



A Community of Faith

Hartwick Wiehler

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Dear Momma:

I am excited about coming home for Christmas and spending some time with you. All over the city houses have bright Christmas lights, which add to the excitement of the season. Stores are advertising and trying to sell you everything from what you need to what they want you to think that you need.

The church I have been writing about does promote a belief in God but I wondered how it helps you in your faith in God. How does the church encourage a faith in God and how does it develop it? I decided to go and talk to Alfred Janz and ask him about that.

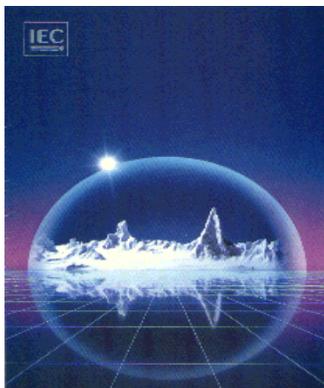
I went to visit Alfred and Ingrid Janz at their home in southwest Calgary one snowy evening. Alfred is a retired carpenter who still has the urge to help out where he feels he is needed. We first talked about the project that his neighbour was undertaking to renovate his home. Ingrid was kind enough to make me a snack and some tea after Alfred and I talked.

It is obvious that Alfred likes attending First Mennonite Church. He believes in the Mennonite view of faith, especially in the belief of non-resistance. He stated that he could not go to a church where it is seen as an honour to go to war. Church for Alfred is not only praising and worshipping God but it is also about meeting friends. He sees the people at church as his friends and he finds that they support him.

MCC is a big part of Alfred's life and supporting it is a priority for him. MCC helped his family to come to Canada even when after the war they had no money. Moving here gave them a second chance.

I asked Alfred how the church encourages his faith. He responded by saying that the other members of his faith community do that for him. There

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A Community of Faith continued...

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are many people who are good examples to him by serving God in talented and beautiful ways. They help out in positions like ushers, sound system technicians, teachers etc. They serve because God spoke to them and they want to help build God's kingdom.

An example that Alfred talked about was Rudy Janssen Sr. who started boy's club many years ago. Alfred helped as one of the leaders, as did others like Cornie Friesen. Boy's Club touched so many kids. When Alfred talks to boys who used to attend they still know the pledge off by heart. The time spent in activities and getting together is fondly remembered. The little seed that was planted brought fruit. Alfred sees Rudy as the person who started it and led it. It takes one person who has faith and is willing to do it faithfully to spearhead activities such as this. Alfred finds this encouraging for his faith.

Another example of where Alfred finds encouragement is when he thinks about his time in leading the Teens Clubs. Alfred and Ingrid were leaders for about 5 years while their kids attended the club. The people that they worked with were a real blessing. The group did a lot of fun things and he loves talking to those who attended about what they experienced. He recently reminisced with Lisa Thiessen about going cross country skiing. The club was good for their kids and was a blessing for many other teens.

I also asked Alfred how the church community helps his personal faith to grow. This question is obviously very close to the first one and he started out by again mentioning other people. Alfred was often involved in getting accommodations for conferences which involved phoning people and asking for help. Ordinary men and women who did not have much but were ready to serve faithfully were an encouragement to his faith. When Alfred sees how so many people volunteer to help others he finds that this strengthens his own faith.

Alfred and Ingrid attended a Monday night Bible Study for about 10 years. This was a good time for delving deeper into the Word of God. It was a group that became like a family and it gave them the opportunity to also talk about personal problems such as concerns about their children. In bigger groups some persons will not share or talk as much. To Alfred, the key is that in smaller groups there is more opportunity for people to grow in their faith.

The Sunday morning worship service also seems to be special for Alfred. He loves the idea of being able to download the bulletin so that he can read the Scripture before the service. He looks forward to the sermons, no matter who the speaker is. He finds that if he is able to discuss the sermon after he has heard it he remembers it better, however there isn't always the opportunity for this. He enjoys watching the small, eager children run forward for children's church.

Alfred never had the opportunity to have a prayer partner but he has found that people have prayed for him in times of trouble, such as when he had his heart attack. He has found that at First Mennonite Church, when a person has a problem, others are there to help.

First Mennonite Church gives Alfred a chance to serve God and others, which helps him in his personal faith development. I was surprised at how many aspects of church life contribute to Alfred's faith.

