



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Witness

Multi-cultural Ministry Newsletter

May 2004

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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



It has been three months since the last time I shared with you in my Christmas newsletter. Our hearts are filled with thankfulness and joy for God's guidance and keeping, but we are also reminded to urge and encourage each other to "give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because our labour in the Lord is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Council of Anabaptist Interna-

tional Ministries

I attended the annual Council of Anabaptist International Ministries Conference (CIM) in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A. with other co-workers in late January of this year. At their invitation I shared with participants some facts and experiences about our multi-cultural ministry in Canada. I also had the opportunity to share how some of our ethnic brothers and sisters have taken part in expanding the Gospel ministry in their homeland, training leaders and exploring the direction for the Mennonite Church with local churches. Actually, ever since the Mennonite World Conference held last August in Africa – in which I was privileged to take part – congregations from different areas have been keen on exploring and affirming the direction for the development of Mennonite Church in the context of their specific cultural characteristics. For this reason this conference in Chicago is especially meaningful for me.

Mennonite Church Alberta

In February I attended the Mennonite Church Alberta Annual Conference in Rosemary, Alberta and had the opportunity to meet and fellowship with delegates from various congregations. This was really helpful in strengthening my understanding and communication with them. It was good to learn that The Word of Life Hispanic Mennonite Church was accepted as an emerging member of MC Alberta. I also visited Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church and spoke at the Sunday services at the Calgary Chinese Mennonite Church and Calgary Lao Community Mennonite Church.

Witness Staff meeting

I attended the MC Canada Witness Staff Meeting in Winnipeg on March 8 and managed to have dinner and fellowship with local multi-cultural church leaders, including Luc Tran (Vietnamese Pastor), Onong Prasong (Laotian Pastor), Omar Maldonado (Spanish Pastor) and Young Ho Son who replaced Hun Lee as the pastor of Korean Ministry at Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg as of January this year. We had a very enjoyable time sharing with each other and planning for our participation in the upcoming Annual Assembly in Winkler, MB this July.

Mennonite Church British Columbia

I also took part in the Special Delegate Meeting of Mennonite Church British Columbia on March 13 during which time I had the opportunity to share lunch and fellowship with delegates from First United Spanish Mennonite Church in Vancouver. At the gathering I met Otto Ng for the first time. He was appointed and installed as senior pastor of Vancouver Chinese Mennonite Church on March 21.

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

I will travel to Leamington, ON in April, partly to attend the Spring Conference of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and partly to visit some congregations. Please pray for my itinerary and ministry.

Thanks

I must take this opportunity to convey my most heartfelt thanks to my co-workers as well as brothers and sisters in the various cities for their warm hospitality, support and concern. I am most grateful for your constant prayers, affirmation and participation in our ministry. May the Lord bless you and give you strength.

During this season of Lent let us meditate on the life of Christ on earth and His sacrificial love for us. May we hearken to the call from above and make the best of our time in carrying out the Great Commission. Let us walk shoulder to shoulder and with one mind continue in our efforts in advancing God's kingdom and in bearing bold witness for the Lord – and in so doing minister to our friends and neighbors from the same culture as well as from similar or different cultures, for the Gospel itself is after all without national borders or cultural and language barriers.

My co-workers and I would be overjoyed if only this little newsletter is able to achieve the goal that it is intended for (stated above). Please share this with others in your congregation, and remember that your comments and sharing are always most welcome.

— Samson Lo, Director of Multi-cultural Ministry

On March 18th, Samson Lo received his Canadian citizenship in a ceremony at the Citizenship Court in Vancouver, BC. We are grateful for this and appreciate the work Samson is able to do across the nation.

— Kathy Fast, National Ministries coordinator

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)

From: Amy & Clayton Kuepfer – co-pastors of Jane Finch Ministry, Toronto ON

Jane Finch Ministry is located in a 24 story government-subsidized high rise in Toronto. There are approximately 2000 people, from at least 35 countries, who live here.

