

MCC Low German Programs Newsletter

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Mennonite Central Committee Canada, 134 Plaza Dr., Winnipeg, MB, R3T 5K9

Fall is the season when many of the delegates from Mennonite churches in Canada gather for the annual general meeting of their provincial MCC. The theme this year for the MCC reports and the annual meetings is "Living in New Ways." In a world torn by war, natural disasters and increasing poverty, people are asking for signs of hope. MCC, together with the churches, offers hope that comes through the love of God and calls for the church to "Live in New Ways." Reflecting on the meaning of this phrase for our work with Low German Mennonites, it seems obvious that living in new ways or relating in new ways will involve change. Change is not always easy but often happens when we least expect it. In all these circumstances, each of us takes responsibility for who we are, what we do and how we do it. In other words, to change the world we have to change ourselves and to change ourselves requires us to look at our lives and ourselves with honesty. As we approach the Advent season this year, I want to ask myself the question: How will I live in new ways in order to bring hope to a waiting world?

-- Mary Friesen, MCC Canada

Honey Grove, Texas: In September, Ray and Nicky Peters, of Steinbach, MB, journeyed south to Honey Grove, TX, where they are serving at Forest Hill Christian School, the private school of the Honey Grove Old Colony Mennonite community. Ray is working as principal and as a half-time teacher of fourth and fifth graders. Nicky is working in the library, attending to office duties, assisting teachers with grading and helping students who need extra support. Forest Hill serves around 50 students from Kindergarten to seventh grade. Ray and Nicky have emailed, "We are excited about the challenges that lie ahead. The folks have been most welcoming and have made us feel at home. The students appear to be eager to learn. This all makes for a good start to our service." Ray and Nicky's service term is fully funded by the Honey Grove community, and MCC Central States provides administrative support. (Reported by MCC Central States.)

Cuauhtemoc, Mexico: In the last few months there have been significant staff changes in the MCC Cuauhtemoc office. One of the new local staff in the office is Lena Peters who is on a term position replacing Cristina Wiebe, who is in Canada on a one-year International Visitors Exchange Program. As of October 12, John and Ruth Janzen from Winkler have started their six-month service assignment as local program directors for the MCCC Low German Program in Mexico.

In September Adolf Dueck completed his two-year service term with the Rehabilitation Centre Luz en mi Camino in Cuauhtemoc. Adolf has returned to Winnipeg and is exploring future ministry opportunities. Abe and Helen Unrau, also from Winnipeg, completed their one-year service term at the end of October. They served as community support workers in Cuauhtemoc which involved some teaching at the Centre Luz en mi Camino and visiting the families struggling with issues related to addiction. We are very grateful for the ministry these three service workers were able to provide as they worked with the local committee of the Centre Luz en mi Camino.

In October of this year Peter Peters from Neepawa, Manitoba, was invited by the Old Colony School Committee to offer teacher training for many of the teachers from their schools in the Cuauhtemoc region. Peters works with Christian Light Education curriculum and has provided teacher training for schools that use this curriculum. In the past he has provided teacher training in other Mennonite communities including the Old Colony School in Seminole, Texas.

Winkler, Manitoba: Over 200 people attended the Manitoba *Kanadiertreffen* on Sunday August 20 at Stanley Park southwest of Morden. The Treffen began and ended with singing by the local quintet *Glory Bound*. The

program included words of welcome from Rev. Abe Wiebe, a brief report from MCC Family Services coordinator Tina Fehr Kehler, message from Rev. C. C. Thiessen and a report from John and Ruth Janzen about their work in Mexico. Bernie Thiessen, manager at Meridian Industries, publicly acknowledged the contribution Low German Mennonites have made to southern Manitoba. After the program, all participants were invited to a potluck fasha.

Santa Cruz, Bolivia: Phil Bender reports: "We had a meeting with the director of the Chamber of Exporters of Sesame. In the last three years the Mennonites have greatly increased their production of Sesame. The concern is that last year the Bolivian Sesame seeds had higher levels of chemical residue than is now acceptable. We set up a strategy for informing Mennonites about the issue and its importance if they want to maintain this as a crop alternative in the future. One of the actions is to have a notice in the *Menno Bote* in each issue in the next months that focus on how to assure low levels of chemical residues in each phase of the production cycle."

MCC staff in Santa Cruz also met with representatives from the Canadian Embassy from Lima, Lenka Stone, Analyst (Political) Western Hemisphere Division, and Robert Kerr, Second Secretary and Counsel out of the Lima Embassy. According to Phil Bender, It is obvious that the Canadian Embassy representatives have a keen interest in the Canadian Mennonites who live in Bolivia. The embassy representatives reiterated their desire to have more concrete census data on the LG Mennonites in Bolivia. One of their concerns is to be prepared for any potential major security concerns in the future.

Kristina Toews has joined the Centro Menno team as one of the MCC SALT program participants. She completed a month of Spanish study and is looking forward to service with the LGM program at Centro Menno

Steinbach, Manitoba: Kennert Giesbrecht, editor of the *Mennonitische Post*, reports on some of the recent activities at the Post/Blatt/Books office. The staff in the Post

bookstore are in process of entering the entire inventory into the new *Quick Books* computer program which will enable them to keep a running total of current inventory. This involves a lot of extra work for the staff since all the books, CD's, and resources that do not have a barcode must be assigned a code before being placed in the store.

The *Mennonitische Post* has published a new book under the title '**Miteinander und Füreinander: Hinweise fuer ein gesundes Familienleben**' (With each other and For each other). This book is now available at the Post bookstores and other MCC LGM resource centres. The book contains a collection of articles written by *Mary Friesen* (MCC Canada) that were published over the last few years in the '*Mennonitische Post*' on the 'Family life' page.

"**Der Schulfreund**" is a new resource which is published and distributed in October (2006) for teachers in LGM schools. About 500 copies were printed and sent to Mexico with some samples also going to Bolivia, Paraguay and provincial LGM MCC offices. "Der Schulfreund" offers articles on different topics of classroom management, Mennonite history and other short news items that will be of interest to teachers in Mennonite colonies. It is hoped that teachers in Mexico will also begin to send in contributions for future issues of "Der Schulfreund".

Other new resources: "*Saeven Dinja waut Tjinja faelt*" (seven things children need) a set of four Low German audio cassettes is now also available on CD. Please order through MCC Canada or through the *Mennonitische Post* bookstores.

"*Plautdietsche Bibel Jeschichten fa Kjinja*" is a collection of Bible stories for children in Low German published by Jacob M. Fehr, Swift Current, SK. The book is available from the publisher or at the *Mennonitische Post* bookstores.

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