

This Issue's Theme . . .

# Christmas



DECEMBER 2014, VOLUME 1 EDITION 4

# Life With Us

At Niagara United Mennonite Church

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## Advent Prayer

by Carol Penner

God of grace, thank you for this season of waiting.  
Thank you for the beauty of the sleeping earth  
waiting for spring's new life.

Thank you for the joy of children  
waiting for the excitement of gift giving.  
Thank you for the gift of familiar carols,  
whose joyful music touches waiting hearts.

Thank you for far-flung family and friends  
that we can't wait to see this season.  
Thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ;  
we have been waiting for a Saviour.

We pray for all who are waiting this morning;  
people who are waiting for an end to violence  
because they have known too much war;  
people who are waiting for healing  
because they live with sickness and pain;  
people who are waiting for good news  
because they are weighed down with sorrow.

We pray for all of the earth that is waiting--  
creatures who are waiting for protection  
because their environment has been destroyed;  
waterways that are waiting for renewal  
because they have been contaminated;

lands that are waiting to be redeemed from pollution  
because we have forgotten that God called the land good.

Throughout the world, in and on and under it,  
waiting happens, waiting grows and gathers,  
the earth is pregnant waiting for redemption.

In eager expectation we wait for the revelation of the Son of God.

"How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!

So God imparts to human hearts, the blessings of his heaven,  
no ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Lord enters in."\*

\*Philip Brooks, "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Carol Penner is the former pastor of The First Mennonite Church, Vineland

# Ministries at NUMC...

## **Buns & Bowls Pot-luck**

On Sunday, November 16 the young adults had a “Bowls and Buns” potluck lunch after church. The theme for the food was “anything that can be served in a bowl” and with the wintery weather we had outside it was very fitting to be warming up inside with hearty soups and stews. It was also a wonderful opportunity to build community with people that we may not have a chance to talk to on a normal Sunday. It was great to see people intentionally sitting with people that they don't necessarily talk to every week to get to know them a little better. What an excellent way to spend a Sunday afternoon!

- Submitted by Kelly Wohlgemut



In November, there were two days where a group of ladies baked Fleischperoshky for the Pleasant Manor Christmas Bazaar. In collecting all of the supplies they would need, they gathered 150 lbs. of ground beef, 70 lbs. of flour, 12 dozen eggs, and many more ingredients on a similarly large scale. These quantities translated into 346 dozen Peroshky. Now you figure out just how many Peroshky that makes!

Additionally, these ladies also baked Christmas cookies, In doing so, they used 8 bags of sugar, 6 cartons of eggs and 9 containers of sour cream!

# Ministries continued...

November  
16th



## Jr. Youth Event



Mmm.....that  
chocolate sure  
looks good!



Dipping strawberries in chocolate, yum!

Trip to **Chocolate  
FX** in Niagara  
Falls & **Games** back  
at our church!



*Did you ever wonder what it would be like to go back in time and be able to visit the very first Christmas? If so, then come to NUM Church on Christmas Eve at 6:30 pm to help the Sunday School celebrate An Unexpected Christmas. To prepare for this exciting event, all children should be at church each Sunday at 9:30 a.m. to learn songs like Child of Peace & Light a Little Candle.*

## Youth News

As a youth our mission can be summarized in three words, **Fun. Us. Others.** We strive to create an enjoyable and safe environment where we can unwind at the end of each week, while growing closer as a community of believers, to God, and spreading God's love to our community here and across the globe. We welcome anyone in grades 9-12 to come out and join us on Friday nights!

In November, we focused on the **Others** part of our mission in two ways. Locally, we dedicated one evening to community service. This year we served dinner at the 80th birthday party for one of our members - definitely worth celebrating! And our good work is multiplying - the money saved was donated back to the youth to support the NUMC Youth's Pop Project at the annual Mennonite Relief Sale, in which we participate each Spring. Globally, we participated in Operation Christmas Child (run by Samaritan's Purse) and sent 'shoebox' Christmas gifts to children in countries where there is need. This is always a fun event that helps us focus on giving to others, shining the light of love into poverty, and looking for ways to bring joy however we can.

- Submitted by Sylvana Tiedtke

As a newsletter team of editors, we are seeking to reveal untold stories in this column. This month's "Did you know?" story builds on last month's background that was told on Helping Hands. Please read below as we go back even further into the history of how we have cared for one another in times of loss!

## Let's go for a walk down Memory Lane

I'm not the oldest in our church, but I do believe I have been attending this church longer than anyone here. In 1934, our parents bought a 10 acre plot of land with a big, old farm house on Niven Road. This house had no inside plumbing, no hydro and certainly no central heating. The small kitchen had a stove for cooking and heating. A pot belly stove was later added in the big hallway, heating the living room and the stove pipes that went through to the second floor gave a little heat upstairs. In the winter, the windows were all frosted and looked like beautiful lace, and even the chamber pot would freeze. When it was time for bed, our mother would heat some bricks in the oven and we would take them into our beds for warmth. In the morning, we would quickly go downstairs to get dressed around the warm kitchen stove. How our mother managed everything, we don't understand to this day, and on top of all the work, she had a large family to feed. Our mother did a lot of singing.

