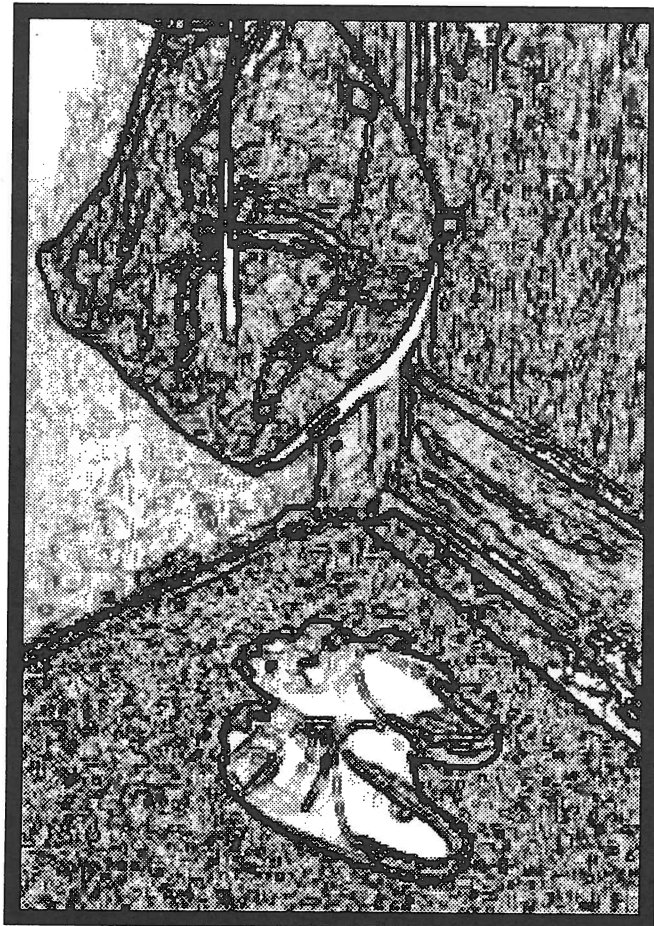


S O P H I A

W I S D O M

4/2

*Say to Wisdom, "You are my sister."
Proverbs 7:4a*



Travelling Light

Kathy Dueck
REMB #11

*Please
renew*

SPRING / SUMMER 1994 VOLUME 4 NUMBER 2

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SOPHIA: A Greek feminine noun
associated with the biblical wisdom
tradition, translated "wisdom" and
personified in the book of Proverbs;
equivalent in the New Testament to
logos, the creative word that was
with God in the beginning,
creating and giving life to the world.

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Cover Photo: Lorie Koop

What's in a name? A great deal. Our names are a part of our identity, they are a part of *us*. When our names are forgotten, mispronounced, misspelled or misused, or when they are wrongly associated with offensive activity, we feel hurt or even violated. When our names are remembered by someone from long ago, when they are spoken with respect, when they appear on certificates of merit or in print in a positive context, we feel affirmed.

Parents often struggle with the naming of an expected child, long before the birth. Not any name will do. Sound, meaning, and associations are considered. The name of this publication, too, was chosen with a great deal of thought, research and prayer, and we still believe *Sophia* is a good name: it is a woman's name with an attractive sound and an admirable meaning – wisdom; it is taken from scripture where *Sophia* has a respected voice and presence; and, like the masculine word *logos*, it has been associated with the wisdom of Christ.

Recently, with the media attention the Re-Imagining Conference in Minneapolis (November 1993) has received, the name "Sophia" has acquired, for some, a very negative connotation. Participants at the

"A Rose By Any Other Name ..."



ecumenical convention, it is reported, employed heretical prayers and questionable rituals honouring a goddess Sophia. Their practices and pronouncements contravene our understanding of what the Bible teaches.

We can't afford to be naive about the potential damage this reporting could do to our fledgling publication. Will *Sophia* lose credibility because of her name? Can we muster the time and energy that may be needed to defend it?

But neither do we want to react with fear. We need to realize, first of all, that the media are drawn to the sensational, while saner voices and constructive activity (very much part of the Minneapolis Conference), are often reported with much less emphasis.

We believe our readers will be able to discriminate between skewed

theology of extremists, and what our mission statement defines as our position and purpose.