I will see you soon. I am looking forward to some home cooked meals and all those special treats that you always make.

Love,

Your son Abel



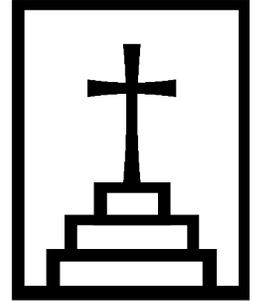
Pastor's Meditation

Ed Kauffman

Prayer Core

Did you know that there are people praying for you and for the ministries of the church? A group of people known as the Prayer Core receives a calendar each month advising them which page of the directory and which ministry of the church to pray for each weekday. Special requests are also listed for each ministry. If you would like to commit yourself to this prayer ministry, please let Pastor Ed know either with an email, a phone call, or by dropping a note in the offering plate.

Advent is about anticipating a change in the world because God became flesh among us. Welcoming Jesus should be much like welcoming a new family. And having Jesus among us may mean some changes as well.



Advent is also about anticipating a birth. And this year Gay and I are living out that anticipation as we await the birth of a new grandchild, this time a granddaughter. Waiting can be a difficult task, but in many ways it's all we can do.

Ed-itorial

Although it's clear from the weather outside, in many ways it is hard to believe that December is here. As we approach the Christmas season, I often reflect on Christmases past, and on the year coming to an end. This has been a year of transition for Gay and I. At the beginning of the year we knew changes were coming, but at that point still did not know exactly what those changes might entail. By mid-year we were saying our good-byes to many people, and anticipating the hellos of a new congregation. And now at the end of the year we are feeling more and more a part of First Mennonite, and Calgary.

During this Advent season I invite you to take time to wait. Just wait! Become aware of those things that you are waiting for, and anticipate the changes that Jesus makes by coming among us.

Oh..., and as our gift to you, we invite you to drop by our house on Sunday afternoon, December 19, any time between 2:00 and 5:00 PM for a cup of tea, coffee, or juice, and a cookie or two.

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and a Joyous New Year. It is good to be among you.



A Christmas Prayer

Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father, Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

Sharing Our Stories

Hartwick Wiehler

Charlotte Wiehler - My Mother

I received a shock this year when someone pointed out to me that I am on the birthday list. Now that I am over 60, I decided to look at what lessons I can learn about life as a senior. I decided to study my mother and write down my observations.

Mütti enjoys living in her own home. We have discussed her moving into an apartment or a senior's complex but she won't have any of that - she wants to stay where she is. She has a garden that she can work in. She can enjoy the flowers and plants as they grow. When it is nice out, she can sit and read a book in the back yard or take a nap in the lawn chair. A house is a combination of work and enjoyment and she enjoys both parts.

Being at home does bring chores. My sister has arranged for someone to help with cutting the grass and we all help a little bit in the yard work but we do not do everything. Even Mütti recognizes that when you get older there are limitations. So, instead of shovelling the snow when it has finished snowing, she sweeps the sidewalks every couple of hours so that it is not too much work. It gets done with both approaches and besides, she sees the exercise as being good for her.

Living in her own house gives her the opportunity to invite people over and Mütti really enjoys this. Whether it is visiting with people from the congregation or her neighbours, having coffee with some nieces or nephews, or having people over to pick apples - all are enjoyable. It is lively and noisy when she has a houseful of children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, but she loves it. Special occasions like her birthday, making "peppernuts", and Christmas Eve are celebrated at my mother's house with all the children helping with the food.

Perhaps when you get older, you spend more evenings at home but during the days - well Mütti sees every day as an opportunity to do something. If she does not have people over, she goes out visiting or shopping. Many days she goes to see the elderly - many of whom are

many years younger than she is. Often she gets a ride from one of her children in order to visit Annie Heidebrecht but she travels home by bus. The ride gives her time to watch the scenery or to read, and when she waits for a bus downtown, well, then it gives her time to enjoy a cup of coffee. Some days she may go shopping or if it is a pleasant day she may go to the zoo to enjoy the animals and a snack in the conservatory.

When you get older you have more time. Mütti enjoys taking a nap some afternoons. She finds time to read. Sometimes she gets so engrossed in a book that she ends up reading all day. She has time to watch a good movie or a good TV show even though she finds many shows inappropriate.

