



March April 2018 VOLUME 5 EDITION 2

LIFE WITH US

At Niagara United Mennonite Church

How can we be silent when we know our God is near,
Bringing light to those in darkness, to the worthless, endless worth?

How can we be silent when we are the voice of Christ,
Speaking justice to the nations, breathing love to all the earth?

How can we be silent when our God has conquered death,
Stretching out his arms to suffer so that we might have new life?

How can we be silent when we know that Jesus rose,
And will come again in glory, ending suffering and strife?

How can we be silent as we turn our eyes away
And ignore the poor and broken who lie bleeding in the street?

How can we be silent when we're called to heal and serve
In the image of Lord Jesus, who has stooped to wash our feet?

How can we be silent, not give praise with all our hearts,
For Christ Jesus is our Saviour and compassion is our king?

How can we be silent when God gave us life to be
Vibrant instruments of worship, made to laugh and dance and sing?

How can we be silent when our souls are filled with awe

At the beauty of creation and the mercy of our Lord?

How can we be silent when we yearn to sing new songs?

In our hearts a fire is burning and it will not be ignored!

None can stop the Spirit burning now inside us.

We will shape the future. We will not be silent!

~ Michael Mahler

Editor's note: As I was reading through, and formatting Ingrid Regier's article (next page) about her very interesting trip to Poland, I realized how little I know about the development and history of our Anabaptists/Mennonites in Prussia/Poland. She's right in saying that her ancestor's history is less spoken about than the history of my ancestors from Russia. This may just be a result of numbers—**more** people speak **more**, or maybe some people just speak **louder**, and more forcefully. Whatever the case, I decided to do some research about our common ancestors in Prussia/Poland. Since I found this research very interesting, I thought I would share some of it with you the readers. The source of my information is mainly **"Horst Penner, West Prussia." Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online.**

~ Kathy Rempel



Mennonite communities in West Prussia, East Prussia and Poland.

Source: Mennonite Encyclopedia, v. 4, p. 921

West Prussia was the region on both sides of the lower Vistula between Danzig and Thorn. As the western part of the possessions of the Teutonic Knights it was ceded to Poland in 1466 and became the province of Royal Prussia in the Kingdom of Poland. It became a province under direct administration of the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1569 to 1772, where it remained until it was made a part of rapidly expanding Kingdom of Prussia in 1772. It was a province of Prussia from 1773 to 1824 and from 1878 to 1918 (from 1824 to 1878 it was combined with East Prussia [Ducal Prussia] to form the province of Prussia). After 1918, its central parts became the Polish Corridor and the Free City of Danzig, while the parts remaining with the German Weimar Republic became the new province of Posen-West Prussia in the Free State of Prussia or were joined to the Province of East Prussia as Regierungsbezirk West Prussia.

The Mennonite population of this province probably never exceeded 15,000 souls. Nevertheless West Prussian Mennonitism is the mother soil from which nearly half the Mennonites of the entire world were transplanted to Russia, Asia, and North and South America. East Prussia, the territory immediately to the east of West Prussia, consisting largely of the eastern part of the former territory of the Teutonic Knights, was made a secular duchy in 1525 by Duke Albrecht. The city of Danzig was a free city, under Polish rule 1466-1772, and from 1772 under Prussian rule, and was never actually a part of West Prussia.

The West Prussian congregations were built largely by refugees from the Netherlands. Since the Reformation in that country took on an Anabaptist character after the appearance of Melchior Hoffman (ca. 1530), the opposition of the authorities was directed principally against the Anabaptists. On 1 February 1539 the first Mennonite (Anabaptist) settlement in the general area of Prussia was begun by two preachers from the Netherlands—Hermann Sachs and Hugo Mattheissen—in Schönberg in the Oberland of East Prussia, where 4,250 acres were made available for settlers. Hugo was a preacher of the Danzig Mennonites during the years when Menno Simons and Dirk Philips organized the West Prussian congregations.

When it was discovered that the Dutch settlers differed from the Prussian church constitution in the matter of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the unofficial toleration was annulled, and the great majority of the settlers were expelled. Thus the first Anabaptist settlement in the duchy of Prussia was destroyed. The settlers found new homes in West Prussia, and in the free cities of Elbing and Danzig, where the Polish authorities had to give religious toleration to their German subjects, who for the most part had accepted the Reformation. Although all these immigrants were settled as farmers, some of them had previously been in other trades or professions.

In the spring of 1535, 200 Anabaptists (60 families) expelled from Moravia, in part of Silesian origin, came to the region of Thorn, Graudenz, and the Duchy of Prussia. They constituted the initial core of the Anabaptist congregations in the lowlands of the Vistula near Culm and Graudenz.

From the religious point of view, the years 1547-1550 were also a turning point. It is only from this time on that one can really speak of Mennonites in West Prussia. By 1550 a large Anabaptist congregation had been established in West Prussia, with its center in Schottland just outside the walls of Danzig, since the Anabaptists were not permitted to settle in the city proper. Here they had their worship and established their shops for the manufacture of fine textiles and brandy. Hugo Mattheissen and Herman van Bommel were the ministers of the Danzig Anabaptist congregation ca. 1550.

In the summer of 1549 Menno Simons came to Prussia with Dirk Philips to establish the church in Prussia in permanent form. It was no doubt at this time that the influence of the Sacramentists, which was being felt among the Anabaptists in Prussia, was rooted out. Menno Simons' loving concern for the "brethren in Prussia" is evidenced by a letter he wrote to them on 7 October 1549 from his home in the west, closely following his visit to them. The significance of the refugee group here was so great that Menno's most intimate co-worker, Dirk Philips, assumed the leadership of the congregation in Danzig for the rest of his life.

In the first decades of the 17th century the dominant position of the Danzig city church in West Prussian Mennonitism gradually declined, and the rural Mennonites began to develop both ecclesiastically and economically into strong groups.

In 1613 the Mennonites of the Danzig Werder refused on conscientious grounds to obey the demand of the city council for military service, and received exemption from this service on the basis of a money payment. This is the first appearance of the problem of nonresistance in the history of the West Prussian Mennonites, a problem which was to be so important in their later history.

Outside Danzig and Thorn the Mennonites at that time numbered 13,500 souls and owned approximately 150,000 Prussian "Morgen" (a Morgen is about 2/3 of an acre) of the best lowlands in the Delta of the Vistula. After Frederick's death the generosity of the government came to an end. The Lutheran pastors of the Werder, concerned for the future of their congregations, as well as the government officials responsible for providing recruits for military service, urged the king to prohibit further extension of Mennonite landholdings. For this reason Friedrich Wilhelm II issued a special decree in 1789 bearing the title "Edict Concerning the Future of Mennonitism," which guaranteed freedom of conscience in regard to military service but restricted sharply the opportunity to purchase land and obliged the Mennonite landowners to pay the regular church tax required of members of the Lutheran churches. Thus began an 80 year struggle by the West Prussian Mennonites to maintain their practice of nonresistance. In 1801 the edict of 1789 was further sharpened to make the purchase of any further land impossible.

Under these conditions the surplus Mennonite rural population had only one outlet—emigration. This emigration was now undertaken in the form of a large-scale movement to South Russia. But it was not only the landless and poorer Mennonites who sought a new home in the Ukraine. Many others who were not satisfied with the new conditions in West Prussia sold their farms and joined the migrants. A considerable number immigrated to the Samara region of Russia in 1859 to found the Alexandertal settlement.

In the time of Prussia's distress during the Napoleonic Wars (1806-1814) the Mennonites who remained in West Prussia gave their loyal support to the government, but were still subjected to a renewed and vigorous attack on their freedom from military service. In 1806 the Mennonites made a voluntary grant of 30,000 thalers to Friedrich Wilhelm III on the occasion of his visit to Königsberg. In 1810 they added another voluntary contribution of 10,000 thalers to the compulsory war tax which all Prussians had to pay. When the king issued his famous "appeal to my people" in 1813, love for the enslaved homeland was strong in the hearts of the Mennonites, but their spiritual duty to God, which forbade military service for them, still held first place in their consciences. Accordingly, they did not furnish any soldiers, but delivered 500 horses and paid 25,000 thalers tax. In addition they made a voluntary contribution of 60,000 guilders and 6,000 ells of linen. All attempts to force them into active military service, however, met a stubbornly successful resistance which was expressed in the following statement: "Although we are prepared to support in every way possible the state which protects and tolerates us, it is impossible for us to have any part in military service as long as we are Mennonites and remain so." A number of their young men, to be sure, accepted military service, and were then excommunicated from the church.

A crucial time for the congregations came when the North German Confederacy passed a law on 9 November 1867 which annulled the Mennonite privilege of exemption from military service. The crisis was alleviated somewhat by a modification of the law by an Order of Cabinet dated 3 March 1868 which authorized noncombatant service by those Mennonites who could not conscientiously serve with arms, offering service as hospital orderlies, clerks, and in transportation. They were also released from the military oath of loyalty and permitted to substitute a simple handclasp. However, a great number of Mennonites could not conscientiously accept even noncombatant military service. The elders of the congregations at Heubuden, Elbing, and Obernessau emigrated soon thereafter with a part of their congregations to Kansas and Nebraska.

