

Multi-cultural Ministry Newsletter

Spring 2005

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Working towards integration of people groups within Mennonite congregations and cooperation among people of different ethnic, social, national, political and religious backgrounds.

From the director – Samson Lo



Greetings to you in this beautiful spring season! I trust that the grace of God stays with you and flows through you. It is the time again for me to share with you what God has been doing in us, through us and for us. It is amazing how our God works in mysterious ways and continues to shower us with His abundant blessings in the face of difficulties and problems which seem

insurmountable to us. Our God is great and He is present in every culture and tradition.

The purpose of this newsletter is to facilitate communication among ethnic groups dispersed in various parts of Canada, and in turn to promote multi-cultural ministry and encourage mutual intercession. A big thank-you must be extended to pastoral co-workers and leaders in various areas for their strong and unceasing support of our ministry, especially in sharing their needs and updating us on their circumstances. It is this support which lends life and significance to our newsletter.

In gathering information and material for the newsletter I employ all means of communication available, including emails, phone calls, faxes, visitations and face to face interviews. It is my hope that this news letter will serve as a link in connecting congregations and groups from all over Canada into one network, so that even though we came from different ethnic origins, we will be able to live and minister as one body in Christ.

I attended the Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) **School for Ministers** in Breslau, Ontario in February. The theme was "Sharing Gifts". Special guest speakers for the workshops and seminars were Pakisa K. Tshimika and Timothy Lind, authors of *Sharing Gifts in the Global Family of Faith*. The training program was well attended and participation in discussions motivated and energetic.



(L-R: Sunny and Hun Lee, Samson Lo were involved in the MCEC School for Ministers, February 2005)

The purpose for this program is three-fold: (1) to gain appreciation for our diverse cultures; (2) to explore a theology of gift sharing in the Biblical story and the cultural expression of gift sharing in diverse Mennonite communities throughout the world; and (3) to learn new ways for discerning and helping people share their gifts in ministry at home and around the world.

I was suffering from the flu during the three-day course and had to take one day off to recuperate, although I still managed to complete the program at the end. The program set me thinking along some new lines and left me with some provocative questions to ponder and explore in days to come. I also had the opportunity to fellowship with a number of co-workers and had some good sharing about each other's ministries, which would no doubt strengthen our ties with each other.

I took part in Mennonite Church British Columbia's (**MCBC**) **Annual Delegate Session** in Richmond, B.C. at the end of February, the theme being "Walking Together in Grace." Other than business sessions there were also worship and

workshops. I was invited to lead the prayer at one of the morning assemblies. I was thrilled to see quite a few delegates from ethnic groups, some of them invited to lead certain sessions such as worship, singing, skits, and to take part in providing a multi-cultural meal. The more I see this increasing ethnic participation in area conference activities, the more I feel the need for multi-cultural ministry.

In early March, I again attended the **Leadership Assembly** in Winnipeg, which is an important Mennonite Church Canada (MC Canada) conference. Besides attending various business meetings I also shared with other participants about our ministry and its goals and development.

I took the opportunity to visit local Chinese Mennonite churches (on Sunday, March 6) and had some sharing and fellowship with brothers and sisters; I really enjoy doing this

whenever and wherever I travel to carry out my responsibilities for Mennonite Church Canada.

As my office is located in Vancouver, I also took part in various local ministries and events such as MCBC's Missional Church Sub-committee meeting on January 10; Church Ministries Committee meeting on January 13; MC Canada staff telephone conference on February 2; the Joseph Huen pre-ordination

meeting at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond on February 6; the Exit Interview for a resigned co-worker on February 8. Special mention should be made about the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) lunch meeting at First United Mennonite Church in Vancouver on February 9, with special guest Bishop Danisa Ndlovu from Zimbabwe, who shared about MWC and the Zimbabwe church. It reminded me of my participation at MWC in Zimbabwe in 2003 which is still fresh in my memory. I also took part in the MC Canada Inter-council telephone conference on February 10, as Multi-cultural Ministry is closely working with both Witness and Formation Councils. There were many matters which required consultation together.

Mennonite Men (MM) recently appointed me as their third Canadian Board Member and I just returned from attending their Board Meeting at Sarasota, Florida in March 10 – 14. During that time I was happy to visit two local Mennonite congregations and share with them the work of Multi-cultural Ministry and other business of Mennonite Men. Mennonite Men is a shared ministry of Mennonite Church Canada & Mennonite Church USA. **JoinHands** Church Building Program is one of the major programs of MM which gives grants to young Mennonite congregations to assist them to purchase their first building or meetinghouse. There are quite a number of ethnic churches in Canada which have benefited by such grants: Calgary Chinese MC (1988), Saskatoon Chinese MC (1988), Calgary Vietnamese MC (1994), Edmonton Vietnamese / Chinese MC (2000) and St.