Good and suitable names have survived unfortunate associations in the past. The Mennonite Brethren, in the 1860s, were associated with *Die Froehliche Richtung* (the Exuberant Movement), an association that threatened to discredit the new church. Yet our denomination survives to this day. Many churches with the word "Christian" as part of their name espouse a theology Mennonite Brethren do not endorse. Yet we do not stop calling ourselves Christian.

We believe that you, our valued readers, have ideas and opinions on the matter of the name *Sophia*. Please write and tell us what you think.

The publisher and editors of Sophia.

MISSION STATEMENT: Sophia

Sophia offers a forum for women in the MB church. Her pages provide room for dialogue, room for women to speak to each other about their place in the family, the church, the work place and the world. She recognizes that the MB sisterhood is rural, urban and suburban; that it represents all age groups; that it includes diverse interests and experiences; that its members speak with various voices.

Sophia offers herself as a rallying place for women in an uncertain, changing world. She is interested in women's stories, in their aspirations and disappointments, their successes and failures. She invites expressions of joy and sorrow, concern and outrage. She encourages women in the use of their gifts in all spheres of life.

Although **Sophia** was conceived and brought to birth by and for MB women and celebrates sisterhood, it is her desire to be inclusive. She hopes to challenge both men and women; she welcomes their voices and invites them into dialogue.

Sophia acknowledges the authority of God, the giver of wisdom, and of the sacred Scriptures, the story of God's dealings with women and men. "Oh the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33)

How will I make it home?

by Sarah Klassen

I'm trying to travel light. On flights that take me away from home for up to five days, I allow myself only one piece of carry-on luggage. This way I avoid the crowded wait at the luggage carousel and the awkwardness of carrying several suitcases. On longer trips this isn't always possible, though I once sat beside a woman and her daughter who were travelling to the orient for a six-week stay with one piece of luggage each, stowed under the seat in front of them.

Carry-on luggage always arrives when you do. One summer I arrived in Lithuania to find that my suitcase, which I'd checked, couldn't be found. Fortunately I'd brought a change of clothing in my carry-on. For several days my hotel room had a spare, serene ambience.

My family back home, meanwhile, learned of my misfortune and sent a small bag of hastily gathered items of clothing. I was grateful to add a skirt and blouse, and things to wear under them, to the jeans and two T-shirts I'd been rotating.

And then the airlines located my suitcase and one day it arrived. Depression settled in as I unpacked and tried to stow things in a room with



minimal storage space. I was forced to live for the remainder of my seven-week stay in constant clutter. I had managed to squeeze, push and force an amazing amount into that medium-sized suitcase.

Although I gave away some of the contents of my luggage while in Lithuania, I also managed to acquire new possessions. How would I get everything home? It was a struggle and I won't burden you with the details.

On the journey toward God, it is easy to burden ourselves with so much excess luggage that we despair of ever arriving home. John Bunyan has given us, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, the classic example of the burdened traveller. The burden robbed the traveller of all joy; it made every step of the narrow way more difficult. What a relief when it finally rolled away, at the cross. This

had nothing to do with the traveller's efforts or help from companions. The unburdening was a gift of grace received at the cross of Jesus. It did not mark the end of the journey, but the beginning of a transformed journey.

In preparing this issue, the committee discovered how complicated it is to define what it means to travel light in a complex world. Scriptures encourage us to cast our burdens on Jesus; they also challenge us to carry one another's burdens. How do we juggle that? We don't want to pass through this life like tourists, merely snapping pictures and noting what is quaint or novel. Neither do we want to be rooted as if this world is our only home.

Perhaps we can help each other along the journey by sharing what we've experienced. This issue offers travel tips and introduces travellers who have something to tell overloaded pilgrims.

We wish all of our readers a transformed journey. Along the way, may you, like Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*, find among your travelling companions those whose names are Hopeful and Faithful.

KEEP SOPHIA COMING

To keep **Sophia** coming, please renew your subscription promptly and you won't miss the next issue on women in the arts.

3 issues (a year) \$9.00; 6 issues (2 years) \$17.00

Please make cheques payable to **Sophia** and indicate church affiliation and church mailbox number if applicable. Send subscriptions to: **Sophia**, P.O. Box 28062, 1453 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg, MB R2G 4E9

Letters

Volunteers read *Sophia*

Greetings from MCC Bolivia! We received one issue of your magazine (Linda Penner had sent a gift subscription to our friend and co-worker, Rita Wall), and we would like our own subscription.