For those who remained behind the previous restrictions in the purchase of land naturally fell away. Mixed marriages with other faiths became more frequent. Mennonites now became better citizens. To achieve this position, however, they had to surrender one of the two fundamental articles of faith. This meant that their separation from the world and their peculiar character as Mennonites was in part eliminated. Until World War I something of this typical Mennonite character as different from the surrounding world remained in the sense that a large percentage of the Mennonite men still took noncombatant service. The Versailles treaty of 1920, following World War I, imposed considerable difficulties upon the Mennonites of this region, who were divided by the new boundaries into three almost equal blocks, Danzig Free State, Poland, and East Prussia.

In World War II the Mennonites of West Prussia took regular military service along with other Germans. The Bolshevik flood from the East now took from them their homeland and their existence as a settlement. When the Russian army in 1945 marched into the Vistula Delta, where the great majority of the Mennonites of West Prussia lived, the great emigration began. On 24 January 1945 the endless columns of wagons and trucks began to move the Mennonites out of the Werder territory which had been their home for 400 years. This was no organized movement. Part of the group succeeded in getting across the Oder River before the Russian army encircled Danzig. The remainder finally fled by sea to save their bare lives, and many of these finally reached Denmark. A large part of those who remained behind were transported into the interior of Russia, or suffered severely in their old home territory.

In the 1950s some 5,500 West Prussian Mennonites were living as refugees in the northern and Rhine provinces of Germany and another 1,000 in Württemberg, Baden, and a large number in the Palatinate. Two new refugee congregations were established in the South Enkenbach in the Palatinate and Backnang near Stuttgart. In Uruguay there were in 1957 four congregations with a total of 809 members—El Ombu, Gartental, Montevideo, and Colonia Delta. The nine congregations in North Germany were organized under a conference committee called "Aeltestenausschuss der Konferenz der west- und ostpreussischen Gemeinden." In Uruguay the four congregations formed a conference which was affiliated with the General Conference Mennonite Church in North America. — **"Horst Penner, West Prussia." *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*.**

A Ladder of Angels The Einlage Danzig, 1652

....From the moment of our birth, dying carries us towards the moment of our death. I am close now, kneeling in this soft, black ground pulling out turnips one by one. An old man has time. Time to feel earth between his fingers down to its very dust. After all, my name is Adam.

For thirty-five years I was chief engineer of the fortress city of Danzig, but like all Mennonites, our family had no permit to live in its tight stone buildings. Fortunately. In our row village of Neugarten, between the shadows of the Bishop's and the Hagel's Hill, we all had deep black soil for gardens, and though every army that besieged Danzig burned Neugarten to the ground while we fled inside the walls with a few possessions, my wife Anna and I agreed: a garden was worth it.

....Our sons Abraham and Jakob received royal permission to dam and drain the floodplain of the Nogat Rver opposite the city of Elbing, and for the past 15 years, while we continued working in both Danzig and Elbing as engineers, Wiebes have diked and ditched and drained the Einlage, as it is called.

....For years I had invited Jan Adrianenz Leeghwater to come and help me redesign our outdated bastions; we needed a second harbor channel and should enlarge our walls to include the Long Garden, so we would have more food to withstand the next siege. We were so endlessly attacked by whatever army had a fleeting advantage in the Wars of the Polish Succession, complicated by the Thirty Years War of Religion and the holy Roman Empire, that we never had sufficient time to rebuild the bastions, leave alone extend our fortifications. But then, suddenly, Jan Adriaenz did arrive.....

....As Danzig's master builder, I had to ponder war: our independent city, a strategic and rich prize for any conqueror was fixed in its place, set immovably on the earth inside the triangle formed on two sides by two rivers and on the third by the westerly line of hills anchored by the Bishop's Hill. Beyond any walls we could build, our best defence was the water of the rivers; when we opened our control dikes and sluices, water flooded the approaches to the city on two sides to confound any attacking army. ...(but) if a general attacked from the west and forced his way up to their tops, he was not only above the flood but also above the walls; the city lay below him, open to whatever destruction his cannonballs could wreak.

...Only earth could save Danzig, Jan Adriaenz and I decided. Our thick bastion walls were built of earth dug out deep to create the moats, and faced with thin stone barged from the mountains. Under heavy cannon fire the stone would break, but the wide, exactly sloped dam of earth behind it would absorb the force of the cannonball without serious damage.

....The problem was the straight line of wall from the Gertrud back to the Corpus Christi Bastion. That wall fronted the western hills that overlooked the city; it was almost a mile long and dangerously low because we had always counted on the hills to protect us. How could that wall be strengthened? There was so little usable earth along the Raduane Canal with its swampy, bottomless marshes. The Bishop's Hill had more than enough earth, even boulders and rock, to build up the wall. The question was how to get the earth from the hill and across the marsh and canal to the wall.

....So I had to decide. Carry earth in endless tiny shovelfuls, drag every grain and clump of it over miles of ground the way the Children of Israel slaved for the Egyptians? Had we learned nothing about the *placedness* of earth, its possible motion, since the desert pyramids of Genesis?

....The best we can do is build ladders to climb step by heavy step up, be there in the air momentarily, and retreat slowly down to earth again, stand ladders against the steep sides of the hill, one stream of people climbing up with yokes and empty buckets, a second stream with buckets filled coming down, in an endless circular motion on ladders, like the ladder Jacob saw as he slept with his head on a stone, and sleeping saw a ladder with its top reaching to heaven and angels going up and down on it and God there standing over him. A ladder set on the earth and leading up to the very gate of heaven, and down again. Angels moving up and down continuously.

...November 13, 1642. The blazing rim of the early winter sun rose on the edge of the earth behind me. It was already so far south of east that, as I faced the Bishop's Hill from the Gertrud Bastion, it laid the shadow of Danzig's western wall all across the middle of the hill. The wall was too low, and much too thin.

The next day we received the message that on November 13 our son Jakob's wife, Ruth, had given birth to a daughter. They had named here Katerina, in Lowgerman Trientje. Purity. When I held her – her tiny face was closed, she was sleeping – they told me she was born at dawn, and I remembered the line between light and shadow that I had seen laid across the Bishop's Hill. Level on the earth as only light can be at the instant of sunrise, and I realized it had revealed to me the precise difference in height between hill and wall, that I could measure it as exactly as I could the width of this tiny perfect nose.

And I saw. The machine was already there, a machine like a line of light in air. I had been merely blind. Connect hill and wall with a string. Like the flight of the bird, like wool that sags and unwinds between the round ball of it and the continuous pull of knitting needles making mittens, here use a strong rope, unbreakably strong like the ship ropes Holland now twists out of the incredible sisal fibres it brings from the New World, connect a continuous circle of this rope from hill to wall and back up again, attach to that rope the necessary yokes of buckets, fill them with earth on the hill and weight of the filled buckets will carry them down and across the valley marsh and up to the top of the fortification wall, because it always remains lower than the hill and at the same time the circle will be returning the empty buckets back to the crest of the hill. Human energy will be needed only to fill the buckets on the hill, and to tip them empty on the wall. The earth can be moved without pause, in buckets hung on a continuous rope.

It took me a year to develop the right size of rope and work out all the problems of exact balance and bucket attachment, the rope and pillar supports. But once started, the aerial rope-train worked perfectly. All over Europe people heard of it and came to see Adam Wiebe's "Jacob's ladder" as they called it, came to stare and praise me, write stories in papers and books, even songs.

And one morning, when the workmen arrived to begin their work, I stepped into the first empty bucket myself and, like the shovelled earth, swaying a little, I was carried slowly along the crest of the Bishop's Hill and then, suddenly, dropped out into space; and then even more suddenly dropped from light into the twilight before dawn lying level across the valley. Moving steadily, riding the waves over the supporting pillars, I knew I was neither bird nor angel. I was a human being suspended in air and shadow approaching an earthen city. When I was lifted up again into the brilliant sunrise over the Wiebe Bastion that anchored the long Wiebe Wall (as the Council had now named them) and the workmen tilted me out, I found myself weeping for happiness....

(excerpt taken from novel "Sweeter Than All the World" by Rudy Wiebe)

Wiebe, Adam (d. 1653)

Adam Wiebe: civil engineer and inventor; born in the Frisian city of Harlingen to a Mennonite Family. He married Margaretha (b. ca.1587) about 1610 and they had five children, all born in Danzig. Son Abraham (b. 1628) was taught by his father to be an engineer and between 1656 and 1657 replaced his father as Danzig's chief engineer of water works (*Wasserbaumeister*). Adam had one known brother who came with him to Danzig and settled in Freienhuben, near the Nogat River. Adam died in Danzig in 1653.

Nothing is known of Adam's early life though like many other Mennonites, he may have fled to the Vistula Delta of Poland because of persecution in the Netherlands or moved there for employment. It is thought that Adam and his brother were in Danzig at least by 1610 but he is not listed on the city's citizen list, most likely because as a Mennonite he would have refused to swear the oath of allegiance to the city.