Our ministry is two fold:

As Chaplains we work with the development of community programs, visit homes, and help people make connections with other community agencies to help meet their needs, and work in crisis situations as needed. An excellent challenge for us has been bridge building with the many Muslim families who live here, as well as relating to Hindu's and people of various other faiths.

As Pastors, there is a small worshipping community that meets in the building. Our attendance varies from 20 - 30 persons for Sunday worship. There are challenges of needing teachers for children, leaders for Bible Studies, programs for children as well as adults. Having time to reach out to new people is a high priority.

One of the challenges we face is seeing people constantly struggle with limited income. Jobs with sufficient income are difficult to find. We are very grateful for churches who support our programs, for MCC who assists us to have a young person from International Visitor Exchange Program to help us, and for MCEC who supports our personal salary.

One of the things we enjoy most is seeing people discover Jesus, and grow in their spiritual lives. Healing of past experiences is an important part of this growth process. We continue to feel blessed in being part of this community, which has taught us a lot about the Kingdom of God: in love, acceptance and diversity. Our prayer is that we return love in God's way.

From: Jim Shantz – Conference Minister of Mennonite Church Alberta

Just a bit of an update on a couple of our ethnic churches in Calgary. David Ma has stepped aside from his leadership role at the Calgary Chinese Mennonite Church. Sandy Chuong has been giving some coordinating oversight to the youth group at this time as the church continues to function with guest speakers. Sandy told me of a young Caucasian student from the Southern Baptist

Seminary who has been giving them some assistance. Their continuing need has been to find someone who can shepherd the whole church, both the young English speaking and the more traditional Chinese older part of the congregation.

Sountorn Chaichana of the Calgary Lao Community Mennonite Church has resigned effective the beginning of the new year, leaving Dan Poovong in charge. A number of their key leadership people have left and the congregation is in somewhat of a crisis mode over this sudden change. While Dan has a great heart and vision for ministry, especially evangelism, he is having difficulty keeping things together and is needing help. Finding someone with pastoral skills from a SE Asian background would be ideal for this ministry but the problem here has always been the church's ability to support a pastor. Most of the pastoring until now has been done by bi-vocational pastors.

Wishing you God's Grace and Blessing in your important work with churches of a different culture.

From: Dan Yang – Pastor of First Hmong Mennonite Church, Kitchener ON

We formed a Hmong Christian organization in North America named "Hmong Mennonite Churches Mission" in August 2003. We now have three churches :

1. First Hmong Mennonite Church Kitchener, ON Canada
2. Hmong Mennonite Church Arvada, CO USA
3. Hmong Community Church Mennonite Fresno, CA, USA and two new emerging groups at Hickory, North Carolina USA and St. Paul, MN USA.

As for me, it is very exciting to be pastor at First Hmong Mennonite Church. There are several challenges in our church ministry. We already paid off our church mortgage this past year. We are looking for a new, bigger church building because the old building is too small for us. And I am excited to prepare the congregation for the goal of fulfilling the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ in proclaiming the Gospel to the Hmong people in Asia.

This year we will not have the Hmong Mennonite Churches Mission Conference. Instead we will have one in the year 2005.

From: Jane Zheng – member of Chinese Mennonite Church, Winnipeg MB

Today is Valentine's Day. Like many people in town, I got a Valentine's Day gift from my husband. The gift was not worth a lot of money. However, to me it is very valuable because it is the symbol of 'love and respect' and will become a part of my life which I shall always cherish.

"Love", only four letters, is the bridge where the will of God and human nature meet. The love given by God through my family makes me ponder the love I receive from others: our church, our friends, and particularly our work places, such as Mennonite Church Canada. My work place is a very important part of my personal life, as I spend almost five days a week in the office. It has been more than ten months since I started to work at Mennonite Church Canada. I must say that the office of Mennonite Church Canada is the warmest work place I have ever experienced.