Mütti has an interest in politics and likes to give her opinions on the subject. She still finds the world situation interesting to study and to discuss. She can't see why anyone would want to be a leader of a country and take on all those problems that seem to have no solution.

When you get older there are some things that are more difficult. Mütti does mention that she has aches and pains that old age brings, but to her these are just small inconveniences. They do not stop her from still going out and doing things and enjoying life.

When you get older travel is still fun. Mütti looks forward to going to Mexico with her children. While she doesn't travel by herself to faraway places, last year she did go to Germany with my sister for a family reunion. Once she got back she celebrated her birthday and then went to Saskatoon by herself to see some friends. Of course, Saskatoon isn't that far away.

In some people you can see what truly brings them happiness. Mütti gets enjoyment out of her family. She enjoys their company, she likes to talk to them,

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Sharing Our Stories continued....

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she worries about them, she is happy for them, she prays for them. They are on her mind a lot. Mütti sees value in friends and relatives. Mütti has a faith in God that keeps her going. It has helped her in the past to face unpleasant times and will see her through her remaining years.

When I talk to my mother she often says that life is a gift from God and the fact that she is still able to do so much is a real blessing. The lesson I can learn from my mother is not to gripe that I am 60. It seems that my mother can still do a lot and she is 32 years older.

The Lighter Side

Wrong Address



"Oops... heh, heh... sorry!"

Christmas Present

It was the day after Christmas at a church in San Francisco. The pastor of the church was looking over the cradle when he noticed that the baby Jesus was missing from among the figures. Immediately he turned and went outside and saw a little boy with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus.

So he walked up to the boy and said, "Well, where did you get Him, my fine friend?"

The little boy replied, "I got him from the church."

"And why did you take him?"

The boy said, "Well, about a week before Christmas I prayed to the little Lord Jesus and I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas I would give him a ride around the block in it."

With Love To My Canadian Mother—A True Story Charlotte Wiehler

In 1977, I went with Menno Travel to the Middle East, to Egypt, Jordan and Israel. In Amman, Jordan we visited the almost 2000 year old Amphitheatre, an unbelievable rock building. Our tour leader who was down on the stage talked to us and as we sat on the stony seats we could even understand every word.

It was on a rainy afternoon in February 1977 that my adventure began. My roommate wanted a nap while I preferred to see more of this ancient city. My way led me to the old theatre again. Two boys who were standing around asked me if I wanted to see the surrounding inner storage rooms of the Theatre. I didn't think much. Down we went on old stony steps. I remember walls big and small, spider webs, dusty air and rooms of which some had ornaments. It was not very inviting. I was actually very relieved to see the bright lights again after the semi-darkness.

This huge colossal construction sure amazed me. After a long walk with the two Palestinian Jordanian boys I thanked them and said goodbye. Of course I gave them a tip. I also asked one of them for his address and later that year sent him a Canadian calendar for Christmas. Time passed. I wrote to this boy, Ghassan Oweiss and he sent me cards and letters always signed - With Love, from your Jordanian son, Ghassan. Sometimes he talked about his life. He explained in a dramatic style how his neighbours were not always nice to him. In the late 1980's I received a wedding invitation and later a nice picture of the young couple.

In the 1990's I received exciting news that Ghassan was coming to Canada and that he would visit me. He phoned me from Montreal, where he was staying while on a course but he never came to Calgary. He had no idea how big Canada was.

We have always kept in touch. Sometimes Ghassan sends me greetings through vacationers who came back from Amman. A couple visited me a few years ago as they were interested to meet the Canadian mother. A Jordanian flag ordains my living room. Ghassan wanted to send me a fresh bottle of olives but he couldn't ship it out of the country.



In the year 2000, one of my nephews went on a Mission trip to Amman and I was able to send a special treat to Ghassan. My relative connected with him and they had a nice time together. Ghassan is a super tour guide.

Time flies. Looking ahead 33 years is a long way but looking back it is short. Pretty soon I will send Ghassan, my Jordanian son, a Canadian calendar again. Perhaps, he will send me more emails (using my daughter's email), like this one:

Hi dear mother, how nice to hear from you hope everything with you goes as you wish. And hope you still remember Jordan and using your pictures to promote it. I am very glad to receive this email showing the appreciation to Jordan that you left. You are one of the real ambassadors of Jordan, we are living comfortable and peaceful life, missing nothing but rain and your smile. All the best for you and yours hope to be able to meet again, take care and keep in touch.