As children, we remember a young Neufeld child that had died and the family could not afford a funeral. The Mennonite folks got together, collected the meagre money and helped the family financially. Maybe that is how the Mennonite Burial Society was founded. Also when there was a funeral, the Mennonite women would get together at the Andres homestead and mix the Zwieback dough. The night before the women would bring their large bowls, and then the dough was put into these bowls and we children with our little red wagon would deliver it to the homes on Niven Rod. To be shaped and baked. If I remember, the same custom went on at Hunter Rd. and East & West Line where they made the raisin bread (Stretzel). These same women who did all the baking would serve the coffee, zwieback & raisin bread after a funeral service.



Our mother used to say, (in German) "We all loved each other more when we were poor, and we definitely needed each other." Whether we were GC or MB, we were all together. Church services were held in this old house and picnics were enjoyed in the meadow on this farm. The young people would always have so much fun. As a young girl, I recall Nettie (Enns) Goerz, who was blindfolded, trying to bite into an apple hanging from a rope. How I wished I would be a teenager someday. Wealth has not always made us happy, but would we like to go back to those good old days?????

### Give the following gifts:

- To your enemies— forgiveness
- To your opponent— tolerance
- To a friend— your heart
- To a customer— service
- To all men— charity
- To every child— a good example
- To yourself— respect

- Unknown



## A Review of *The Grace Awakening* by Charles R. Swindoll

Grace is always refreshing. A book about grace is a refreshing book. Swindoll has probably written his best work and made his most important contribution to modern Christianity with the writing of this book.

*The Grace Awakening* is appropriately titled. If you are not already aware of man's natural aversion to grace and experiencing it in your contact with others, then Chuck Swindoll will convince you of this perpetual problem that plagues the church. Legalism (from cultic to Christian forms) and a judgmental spirit show the great need for a grace awakening in modern Christianity. Understandably, natural man does not know grace, but it is tragic indeed that Christians also have such a misshapen idea of this concept.

Swindoll meets the enemies of grace head on without wavering and, of course, with grace. While attacking legalism, he retreats enough to deal with objections against the liberty (which opponents call license) that grace brings. His applications of grace to how we see ourselves and others, to our marriages, and to our ministries are expertly done and valuable.

It is the nature of grace that it changes and transforms. This book will awaken you to God's amazing grace, which will, in turn, shape your life and ministry.

Review written by Charlie Bing. This article first appeared in the March-April 2014 issue of *Grace in Focus Magazine*, available at [www.faithalone.org](http://www.faithalone.org).

The featured book in this month's book review is that which is mentioned in our Spotlights story on pages 10 & 11.

Well once again **Christmas** is just around the corner. Every year I'm determined not to let it sneak up on me & yet it does so again & again. This year I marked it on my calendar in November to get started early. Wish me luck.

We have a good number of Christmas books to read during the season. So if your shopping is done, cookies are baked & you find you have some free time then come visit us in the library & enjoy a festive book.

### **The Christmas Box Miracle** By Richard Paul Evans

"This is a charming and delightful book and it shows that the true miracle of The Christmas Box is in the thousands of spirits it has lifted and the hearts it has healed" Mary Higgins Clark

### **The Christmas Shoes** By Donna VanLiere

"If we're open to it, God can use even the smallest thing to change our lives ... to change us. It might be a laughing child, car brakes that need fixing, a sale on pot roast, a cloudless sky, a trip to the woods to cut down a Christmas tree, a school-teacher, a Dunhill Billiard pipe ... or even a pair of shoes.

Some people will never believe. They may feel that such things are too trivial, too simple or too insignificant to forever change a life. But I believe.

And I always will"

### **The Christmas Candle** By Max Lucado

"When a mysterious angel suddenly appears in a lowly candelmaker's shop, the holy and the human collide in a way that only God could imagine. Glowing bright with a timeless message, *The Christmas Candle* will warm your heart with a surprising reminder of God's bountiful love"

This month's  
Suggested Reading List  
comes from Debbie Fast



Photo taken by Lani Gade

## Anabaptist Heritage Choir, Sunday October 26, 2014

There is something about voices joined together as a choir to share a message for God's glory that is unlike any other worship experience.

We came to choir practices at the St Catharines United Mennonite Church on four rainy Tuesday evenings, a group of individuals with varying degrees of musical ability, from a variety of cultural and language backgrounds, and all with the desire to express our faith in God in this unique and tangible way. I joined the choir at the urging of my cousin (who was enthusiastically encouraged by John), but also for the opportunity to sing under the direction of John & Kathy Rempel. Their enthusiasm and dedication to worship in song, not to mention their ability to motivate even the most challenging voices to create inspirational harmony, has been part of my worship experience for as long as I can remember. If any of the choir members expressed concern about not presenting a professional concert, John confidently reminded us, "We have a Message, and if we believe that Message, it will come through in our singing and the audience will be blessed."

The Anabaptist Heritage Choir was created to celebrate the early songs of our forefathers, remind us of the importance of music in our churches, and preserve that tradition for the future. Starting with the majestic organ prelude by Will Friesen, our spirits soared and our hearts were prepared to be inspired. The selection of songs created a patchwork quilt of old familiar tunes, many having German lyrics translated to English, with some newer contemporary songs, and combination medleys preserving the best of both. Since the songs were well-known by the group, John encouraged creativity for those who were so inclined. "There are lots of notes on the page," he said, "Pick one you haven't sung before and try

it." The result was a choreography of harmony that inspired and touched the listeners' emotions. This type of expression of praise to the Lord cannot be accomplished in any other way except in a choir.