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." - I Peter 4:8-10

I feel that this passage in the Bible describes best how I felt about the staff when I encountered challenges in the office while working at Mennonite Church Canada. These ten months have made a considerable contribution to my career and professional development, as well as help me know better about God's incomparable power, His heart and His love.

In my personal life, God has inspired me to work to the best of my ability, and taught me to give it my all. God has helped me press on during challenging times at work and at home. God has been there for me whenever I have needed him. And that is the greatest thing about Him. God will always be there for us so long as we truly believe in Him.

The image of a heart and the word "Valentine" become synonymous with the word "love". This is exactly what I want to say to our God and Mennonite Church Canada staff. Thank you and God Bless.

Note: Jane finished serving with Mennonite Church Canada as Interim Assistant Director of Finance on Feb. 20, 2004.

From: Lorin Bergen – Pastor of Living Hope Christian Fellowship, Surrey BC

God has been blessing our attempts to minister in a multicultural way in our multicultural city. Through the leadership of Jonathan Deng the past year has seen 30-40 Mandarin people join Living Hope. Through ministries like translation of the teaching time in Sunday worship, Mandarin cell groups, English as a Second Language and multicultural youth group, God has touched lives.

Jonathan, the head of our Mandarin ministry, is ministering to Mandarin speaking people with the goal of bringing them into Living Hope. He coordinates all Mandarin ministries and works at assimilating people into the larger body.

God has given us a heart to be a multi-ethnic international church. We pray for opportunities to add another language to our translation ministry. East Indian and Korean groups are possibilities for ministry in the future, and we are excited to see what God has planned for us in the next step.

From: Hun Lee – Former Pastor of Korean Ministry, Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg MB

I now concentrate on the following ministries: working part-time with the Korean Ministry at Valleyview Mennonite Church in London, ON, visiting and helping the Korean Ministry at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church in Vancouver, BC and giving lectures in Seattle, WA and Los Angeles, CA.

My wife, Sunny, just finished a two year work contract with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba and is in the process of looking for another job. My family and I are planning to move to Ontario this summer. I will be visiting and lecturing in Korea for two weeks in June this year. Please continue to pray for my itineraries and ministries in these places.

From: John Melendez – Pastor of Spanish Mennonite Church Planting Project, East Vancouver BC

I am glad that members of Grace Chinese Mennonite Church in Vancouver BC are so generous as to let our group use part of their space and facilities for our church planting project. Our vision is to reach out to and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the Spanish speaking people and eventually form a congregation around the Commercial Drive Area, which is very multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. At the moment we have a few families regularly joining us for fellowship and prayer almost on a daily basis.

From: Iris Leung - member of Peace Chinese Mennonite Church, Richmond BC

For the past several years my church has appointed me as a representative to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) BC. I did not know much about MCC before or what they do. I have since learned much from different areas, the Relief Sales in Abbotsford, the *Common Place*, the books written by Peter Dyck, etc. I very much appreciate the brothers and sisters who consistently contribute their time and money to support the program of MCC. Not by our name, but "In the name of Christ." I also remember the words "Learn from serving" by Peter Dyck.

I became a board member on the MCC bi-national board last June. It is a challenge for me, especially since my spoken English is not that good. However, language will not be a barrier for us who work together to serve our God. I have noticed an increase in the number of ethnic churches in our conference. In God's Kingdom we embrace each other regardless of what ethnic groups we are from. We serve together in unity as the body of Christ.

When I had my orientation in Akron, PA on January 14-18, I had a chance to talk with Anton Enns, Project Director of

Canadian/China Poverty Alleviation Project. As a Chinese person, I have a real concern for the situation in China. Poverty is a serious problem in most rural areas in China. Anton introduced me to a couple from Vancouver who had worked three years in China. They are not from Mennonite background, but they appreciate the work of MCC. I invited them to come to my church and share their experience with my youth group in March. I hope more young people will recognize the work of MCC as more of the needy are being helped through MCC.

To find out about MC Canada Witness work in China, visit www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/witness

or ask Kathy Fast for Mission Action Profiles of the work in China and a copy of the Witness Prayer Directory.

