

Response activities

1. Give the language gift.

English is a language gift around the world. It is a big gift for newcomers to Canada as well. In Vancouver, Christian Chui leads an ESL program in the First United Mennonite Church that has similarities to the English teaching programs Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers offer in Asia. Are there immigrants in your congregation's neighbourhood who would welcome Christian hospitality through ESL classes or after school programs?

2. Let me count the ways.

Have a contest in which you learn the first line, or more, of the *Vision: Healing and Hope Statement* in as many of these languages as you can. Challenge the adults in your church to compete against the children in Sunday school or clubs. Gather pledges for languages learned.

The *Vision: Healing and Hope Statement* is available in bookmark form, in eleven languages in which Canadian Mennonites worship. Download these bookmarks and learn how to read them by listening to them in MP3 format.

<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/ResourceView/5/7326>

3. See what I mean?

ASL, American Sign Language, is another wonderful language gift that can add meaning to speaking and singing for people with or without a hearing impairment. ASL resources are quite easy to find. Have fun learning to sign some words and then play a charades style game to guess or read what is being signed.

Here are three easy sources for ASL signs:

1. The Bible memory passages in *Gather'Round* are on posters with pictures and directions for using ASL.
2. The Resource Centre has a video: "Lift Up Your Hands: An Introduction to Signing in Children and Worship"

<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/ResourceView/1/7436>

3. Visit the *American Sign Language Browser* and learn how to sign the words of your choice. <http://commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/browser.htm>.

Download KidsPak resource kits from

<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/43>

Call 1-866-888-6785 and get your church involved today!

Language Gift Snacks

Option 1

Serve "Alpha-Bits", or alphabet noodle soup, or any other food that comes in letter shapes. As you lift up a spoonful of letters, think of words that begin with those letters and create a sentence out of them. Be careful not to laugh too hard as you eat them.



Option 2

Research the message behind pretzels. Then bake your own soft pretzels into shapes that send a message, or purchase and serve the ready-made variety along with their story.



Option 3

Brainstorm about the connections between food and language. What messages do we send each other with food? Send people in your congregation, or even your Witness Partners, a message of care or appreciation, with a food package.



Projects for Small & Tall — Helping the church grow in stewardship and mission.

The Language Gift

Language learning in Seoul

See <http://www.kac.or.kr/>

Cheryl Woelk teaches English and facilitates peace education programs through English conversation classes for the English teaching institute, Connexus, in Seoul, Korea (see World of Witness prayer directory, p.94).

She writes, "I gain energy from getting to know more students, from the Korea Anabaptist Centre and Connexus community, and from friends outside of the workplace. I also have chances to reflect more on the role of language learning and teaching in cross-cultural learning and communication.

Several weeks ago, I met a new student who had come to hear about the Peacebuilders class.

We talked a bit in English, and then after she asked if I could speak Korean, I switched languages. To my surprise, tears welled up in her eyes as I spoke. Finally, she reached out and hugged me. Holding my hand, she explained, "I've met so many people wanting to learn English and North American culture. You're the first person I've met who has put the same effort into learning about my country and my language. Thank you."

Reflect:

If we tried to learn some phrases in the language of newcomers to Canada, how do you think they would react? What might they think?



English is the language of interaction and opportunity in the world. While lots of people can teach English, Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers offer additional gifts; they offer themselves. As they do so, they break down barriers of misconception and fear, offer new ways of communicating, build community among students, respond to questions about God and share their faith. (Whether you are a teacher or a learner, young or old, you can give of yourself, too.)

You are invited to send your contribution to Mennonite Church Canada, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd, Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4. Please note "Asia: The Language Gift" with your donation.

After-school tutoring in Macau launches a family's journey to Jesus

Tobia Veith participates in an after school program in Macau (see World of Witness prayer directory, p 83.). Here is just one of her 'after school' stories.

My heart jumped with surprise when I saw Mrs. J's husband in church on Sunday. For almost four years, our ministry team in Macau has known this family and has prayed for them. With their elaborate godshelf (altar) at home, it was hard to imagine that they might ever choose to follow Jesus, but we prayed anyway.

Almost four years ago, Mrs. J. had started bringing her daughter, Mandy, to our church for after-school tutoring in English. We soon learned that Mandy, although bright, found it hard to concentrate. Over the years, various members of our team patiently have sat with her and tried various ways to help her focus on her work. In Macau, the school system is taxed to the limit with large classes of 50+ students per class. There is little room to tailor teaching methods to the various learning styles and needs of students in such large classes. Children with special needs that are not so obvious (like ADHD) go undiagnosed and unmet. We try to do our best with Mandy, to give her boundaries and yet encourage her.

Our daughter, Marika, is Mandy's age. Over the years they have played together in each other's homes (across the street). Mandy asked her mom to take her to church where, before long, Mandy decided to follow Jesus. The main thread of contact, though, has been the after-school tutoring time.

About a month ago, Mrs. J. shared that her husband, a successful manager of a company for 20 years, was caught in a power struggle between the two owners. He feared that he would lose his job. Now that this had actually happened, Mandy suggested that her parents also go to church. After the worship service, Mr. J. was very open to share about his situation and welcomed our prayers for him. We rejoice at this step of faith on the journey to Jesus and ask others to join us in praying for the J. family.



Reflect:

Imagine the possibilities for sharing the good news that could open up in your community through an after-school program, or through reaching out in friendship to some of your neighbours, as Marika did.

Chinese medical student shocked by Jesus

Philip and Julie Bender teach English in Chongqing and share this story. (See World of Witness prayer directory, p. 66.) Because it is against the law in China for Westerners to proselytize, the ministry of Mennonite Church Canada Witness and CEE is largely one of presence. But, they do have appropriate opportunities to speak about Christ, especially when students like Li ask questions.



When Li first heard the foot-washing story in the Gospel of John, her shock was similar to Peter's when his feet were washed by Jesus. "How can he do this!" she exclaimed.

Li (not her real name) is a young doctor studying English at Chongqing University of Medical Sciences in the large commercial centre of Chongqing, China.

Neither Li nor her classmates have had exposure to Christian beliefs or the church. However, in my English classes, these students sometimes ask insightful questions about Christianity. After one such discussion, Li asked to come to church with us and it was in the large Chinese church in Chongqing that Li heard this story about Jesus.

I later learned from Li that foot-washing has a place in traditional Chinese culture. People wash their feet at night, because they believe it will help them sleep.

Occasionally, a younger person will wash the feet of an elder to assist them as a sign of respect. However, people of senior social status do not normally wash the feet of younger people.

Li's shock was a gift to me. I would also like to feel afresh the shock of some of the Bible's familiar stories, as Li did when she first heard of Jesus washing his disciples' feet.

Reflect:

What stories of Jesus would you find shocking if you were hearing them for the first time?

What opportunities to speak about Christ present themselves in your normal day at school?