Your Jordanian son Ghassan Oweiss.

Looking Back

Hartwick Wiehler

Sep 26	Sunday School teacher commissioning
Oct 10	Thanksgiving service
Oct 17	Installation service for Pastor Ed followed by a potluck lunch
Oct 24	Dankfest featuring Kim Thiessen and Abe Janzen
Nov 14	Mission Sunday service with Cara Baergen
Nov 19, Nov 20	Photos for the new pictorial directory
Nov 21	Memorial Sunday
Dec 11	Annual Christmas Banquet

Looking Ahead

Hartwick Wiehler

Dec 14	Helping Hands Christmas Social
Dec 19	Kauffman open house 2:00—5:00
Dec 24	Christmas Eve Pageant at 6:30

Family Life

Hartwick Wiehler

Marriages

Oct 30	Lisa Thiessen and Nathan Burgess
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Engagements

Sep 19	Craig Thiessen is engaged to be married to Caroline Klassen of Vancouver
Nov 7	Erwin and Birgitt Thiessen are pleased to announce the engagement of their son, Daniel to Lisa McBride of Saskatoon

Births

Sep 13	Nicole & Greg Bruins have been blessed with a beautiful daughter, Ayla Gabrielle. Proud grandparents are Henry & Elsa Bergen.
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Let us remember those facing illness and physical challenges

- Hedy Bartel at home
- Henry Bergen in Bethany Care Centre
- John and Hilda Franz at home
- Rose Ferrara at home
- Anny Heidebrecht in Monterey Place
- Bill and Katie Hildebrand at home

- Susie Penner in Spruce Lodge
- Mary Quiring in Carewest Dr. Vernon Fanning Centre
- Sonya Regehr at home
- Eldriede Wiens in Staywell Manor

Editorial

Hartwick Wiehler

Downtown, in the plus 15's and on street corners, there are often younger people, most likely students, standing around, trying to get your attention with a smile or a question. They are wearing vests that have organizations such as Red Cross, World Vision and Save the Children printed on them and they are fundraising for these causes. I started talking to one person and ended up giving him my name so that I could possibly make a donation. For the next while I got regular voice messages from Vancouver about donating to the Red Cross. After we finally connected, I listened to his pitch about what they are trying to do. It sounded worthy and after taking up so much of his time I felt obligated to donate some money.

Before I did though, I asked him some questions about their approach to fundraising. This is a paid fundraising venture. The organization that they represent pays them a fee to raise a specified amount. All the people involved, from the management to the students on the street corners are compensated.

To my way of thinking, the organizations that they represent have worthwhile objectives. The part that I am not thrilled about is that the fundraisers are compensated and therefore less money goes to the cause that they represent. When people come to the door I always ask if they are they being paid. I still donate to some organizations that pay for fundraising but it is one of the factors that I consider.

One of the reasons that I like MCC is that there are many volunteers included in their effort. I understand that there will be paid staff and that money has to be spent on raising funds, but the more that goes to the end cause, the better. I want to donate to organizations where funds are targeted to helping others and want to minimize administration and fundraising.

This raises an interesting point. Charity organizations need funds to continue and if they can't raise them with volunteers then they will move towards professional fundraisers. If we want to support organizations where a high percentage of the funds go directly to the cause, then we have to support these organizations, possibly

seek them out instead of them finding us, and volunteer to help them.

Our time is one of our most valuable assets and to help an organization with their administration or in fundraising will take commitment. However, if we want to see organizations like MCC that use volunteers extensively continue to exist, then we have to be willing to donate our most valuable commodity - time.

I want to take this time to thank everyone who reads this newsletter. A special thanks to those who took the time to offer a word of encouragement or to make a comment on an article. You made a difference.

There are many people who made the effort to write for First Contact. Thanks for doing this. Thanks especially to the people who over the past year made contributions on a regular basis including Alissa Bender, Rita Dahl, Sonya Regehr, Irene Klassen, Marvin Thiessen and Ed Kauffman.

I wish you all a time of peace and happiness as you celebrate the birth of a baby 2000 years ago and what it means for our lives today.

Thank You!