The first record of Adam was in March 1616, when he was granted a contract by the Danzig City Council for the construction of a Dutch windmill in a nearby village. In 1624-25 he worked in Warsaw, where he received from the Polish king the title of Royal Engineer (*Inżyniera Królewskiego*). Though offered employment in Torun, Elbing, and Riga, he returned and remained a permanent resident in Danzig. Here and in the surrounding Vistula Delta area he designed, engineered, and built many projects, often in hydraulics such as water supply projects, drainage, dredging, and water wheels. These included: a bridge at Śluza Kamienna; an aqueduct over the moat at Riedenwald; and the channeling of water to supply Danzig using the Radunia River. He also invented and built a portable water pump for fighting fires. In the years 1634-1637 he supervised regulatory work at the mouth of the Vistula River and then was

advisor for the construction of a bridge over the Vistula at Torun. He built a remarkable mechanism for moving the mythical figures of Atlas and Hercules on the ceremonial gate to the city of Danzig in 1646 as the city welcomed a visit from the Polish Queen Marie Louise Gonzaga.

Adam's most famous engineering invention was in operation in Danzig in 1644. His invention was of an **aerial tramway, also known as a ropeway conveyer, bucket line, or aerial conveyer**. This invention was used to move large quantities of soil from the Bishop's Mountain to build up the defensive perimeter of the City of Danzig. A long rope loop had a series of buckets firmly attached and the rope passed over several wheels aerially mounted on long poles. The rope circulated the buckets when full of soil from the top of Bishop's Mountain to the lower positioned city walls where they were emptied. The rope then carried the empty buckets back to Bishop's Mountain for refilling. Gravity on the full buckets moving downhill propelled the conveyer. In history this is considered the first demonstrated use of aerial conveyers and Adam is known as its inventor. In spite of all his cost and labor saving inventions Adam remained poor to the end of his life.

Adam Wiebe, his life and descendants, were fictionalized by the Canadian writer Rudy H. Wiebe in his work *Sweeter Than All the World* (Toronto, Alfred A. Knopf, 2001).

There is no reliable documentation on Adam Wiebe's exact birth date, his brother's name and some of his children's names.

Author: Victor G. Wiebe

Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online GAMEO



Etching of Adam Wybe's cable car in Danzig.

Artist: Willem Hondius.

Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

Information on Adam Wiebe compiled by
Kathy Rempel

A BITTERSWEET GENEALOGY SEARCH: from Pleasant Manor to Poland

Our ancestral lives have recently come into the forefront. We now realize the importance of learning from our heritage.

During my formative years (9-17) I lived with my widowed mother and her parents, whose pre-war home background was in Poland. (Deutsch Kazun) Only a small group of immigrants could identify with them. They got together, I listened as they told many stories about lives in their "homeland". Most of the other survival stories about coming to Canada were from southern Russia /Ukraine. These were kept alive via the church (Niagara United Mennonite Church)

Is it possible that the years of refuge in Poland constituted a much longer stay than the later years of residence in South Russia and Ukraine ??? YES writes Peter J. Klassen, author and historian. He also writes "early modern Poland and Prussia are virtually ignored in most studies of the reformation"

He is a professor emeritus of history at California State University in Fresno. I was able to obtain one of his books, together with other writings via the Mennonite Heritage Center in Winnipeg

A large number of Mennonites remained in Poland until the end of the second world war. **My ancestors were in the group that stayed. They bloomed where they were planted. They were not tempted by the offers made by Russia nor did they go and then come back to Poland .**

My grandparents were Reinhold and Lidia Stobbe (nee Schroeder) Mennonite Historian Horst Penner writes: " It is my opinion that the Stobbes did not migrate to Prussia. They were "einheimische Preussen" going back to the Teutonic Knights of the 12th Century" I have always been interested in the country of which I had heard so much.

In December of 2017 my cousin Doris Martin, her husband David and I received confirmation of acceptance for the June 2018 tour to Poland. It was sponsored by the California Mennonite Historical Society and titled "Seeing Poland through Mennonite Eyes" . So I quickly immersed myself into my heritage. I read, bought and googled every lead, talked to anyone who may have any bit of recollection and even learned a bit of Polish, although that proved to be quite unnecessary.

We were a group of 37 from various places, but each one had an ancestral connection in Poland. There were 11 of us from Ontario, others from California and western Canada. Ours was the eighth tour (and his last one) that Alan Peters had organized /hosted . He is a Mennonite genealogist and took over the tours after Peter Klassen retired. Alan sent out an ongoing variety of pertinent newsletters After registration he sent us each our own "Ahnentafel". What an eye opener!

The actual tour dates were set but it was suggested to arrive early so I did and also stayed a day later to get the right flight home. Amazing how about 12 total strangers found each other in a hotel lobby or restaurant in far off Poland before our leader actually connected us !

After a meet and greet supper in Warsaw and a tour of the city on day one, we hit the road by bus. As we approached a site, a church, or a village which was relative to anyone on the bus, Alan read out the names and we stopped to explore, often in awe and amazement..

The first stop was "ours." This building had been the church at Deutsch Kazun. My mother and Doris' mother were baptized in that building and my parents were married there in 1943. It is now a private residence.

The owner came out for a chat via translator. He had a family as evidenced by the toys. There were chickens a dog house, some spring plantings and a very large tree which could have been a sapling in 1943. I was overcome with emotion . I stood on the very same steps where my mother had stood as a bride . Doris and I had a few tears together and many of our bus mates

joined us. The building is still intact needing a few minor renovations. It has its own survival history..

The cemetery which had been across from the then road is no more. It was levelled and all the gravestones and bones of the saints are part of the new dam. We could climb up the steep embankment and look out over the mighty Weichsel of which my Oma had spoken.

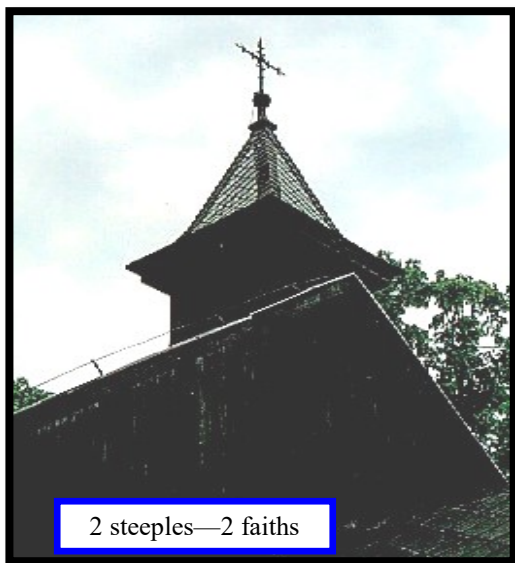
So on we went . At each stop we all tumbled out of the bus to hear the who, what where and

why of our ancestors. Several others had also done research and shared what they knew. We ask too late about what happened during such tumultuous historical political times. Did their faith fail, did they succumb to survive? There is not a German, nor a Mennonite left in all of Poland. However many of our cemeteries have been cared for by the Catholic groups, and there are numerous "Mennonita" signs. Several times we were able to speak to older residents who still spoke some German and let us know that both Germans and Mennonita were good people.



A guided tour of the Marienburg (famous fortress) was certainly a highlight.. Three young women from Deutsch Kazun were sent there to study. My mother was one of them . I have a picture of her sitting behind a very large typewriter. The others were Natalie Lammert (Bartel) and Maria Bartel (Stobbe) How sad that we did not take the time or have the interest to ask them about that experience.

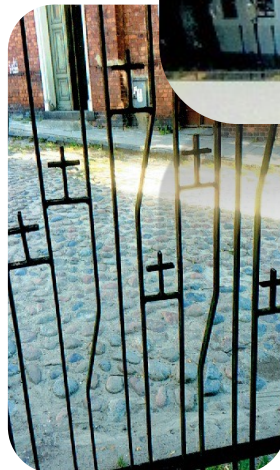
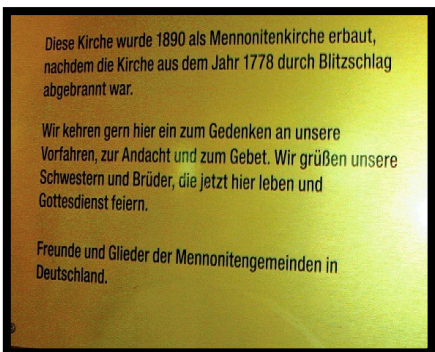
Poland has recognized the value of what the Mennonites had contributed to their country. Just outside Torun there is a replica of a Mennonite village under construction. It is anchored by a beautiful cemetery and several replica buildings had already been constructed. A large, high fence surrounded the site but it was not officially to be opened until Sept. The groundkeeper did come to the fence but despite all explanations and pleading by the translator he could not be swayed to let us in. Across the road was a huge meadow where red poppies were in full bloom. I took a picture of the field with Dr. Dyck holding a poppy. His brother Peter is a resident at Pleasant Manor where I live. So we have become sort of better acquainted via the Poland trip. A sometimes small world indeed !