I am awed by the incredible songs that God has inspired men and women to write, in the past and in the present. These songs have become part of my own faith journey, implanting the simple message of God's love and mercy in my soul each time I sing them. As I close my eyes and let the harmonic sounds wash over me, I feel a connection to previous generations and the teachings they instilled in us. Resting in those historical sounds provides a way to help reset our perspective.

In typical Anabaptist tradition, there needed to be a practical purpose to the event. A freewill offering was taken for the MCC Refugee Fund. When a choir member asked how many verses we would sing for the offertory hymn, John simply stated that "as long as they're still giving money, we keep on singing!" We sang all five verses.

The program concluded with the song "My Soul Cries Out", a less familiar yet rousing tune, through which we were reminded that we are no longer the silent in the land, and are called to be instruments of change "for the world is about to turn."

Coming together in a larger diverse group, the feeling of being a part of something much bigger and greater than we could ever achieve on our own, to deliver the Good News, the message of salvation – that is what singing in this choir meant to us.

Submitted by the singing cousins,

Marlene Heidebrecht & Ruth Lamarre

## Some words from our Church Council Chair on November 11th's Membership Meeting & Constitution Vote...

We just completed our **Fall Membership Meeting**. Some items are standard such as affirmation of new committee members, project updates or normal business updates. The **"financial status or health"** of our church is always important information that we like to keep our members up to date with. We are always challenged at this time of year to meet our budgets that we set earlier. So please give regularly and watch the bulletin for announcements. It is great news to hear that our Refugee family is now able to stand on their own. Great news about health and job status. As of October 31, we bring to a close our financial support and pray for blessings for them. A **Constitutional change** is always an "important item". These changes come about for a variety of reasons, but we are forced to ask ourselves why change? The change is not in baptism, but how we perform it, and has come from years of discussions and discernment. **Spiritual Council** felt it was time to

address these concerns. It was felt by **Church Council** that it was a significant enough issue to hold an "advance vote". There were in attendance at the meeting, 112 people which is normal for membership meetings. But what was extremely surprising was the number of advance voters of 58 for a total of 170 voices. There was an abundance of interest on this topic. I am glad that so many had a chance to share and voice their opinions. A **Constitutional change** requires 2/3 majority vote and we ended with **79% supporting this change**. The actual change is as follows **"The church may baptize by pouring, immersion, or the sprinkling of water"**. Thank you to all who attended and voted. We respect all of your opinions, and thank you for your prayers, thoughts, and participation on this issue." Please pass this on to those who could not be there. Thank you again to our Leadership Team and many volunteers that make our church not just a building but family of believers. Come **"Live Life With Us."**

Submitted by Lloyd Redekopp



Sights and Smells of Christmas

Bears and Shawls for Guatemala made by loving hands in our congregation. (Above Left)

Ten Thousand Villages Christmas Sale at Brock University run by many volunteers. (Above Right)

Cookies galore baked for local bazaars and Advent programs by our busy bakers. (Right)



# Our Kids...



Sienna Browning loves to dance Hip Hop, read, draw and play outside with her brother Sam, neighbours and friends. She can't wait for more snow to fall and to spend time at the cottage with Oma, Opa and extended family. And of course, Sienna really enjoyed playing the piano for the offeratory in church, and would be willing to do it again some Sunday.

## Spotlight On....

### Pilgrimages and Hiking...

Submitted by Sharon & Rudy Dirks

This October, Rudy and I had the amazing privilege of hiking to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. I say "amazing", now that it's over, but many of you heard me say "I'm not so sure" before we left! Especially because of the weeks of preparation – hiking for a few hours at a time, filling up our backpacks and going up and down the gorge – not once, but 3 times, and doing the same from Queenston Heights down to the River and back again. And again! Hiking down the Niagara Glen and up at the Whirlpool and around... again with full back-packs... I rolled my eyes each time, but the competitive side of me was not going to let my husband do this without me. So, we did it. And we actually enjoyed the process of preparation, the anticipation of the "real" hike. The planning and talking and praying as we walked. We wondered if our not-so-young bodies could manage. One day a sore muscle, another day a sore tendon. Sore backs, sore knees, sore shoulders. Two years ago we completed a four month sabbatical – a pilgrimage of spiritual practices. It has stayed with us, this desire to immerse our physical exercise, our travel, our daily practices more fully into a walk with God. We were inspired by others who have done this be-

fore us. Arthur Paul Boers wrote an inspirational book called The Way is Made By Walking: A Pilgrimage Along the Camino de Santiago. Ever since then we have been intrigued with the practice of walking or biking or canoeing, or whatever we are engaged in as a spiritual discipline – a way of encountering God by a practice which invites us into Him.

Now we had this opportunity as we were attending a wedding in Phoenix, and just had to add an excursion to the trip. Rudy applied for the permit to allow us to camp in the Bright Angel Campground at the bottom of the canyon, and another night in the Indian Garden Campground as only a fixed number of people are allowed to camp overnight. The preparation was thorough. How many clothes would we need, and what kind? What kind of food and cooking fuel? How much water would we carry based on availability along the path? How little garbage would we make as we would have to carry it all out with us again? Thankfully we had excellent footwear and clothing, gathered over the years from other excursions. We had discovered the usefulness of walking sticks. We bought freeze-dried food which was light and easy to prepare, and made quite a bit of trail mix. Our children gave us electrolyte tablets, and allowed us to use their small, light tent and sleeping bags and air mattresses.