Catharines Lao Christian Fellowship (2005). I am glad to be part of MM as I continue to work promoting multi-cultural ministry and connecting various ethnic groups, particularly in Canada.

As to the **Multi-cultural Leadership Training Program**, MCEC has started the last unit of the program and hopefully will complete the whole program by this summer. Mennonite Church Manitoba (MCM), on the other hand, has completed the third unit. MCEC and MCM both conducted an

evaluation and received some feedback regarding the program and will use the information gathered for future improvement and adjustment.

We give glory to God for all these achievements. Furthermore, I would like to take this opportunity to invite other area conferences to consider adopting this training program in helping ethnic groups who are culturally newer to Mennonite Church traditions. Please feel free to recommend the materials to congregations and leaders. It is my pleasure to have further discussions with those who are interested to learn more or share their comments about the program and materials.



The ethnic ministers in Winnipeg gathered for fellowship and discussion during the Leadership Assembly in early March, 2005. (L-R: John Wang, Omar Maldonado, Samson Lo, Luc Tran & Onong Prasong)

Sharing & prayer concerns

(h i g h l i g h t s f r o m a c r o s s t h e c o u n t r y)

THANKSGIVING & PRAISE

Takahiko & Mari Yosshiyuki, the pastors of Mennonite Japanese Christian Fellowship & North Shore Japanese Mennonite Church in B.C. write:

“Last year God gave us a son, Setsu. We have been waiting for him for 13 years. God is very merciful. One month later Mari suffered from post-partum depression. Our family doctor advised her hospitalization. During her 7 weeks stay in the hospital, our church family and Mennonite community were very supportive and Takahiko’s mother even came from Japan to help us. We were very encouraged by those who believe in God’s healing and pray earnestly. Mari experienced God’s healing touch upon her. We are very thankful for the love and mercy of God. Our son Setsu is growing well and we really enjoy the precious time being with him. Mari is also serving on MCBC Program Committee.”

“Regarding the ministry, there is a Japanese Bible study group in Trinity Western University. God has sent some students to our church which was revitalized and challenged by the passion of these students. Praise the Lord. Please keep us in your prayers”.

Han Vandenberg passed away on the early morning of February 21. Han and his wife, Martha served with COM



(Commission on Overseas Mission) in Taiwan from 1957-93, retiring in Alberta. Tobia Veith, their daughter and present Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker to Macau with husband George, writes “We are grateful for the gift of his life, one that he lived well and to the fullest despite the last few years of dealing

with the challenges of Alzheimer’s.” Please keep Martha and her children, Tobia & George Veith and Susan & Rod Reynar in your prayers as they begin to live without their husband, father and grandfather.

NEW WORKERS

Edgar Rivera is appointed as the Interim Half-time Administrator of MCBC Evangelism & Church Development as of March. Edgar comes from Central America and is fluent in both English and Spanish. He has a heart for evangelism, mentoring and sharing the vision of churches planting churches. Please pray for Edgar and his wife, Ligia and their four children.

The **Lao/Thai Community Church** in Calgary, Alberta is glad to have a young lady, Rattaya Nathanson, from Thailand to help them with their outreach to young people. Please pray that Rattaya can adjust to the new environment as well as the new ministry in Canada.

EVENTS

The **North American Vietnamese Mennonite Fellowship Bi-national Conference** is scheduled to be held in Vancouver from July 1-3.

North American Laotian Mennonite Annual Conference is to be held from August 26 -28. The venue is to be announced.

PUBLICATION

In our last newsletter mention was made of the publication of the Chinese version of **Confession of Faith in a Mennonite perspective**. We received a very reasonable quotation from China Alliance Press Hong Kong and instructed them to proceed with the editing and design work on the book. Hopefully publication will be completed early summer for us to distribute the book for the benefit of Chinese Mennonites all around the world. We thank God for this very significant progress.

Van Hoa Chau, Treasurer of North American Vietnamese Mennonite Fellowship has been writing a booklet about the history of NAVMF and Mennonite Church Vietnam. The publication of this booklet is to be funded by Christian Formation Council. The exact time of publication will be announced shortly.

OVERSEAS

Tim and Cindy Buhler, the Witness worker couple who have been living & ministering in Macau since last summer, had been operating on 2 week working visas requiring regular visits to the visa office for extensions. On February 18 they finally received a one year work permit! Thank you for your prayers, and thank God for the freedom to serve the church in Macau.