2 steeples—2 faiths

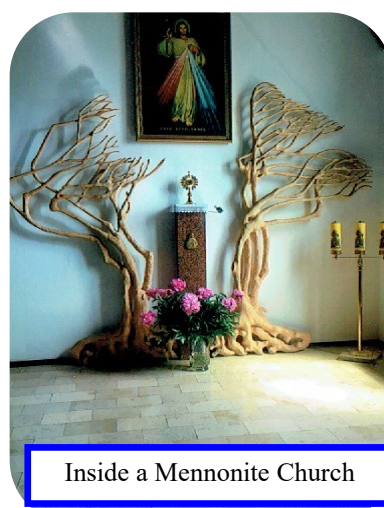
Oh the churches. - although our cemeteries are scattered, so many of our churches are still in use.

In each church we sang the Doxology and in the one near Torun the priest greeted us warmly and made sure we noticed the brass plaque which had been donated by the friends and members of the Mennonite churches in Germany Tom Yoder-Neufeld wondered if we could also pray the Lord's Prayer in German, which would have been prayed there in German many times for many years. To his amazement we did – loud, clean and clear – wow what an AH HA moment.

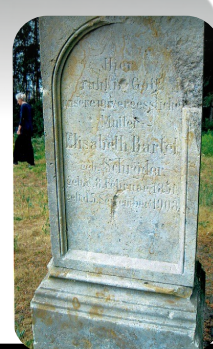


- former Mennonite Church in Gdansk

Our former church in Gdansk is the one often shown in pictures. It is a beautiful, fully-restored white building close to the railroad, in busy busy Gdansk. The pastor, a young man who speaks English, has taken the small congregation into the next century and now has a swelling younger congregation. The iron fence is adorned with many many crosses and a sign saying “ ul. Mennonitow 2 “



Inside a Mennonite Church



Driving along the country roads it was like passing through an. “Allee” Often we passed an “Altar” which had been erected for those who could not get from the country to a church. Some were a bit less adorned than in the picture, but it was a place of worship, lovingly cared for by the locals.

My husbands family had called Tiegenhof their home, he was born in that area. The river Tiege as a branch of the Vistula flows gently through this area. There is a wonderful museum here where many artifacts had been recovered and are now on display. Of special interest to me was the Stobbe Machandel cabinet with a variety of bottles and crests. This is a specialty liqueur made from juniper berries, native to the area, A special drinking ceremony is attached to this drink. I am familiar with this ritual . Actually a young member of our church had been to Tiegenhof/ Tiegenhagen and was instrumental in in setting up some of the displays. A small world !



Gdansk was an adventure all its own – a beautiful city with overwhelming history. All our meals were outstanding and always included one course of polish food. However in Gdansk a special treat was an evening meal at Pod Lososiem known in German as Zum Lachs. In 1598 it became famous for its Goldwasser liqueur, with its floating flecks of gold. Golden history ???!

One member of our group often asked at the end of the day : what was your AH HA moment today. So here are a few of mine :

- *****standing with Doris on the same “church” steps where our mothers had stood
- *****the group singing and praying together
- *****walking through Lazienki Park in Warsaw - huge trees – Chopin memorial
- *****the amazing roof top gardens on the library of the University of Warsaw
- *****the spray of the cold Baltic Sea on my face. The Baltic from where many fled to safety !
- *****the Chopin recital just for our group in the amazing palace like building

Poland has finally come into its own. No more Russian, German, Austrian or others tearing at their beautiful, fertile land. Everyone is welcoming English is spoken easily, especially in Warsaw and larger villages. The integrity of the Mennonite and German name is still intact in Poland.

I am thankful that I was able to take this trip. I am thankful for Alan Peters and his wife Jeannie who so graciously shared their experiences, knowledge and advice with us. I admire the tour coordinator Beverly Reimer who left her husband at home to take this last tour with us. She had been with Alan for most of these tours She has the greatest common sense and the best, ever, body language !

I am thankful that I am now able to step out of the shadow of the Russian Mennonite heritage. That I returned home safely with even more respect and gratitude for my ancestors.



Ingrid Regier - Feb. 2018
a personal non-travelogue submission



Highlight Reel - Skydiving Adventure

The month of January held some pretty incredible adventures as I travelled with Ellery and Mark (my sister and brother-in-law) to New Zealand and Australia. As we were travelling along, Ellery would often ask “what was your favourite part about today?”, or “what has been your favourite thing about the trip so far?” She and Mark are also keeping a blog, and Ellery had this awesome “Highlight Reel” idea, where we’d each reflect on the top three things we loved the most in each leg of the trip. My most anticipated adventure was skydiving in Motueka, NZ, and it definitely ranked #1 in my highlights.

I’ve wanted to go skydiving for as long as I can remember. Ideally I wanted to go alone and to be the one responsible for pulling the parachute and guiding myself to the ground. I figured if you’re jumping out of a plane, might as well make it the scariest and riskiest experience possible. It turns out that now they have rules about going on your own. Pretty much you can’t, at least until you have several tandem jumps under your belt, and quite extensive training. So, I went tandem, but even that was an incredibly cool experience. When we got to the skydive place, it was such a long wait because the days before had been rained out, so they were catching up on all of the cancelled skydives.

Finally I got to go in to get ready for my jump, but not before they convinced me to watch an amazing promo video. I too, for a mere \$200, could have a personal video guy come along for the trip with me to capture the entire thing. My mindset quickly shifted from “WHAT?! \$200 for a video?! No way, that’s way too expensive. I’m very happy to enjoy skydiving without a video” to “Oh, those videos are amazing!!! I would love to have one and this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. \$200? I think I can manage that...” So, with my suit on, my credit card in their hands, and my video guy all ready beside me, we headed onto the plane. We took off and circled over the area for about 10 minutes, and the view was breathtaking. New Zealand is the most beautiful country I’ve ever seen. In that 10 minute plane ride, I learned a few things while I was chatting with the tandem guy who I was strapped onto. The thing that I was the most shocked and dismayed to learn about was how incredibly safe this experience was. First of all, they have you

strapped on with about 10 different straps, making it feel like you’re on a rollercoaster and taking hardly any risk at all. Most devastating was that these skydiving instructors have to take a 9 MONTH COURSE on how to skydive. How they can fill 9 months worth of content based around deploying a little parachute is beyond me. Anyway, at 13,000 feet high, the plane doors swung open, and the time had come to jump off the edge. At that point, all safety disappointment vanished, and I was actually completely scared and excited. Before I knew it, we were falling out of the plane

and into the open air. It was amazing.

We had an entire minute of free falling (my ears hurt a lot during that time, but it was still one of the most amazing feelings), and then after the parachute went out, we glided through the air for about 5 minutes until we reached the ground. Those 5 minutes held some of the most spectacular views, and I felt so in awe of the world that God has created for us to take in and enjoy. I’m so grateful to



have had the opportunity to go skydiving. You have to try it!!!

Outlining the highlights of our trip during each leg has really inspired me to continue doing this at home. I’ve been keeping a journal since the trip, and each week I intentionally choose 3 highlights of my week. My weekly highlights aren’t as obviously exciting as skydiving in New Zealand, but it feels so special and important to think over your week and establish the high points. One of my highlights of this week was meeting up with some of my Grebel friends in Hamilton. Another highlight was a moment of listening to music while driving down the QEW, when I noticed that I felt totally at peace and aware of how indescribably loved and valuable we are to God. I am going to try to continue to be intentional about focussing in on the highlights of each week, no matter how small. And maybe if some weeks aren’t naturally lending themselves to highlights, I will just have to create my own. I’m so excited to continue my “Highlight Reel” in regular life, just like we did on the trip.

~ by Austin Penner



2 Countries: Thailand and Cambodia: **Elephants and Building a House**

- contributed by Ruth Gade

I am fortunate to have many “joys” in my life. One of my joys that is close to the top of the list is travelling and exploring other cultures. I also have a philosophy that my remaining travel years are numbered – there will come a day when I am unable to travel or the desire to travel has waned - and so I make it a goal to see something interesting every year if possible. So in June of 2017 as I was sitting on my front porch perplexed that I had not yet booked my 2017 adventure, and whilst checking out my Facebook, this popped open in front of me: A lively musical ad from a company based out of New Zealand called “BAMBOO” taunting me, “Do you enjoy travel and would you like to give something back and make a difference at the same time?” (Me: YES!); Are you over 50 and young at heart?” (Me: YES!). That is how I signed up for a trip to Thailand and Cambodia. It was easy enough to convince my friend Virginia to join me by simply saying “Virginia, I am going to play with elephants – do you want to join me?” We booked our tour November 29 to December 17, travelling to two countries, volunteering at an elephant village in Thailand and doing community work in Cambodia.

With our tour booked, the next step was to book flights. A flight from Toronto to Bangkok, with a stop in Beijing is 21 hours in transit and covers over 14,000 km! On the way back from Bangkok to Toronto, with a 12 hour stop in Tokyo it is 29 hours AND we arrived home only 4 hours later than when we first left! I was delighted also to have an abundance of travel points and to be able to book a pod in business class for my friend and me – that too was an exciting adventure in itself. Spoiled! Now we ponder how we will ever fly economy class again!