Yes, we carried all those things. Turns out for \$90 the mules would have carried all those things for us, but I had my “mule” and he was happy to carry 35 pounds so that I would only have to carry 20!

Staying in a lodge at the top of the trail, we began at sunrise the next morning. The first moments of steep switchbacks were breath-taking – beautiful, but also terrifying for me. I calmed down quickly as we had to keep going. Poor Rudy. He hadn’t slept well the night before as he realized that I was actually scared and wondered why he had brought me on another one of his hair-brained adventures! Sometimes I don’t know whether to keep humouring him or not, but I always end up enjoying these crazy rides! So, I keep joining him. I probably will for the rest of my life. How else would I have so many stories to tell my grandkids some day? How can we describe the beauty that each turn brought? Although the view is spectacular from

above, you walk into different ecosystems the further down you go. The little oases down at the bottom by the water in the middle of this desert canyon were delightful. The words of scripture came



alive as we soaked in a spring-fed stream when we reached the bottom. “When the poor and needy search for water and there is none, and their tongues are parched from thirst, then I, the Lord will, will answer them. I, the God of Israel, will never forsake them. I will open up rivers for them on high plateaus. I will give them fountains of water in the valleys. In the deserts they will find pools of water. Rivers fed by springs will flow across the dry, parched ground.” Isaiah 41:17,18. There were many such spiritual illustrations as well as life lessons along the way.

Rudy and I love doing these kinds of things together. We are both so thankful that we are on the same page about these kinds of things. We never tire of things to talk about, chatting for hours as we hike - and then have more to talk about for years

after such an event. Although it was more delightful with a companion, sometimes we just needed to be quiet and alone. There were times when we hiked in silence on purpose (so that we could pray and contemplate), but other times we just had to concentrate or were too tired to talk much.

Surprisingly, going down was harder than going up. We got so tired of walking down the steps that had been placed there to contain erosion that we sometimes took the side path. This sometimes worked, but sometimes was too close to a steep drop-off. Not a wise choice. There were times when we had to watch our feet rather than take in every single view. But of course, stopping was necessary to soak it all in and take ridiculous numbers of pictures. We met such cool people along the way, and shared with different ones for a time – often meeting the same ones repeatedly. Some people ran – go figure! Others seemed to huff and

puff. Some of the oldest and slowest had done this trip dozens of times and took their jolly good time doing it!! One woman’s husband carried her pack half way up and then ran

down to get his. They were from Buffalo and had “trained” just like us – only on the other side of the Niagara Gorge! There was sharing of food and tips for making the hike easier. When someone was in pain, we stopped to help with bandages and foot powder. We found ourselves being more attentive to God as the environment just shouted his glory and beauty and majesty! These experiences of preparation, walking, hiking, living in simplicity, making a pilgrimage, and battling a physical or psychological difficulty are spiritual practices for us. It has become part of what energizes us to grow and engage more fully in our walk with God. It was one of the most inspirational experiences of our lives! “Blessed are those who are strong in the Lord; who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.” Psalm 84:5

# Spotlight on....



Submitted by Alex & Alice Bradnam

On my way to work, I would often tune in to WDCX at 99.5 FM, where I first learned about "Insight for Living" (IFL) and the Bible teaching ministry of shepherd/pastor Chuck Swindoll. Although I would only have the opportunity to hear about ten to fifteen minutes at a time, I would appreciate the nuggets of truth with practical life applications to help anchor my thoughts before entering the classroom. Since those days, Alex and I have travelled with Chuck and Cynthia Swindoll to Israel and, this past summer, to Norway. We have been impressed by the organization and high quality of these "retreat" excursions where we have experienced such a wonderful time of learning and renewal in an atmosphere of warm Christian fellowship.

Our trip began in Amsterdam where beautiful flowers line the canals, and boats and bicycles are everywhere. We travelled to Haarlem and visited The "Corrie Ten Boom Museum" where we saw the actual "hiding place".....a two-foot by eight-foot room behind a false wall in Corrie's bedroom, which sheltered many Jews and underground workers during the Nazi occupation. Corrie's family was eventually betrayed and sent to a concentration camp where they suffered horrific brutality. Corrie survived the holocaust and took the message of forgiveness and salvation through Christ around the world. She understood that Jesus is the Light of the world who can penetrate into darkness. God can bring beauty where broken-



ness prevailed. The next morning, we had the opportunity to visit the full-sized replica of "Noah's Ark", built by Johan Huibers, a contractor from a small village in the Netherlands. His dream began in 1992 to build a replica ark as a visual representation of God's love and grace. In 2005, Johan first built a scaled-down replica small enough to sail through the Netherlands. Then, in 2009, he began this full-sized vessel project, in Biblical proportions, which opened in July 2012 in Rotterdam. Visitors to this floating, living museum are reminded of the new life on earth after the flood....and also newness of life through faith in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

At noon, we embarked "The Rotterdam" ship of the Holland America Line, which set sail for Oslo, Norway. Although the summer Scandinavian sun didn't set until about 10:30 and then rise again at about 4:30 the next morning, the North Sea was very calm and our active sunny days of warm weather allowed us to welcome our "night" of peaceful slumber.