CHURCHES & PASTORS

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

Daniel Yang, pastor of First Hmong Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ontario is preparing to lead a group of about 20 people to visit Thailand and Laos at the end of this year. Please pray for what they need in this ministry related tour.

Winfred Soong, pastor of Markham Chinese Mennonite Church, Ontario officially retired in February and a party was held on February 27 to celebrate and recognize his dedicated service in the past years. Please pray that he and his wife enjoy the retirement while at the same time still serve the wider church in playing a different role.

We thank God that **Paul Mo**, a longstanding member of Markham Chinese MC, was licensed as the new pastor on March 13. Various Mennonite congregations in the area showed their support by sending their representatives to attend Paul's licensing service. Please continue to pray for Paul and his wife Monica and their two children as they adapt to the changes while in transition.

Noe Gonzalia, pastor of Spanish Ministry, First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ontario is busy in the ministry with the congregation. They have Sunday services in Spanish twice a month and on the other Sundays they worship in the English service. Noe is also serving on MC Canada Christian Witness Council and helping out in some educational programs within MCEC. Please continue to uphold the various ministries of Noe and his wife Ara through prayers.

Kuaying Teng & Khamphong Phommaseng, co-pastors at St. Catharines Lao Christian Fellowship, Ontario are glad to share that a grant of \$13,000 for church building fund from JoinHands (a church building program under Mennonite Men) was recently presented to their church. Please pray that through this the ministry of the church may be further strengthened.

Mennonite Church Manitoba

The second eldest sister of **Luc Tran**, pastor of Winnipeg Vietnamese Mennonite Church, died of heart failure on March 3. Please pray that God's peace be with Luc and his family.

John Wang, pastor of Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Church, handed in his resignation and will be leaving his position in July. Please pray for John's future and the work of the pastoral search committee.

Omar Maldonado, pastor of Iglesia Jesus es el Camino, Winnipeg, thanks God for the growing number of service attendants since his installation 1 1/2 year ago. Omar and his wife, Susana and their three children participate in the ministry wholeheartedly. Their church has been meeting every Saturday at 5:30 pm at their new location - 514 Maryland Street, Winnipeg since February.



Samson Lo (left) with Luc and Hoa Tran during a visit to Winnipeg, 2004.

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

Please pray for **Magdalena Widjaja**, pastor of Mandarin Ministry, Grace Mennonite Church, Regina, Sask., who plans to visit her family in Indonesia from the end of May to the end of June. May Magdalena have a safe journey and a meaningful reunion with her family. Magdalena is also a member on MC Sask. Ministries Commission.

Mennonite Church British Columbia

Otto Ng resigned from and left Vancouver Chinese Mennonite Church at the end of February. Please pray for both Otto & his wife Winnie and for the congregation as they continue to seek new leadership.

White Rock Chinese Mennonite Church is still in the process of seeking a pastor. Please pray for the pastoral search committee and the lay leaders as they serve the church without a pastor.

Richmond Peace Chinese Mennonite Church is in the midst of planning an ordination ceremony for their pastor, **Joseph Huen**. Please pray that both congregation and pastor are encouraged in this process.

The grandmother of **Billy Chiew** passed away on February 13 and her funeral service was well attended. Please pray for Billy and his wife, Linda. Billy is the youth pastor for both Vancouver Chinese MC and Grace Chinese MC, and also began serving on Church Ministries Committee of MCBC in March.

Sung-Rok Cho, the associate pastor of Mennonite Japanese Christian Fellowship and North Shore Japanese Church, and his wife went to Korea, their home country, last Christmas and returned on March 14. The Chos continue to lead a Bible study group every Wednesday and sometimes interpret Sunday sermons into Korean for students from Korea attending the Japanese church.

Nhien Pham, pastor of Vancouver Vietnamese Mennonite Church and his wife Lien will be on a speaking and teaching tour to various cities in Australia after Easter and are expected to be back in mid April. Please pray that they have a safe journey and fruitful ministry.

Please pray for **Jorge Hoajaca**, pastor of First United Spanish Mennonite Church in Vancouver, as he is preparing himself for a three-month sabbatical study leave in Guatemala starting from June 3.

We thank God for the fruitful ministry of **John Melendez**, pastor of Centro de Fe Y Esperanza Iglesia Menonita in Vancouver. Please remember John as he had been ill and hospitalized recently; may God's healing be upon him.

Overall I humbly find that these pastors and congregations are all working hard to fulfill God's mission in their different areas of service. While they are experiencing all kinds of difficulties, at the same time they are enjoying and celebrating the fruits of serving the Lord. May all glory, honour and thanksgiving be to our God. Amen.