Church in the Soviet Union since the major emigration of the 1920's. The authors themselves were participants in the struggle of those years and only recently immigrated to Germany. Thus they have made available a rich source of primary information.

At the outset it needs to be noted that the book has a number of serious weaknesses in terms of format, style, etc. The material is not assimilated and integrated into a logical or chronological account of the M.B. Church during the period of 1925-1980. It contains a number of documents, such as first-hand accounts of the experiences of the exile and suffering by women who had lost their husbands, letters from elders in prison, or sermons preached at special occasions. The documents are not woven into the narrative nor are they included separately as appendices. Footnoting and various technical editorial matters have been dealt with very inadequately.

The contents nevertheless reveal a great deal about the M.B. Church and the various internal and external tensions which have been experienced in such a hostile environment. A threat which runs through the entire work is the question of M.B. identity. When recognition and registration became possible for evangelicals in the Soviet Union it was generally under the umbrella of the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists--hence it implied a virtual abandonment of Mennonite identity in favour of a Baptist identity. Most MB's indeed did join the AUCECB. Many Christians felt, however, that the AUCECB had compromised Christian principles in order to buy its peace with the state. Hence an opposing group of Reform Baptists (CCECB) developed and engaged in activities which were regarded as subversive by the state. Some MB's also identified with these. The constant plea of the authors, however, is

for a separate identity for the MB's which does not capitulate either to a mixing of church state (AUCECB) or to subversive anti-state activity. The MB ideal is to be "die Stille im Lande," hence not to protest or to demonstrate publicly but to obey when possible and to suffer quietly when obedience is impossible.

The struggle for such a separate identity was obviously a very difficult one and led to much bitterness and acrimony. Nonetheless, there were remarkable achievements. The Karaganda M.B. Church, in existence since 1956, was officially registered in 1967. Six others have also been registered since that time and small unrecognized churches exist in a number of places.

Of considerable interest is also the theology, life, and worship in the church as described and reflected in the book. One quickly detects a rather brittle and stubbornly conservative approach to many questions. The isolation and suffering have understandably resulted in a deepening commitment but also, in many respects, a narrowing of vision and an intolerance of others. Issues such as the role of women, the cutting of hair, viewing of television, etc., are seen as prominent issues on which the church needs to take a very firm stand. It is also interesting to note how the role of music is viewed in church worship.

Many other valuable insights into the life and experience of the M.B. Church in Russia in the last half century are given in the book. If the MB churches in North America want to learn how to relate to their brethren in the Soviet Union as well as to those who have recently come out of the Soviet Union, then it is essential that a book such as this be made available in English. We have grown apart more than we may have imagined in many ways and we must do our part to bridge the gap.

RECENT ACCESSIONS

1. Sawatzky, Genealogy 1760-1980, compiled by Helen C. Andres.
2. Glaubenshelden, Bilder aus der Kirchengeschichte, Textbuch zum Noten-Unterricht, Unruh's Anleitung, Mennonitische Maertyrer, donated by the Manitou M.B. Church.
3. Five linear inches of materials relating to such topics as Sunday Schools, Higher Education, Church conventions and oral histories, donated by Harold Jantz.
4. From the files of Dr. G.D. Huebert: 1½ linear feet of Mennonitische Rundschau's, Der Geisteskanph (1927, 1929-33), Wort und Tat (1934, 1936). Donated by the Huebert family.
5. Five linear inches of letters and papers of Jacob A. Kroeker. Donated by John Kroeker.
6. Klaas Dueck and Descendants 1743-1981, compiled by J.P. Dyck.
7. Fifteen 16 m.m. microfilms of materials relating to the coming of Mennonites to Canada. Materials microfilmed at the Public Archives Canada, Ottawa. Collected by Frank Epp for the writing of Mennonites in Canada.
8. Three linear feet of materials of the Alberta M.B. Conference (1928-1971). These include minutes, correspondence and financial records. Deposited by the Alberta M.B. Conference.
9. Wir Waren Mit Dabei: Erinnerungen eines alten Kommunisten, written by Peter Reimer and published in Verlag, Kasachstan, 1977.
10. Audio tapes of: Funeral of Abram Neufeld; Johannes Harder Sermons (Mennonites in Politics, Sermon on the Mount, Come Unto Me); Ben and Esther Horch Evening.

11. Hymnbooks and textbooks used in the Herbert Bible School. Donated by Mrs. Gertrude Huebert.
 12. Twenty linear inches of Manitoba M.B. Conference Minutes of the Home Missions Committee, 1950-1974. Donated by Dr. Helmut Huebert.
 13. The Story of the M.B. Church of Reedley, 1905-1980. Donated by Otto B. Reimer.
 14. Zionsbote (1962-64); Die Kleine Jugendbote (1933-1939); Die Abendschule (1935-1939); Konfrenz Jugenblatt (1948-1956); Evangelical Christian (1962), donated by William Schroeder.
 15. Vorwaertz-Kalender, Bilderbuch, Zionsbote, T.C. Bluejay and 50 photographs of the Heinrich Voth and H.S. Voth family. Donated by Mrs. Sarah Klippenstein.
 16. Thirteen copies of Liederperlen. Donated by Anna Derksen.
 17. Forever Summer Forever Sunday: Peter Rempel's Photographs of Mennonites in Russia, 1890-1917. Edited by John D. Rempel and Paul Tiessen.
 18. "A Short History of our Forefathers" and "Up and Away to Canada," written by J.B. Janz.
 19. Blumenfeld: Where Land and People Meet, written by Irene Friesen and Peter A. Paetkau.
 20. Five and $\frac{1}{2}$ linear feet of materials related to the Home Missions Board of the Canadian Conference of M.B. Churches. Deposited by the Home Missions Office.
 21. Six linear feet of materials of the Christian Education Office of the Canadian Conference of M.B. Churches. Deposited by the Christian Education Office.
 22. Tape of the Mennonite Studies Seminar: Biography and Hagiography (Vic Doerksen), Broadcasting in Low German (Gerhard Ens), Telling Mennonite Stories (Elisabeth Peters).
 23. Todesreigen, Ursachen und Geschichte der Aus wanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika, Kanadische Mennoniten...Zum Jubilaemsjahr 1924. Donated by Mrs. Jacob Peters.
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This NEWSLETTER of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of Canada is published four times a year, by the Executive of the Society, at the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Canada, Winnipeg. All correspondence regarding the Society or the NEWSLETTER should be addressed to:

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If you know of someone who would be interested in becoming a member of the Society and receive the NEWSLETTER please have them fill out the following form:

NAME: _____ STREET ADDRESS: _____
 CITY: _____ PROVINCE: _____

Send form together with the yearly membership fee of \$5.00 to the Society Secretary in care of the above stated address.