On our day at sea, which was Sunday, we were introduced to the leaders, interacted with fellow IFL (about 440) travelers, and worshipped together. The theme of the week was "From Brokenness to Beauty" and Chuck's first sermon "Dealing with Resentment...Extending Grace" was introduced by Dr. Reg Grant, a top-notch dramatist who, in the role of Esau, explored thoughts, feelings and reflections as they related to his nephew Joseph, who later became the Prince of Egypt. Throughout the week, we met other Bible characters such as Uriah and Paul, as eloquently dramatized by Reg Grant. Sermons taught by Chuck Swindoll, included selections from Job regarding "Facing Calamity....Pressing On", excerpts from 1st Samuel about David and "Enduring Mistreatment...Trusting God" and reflecting on the life of the apostle Paul where the theme was "Living With Disability....Accepting Reality."

Evening "shows" included Christian performers such as vocalist David Gaschen, ventriloquist David Pendleton and "friends", folk singer Buddy Green and Jeff Taylor with harmonicas, piano, accordion and all sorts of string instruments. In addition, while at port, local choirs from the Netherlands and Norway in native costume would perform on the dock. What a lovely welcome or farewell for passengers aboard the ship!! Music was alive and well on this trip, and nobody seemed to enjoy it more than eighty year old Chuck Swindoll, who smiles and laughs easily; he is such a positive role model and mentor for many.



While in the Norwegian capital of Oslo, we enjoyed Vigeland Park with over 200 bronze and granite sculptures creatively displayed in a beautifully designed setting with fountains, lawns, shrubs and trees. Another interesting exhibit is the Thor Heyerdahl museum featuring the famous Kon-Tiki raft, constructed of balsa wood, bamboo and ropes, which, in 1947 was used by Thor and a crew of five others to sail 8000 km in 101 days on the open Pacific Ocean from Peru to Polynesia. Why? What did they learn? ... another story... The Viking Ship Museum houses an authentic Viking ship and grave artifacts. I can just imagine how amazing it was for these Vikings to discover the New World long before my parents immigrated to our great country almost a millennium later. Yet, descendants of both call Canada our home

## Norwegian Fjords Cruise with Chuck Swindoll and Insight for Living Ministries

Kristiansand, with a population of around 90,000 inhabitants, is a delightful city with about 70,000 floral decorations. This lovely city demonstrated the harmony between recreation, leisure, work and everyday living. We strolled along the boardwalk with flower-covered bridges to a very clean public beach easily accessible for people of all ages and abilities. A little "city train" travelled from the well appointed low rise apartment dwellings along a route where people were enjoying sculpture art, exercise stations, the fish market, grassy picnicking areas, bicycle paths and access to kayaks and boats. When we arrived at the pedestrian shopping area in the city square, we were particularly delighted with the sandboxes on the street corners where children could play.



While in the port of Stavanger, opportunities were available to learn more about the petroleum industry which, after the discovery of offshore North Sea oil, has greatly improved the economic prosperity for generations of Norwegians. We took a scenic boat tour of the breathtaking Lysefjord with beautiful islands and waterfalls to the Pulpit Rock or "Preikestolen". Some youth from our group actually hiked on a path to the top which is about 2000 feet above sea level. We were content to stay on the boat with views of goats, seals, and geological wonders while chatting easily with good people of all ages about what God is doing in our midst.

Another amazing destination was Flam which means "little place between steep mountains". We really enjoyed the legendary Flam Railway, which travels for twelve miles with twists and turns to nearly three thousand feet from fjord to snow covered mountain tops with magnificent views of quaint seaside towns, tiny farms, waterfalls and other natural wonders.



After this wonderful time of renewal, it is good to reflect upon what this all means going forward. Our theme song "The Perfect Wisdom of Our God", written by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend sums it up quite well (check Google to hear it). Just as the natural wonders of the earth are formed after much tumult and upheaval, so too, we have been encouraged to recognize that the suffering and agonizing experiences of life can remake us into creations of beauty.... God walks with us and carries us through the valleys and mountains of life to places of peace. We are blessed and thankful. Praise God Almighty for His perfect wisdom.

Please consider checking out "The Grace Awakening" book by Chuck Swindoll in our church library at NUMC for a thought provoking message with a 30 day devotional included.

Please see a review of this book in our Book Corner on page 5

## Outreach *Submitted by: Leah Broekema*

### The Operation Christmas Child "Run Down"

Every year our youth participates in a charity called Operation Christmas Child. We go together to the dollar store with \$10 to purchase hygiene items, school supplies, and toys for a child ranging in age from 2-4, 5-9 or 10-14. You can even send along a personal note. This is a very fun youth event and a great way to get involved. Doing this event brings us closer together and gives us a chance to look at a serious topic.





## MCC Christmas Giving



This 20 page booklet provides at least 30 ways in which we can give a gift that keeps on giving this Christmas. For as little as \$15.00 to more than \$350.00, we can help improve the lives of individuals, families and whole communities. This Christmas, consider Jesus' words in Matthew 25:35 "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me..."

**\*\*Reminder: If you have moved or changed any of your contact information, please alert the office so that our records remain current. \*\***

# Milestones

Join us as we celebrate one another's special milestones!

The following members, who are 80 years of age and older are celebrating birthdays this month:



- Elizabeth Janzen turns 83 on December 1st
- Jake Wiens turns 86 on December 6th
- Egon Epp turns 85 on December 9th
- Irma Epp turns 83 on December 12th
- Henry Schroeder turns 81 on December 14th
- Therese Bergen turns 83 on December 31st

**We wish you all much happiness and health on your special days!**



Congratulations to Steve, Christina and Trent on the addition of Carston Cox to their family! He made his entrance into the world on November 22nd.