Thank you for your good work. Many of the volunteers who saw the issue we received, enjoyed your refreshing perspective.

God's blessings on all your endeavours.

Kitty B. deVoogd
Education Advisor
MCC Bolivia

Taking her turn

Received my first issue of *Sophia* last week, read it through, and ever since have been thinking of people to send it to. I'm an older person, but I know several younger women who would enjoy this forum.

A few years ago I was elected to a three-year term as a deacon (Grace Mennonite Church, GC, Brandon). At my first meeting with the other deacons, one of them said, probably as a joke, "Well, you know, Anna, one of the deacon's jobs is to take a turn on the layman's preaching list." To his astonishment I said, "Okay." They've been stuck with me ever since. I speak once or twice a year, which gives me lots of time to hone a sermon, and I enjoy it. We had one man who would check to see when I was speaking, and simply not come to church that Sunday, but everyone else has been supportive.

Anna Schroeder
Brandon

A greeting from Munich

I became aware of *Sophia* through a friend who gave me the Fall/93 issue and I enjoyed reading through it. It's a magazine I would like to subscribe to.

In 1989 I graduated from Mennonite Biblical Seminary with an MA in theology. Munich, Germany has been home since 1990, when my family and I came here on a church planting assignment with MBM/S.

Thanks to those who took the initiative to begin a new and creative project.

Julia Penner Zook
Munich, Germany

Thanks for pastoral letter

Thank you, Katie [Wiebe]! Thank you for your pastoral letter, reminding us that after a night of weeping, joy comes in the morning. Thank you for giving us hope. I

have read the letter many times, weeping over it, praying over it, rejoicing in it.

My husband first brought it to my attention, then my daughter called from Winnipeg to tell me about it. My mother read it because she loves Katie's books. Even my father got into the act after his granddaughter challenged him. We have hope and are networking.

Thank you also to John Regehr, "the token male," for his wisdom and for saying it so well.

I enjoyed the poems "My Pastor is a woman," and "For my daughter." I might as well say it: The whole magazine was excellent.

Elfrieda N. Schroeder
Kitchener, Ontario

Why *Sophia* was chosen (letter to the *Winnipeg Free Press*)

While the article "Rocking the boat for women," on November 13 represented quite faithfully my conversation with your reporter, I'd like to point out one error.

The publication, *Sophia*, does not derive its name from the Greek goddess Sophia.

The word "sophia" is a feminine gender Greek noun which can be translated as "wisdom."

It is used in the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures where the word for wisdom was "chokmah."

Later, in the writings of the Christian church, in the Gospel of John for instance, the Greek masculine noun "logos" was used instead of "sophia."

In all cases the word used in the scriptures for "wisdom" usually means or implies "wisdom from God." Both "logos" and "sophia" are identified with Christ.

The women who launched the publication could as well have chosen "chokmah" or "logos" for the title, but clearly "Sophia" seemed more appropriate for a publication by and for women.

Sarah Klassen
Editor, *Sophia*

What's in a name?

I saw the article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* (November 13/93) titled "Rocking the Boat for Women."

I trust that your magazine will truly minister to women. My concern is that it will be Bible based material that you will be promoting.

May I encourage you to listen to the enclosed message on tape by Dr. John MacArthur, please.

Question: If this is indeed a Christian magazine with biblical values, why would you choose a name for it that is the name of a Greek goddess? Why not choose something that would be known as clearly biblical and Christ-glorifying?

In the Blessed Hope of Christ's Soon Return.

Jake Froese
Winnipeg

In response to the article mentioned by Jake Froese, we reprint, (see insert), the letter sent to *The Winnipeg Free Press*. The letter, and our mission statement, answer the concerns raised by those who wrote us about the article.

letters continued on page 7

How fast are you running these days? Are you experiencing level ground under your feet while the sun warms your back and the wind blows gently through your hair? Or are your knees shaking and your arms aching as you puff and pant your way up that difficult hill?

Hebrews 12 speaks about our race through life, and doesn't it seem like a real race at times? The writer warns us of things that can hinder our progress. Certain sins can sneak up on us. We are encouraged to be on the lookout for these and to throw them off as soon as they spring up, since they can do serious damage.