Upon our arrival in Bangkok we met the rest of our “young at heart” or “y@h” travel group for orientation. We were seventeen people coming from Scotland, England, U.S.A., Australia and us, the two Canadians. The group was comprised of 14 women and 3 men. I have frequently wondered why this type of trip does not seem to appeal to more men. Since most of us arrived on a Friday, the weekend was spent exploring Bangkok as a group – impressive and awe-inspiring ornate temples with many gold Buddhas, unusual street food, crowds, night markets, - it is a noisy, busy, crowded city with crazy food and strange smells, and it doesn’t seem to sleep.

On Sunday we were transported by bus to a hotel in Surin, Thailand. At this hotel we received our elephant orientation explaining the cultural significance of elephants in Thailand and the purpose of the elephant village. Today, Thailand has approximately 3,500 wild elephants and 3,500 captured elephants. At the beginning of this century it is estimated that there were in excess of 400,000 elephants in Thailand, with 100,000 captured. They were used in farming as well as for war. The drop in elephant population is primarily due to increase in human population and loss of habitat, and hunting for ivory. My friend Virginia believes the answer is birth control – for people.

The following morning we travelled “thai style” (read: a flat-bed truck converted to be a people carrier) to Ban Ta Klang or “Elephant Village” for our first group elephant hug. The

“Village” is funded by government and tourists like us, to repatriate performing elephants, orphaned elephants and provide sanctuary. Here elephants are not forced to perform for humans — training which requires bull hooks, and training where babies are forced to separate from mothers and clan. “Say no to riding elephants” is the theme.

This is where villagers (mahouts are the elephant caretakers) and pachyderms live side by side. Here our group of 17 was split into 3 homestays, where we lived for the week with the local



families. Dusty dirt roads, mosquito nets, hard plywood beds, stray dogs sleeping on the road, rice at very meal....AND lots of Elephants walking along the road was our day to day experience. Our stay was an opportunity to walk side by side with ele-

phants. It is truly an awesome experience which is frankly indescribable – to bathe with elephants, to work with and learn about elephants. We cut grass (sugar cane?) filling big pickup trucks to deliver to our elephants. Do you know that an adult elephant will eat approximately 200 to 600 lbs of food a day – they are herbivores, and drink up to 50 gallons of water (standard bath tub) a day? I believe the village had approximately 60 elephants, and there were three new groups of tourists every week. Our guide told us that it costs approximately \$85.00 U.S. per day to feed one elephant. We were able to buy bunches of bananas at the village for the elephants. This is like candy to them! If you can imagine, the elephant reaches out with its trunk, you give him/her a banana, and she takes it with her trunk, sticks it in her mouth - peel and all – one chew, one swallow and her trunk is out for the next one – until the banana bunch is all gone in less than one minute – the equivalent of some people eating peanuts!





We each had our “own” elephant. Mine was named Nam Wan (translated “Sweet Soda”) – a 7 year old female who had no mother (poachers?). Nam Wan always stayed close to her “aunt” or adopted mom – an older female elephant. As we walked in line side by side - trunks to tail for the elephants and ear-to-ear grins on the humans - to the water for bathing with our elephants, I stroked Nam Wan gently and sang softly to her – the tune that came to mind was “How great thou art”. The feeling of majesty and greatness, and yet gentleness was overwhelming for all of us. Elephants have great memories – do you think if I went back in 20 years and sang the same song, she would remember me? As we ap-

proached the water – the elephants were excited to get in. We, the tourists, on the other hand, were slightly hesitant. The water was the colour of chocolate milk and we could see that some elephants used the water as their personal toilet! But none of us could resist – we clamored in as well – our feet stepping in who knows what! Nam Wan was very playful in the water, ducking



Our other activities in the village included building a pig pen with bricks and mortar, weeding a pineapple garden, visiting the local market, visiting and participating at the elephant dung project – where poo is converted to paper, (remember they are herbivores, and their poo is fibrous), and visiting the local elephant cemetery, where great reverence and care is taken in the final resting place of all elephants from the village. The week was over too quickly, and then it was time to say “goodbye” and one more elephant kiss – (did I tell you that they give kisses with their trunks?), and back on the road for our next adventure.



her whole head under and then spraying me with her nose! Her mahout, who was in the water with her, encouraged me to wash her eyes and rub her skin. She was so very gentle. After our water fun, we walked with our elephants back to the village. Elephants like to pick up sticks on the road with their trunk, break them effortlessly into just the right size, and use the stick as a personal back scratcher. Some would pick up dust and dirt from the road with their trunks and throw it on their back – the mahout explained that they do this to protect themselves from the sun. We walked past a grove of trees with the closest ones to the road having no bark. It became evident very quickly as the elephants slowed down, that this was their back scratch stop. Everyone got a turn – the elephants that is! It is absolutely amazing to be in the presence of an elephant.

On Saturday we headed to the Kingdom of Cambodia – to Siem Reap. The name Siem Reap literally means “Siam defeated”. The border crossing was also an experience. A bus dropped us off several meters from the border. We had to walk our luggage up to the border where it was loaded onto a cart on the Thailand side, and away the luggage went – never to be seen again? Then we walked across the border where officials closely examined our paperwork – visa required – and passports, and then we were thankfully reunited with our luggage. It was interesting. In Siem Reap we stayed in a beautiful hotel with swimming pool, soft beds, and a restaurant that served more than just rice! It is the culture, both in Thailand and Cambodia, to remove your shoes before entering a home or building. The hotel had racks for shoes outside the front doors and everyone walked around barefoot inside the hotel. As you can imagine, there were easily one hundred pair of shoes, as we all had more than one pair of shoes – so you had to remember where you put yours. I also noticed that upon leaving, some had forgotten their shoes in the racks.

What better way to kick things off in Cambodia than a Sunday sunrise trip (this means getting up a 3:30 in the morning) to the awe-inspiring Angkor Wat. This is an over 1000 year old ancient temple compound, a UNESCO World Heritage Site – a must-see if you are in this part of the world. The sun rising over the temple with a shadow at dawn cast on the water surrounding the temple is a recognizable picture for many.

Just outside the city of Siem Reap, is a tiny impoverished village where we were to spend our week contributing to community work. On Monday morning, our group of seventeen was divided. We needed half the group to teach English to school children in the village school built and supported by our tour organization, Bamboo, and the other half to be builders – to build a new home for a local family.

Virginia and I decided to be part of the building team. Bamboo had sourced ahead of time what family would get a new home. They have criteria, one being that the family must pledge to send their children to the local school. The cost of our trip had funded all the building supplies, and a local building supervisor, as well as school supplies.

Tuktuks are the mode of transportation – a motorcycle with a cart attached at the back that seats four people. Tuktuks arrived at the hotel at 7:00 each morning to take both the teachers and the builders to this tiny village – perhaps a 30 minute ride on dusty bumpy road which is also shared with every other mode of transportation. We all got together at the local school, named “Happiness House” for our orientation. The builders then got back into the tuktuks to head to our building site which was close to the school. As Bamboo has been working in this village for some time, we saw examples along the way of the house that we would build. It was a simple, raised, one-room structure built out of wood and tin. It was raised about four feet above ground for flooding as well as providing hammock shelter underneath.



Once we arrived, the young family, a very young couple with two little girls, along with other neighbours, eagerly greeted us and seemed happy to welcome us. We saw all the building material laid out for us and the local contractor hired had already started organizing the work site. The new home would be built beside the existing home – which was a decaying patched structure made out of bamboo and leaves. The whole village seemed excited that this young family was getting a new house! The first day was spent sanding the wood and creating the framework. This was not the fine lumber that we have in Canada – it was hard and uneven wood. We sanded, we lifted, and we hammered and sawed – mostly women – all over 50 – who had never built before! The temperature was on average 36 or 37 degrees Celsius, and we were expected to keep our knees and shoulders covered in this traditional village. The breaks were plentiful – and we were provided with fresh coconut, pineapple, and mango – so sweet! For our lunch break, we walked back to the school to reunite with our other group members who were the teachers. Here we enjoyed a rice lunch (yes, rice AGAIN), catching up with stories and having some relaxation. Then it was back to work in the afternoon. We worked until 3:30 every day.

The “building site” had no safety standards, as children from the village gathered and played in bare feet in the “construction

zone”! Wood remnants made for a new set of children’s building blocks! No hardhats or safety shoes – flip-flops would do, for the workers. It was also ingenious how this work got done without modern tools. A clear long tube with water was used as a leveller.



Small circles cut from old rubber tires got placed beneath the nails used on the roof to ensure water-proofing. A back of a small axe made do as an extra hammer. This house was completed in 4 days! It was beautiful!! The final touches included a personalized sign that we, the volunteers, made with each of our handprints, and which then adorned the front of the house.

Both groups celebrated when the week was done. The teachers had a “spelling bee” with the students – and prizes purchased by the teaching group included new bicycles for the winning students in the various age categories. The “builders” had also gone shopping to provide gifts – a 50 kg bag of rice, a propane cook top, bedding, mats, cooking oil and spices...and a case of beer for the party. A house blessing ceremony had been planned and 3 monks arrived to give a blessing to the house and the family – everyone was invited. It was a grand celebration with music and dancing for young and old. It is tradition to walk or dance around the new home with gifts in hand, three times, accompanied by very loud music. Everyone participates. We held hands, we laughed, we hugged, and we cried. The young family, with two little girls, was grateful.