Mazin, Zaineb & Yousif have moved! Please update your records to reflect their new address!

2 Lighthouse Road  
St. Catharines, ON



## A look back to this day in our history...

**December 7, 1542**

Emperor Charles V places a reward of one hundred gold guilders on the head of the peaceable Anabaptist leader Menno Simons.

**December 11, 1792**

Joseph Mohr penned the carol "Silent Night," the most popular Christmas Carol of all time.

**December 19, 1947**

The Dead Sea Scrolls are discovered and will soon be recognized as one of the greatest archaeological finds of the 20th Century, for the light they cast on Scripture, in particular, to the life of Christ.

**December 24, 1990**

This Christmas Eve, the bells of St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow rang for the first time since the death of Lenin.

**December 25th**

Christmas Day commemorates the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Although the exact date of His birth is not known, it has been celebrated on December 25th by the church since the early-to-mid 4th Century.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2 @ 9 am Women in Service @ 7 pm Church Council	3 @ 6:30 pm Pioneer Club @ 7 pm Prayer Mtg	4 @ 8 pm Choir Practice @ 8:30 pm Candle Light Choir Practice	5 @ 6:30 pm Youth Band @ 7:30 pm Youth	6
7 @ 10 am German Service— Hans H. Dau @ 10 am Interactive Sermon @ 11 am Worship Service— Pastor Rudy Dirks @ 1 pm— Jr Youth Christmas Party	8	9 @9am Women in Service	10 @ 7 pm Prayer Mtg	11 @ 8 pm Choir Practice @ 8:30 pm Candle Light Choir Practice	12 @ 6:00 pm Turkey Supper	13
14 @ 11 am Worship Service— Stephen Cox	15	16 @ 9 am Women in Service @ 7 pm Spiritual Council Mtg	17 @7pm Prayer Mtg	18 @ 8 pm Choir Practice @ 8:30 pm Candle Light Choir Practice	19 @ 6:30 pm Youth Band @ 7:30 pm Youth—	20 @ 7pm Candle Light Service @ Bethany Church
21 @ 10 am German Service— Joachim Dau @ 10 am Interactive Sermon @11 am Worship Service— John Tiessen @ 7pm Candle Light Service	22	23	24 <b>Christ- mas Eve</b> @ 9:30 am Children's Concert Dress Re- hearsal @ 6:30 pm Children's Concert	25 <b>Christmas Day</b> @ 9:30 am Pick-up Choir Practice @10:45 am Worship Ser- vice— Pastor Rudy Dirks	26 <b>Boxing Day</b>	27
28 @11 am Worship Service— Pastor Rudy Dirks	29	30	31 <b>New Year's Eve</b>			

## Christmas Memories

Christmas was always an exciting time with the Andres Clan. We were a large family and we always had a lot of fun. On Christmas Eve we all went to church to celebrate "Weihnachtsabend". When we came home after the program, Dad would go to the window and shout with excitement that he had just seen Santa Claus and the reindeer leaving our place. Naturally we all believed in Santa and were very disappointed that we had missed him. Then we all gathered in the living room to sing Christmas Carols. The Christmas story was read and we had to recite a poem or sing a song that we had learned in Sunday School. It was so exciting for us as children when we received our gifts. I remember when my sister Mary & I had to share a "Wettums doll". This doll would wet her diaper every time you gave it a bottle of water to drink. This reality we could not understand at our young age. Mom also prepared a meal that evening and before we went to bed, we each received a plate of goodies, Halvah, candies, peanuts and 1 orange. What a treat!!!

Christmas morning we had to get up early to drive all the way to Grandma Fransen who lived in Vineland. It must have been quite a chore for our Mother to get us all ready for that big trip after having milked the cow. Then we all crowded into Dad's Model A Ford. Bricks were heated in the oven all night to provide warmth in the car. We sat in the back seat like sardines and there were always one or two on Mom's lap. No seatbelts were required. We had to leave early enough to make it on time for the church service in Vineland. We had our Christmas dinner at Grandma's with our Fransen & Harder relatives. How exciting it was to see our cousins again. Grandma would give us our gifts after the dinner so we could entertain ourselves all afternoon. My sister Mary, cousin Herta & I received the Dionne Quintuplets cut-outs one year and that kept us busy all afternoon sitting on the landing of the steps. What a good time we had. The grown-ups sat in the living room and visited.

"Vesper" was served in shifts in the kitchen around 5:00 p.m. After we ate, we assembled in the living room with the children sitting on the floor. This was very exciting, but Santa Claus was never mentioned. All the lights were out and only the candles were burning on the Christmas tree. Our uncle Jake Fransen would stand by the tree with a pail of water in case of a fire. Our Aunt Lena would play the piano and Christmas carols were sung. Our Uncle Rev. John Wichert would read the Christmas story with great emphasis and have the devotional. Like at home, we had to recite a poem or sing a song. It was such a solemn moment when we all sang "Stille Nacht" with only the candles burning on the tree. By now it was time for us to head back to Niagara, quite a distance in those days. We often cried when we left Grandma's house. She was such a warm and loving person and we all loved her too. When we left we each received a bag of goodies. We had no telephone and imagine our dear Grandmother wondering if we had arrived home safely, driving home late at night along the snowy and treacherous #8 Highway with all these tired children.