What are some of these harmful tag-alongs? This chapter points out spiritual weariness, discouragement, bitterness, sexual immorality, disregard for God's blessings, and refusal to listen when God speaks to us. In contrast, we are encouraged to fix our eyes on Jesus when we experience hardship.

Although I don't mind running through life at a fairly quick pace, I don't enjoy difficulties, and consequently I become annoyed by obstacles. Interestingly, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews assumes that obstacles and difficulties will be part of life for all of us. We are not instructed to get rid of these. Rather, we are encouraged to watch our reactions when faced with hardship. It is then that sin waits to get us, bringing us to a grinding spiritual standstill.

The past few weeks have been particularly challenging for me. On several occasions I have been aware of sin's tentacles wrapping around my feet and my heart. In addition to studying full-time, raising three daughters (one of whom is away at college, so I am experiencing the dull ache of loneliness), being a helpful partner to my husband and working part-time at church-related business, I moved into a new house last week. This has caused real fatigue.

Running Lightly

by Lynn Voth

I was faced with discouragement as well. One of my professors proved to be an unreasonable marker; some of the tradesmen at our new home made time-consuming mistakes which meant an unfinished house on moving day; family dynamics were affected by the stress. To my shame, I didn't respond the way I would have liked to. How quickly I was tempted to find fault with others for my discomfort. I admit it was easier to focus on my unfair grade, the damaged floor and the faults, real and imagined, of my family, than to look at Jesus.

The result of my badly-focused vision proved to be anxiety, irritability and quarrelsomeness. In very real ways I "slowed down" spiritually. My attitude and speech reflected this state and others began to be affected by it. I realized

the need to refocus and get rid of these sins before they did more damage. Hebrews 12: 14, 15 reminded me:

Try to stay out of all quarrels and seek to live a clean and holy life... Look after each other so that not one of you will fail to find God's blessings. Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you for as it springs up it causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives.

The writer must have been tempted by similarly negative feelings; but he knew the remedy. The solution he offers here in Hebrews is also found in one of my favourite old hymns:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
look full in his wonderful face;
and the things of earth will grow
strangely dim, in the light of his
glory and grace.

Jesus endured much more than you or I are struggling with. By steadfastly focusing on the task his father had given him, Jesus became the supreme example of perseverance in the face of extreme difficulty. The shame of our failure is covered by his costly suffering on the cross. Hebrews 12 reminds us that because of Jesus, we have access to a heavenly kingdom that cannot be shaken by hardship. In God's presence, our sins can be melted away and we can be made new.

The course set before Christian women today is diverse, complex and filled with challenges. Let's remember to be on the lookout for those sins that seek to ambush us along the way. Because each of us has the God-given responsibility of safeguarding the spiritual lives of those around us, our attitudes and actions do matter. We cannot afford to neglect the one who longs to sift away anything unstable. Let's encourage one another to keep focused on Jesus.

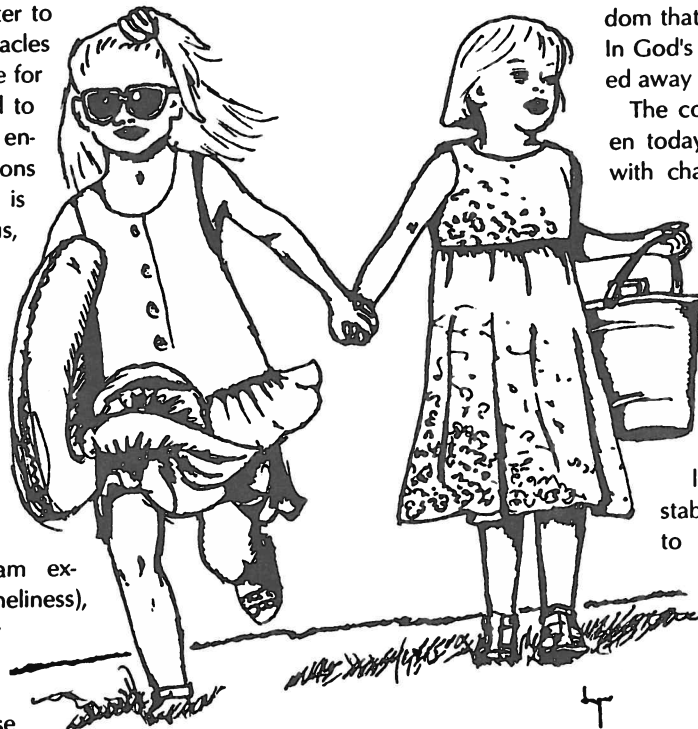


ILLUSTRATION: BETTE PLETT

Lynn Voth, Westwood MB, has recently been elected executive secretary of the Manitoba MB conference. She is a graduate student in religion and culture at the University of Manitoba.