Our travel group of 17 was in agreement that on this trip we received at least as much as we gave. We had come to teach, build and share, and yet we learned so much and the locals shared generously with us. We didn’t speak each other’s language and yet we felt that we made a connection and we communicated. My observation is that the local people appear to have enough to eat and they appear to be happy and content, a peaceful people. Ownership and possession don’t appear to be a priority. There is strong evidence of community and of sharing, and caring for each other.

Travel for me often exposes me to a different life than what we have here in Canada and this has many benefits. Virginia and I got back on the plane to Canada, both somewhat changed, and with much left to reflect on.



Reflections of our time at NUMC

Dave and Janie Lewis

Dave

When I first arrived at NUMC one of the foremost questions I was asked was: *“Have you ever worked with Mennonites before?”* I wasn’t quite sure how to respond to that question. I found myself trying to determine what the intent was behind the inquiry. Where you trying to see what I knew to help me fit in better? Or, was there some hidden cultural value that I needed to be careful not to miss? Or, because this question was often asked with a smile, were you wanting me to know that you have the ability to laugh at yourselves and there may be some ‘quirks’ that I might discover? At any rate, now that I have lived among you, if I am ever asked that question again I know what I will say.

This is what I have learned about Mennonites because of you...

You are amazingly generous people. There is a ready response to meet the needs of others that I have witnessed among you. At a time when many in our country were fearful of the influx of refugees, you took a strong stand to reach out to the disenfranchised and provided welcoming support – no strings attached.

You are warmly embracing. Although I have teased you a little with my opening remarks on the Mennonite question, I have only felt accepted among you. You have made me feel at home and I feel like I have flourished in your midst. Then, whenever we have had family members visit us, they have all remarked on the warmth of your friendliness and the interest you have shown in them.

You have a captivating spiritual sensitivity. This is the biggest take away for me. I have been instructed by how you readily move toward discerning what the Spirit of God might be saying to you in your decision making process.

You are intentionally caring. There is a deep level of compassion that I have witnessed among you. I experienced this personally at the death of my mother, and I have seen how you pull together to care and support the bereaved. But it goes beyond doing ‘funerals well’. There is a caring culture that has emerged, giving testimony to a supernatural inclination toward compassionate engagement with those who are hurting that has developed within you.

Janie

When we knew that Dave would be starting at the church at first I have to admit I was most excited that it was close! For 7 years he had been helping to transition churches in Kitchener, Toronto and Windsor. With the responsibilities of the Bed & Breakfast, it was difficult for me to travel with him more than a few times in any given year. The two years in Windsor were even more difficult due to the distance involved and him having to stay overnight. He has been my husband, but also my pastor for the 46 years of our marriage and I missed that. I missed hearing him preach, being at times challenged and at times comforted by the messages he would bring, - and I missed being able to be a part of the congregations he was ministering to. So I have been very grateful for these last almost 20 months.

Now however, I am grateful for more than the fact that Dave has been able to stay close to home. I am grateful for each of you who have taken the time to introduce yourself and make me feel welcome, to share a bit of your story, to ask about ours. I don’t always remember the name, but I remember the smile, your story and your thoughtfulness. Thank you for inviting us into your homes or out for lunch, a chance to get to know you better and a reason to feel more “a part” of you.

When Dave’s Mom died last March, I was amazed at how many of you drove to Hamilton for the visitation and the funeral. You have no idea how much that meant to both of us. I mentioned it to Linda at the funeral. She took my hands and simply said, “We love you and this is what we do.” Simple. Loving. Jesus to our hearts.

On a more practical note, I have been grateful for your wonderful library. As we have walked through these last couple of months of transition it has been a comfort to curl up with a book, or a couple of books from the library!

I will be away for 3 weeks at our daughter’s in Alberta. It’s hard to think that only 3 Sundays after that we will be finished! We will miss you and always be grateful for welcoming us into your lives. Some of you have already promised to stop in to see us in our new home. We will also look forward to seeing you again when we come down this way to visit. Thank you.

Dave wrapping up...

So, these are a few of the things I have learned. Let me conclude by making this observation as you look to carry on in the mission God has you on here. You have taken up the call to *“be servants of Christ in the community.”* This is a great calling. Over the years this calling of service has generally been to a specific people group. You developed an intentional strategy to accomplish this service. Some good foundational work has been done. So, here’s the question, What can you ‘borrow’ from what you have already learned to create a missional strategy for tangibly advancing the kingdom of God in your neighbourhoods and beyond? There is so much you have to offer this community. As you process this admonition, let me encourage you to keep it simple. Don’t try to do too much. Be discerning. Then, embrace the mission God has set out for you. And, I will be eagerly watching from a distance!

Memories of Art Andres

Art and I were forever thankful that we were raised in a loving Christian home in a family of twelve energetic fun loving children and never a dull moment. We were raised with strong Christian values and church attendance was a must. Art and I did everything together, like doing chores (feeding the cows and chickens, chopping and bringing in wood, cleaning the barns etc.). We played hockey on the pond, baseball in the field and rode our bikes to go swimming in the nearby lake every evening with our friends.

Art and I went to Sunday and German school in the Niagara United Mennonite Church and had excellent teachers. We attended Virgil Public School and then Eden Christian College, having the same favorite subjects and our marks were always very close. It was while attending Eden and during Bible Emphasis Week that Art and I accepted Jesus as our Personal Lord and Savior in January 1955 and we were baptized in this church by Rev. Jacob Dyck in May 1955. Our parents, as well as Eden's music teacher John Thiessen instilled in us the love of music and singing. Art and I have enjoyed singing together in the church and male choirs for over sixty years and in many volunteer funeral choirs.

We farmed together with our wives for over thirty years and during this time Art's faith was tested. His wife Elvira died of cancer in 1967, Art and Helen's infant son Timothy died at childbirth in 1973, and their daughter Joanne was diagnosed with Hodgkins lymphoma. After multiple therapies, God answered the many prayers and she was completely healed.

We sold the farm in 1989 and were free to give our time to do volunteer work: picking up furniture and appliances for the Christian Benefit Shop, doing lawn maintenance for church, and painting at Camp Crossroads, Silver Lake, Ten Thousand Villages, Christian Benefit Shops and in our church. Also, we enjoyed helping in a number of MDS disaster areas such as El Salvador, St. Louis, Detroit, Binghamton NY, Barrie and Toronto.

Art and I loved playing hockey. We played for the Virgil Cubs in the Lincoln League and after seventeen years we had almost the same number of goals and assists. We won a number of championships but the highlight was when Art scored the winning goal in the second overtime period of the final game in 1958.

He said we have had a lot of fun and good times but the most important decision he made was to follow Jesus. Art gave most of his life to his work in the church. He served as a deacon in the Bethany Church from the late 1960's, served in the church's Senior Ministry, helped in the Mexican Mennonite Ministry and has sung in the church choir most of his life. I have been blessed to have been able to share his life with him. I miss him a lot and am comforted in knowing we will join him in Heaven again some day. To God be the Glory!!

~ submitted by twin brother Fred

Memories of Art

Art and his brother Fred were never separated in this life. Our mother thought she was having only one child, and when Fred appeared the midwife excitedly exclaimed "Oh, Oh, I think there is another one coming."

Mom was not excited. We were a poor family and one was certainly enough. Later on in life as they grew up, our mom always said, "Had I known twins got along so well, I wish they had all been twins". Art and Fred slept together in a small crib, they played together, they studied together and went to school together. They were always the top students in their class, one trying to outdo the other.

They would go clothes shopping separately with their wives, and more often than not, come home with the same outfits. There were many instances like this and we often wondered if they only had one brain between the two of them. They were and still are great brothers and we all will miss Art. Helen will surely miss her husband and Fred will miss his life long partner and brother.

~ Lena Van Bergen

Memories of Brother Art

In a family of 12 children, my brother Art somehow stood apart. The Andres family was generally known to be boisterous, outspoken, brash, and at times, down right rowdy! - but not brother Art. He certainly inherited our mother's genes, as opposed to our father's genes, which the rest of us apparently inherited? Art had an uncanny knack of being that calming effect during a storm. Unlike the rest of us, he thought carefully and methodically before responding to a situation.

During our hockey years in the tough Lincoln Senior Hockey league in St. Catharines, I had the privilege of being the centre man on a line with my twin brothers. All of us certainly were involved in on-ice altercations (some of us more than others) from time to time, but not brother Art. How he avoided conflict and penalties in a league known for its rough play, is beyond me - but he did! Teammates and opponents alike, often teased my brothers for their squeaky clean lifestyle. If the Lincoln Hockey league, had awarded a **Lady Byng trophy**, brother Art would have owned it. The Lady Byng trophy is awarded annually to an NHL player exhibiting sportsmanship and gentlemanly conduct, combined with a high standard of playing ability. Brother Art met all of those qualifications and then some!