If anyone was alone at Christmas, Grandma would always invite them also. There was always room in her small house. In 1950 the Fransens sponsored a Witt family from Germany. There was no way that Mrs. Witt, a widow with eight children would spend her first Christmas in Canada all alone, so they were invited as well. They entertained us with their lively personalities and singing German Christmas carols as a family.

These are good memories and I believe Grandma Fransen instilled in us the gift of hospitality. Let's be thankful for family gatherings and cherish them as long as we can and may our children continue this tradition.

Submitted by Lena Van Bergen

## “Lustigstal” Gal

### Irma Epp’s 83rd Birthday

My Mom (Irma Epp nee Neufeld) came from the small village of Hamberg Ukraine where she was surrounded by her large extended Neufeld and Willms families. After all of their husbands were taken by the Russians, my Oma (Kaethe Neufeld) and her 5 sisters and 2 sisters-in-law along with their children found their way to Canada and to Niagara-on-the-Lake. Oma and two of her sisters purchased a house and property at Lakeshore and Creek roads where the women, each with three children, shared the house. Here the Fast and two Neufeld families thrived through hard work, school and church. Tante Mieka Neufeld gave their home the nickname: “Kleines Lustigstal” or Little Happy/Fun Land, and it stuck.

On Mom’s Eighteenth Birthday she had her sisters and all of her cousins and friends over for a party. Just down the road some of the local guys from

the church choir were at another girl’s party and decided to go to Irma’s Birthday Party and crash it. By eating all of her party food, they knew that this would be a great embarrassment to her – one never wants to run out of food when you have guests. So as the guys were filling up their bellies and getting near the end of eating all of the Zwieback (buns), Mom slipped through to the other side of the house and asked Tante Greta Fast for a bunch of the Zwieback that she had just baked. Mom walked confidently back into the party, smiling, and carrying a large plate of buns. The guys just groaned... they couldn’t eat another thing. She definitely made a wonderful impression on one of those guys, because a few years later she and my Dad Rudy were married.

65 years on from that birthday she is as wonderful as ever - Happy 83rd Birthday Mom!

Submitted by Donna Froese

## Things We Learned from our Father

### An 86th Birthday for Jake Wiens

It’s hard to believe that dad is turning 86 this month. We can clearly remember dad arriving home from a hard day’s work and jumping into his arms, but not before he gave mom a hug and kiss. After getting cleaned up he always seemed to have time to join us in the back yard to play catch or 21. He built us stilts, taught us how to skate on our backyard ice rink that he spent hours building, helped us build the biggest snowman in the neighbourhood, taught us how to ride bike, to swim and to drive, and many other skills that we still use today. One hot summer’s day dad rescued some abandoned kittens from underneath our neighbour’s shed, then taught us how to care for them until they were old enough to go to a new home.

But most of all we remember dad’s involvement in church and community. Dad impressed on us at an early age that it was important to help wherever you can. For many years he helped in boys club, youth, ushering, and church council. No matter how busy he was outside the home, he always had time for us.

In later years, after we had left home, we all knew that mom and dad were just a phone call away, regardless of what was needed. When dad retired he had more time to help mom in the kitchen, and to this day he supplies us all with the best borscht, rollkuchen, and obst moos. Dad is also a very patient man. At the age of 80 he started teaching his daughters how to play golf. Trust us - that takes a lot of patience.

A quote by Albert Pike describes how we feel about our father: ***“What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.”***

Dad has been exemplary in the way he cared for mom while she was ill, and he continues to offer of himself to others consistently and joyfully in his volunteering at Heritage Place. His dedication to others was highlighted earlier this year when he was nominated and received the Salute to Seniors Volunteer Appreciation Award for Ontario. We all admire him and love him for his dedication.

- Submitted by the Family of Jake Wiens

# Congregational Survey Response

## Our favourite hymns are:

Count Your Many Blessings, Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow, What a Friend we have in Jesus, and How Great Thou Art.

Please read below as John Rempel shares with us some background history on one of these favourites...

### How Great Thou Art

How Great Thou Art is a 20th century hymn of praise that has become a favourite with God's people everywhere. This beautiful hymn has an amazing history.

The author is Rev. Carl Boberg, a Swedish pastor. His inspiration for the text came when he was caught in a midday thunderstorm with awe-inspiring moments of flashing violence, followed by a clear, brilliant sun and the sound of birds singing.

Several years later, Boberg was surprised to hear a congregation sing his poem to a familiar Swedish folk melody.

Soon after, the song was translated into German as *Wie gross bist Du* by Manfred von Glehn, who heard it in Estonia in a small Swedish congregation. In 1927, I.S. Prokhanoff, known as the Russian Martin Luther, came upon the German version and translated it into the Russian language.

In the early 1930's Stuart and Mercy Hine, English missionaries in Ukraine, came upon the Russian version of the song and used it extensively in their ministry. The third and fourth verses, as we know them, were written by Hine.