Sophia and real life

I've just experienced an exhilarating "walk down memory lane" through the pages of the Winter/94 *Sophia*.

It all began with the editorial. I had just reread Lawrence's *Practicing the Presence of God*, reflecting on my three years on the "mountaintop" with God, 1975-77. I was a single, divorced career woman at the time; apart from my working life at the university, I shut out all distractions, including newspapers, television and radio. I had experienced an overwhelming sense of God's love on January 10, 1975, and I responded with a compelling, singular desire to know God in a deeper way. I immersed myself in a study of the Bible, devouring 132 Christian books. I had lots of "good feelings," but as Sarah Klassen writes, "it must sustain us in the long haul...."

My memory walk through *Sophia* thrust me fast-forward into 1990, when I rediscovered the "other side of silence" for the first time when I attended a journaling workshop at St. Benedict's amidst the clamorous (but wonderful) changes which had taken place in my life the previous year, and I felt deeply affirmed by Elaine Pinto's "A Way to Hear God" and Kathleen Rempel Boschman's "Listening to God."

1982 was a crucial year in my awareness of women's issues not only as a working woman in the secular world, but also as a Christian woman seeking to identify and express the gifts God had given me. That year a close friend gave me Kari Torjesen Malcolm's *Women at the Crossroads*, (mentioned in "International Year of the Family") which changed my life.

I was firmly grounded in the "now" with Katie Funk Wiebe's pastoral letter to MB women; she gave me a fresh infusion of hope (which had slipped away on the heels of the 1993 MB Conference) which extends beyond myself to the Body of Christ and, as I climb this mountain, I am encouraged by Habakkuk 3:19: "God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and makes me tread upon the heights."

I thoroughly enjoyed "Shelf Life;" I'm

always interested in learning about special books in people's lives. One of my special books is a religious classic, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, by Hannah Whittall Smith. The book was a key that unlocked the door of many spiritual "secrets" which helped me on my journey.

Elenore M. Fast
Winnipeg

The promise of the art

The artwork on the cover of the last issue of *Sophia* caught my attention. It evoked sensations of my Mom and her pineapple patterns, doilies and devotions, cozy oldness, handiwork in white and then bordered with colour, bookmarks and having to stop reading for the moment, the rough relentless repetition of a tapestry woven into a wonderful, no-nonsense design. And the mysticism of a mandala, with a bit of fear of its foreignness. It became, somehow, my mandala. I didn't need, nor could I find, a connection to the "hymn singer."

The cover promised pages of understanding of who I am and what I feel. And, as usual, the issue did not disappoint.

Lorina Marsch
Winnipeg

What's the "Real" News?

In the congregation I attend, a worshipper recently drew to our attention these words that we so thoughtlessly sing:

The depths of earth are in *his* hand,
Her secret wealth at *his* command.

Given the prevalence of sexual violence in our society, this image of imperial male control over a female object is, when we stop to think about it, distressing and dangerous.

However, when believers come together to explore new images of God, the meeting is decried as "heresy."

On March 26 the *Winnipeg Free Press* ran a story from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Feminists turn to Sophia," to report on an ecumenical, international

theological conference held in Minneapolis last November. In fact, the story does not report on the conference, called *Re-Imagining*; the conference was long over and no longer "news," if theology ever was. The real "news" is the controversy created by unofficial publications within United Methodist and Presbyterian (U.S.A.) circles, about the conference. According to the *Free Press/Chronicle* story, "to a rising chorus of conservative voices... Sophia is a pagan goddess and dangerous heresy threatening the patriarchal foundations of North American Christianity." So much for trying to express new images of God.