From: Jorge Hoajaca - Pastor of First United Spanish Mennonite Church, Vancouver BC

It is unbelievable how fast time goes by. This coming summer (end of June) we will be in our ninth year of ministry at First United Spanish Mennonite Church (FUSMC).

People and churches who have supported our ministry through these years probably do not know what has been achieved. For this reason I would like to mention some of the milestones which mark FUSMC's achievements with your support:

In July of 1996 there were 22 members. In December 2003 we have 48 members.

Attendance at Sunday worship in July 1996 was around 34-40. Today we have around 75 to 80 attending worship.

There was no worship team in the first three years of ministry here. About four years ago we were able to form our worship team which has four musicians and four singers.

A ministry for women in church was established by Ericka Hoajaca. That ministry has been thriving with strong leadership.

With the desire to prepare people to serve the Lord we opened our Biblical Institute which graduated six students after two years of studies.

We have at least three preachers in our congregation. Two of them were trained in our Biblical Institute.

A street ministry to people on Hastings (between Main and Columbia) was started three years ago. We share literature and food with street people. We also pray for people who request prayer on the street.

Outreach around the coffee table is a ministry that takes place every Thursday at the refugee food bank in Sherbrooke Mennonite Church. Here it is fair to say that at least two new families join our church every year. Because some of them are refugee claimants we are often sorry to see them deported back to their countries.

Our church is one of the churches that sponsor the Kingcrest English as a second language classes.

Since 1998 we have been offering Daily Summer Bible School to kids in our church and also for kids in the Latin American community.

In cooperation with MCC our church operates a very modest and effective Resource Office. We offer orientation and counseling to people who request those services.

We have four home groups where people study the Bible and minister to each other in prayer.

Our joint youth with FUMC continues to work out wonderfully well.

There have been more than thirty people baptized in those eight years, some are still here with us, others have gone back to their countries and a few are worshipping somewhere else.

For the very first time we had simultaneous translation in our First Advent joint service last year. We are thankful to God for our brothers and sisters at FUMC. That Sunday we served a fund-raising lunch and over \$1,700 was collected. Glory and praise to God.

Finally, one of the dreams we have always had is to send someone from our congregation to study and prepare for the ministry. God is so good, last August we sent Alex Galdamez to Goshen College.

From: Florence Driedger – member of Peace Mennonite Church, Regina SK

I sent the following story in our Peace News & Notes to people around the world that are part of our virtual "parish":

In thinking about all of you and where you are, what you are doing, how you live in many parts of the world, I thought about the slogan "Across the Street and Around the World" and how so many of us link to people who reflect that short phrase.

I was deeply moved on New Year's Eve when visiting Elsa and John. They are both from Romania. We were visiting them because Elsa was due to go in for surgery shortly and we had not had the opportunity to visit for several months.

As we sat and visited, Elsa was looking at the clock. I almost got the feeling that perhaps we had overstayed our welcome. Then she said, "It is almost midnight in my home country where my children live. They are together and I want to phone them." She indicated, while dialing to them, that we should stay. She was able to reach them after a second try.

Animated discussion took place in their language. John brought us into the picture by saying that she was making sure they were gathered around the phone. A few minutes before midnight, the tradition in Elsa's home was that they gathered together and prayed. So a few minutes before midnight, she and John knelt at the phone, her children in Romania were gathered around the phone and we were close, as Elsa prayed till midnight when the fire crackers began exploding in the streets of her home town.

Pray "across the street and around the world" for peace and love. Would that all would have knelt to do the same this past Christmas.

From: Kevin Lim – Youth Pastor of Vietnamese Mennonite Church, Calgary AB

In looking for a church to serve 1.5 years ago I knew I wanted to serve under a good mentor. I now find I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve alongside Pastor Chau Dang at Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church. There is also a strong desire among the youth for worship and ministry. Coming from mainly Chinese church background in the past I have noticed a significant difference between working among the Chinese and the Vietnamese. For one, this church is very open to change and creative ministry. They encourage growth in the English congregation and seek to help in whatever way

possible. I personally like starting out in a small church as my first pastorate. I have experienced large church living for most of my Christian life and I find it more intimate to serve in a smaller church setting. We emphasize evangelism and hope to grow and eventually to expand the size of our church building to accommodate this.