Of the inspiration for the third verse a friend wrote:

"It was typical of the Hines to inquire as to the existence of any Christians in the villages they visited. In one case, they found out that the only Christians that their host knew about were a man named Dmitri and his wife Lyudmilla. Dmitri's wife knew how to read--evidently a fairly rare thing at that time and in that place. She taught herself how to read because a Russian soldier had left a Bible behind several years earlier, and she started slowly learning by reading that Bible. When the Hines arrived in the village and approached Dmitri's house, they heard a strange and wonderful sound: Dmitiri's wife was reading from the gospel of John about the crucifixion of Christ to a houseful of guests, and those visitors were in the very act of repenting. In Ukraine, this act of repenting is done very much out loud. So the Hines heard people calling out to God, saying how unbelievable it was that Christ would die for their sins, and praising Him for His love and mercy. The Hines just couldn't barge in and disrupt this obvious work of the Holy Spirit, so they stayed outside and listened. Stuart wrote down the phrases he heard, and even though this was all in Russian, it became the third verse that we know today:

And when I think that God,  
His Son not sparing, sent Him to die,  
I scarce can take it in,  
That on the cross my burden gladly  
bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin.

The inspiration for the fourth verse,

When Christ shall come  
with shout of acclamation to take me  
home,  
what joy shall fill my heart.  
Then I shall bow in humble adoration  
and there proclaim,  
My God how great Thou Art!

came from Polish and Russian refugees in England, who had fled their communist homelands and become separated from their families. They did not expect to see them again in this life, and were therefore looking forward to a reunion with their loved ones in heaven.

In a 1974 poll, *How Great Thou Art* was voted the number one song in America. Today, it probably doesn't rank number one, but it is still very popular.

Submitted by John Rempel

## Congregational Response

As Pastor Rudy Dirks challenged the congregation to share the impact of this past year's year-long sermon series, *God's Story: Our Story* in our personal lives, we also would like to share some of these experiences or revelations. Please share ways that you have recognized over the course of this series how God's Story and your story are impacting one another:

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**16** Please submit your response on this paper (or another if you require more space) to the blue box located at the Welcome Centre. Responses will be printed in the January newsletter!

# Other News...

## Volunteers Needed at the Christian Benefit Shop!

Volunteers are key to our success, contributing time and energy toward the work of raising funds that we forward to Mennonite Central Committee (\$400,000 in 2013).

We are looking for persons for our Grantham Avenue location with a desire to serve and ability to stand for long periods of time. A good sense of humour also comes in handy.

The following are current volunteer openings:

- *Linens* – sorting blankets, pillows, tablecloths, and more. Mondays, 1-4 pm.
- *Cashier* – serving customers with strong interpersonal skills. Thursdays, 12:30-5pm.
- *Footwear and purses* - Are you familiar with shoes/purses and brand names and values? We are looking for a volunteer who has some knowledge in this area. Wednesdays, 1-4 pm.

Call Tim Albrecht or Irene Heyder at 905-682-8944 or [ortima@mccthrift.on.ca](mailto:ortima@mccthrift.on.ca) for more information.

**Urgently Needed: BAGS for AIDS Caregiver Kits-** MCCO is in urgent need of 500 BAGS for AIDS Caregiver kits by February. Completed bags can be dropped off at any MCC office. Contact Wendy Cotter at [wendycotter@mcco.ca](mailto:wendycotter@mcco.ca) or 519-745-8458 for more information.

Alex and Alice Bradnam would like to invite the community to visit Alex's Christmas light display anytime between **5:00 pm and 11:00 pm** from **First Advent until Epiphany**. Whether or not we are home, you are welcome to drop in at 27 Mississauga Rd. in northeast St. Catharines (near Vine and Lakeshore) and wander about the back and front yard to experience our gift of Christmas love, joy and peace to the neighbourhood

**NOTL Candle Light Stroll-** A guided stroll winding through the historical town, accompanied by local choirs and seasonal entertainment. Meet in the Heritage District, 26 Queen Street. **December 5, 6:00 pm - 10:30 pm.**



## Newsflash from NUMC Youth

Turkey Supper Ticket prices have been slashed! Adults may now eat for \$15 & children munch for \$10. *Also, rumour has it that Andreas Tiedtke caught the Coca Cola Company trying to steal Christmas!* Together with the rest of the Youth Group Tiedtke is working on a plan to prevent this heist. Show up at NUMC auditorium at **6:30 on Dec. 12th** for an update on the Coca Cola saga.

**NOTL Santa Claus Parade-** Santa comes to town. The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake presents one of Ontario's best Santa Claus Parades, starting at **11 am running until approx. 12:15 pm on December 13th.**

**MCEC Winter Youth Retreat** is an annual weekend event that is jam packed with faith, music and fun. Over the course of the weekend youth will be challenged and encouraged to grow spiritually, connect with other youth in MCEC, and to make practical changes in their lives that will have an impact even after they leave the retreat.

Dates: **February 6-8, 2015** | Location: Silver Lake Mennonite Camp | Cost: \$95/person, \$10/person for bus  
Total Number of Registration Spots: 140, Registration Closes: Tuesday, December 16, 2014 at 4pm OR when registration is full.

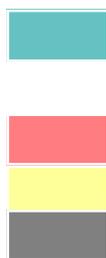
If you would like to submit any photos or articles for the newsletter, please contact any of the Newsletter Team of Editors:

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April Michon in the church office at: 905-468-3313 or by email at [office@redbrickchurch.ca](mailto:office@redbrickchurch.ca).

**Deadline for the January newsletter is December 8th, 2014.**



LIFE WITH US

NEWSLETTER

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