

MCC Low German Programs Newsletter

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

Each year MCC chooses a theme which serves as a focus for programs and reports. For 2007 the theme is **"Celebrating God's love."** This is an appropriate theme for our reflection at the beginning of another calendar year. The love of God as revealed to us in the life and death of Jesus Christ, also commands us to show love to one another. As we celebrate God's love, we are reminded to allow this love to become the center of our own lives. God's love in our lives makes it possible for us to reflect that love in relationships of love, care and concern as we interact with people around us. In 1. John 4:7-8 we read: *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."* I am hoping to learn more about the power of God's love as we together with LGMs reflect on this theme this year. God's love in our lives is truly a gift -- that's something to celebrate. -- Mary Friesen, MCCC

Winnipeg, MB: MCC Canada is connected with many different networks in the national and international work. The purpose of these MCC networks is to share information, receive feedback, work on common agenda, ensure a common approach and to encourage individual workers. MCC programs with Low German Mennonites (LGMs) are part of one such MCC network and representatives from different regions meet every two years for a Networking Conference. This year the MCC LGM Networking Conference will be held in Aylmer, ON, from April 23-25. Two of the speakers at this conference will be Bill Janzen (Ottawa) and John Elias (Saskatoon). In connection with this conference, the LGM documentation workers will also meet for a one-day conference on April 26 and the MCC LGM Advisory Committee will meet on Saturday, April 21.

MCCC Ottawa Office: Bill Janzen reports that as of January 1 the government finally started to place expiry dates on new Canadian citizenship certificates issued to people whose citizenship expires on a specific date (28th birthday, for example). This visible expiry date on the citizenship certificate alerts people to the fact that they need to take preventive steps if they want to retain their Canadian citizenship status. It would have been helpful to have this done right from the beginning when this law came into effect in 1977. This particular issue received national coverage from the media and Bill

Janzen responded to several media inquiries about Canadian citizenship issues which impact many LGMs. The change is a direct result of the lobbying efforts of LGM documentation workers and especially the efforts of Bill Janzen in the Ottawa Office.

Durango, Mexico: Harold and Mina Fehr from Winkler, MB, began a four-month assignment in Durango colony, Mexico, in January. They will support the present MCC staff in the Durango MCC Resource Centre and also connect with people in the community to support them in their projects.

Aylmer, Ontario: Abe Harms informed us that they are recruiting for a number of positions for work with LGMs in Aylmer, ON, area. Some of the positions are with MCC Ontario (more information available on the MCC web site <http://mcc.org/serve/assignments>) and others are with the Aylmer and Area Inter-Mennonite Community Council, which is associated with MCC Ontario LGM programs.

1. The first one is a service positions in visitation ministry with LGMs. Abe and Frieda Hildebrand are completing their term in this position.
2. A salaried position is a part-time (3 days a week) "Itinerant Documentation Worker" to help with immigration and citizenship work. Spanish is a prerequisite.

3. Abe Harms writes that they are also looking for a man and a woman, (preferably a couple) on a 15-month contract (salaried) to develop curriculum for men's classes and for the radio. This couple would also accompany people who have experienced violence.
4. And finally, a person for the radio (*De Brigj*) to sell advertising, do some bookkeeping, be on the air, be available to go to Ecuador for a 3-month training session next summer and help train staff in Aylmer. This is also a salaried position.

A recent news *story* about the radio program *De Brigj* in Aylmer can be found on the MCC web page <http://www.mcc.org/lowgerman/> .

Kansas: Harold Thieszen from Newton writes about the activities of their committee, the *LGMs from Mexico Support Committee*, which assists LGMs in Kansas by providing Low German/English interpretation, in some cases assisting with fund raising to cover medical costs, and scheduling of medical appointments where necessary. Harold Thieszen, chair of this committee, reports the following:

“An Urgent Need is a person who speaks Low German with social work skills. Elisabeth T. Harder was the Kansas Farmworker Healthcare person in Central Kansas from January till August 1, 2006. She is continuing her education as a student at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart IN. The committee is seeking applicants for this part-time position. A job description is available from Harold D. Thieszen at hethieszen@sbcglobal.net or from MCC Canada office.”

“The LGM women of Western Kansas continue to make comforters for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). They travel in three vans to the MCC Center, North Newton, Kansas. They bring at least 70 comforters and many baby layettes and work with relief items at the Center. The name they use is TULIP (*Together United Ladies In Praise, Prayer and Peace*). The LGM women also attend the Annual MCC Relief Sale in Hutchinson, Kansas.”

Winnipeg, MB. Abe Unrau has accepted a part-time contract position with MCC Canada to assist with resource creation for LGM programs. He will edit and compile the teacher's resource *Der Schulfreund* and also continue writing the

Mennonite history lessons for *Das Blatt*. Abe and his wife Helen served in Cuauhtémoc, Mexico, for one year as community support workers with the Rehabilitation Centre Luz en mi Camino.

In the last year MCCC have assigned short-term service workers as local program directors for MCC LGM programs in Cuauhtémoc, Mexico, but MCC Canada has now made a 3-year appointment to that position. *Ron and Carol Neisteter* of Winkler, MB, have accepted the assignment as local program directors in Cuauhtémoc, Mexico, and are ready to begin in July of this year. We are grateful for their willingness to serve in this position. John and Ruth Janzen are presently serving a six-month term in this position and will be returning to Canada at the end of April.

Steinbach, MB: Kennert Giesbrecht, editor of the *Mennonitische Post*, reports: “In January I explored our printing options in Mexico. Shipping the POST and BLATT to Mexico has become increasingly more difficult for our staff so we decided to explore printing in Mexico. It turns out to be a lot more complicated than what we had anticipated; therefore, we will continue to ship the boxes to Mexico with travelers or with a trucking company.

As of February we will also have only one fixed price for our POST subscribers instead of offering readers the option of paying full price or a reduced price. For North America a one-year subscription will now cost \$50.00, for Latin America US \$24.00. We will continue to offer subsidies from our ‘Leserfund’ to help readers who cannot afford to pay the full price.”

The *Mennonitische Post* now has approximately 7,400 subscribers in Canada, USA, Mexico, Belize, and South America. More than 9,200 children receive *Das Blatt* every month and about 500 copies of the teacher's resource *Der Schulfreund* are sent to some of teachers in LGM colonies.

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