Art was also a church deacon for as long as I can remember. I am not so sure that any other Andres brother could have qualified for that job? The Andres clan has truly lost a spiritual anchor. He was a model family man, kind, generous and above all, a man of God. We will all miss him immensely!

~ submitted by Buddy Andres

Seeing Art was a lot older than myself, I have very few memories of life at home with the twins. But one incident stands out quite vividly. It was the fall in 1954 and harvest season was over. So having some time on his hands, Art was driving the tractor from point A to point B. Being the innocent child that I was, I decided to get on the tractor with him. But I didn't sit where most people would sit, I sat on the hood, hanging onto the steering wheel. So as Art was taking a corner, I couldn't hang on anymore, and I slid off, barely being run over by the tractor tires, which was a miracle in itself. Needless to say, I couldn't walk and Art had to carry me to the house. After being rushed to the hospital I was diagnosed with a broken pelvis, and was laid up for a month. Thinking back now, Art being the gentle soul that he was, obviously felt very guilty of allowing me to sit there. In years to come, I never let him forget what he had done, so we did have many laughs over it, me blaming him and him blaming me.

~ Kathy Neufeld

One of my earliest memories of my brother Art was the year I was in grade 1. My twin brothers each had bikes that were much too big for them. Art would give me a ride from Niven Road all the way to Virgil Public School. I would sit on the crossbar with my hands holding on to the steering wheel. Well I guess I made a wrong move in steering and we both landed in a deep ditch. I would have expected a good scolding from him but as I recall, he wasn't even upset with me.

As I got older, I realized that Art was more of a peacemaker than a fighter. This was the quality I appreciated in him and one I will always cherish.

~Margie Enns



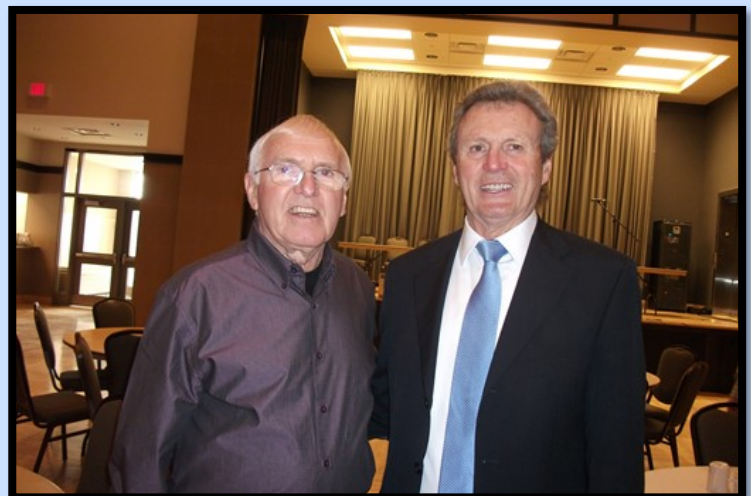
The Twins



Picture of brother Art with the famous Paul Henderson, who scored the winning goal for Canada against the Russians in Sept. of 1972.



All 7 brothers



Virgil P.S. Memories by Fred Andres

1942 - 1950

When I reflect on my years at Virgil Public School (1942-1950) I am reminded of the loving, caring and compassionate teachers who were truly dedicated to their work. Two of them — Helen Dyck in Grade 2 and Ivan Ring in Grade 8 stand out vividly in my mind. Helen Dyck, a soft-spoken motherly type, seemed to take care of her students as a mother hen who puts her young ones under her wings. Mr. Ring demanded perfect grammar, was a strict disciplinarian, but also fun loving, often playing tricks on his students.

Some of my more vivid memories were the trips to and from school. Since there were no school buses in those days and our parents did not have the means to transport us daily to school, the ten of us Niven Road neighbor kids would walk the three miles to Virgil School. That meant getting up at 6:30, helping with the chores in the barn, eating breakfast and leaving at 7:30 for the one hour walk to school. In winter this meant leaving while it was still dark, and arriving home at 5:00 when darkness had already set in.



However, when the weather was bad — rain or snow — our parents would take us to school by car or my father's 3 ton stake truck. How vividly I remember our neighbour Arthur Schmitt, taking us to school after a snow storm because his Model A Ford could get through the snow drifts easier because of its narrow tires and being higher off the ground than the other cars. Bear in mind that we had no snow plows in those days for the rural roads. He would pile all ten of us kids in his car — packed like sardines, no seat belts — and then take runs at the drifts. Much to our disappointment, after a few runs, at the drifts, he always seemed to make it through. So much for a day off from school.

Around the mid forties our parents bought some old used bicycles which we were able to ride to school. I remember how twin brother Art and I, small for our age, would give our younger sisters rides to school, sitting on the crossbars and holding on to our lunch pails and books. For some reason, our sisters would hold too tightly to the steering wheel and consequently many times we found ourselves in a heap in the ditch. One other incident stands out in my mind as we travelled to school. In those days the grade one class was dismissed at 3:00 p.m. instead of 4:00 p.m. like the rest of the school and so Art and I walked home alone the grade one year. One day while walking home past the present day Niagara District High School, a large truck loaded with 45 gallon drums hit a bump in the road as it passed us and two drums dropped and came rolling toward us. Highway 55 was quite narrow and rough in those days and when those barrels rolled erratically towards us we had to run for our lives! The driver must have been unaware of what had happened because he never stopped. I am sure our guardian angels were watching over us that day because the barrels narrowly missed us.

I have fond memories of the school and school life and can honestly say I enjoyed "the good old days".

Virgil P. S. Memories by Art Andres

1942 - 1950

The 125th year anniversary celebration of Virgil Public School being held this year brought back many fond memories of my association with the staff and fellow students.

I attended the school from 1942-1950, and, living about 3 miles away on Niven Road, travelling to and from the school was always an interesting experience. Since this was the preschool bus era, travelling to school consisted of either walking the long distance, hitch-hiking, riding our bicycles, or my father taking all of the children from Niven Road on the back of his 3 ton stake truck and driving them to Virgil. One other form of transportation I recollect quite vividly. When school was out, and we didn't feel like the walk home because of the rain or freezing, cold weather, we would walk the short distance to the corner store in Virgil which was owned by Harry Gibson.

Here we would wait for about half an hour until the St. Catharines Standard delivery van would arrive to deliver newspapers. After he had unloaded his bundle of papers at the Virgil store, the driver urged us into the van with a cheerful, "all aboard!" We scrambled into the van quickly, sitting on top of the papers or wherever else we could find room, sometimes as many as 10 of us. Then, with never a complaint about the extra inconvenience, he would proceed on his way to Niagara-on-the-Lake, stopping only long enough at the end of Niven Road to let his grateful passengers disembark.

We, the former students from Niven Road, owe this kind gentleman a debt of gratitude for his love and patience with us.



Some joyous, some not so joyous times of schoolbus driving...

Out of bed early, shovel snow to circle check and make sure you get the bus on the road in time. After a few slip and slide accidents you learn how to do it. Gratefully, no one ever got hurt. My first route was a van with twelve seats with seatbelts, and to pick up 12 handicapped children door to door in St. Catharines down town.

If a bus is equipped with belts, it is mandatory to put them on even in 1974. OK everyone is secured... "Do not take the belts off guys, OK?" Two minutes, and "ding, ding, ding" – all belts are off. Stop to put them all on again – this in the early times of seatbelts. As tests were done, they found children were safer without seatbelts on buses. "Phew" what a relief!

With more experience, I found some tricks to keep children in the seats. If a child refused to sit, I pulled over in a safe place, and turned the bus off. "Sorry folks, this bus can't move unless All Bottoms are on the seats." It almost always worked. On my big bus (I drove for 17 years), I liked to have bus patrols. Some of the older, Grade 7 or 8 students made really good bus patrols, especially if they had a little trouble behaving. I would tell them how special a person they are, and they were then allowed to help and keep an eye on everybody. This would make them feel so grown up, and well-behaved.

Oh so many great memories – like driving on emotionally low days, when you would rather have stayed home and cried and felt sorry for yourself when a very observant young girl noticed my face in the rearview mirror, I guess. She came to me fighting back tears: "Mrs. Pankratz, you can have my cookies". She wanted to make me feel better with her precious lunch. I smiled and thanked her, but I will never forget.

The last 23 years I drove a 24-seater mini bus. Smaller groups are easier to get to know, and become friends. My passengers were allowed to laugh, talk and sing, and sometimes got really loud. Like the five cousins who lived within walking distance of each other in the country. They were the second last stop to get off the bus. In later years, they had Ipods, and really got loud. So this one day the cute grade 2 boy dashed to the back seat - a place of honour. He could only go there when all the older children got off. In a beautiful voice he sang "Jesus loves me, this I know" - all verses. I had tears running down my face. At his stop he looked at me with his beautiful blue eyes and asked "Did you like that song?" "Yes I did. Where did you learn it?" – knowing he played hockey Sunday mornings. "I'm taking my first communion and we had to learn that," he said. (I drove mostly for Catholic Elementary and High Schools.) It is fun to run into some of these children now, grown up with children of their own and "chat". At 82, I decided to retire for good.