About myself, I was saved while in high school in Toronto and studied at Canadian Bible College in Regina. I then served in congregations in Regina, Toronto, and Richmond BC. I am 25 years young and love this church community. I am Chinese by heritage but speak no Chinese or Vietnamese. Please pray that I will be able to reach out to people of all ages in my ministry.

Responses to the December 2003 Newsletter

Thank you for sharing the needs and growth of other churches, it expands our horizon, and even by knowing some struggles of other people/churches makes us feel that we are not alone and we need to carry each others' burdens. Just this week, a Chinese man left a message on our church phone, asking if there is a Mennonite Chinese Service in Saskatoon. As he spoke Chinese in his phone, the secretary asked me to listen to the message for her. I heard that the Mennonite Saskatoon Chinese service ended not long ago, and it's really sad to hear this, especially for those who are in need of a Chinese-speaking church that can help them to understand the Bible better and get the feel of belonging. I think the work of multi-culture service and your work to encourage it to grow is very helpful. Thank you so much for your continuous support for Magdalena as well as our Chinese Fellowship. I noticed in the newsletter you also mentioned that. I'll forward this newsletter to other brothers and sisters in our church. When Magdalena was on Sabbatical study leave, we encountered some difficulties in Bible study, but thanks to God, it also gives us more opportunities to ask questions and discuss issues on how the Bible guides us in our daily life. We also had more interaction with the English congregation, and came to a better understanding of each other. We are really happy about this. A sister who just joined us in August – not long before Magdalena left, has decided to take baptism in December. It's exciting! —*Iris Qi, a member of Grace Mennonite Church – Mandarin Fellowship – Regina SK*

I think I've shared this with you before, but I just want to say again how encouraging I find it to read your newsletter. I have much to learn from my brothers and sisters in other cultures, including such a vibrant enthusiasm about my faith and sharing my faith. Thanks so much for sharing good news from your ministry, and many blessings to you as you continue to minister to strengthen the church. —*Pam Peters-Pries, Executive Secretary, Support Services, Mennonite Church Canada*

Thank you for sending us a copy of your most recent Newsletter. We appreciate that very much. We have needed this kind of communication for a long time. —*Peter & Susan Kehler, Retired Mission Workers and Pastors*

Thank you for the newsletter, in which you report clearly and sensitively the news and prayer concerns of the diverse groups within Mennonite congregations. Congratulations on a job well done! I am always encouraged by your work with the multi-cultural congregations! Thank you for your hard work, and sensitive caring spirit. —*Justina M. Heese, Executive Secretary, Mennonite Church Canada Formation*

I did indeed enjoy reading this good review of the past year. This is a very interesting newsletter. Thanks for sharing this. Once again I am impressed with your fluent use of English in its written form as well as in speaking. That isn't easy for those for whom it is a second (or third or fourth) language. But more, I'm impressed with the effectiveness of your ministry to the majority culture as well as to all the minority cultures in MC Canada.

I also saw the *Canadian Mennonite* articles yesterday. (In spite of some people's complaints about *Canadian Mennonite*, it is providing, I think, better coverage of the multi-cultural churches.) —*Dan Nighswander, General Secretary, Mennonite Church Canada*

Thank you so much for your Christmas Newsletter and greetings. I know that your work in Canada in Multi-cultural Ministry is so very important, and am so glad you are working at this. You have a lot to offer. —*Ed Bontrager, Director of Development/Church Relations, Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions*

Thanks for the recent issue of the newsletter. I add my voice to the chorus of gratitude for the work you do. —*Norm Voth, Director of Evangelism and Service Ministries, Mennonite Church Manitoba*