This furor teaches us to be wary of the way women's stories are reported in the news media. It seems that a meeting of 2200 Christians, mostly women, from all denominations and every continent, celebrating the mystery of word made flesh is not newsworthy: the anxiety of entrenched ecclesiastical bureaucracies about that celebration is newsworthy.

Or put it this way: the image of God as a male violator is acceptable; the image of God as a female life-giver is not.

Does the "Sophia" controversy represent the Re-Imagining conference? I cannot answer from firsthand experience.

However, reading through all the worship materials from the conference, I see only a few expressions of faith that make me uncomfortable - no more than in the same number of pages of any church hymnal. I see also: Kyrie Eleison, Amazing Grace and Siya Humba. The substance of the worship is true to the Christian confession of Creator, Spirit and Saviour; it has aroused controversy because it explores new images of God. Yet the intention is to represent God more faithfully.

One critic, who did not attend the conference, said, "No comparable heresy has appeared in the church in the last fifteen centuries." A participant reported: "This conference was not about changing the faith - it was about changing the church to save the faith." Sadly, only the critic's opinion made the front page of the *Globe*.

Dale Taylor
Winnipeg

Women on the Great Trek

by Dora Dueck

PHOTO COURTESY OF OTTO KLASSEN



Anna Janzen's tears flowed without stopping as she walked from room to room of her house in Tschongrau, Crimea, on August 19, 1941. Outside, a grain wagon was loaded with the family's most essential things: warm clothes and as much food as could be hastily gathered.

The German army, which invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, was advancing rapidly. The Soviet government decided that Germans in Russia, including the residents of 70 Mennonite villages in the Crimea, were potential collaborators and must be moved.

Anna's cries turned to wails. This place held so many memories. It was awful to be expelled from one's home, quite different from a voluntary departure. Winter was coming; they had to leave the garden full of vegetables, the orchard hanging with plums. The cow was tied to a tree; the little dog Bella whimpered after them from the haystack.

"You must console yourself," Anna's husband Jacob said. "You have your whole family with you."

Yes, Anna had her four children, Gerhard, 21, Jacob, 19, Annie, 16, and Gredel, 11. And she still had her husband. (Nearly half the Mennonite families in Russia were without their fathers by 1940.¹)

Little did Anna know, in the pain of that evacuation, what further losses awaited her. Only a few days later, the Janzen family lost many of their possessions.

Then, on September 30, Anna was separated from her

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANN KOOP



Anna Janzen, (centre) with her daughters

husband and sons when all men 16 to 65 were summoned to service in the Russian army. She never saw them again. Her last act of love was to run back to get her husband's lighter shoes for him, since his feet got sore in boots.

In 1943 Anna and her daughters, along with some 35,000 other Mennonites,² fled Russia in front of the retreating German army in what would become known as "the great trek."

During the course of her wanderings as a refugee in Europe, Anna was separated for several weeks from her oldest daughter and feared that she would lose her as well.

When Anna Janzen eventually landed in Winnipeg on October 29, 1947, to be joyously re-united with her parents who had emigrated to Canada some 18 years earlier, and to finally settle again into a permanent home, it was a bittersweet arrival. She had only her daughters and a handful of personal possessions.

* * *

From notes she had kept on scraps, Anna Janzen later wrote, for her family,³ an account of those six years of her uprooting. "Something of our life since we had to leave our beloved home in 1941" was published as an appendix to *Die Krim war unsere Heimat*, in 1977.⁴

I happened across the story there and found it fascinating – fascinating enough to pursue through 36 pages of small print text in German, Anna's account of the relentless and progressive stripping away: first home and community, then material belongings pared to the barest essentials or less, then

husband and sons, then country and citizenship, and finally the near-loss of another child. Safety, security and the most precious possessions of all - family and personal dignity - were replaced by fear, hunger, heartbreak.

Talk about "travelling light!" The words are too melodious, almost irreverent, for what Anna experienced.

Anna Janzen's story is one of thousands like it. There must have been countless repetitions of scenes such as these: digging through garbage for clothing and struggling to overcome deep repugnance; stealing fodder for horses; sleeping on the hard ground; finding in the ditch a suitcase containing a small corpse; experiencing fear as uncontrollable sweats and chills.