Thanking God for protection on the roads, blessing me with health and strength, helping me with the difficult, so that in 41 years I never had to kick one child off the bus. Hopefully also being the right influence in the morning, and a help sometimes when the children had an upsetting day at school. "I still miss it!"



~ submitted by Anneliese Pankratz

Birthdays

March

Franz Friesen: 90 (3/8/28)
Jacob Enns: 86 (3/12/32)
Maria Enns: 91 (3/19/27)
Jacob Friesen: 93 (3/23/25)
Arno Bartel: 89 (3/25/29)
Manfred Runge: 80 (3/26/38)
Erika Martens: 87 (3/26/38)
Peter Siemens: 86 (3/30/32)
Catherine Wiebe: 95 (3/31/23)



April

Waldemar Bartel: 80 (4/4/38)
Margarete Neufeld: 88 (4/10/30)
Kaethe Riemland: 86 (4/14/32)
Nori Dau: 80 (4/15/38)
John Willms: 87 (4/15/31)
Bill Harder: 83 (4/22/35)

Anneliese Pankratz: 85 (4/22/33)

25th Wedding Anniversary

Gerry & Ruth Lamarre 3/15/93

60th Wedding Anniversary

Frank & Erika Siemens 3/1/58
Ernie & Mary Pries 4/12/58

Hello Church Family!

Back in the end of 2017 two of our children, Chris and Joyce, asked me what I wanted for a Birthday/ Christmas present. Of course, I told them I didn't want or need anything, but they insisted. So, after a few days of pondering I came up with a novel idea! Both my parents are deceased and I only have one aunt on my mother's side still living (Elizabeth Janzen) and one uncle on my father's side (Jake Friesen). I do not have much information on my ancestry or descendants, especially on my father's side. After doing some research I came up with a gift idea, Ancestry DNA. This is a company that traces your family's ancestry through your DNA. Everyone's DNA is unique to each individual, just like one's fingerprint. Although through your DNA you do have certain matches that can link you to another person, or nationalities. The more I thought about it, the more I thought it was a great idea!

To make a long story short the kit was ordered, and within a few weeks the test kit was received! Everyone has to set up a password and your email address to get started. The kit consists of a test tube with a separate chemical, a sealed package to put your sample in after you are finished and a prepaid addressed box to mail the sample to. It's quite easy, you spit saliva in a tube, mix it with this chemical and seal the tube, place the sample in the box they give you and mail it away. They then send you an email when they have received the sample. When the testing is started it takes 2 to 6 weeks before they email you the results. It's quite easy! After I was informed that my sample was received my excitement grew. Of course, I waited with growing anticipation!

Anita then grew interested as well about her ancestry too. We also sent away for the same testing kit for her. When we finally received the results for both of us we were quite surprised!

The breakdown of our results as an average between both of us for our children are as follows:

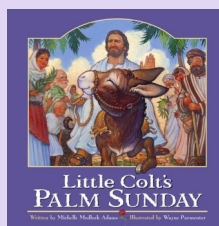
Europe West (Germany,the Netherlands,Belgium and Luxembourg) 42%
Great Britain 25.5%
Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway, Denmark). 16.5%
Europe East (Hungary, Slovenia,Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova,
Lithuania, Latvia, Bosnia and Herzegovina , Croatia. 8%
Europe South (Italy and Greece) 3%
Iberian (Spain and Portugal) 1.5%
Finland/ Northwest Russia .5%
Ireland/ Scotland / Wales 2.5%
European Jewish(Poland,Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Hungary, Israel) .5%

We are quite amazed at the results, especially with the high percentage of Great Britain in our ancestry. These results truly show us that our direct ancestors came from a diverse culture. Anita and I are truly a United Nations. At first we were skeptical of the results, but Anita's cousins took the test without our knowledge and they showed up as her first and second cousins. This proves to us that the results are correct. After this we also signed up for the Grandma Mennonite Data Base out of California and this gives us the chance to cross reference the results and tests. Now we have also a family tree on both sides which we can trace back to the early 1700's on Anita's side and late 1600's on my side. Wow, what a gift! Not from knowing anything to all this information is great.! When I have time I would like to contact some of these descendants of ours to fill in any missing links we have on both our sides. It's amazing that through today's technology we can answer questions that we would have never been able to before. Our children will also now know some of their heritage and ancestry that we couldn't have answered before. It's the gift that keeps on giving.

Blessings, Jeff and Anita Friesen

BOOK CORNER ~ Debbie Fast

Little Colt's Palm Sunday by Michelle Medlock Adams
"The little colt walked with the men, unsure of everything.
And then he met Jesus the Christ – The King of every king!"

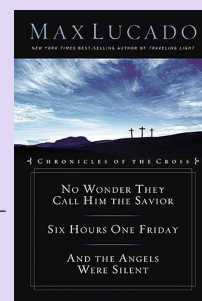


Chronicles of the Cross by Max Lucado

No Wonder They Call Him the Saviour ... leads you up to the hill of
hope & reminds you why he deserves to be called our Saviour. mankind's highest

Six Hours One Friday ... There is a truth greater than all the losses & sorrows of life. And it can be discovered in the life, death & resurrection of Jesus Christ. Delve into the meaning of Jesus' last six hours on the cross.

And the Angels Were Silent ... In the last week of his life, Jesus deliberately sets his face toward Jerusalem – and certain death. Even the angels are silent as they ponder the final days of Jesus Christ.



Answering the Call...In Depth with NUMC Nominating Committee

NUMC is continuing on its transition journey. As the process continues we depend on many volunteers who are active in all kinds of program and services of the church.

At the recent Annual General Meeting it was noted that along with paid staff, there are around 235 volunteer positions within the church that keep NUMC's programs operating. A big thank you to all those who are actively participating and working hard in one or more of these jobs as a vibrant community of support and outreach.

With the current nominating committee of Rita Boldt, Elly Forbes, Harold Neufeld, (Chair), and Tina Runge in place, I talked with Harold about the challenges faced by the committee as they work to fill vacant positions each year. Harold indicated that the Nominating Committee tries to find the right person for the right job, while also trying to strike a balance between existing and new people on the committees. Most terms are 3 years, with a annual rotation of committee members, so there are new and experienced members working together.

The Nominating Committee gets together in November to identify potential committee members, make phone calls, update results etc. until the vacancies were filled. This year, for example, there were 40 vacancies on various committees that needed filling. The Nominating Committee took charge, and after approximately 60 phone calls and other one-on-one contacts, they reached their goal. You have to admire the persistence of all of the nominating committee members as they do their job!

Harold indicated that some volunteer positions are fairly self-explanatory and easier to fill, while others are more challenging. For example, one of the easier positions to fill is for ushers. Some people find ushering to be a good fit for them, and also allows them an opportunity to become involved and meet other church members.

Harold described his own experience in becoming an usher many years ago. Being a bit shy, he was taken under the guidance of George Enns, an usher at the time. George walked him through basics and now Harold is doing the same for others.

Rita Boldt talked about working on filling one of the volunteer positions. After calling a number of people with no success, she regrouped and looked through the church member directory again. She spotted another member that had not been on her original list and made the call. The member eagerly said YES! and the position was filled.

Summary

The 2018 NUMC Directory will be out soon and provide a good summary of all the volunteers that make things happen at NUMC. Have a good read of it and perhaps pick 2-3 positions where you feel you have something to contribute and make and make a difference.

If you are really proactive, let the nomination committee know of your interest in those positions. At the very least be ready to "answer the call" when the nominations committee member contacts you!

Alan Teichroeb

From the May 18, 1980 bulletin. A sampling of announcements from that particular bulletin shows a vibrant, active and growing church. A sort of week-in-the-life at NUMC:

Today, 2:00 p.m. Catechism instruction class meets.
Wednesday, 9:30 a.m. Women's Bible Study & Fellowship meets.
5:30 p.m. Pioneer Girls meet at the church for a hike and a barbeque.
Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Choir Practice for the German service.
7:30 p.m. Choir Practice for the English service.
Friday, 8:00 p.m. Young Peoples meeting. "Outreach"
8:00 p.m. Young Adult Bible Study at Nancy Berg's place, 61 Else Street.
7:45 p.m. Bible Prayer Fellowship at the Mark Dobell home. Text James 4.
Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The YOUNG PEOPLE will have a CAR WASH. \$5.00.
6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Junior Young People meet at the Frank Goerz's place, Irvine Rd.
Sunday, 10:45 a.m. Baptismal Service. This is a joint service.
3:00 p.m. Communion Service.

NEW MEMBERS will be received into our fellowship: John & Tina Friesen, 6 Lorraine, Virgil; Gerhard & Ursula Hummel, Line #3 and Erna Delesky, E/W Line, have asked to join our congregation. We cordially invite others who would like to join our church to contact a member of the ministerial.

Wow... that was a busy week!

~ submitted by Harold Neufeld

SNAPSHOTS



Where's Noah when we need him?



Seniors' Tea



Anabaptist Heritage Concert



Greetings from Hanoi, Vietnam



Welcome to Canada

LIFE WITH US NEWSLETTER

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

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Kathy Rempel | 905-468-3829 | jrempe16@cogeco.ca

Niagara United Mennonite Church

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