Some 23,000 of the 35,000 Mennonites who tried to escape with the German army were deported to the Soviet Union after the hostilities of World War II ended.⁵

Some 12,000 Mennonite refugees, many of them women and children, were eventually located and helped by relief agencies and the Mennonite Central Committee. Some settled in Paraguay, where they pioneered under very difficult conditions. Others, such as Anna and her daughters, came to Canada.

From the accounts that have been preserved, orally or on paper, some observations can be offered about the women on the trek.

1. They were women of tremendous courage. It was courage of a daily, physical kind, bent on survival, for the sake of the children and life itself. It required putting aside the niceties of dress and grooming (Anna Janzen writes of wearing the same clothes for a month at a time, not even changing at night), cooking over a pot in the field, driving nervous horses up and down the terrifyingly mountainous roads into Poland. They did what had to be done.

2. They were women shaped, as we all are, by their times. Most of them were not educated. They suffered physically, spiritually, morally and emotionally under Stalinism and during the war. The long years of deprivation marked their psyches. Many were raped, most witnessed atrocities and destruction (it is easy to forget what a burden it is to "see" evil). To be a

refugee, or displaced person, was to be treated as a non-person and to begin to feel like one.

3. They were women of faith. With the elimination of religious institutions in Soviet society, faith could be kept alive only in the family setting, with women playing a major role. Mothers and grandmothers took leadership in telling the Bible stories and reading sermons, leading the refugees in prayers and above all singing, nurturing small and secretive celebrations of Easter and Christmas.

Faith - this was the strong impression that Anna Janzen's recollections left with me. Between her tears and the many difficulties, Anna speaks repeatedly of God's blessings and help, of answers to prayer. During the "unspeakable pain" of losing husband and sons, the Lord gave her the scripture, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." It was, in her sorrow, "a small ray of light."

In her chronicle of those terrible years, Anna writes of the joy of resuming, whenever possible, the public practice of their faith. She tells of their first communion service in years. It was preceded by confession. Then, "we thanked our God that we could again come before Him and He again accepted us through His Grace. O, His mercy is so great with us."

A spirit of gratitude pervades her memoirs. Anna's conclusion too is astounding: "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

Notes.

1. George Epp, "Mennonite Immigration to Canada," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, Vol. 5, 1987.
2. 35,000 Mennonites within a stream of 350,000 *Volksdeutsche* and over a million Ukrainians and other Soviet people. George Epp, as above.
3. Lorie Koop, design and layout person for *Sophia*, is Anna Janzen's granddaughter.
4. by Martin Durksen.
5. George Epp.

Dora Dueck is a free lance writer and member of the Valley Gardens MB Church.



PHOTO COURTESY OF OTTO KLASSEN



Longing for a Simpler Life

by Eleanor Martens

Every now and then my husband tells me it's time to go back to Africa. He'd like to lose twenty pounds, and it sure was nice when teeth and glasses were covered by MCC. Then there was that perennially fabulous weather....

There are other reasons why, from the vantage point of a decade, our five years in East Africa evoke memories of a simpler, sweeter life. Perhaps we yearn for relief from the complexity and clutter that seem to have invaded our home and working lives. As MCC volunteers living in an isolated, rural setting, we enjoyed a slower, more relaxed daily routine. We had no cellars, faxes, or pocket computers to rigidly dictate our schedules. There was no traffic or commuting - to school, to work, to church, off again to the next event - driven by a never-ending list of things to do, to see, to listen to, to shop for. There was no embarrassment of riches to reap on us a constant quandary of guilt and doubt. Give us Africa any day!

Family life thrived in the togetherness forced upon us by our rustic habitat, early nightfall, and the complete absence of televisions and telephones. Quiet evening hours spent huddled under the glow of a tiny twelve volt battery light allowed us to read every children's book series we could get our hands on, to attempt every game Parker invented. There were picnics, hikes, cooling swims (and baths) in the lake, twilight motorcycle spins along twisting country paths. The children found amusement in a nonstop round of exotic adventures involving lizards, snakes, and African boys with whom they exchanged language and playthings. Together they made reed flutes, corn husk dolls, and ate termites roasted over an open fire. School was a place they ran off to barefoot, watched chickens and bats swoop in and out of, and often vacated for field trips.

Even the birth of our daughter was a "back to basics" affair. One night, within minutes of finding myself in the midst of a major contraction, my physician-husband and I were sidling over to the hospital next door where he singlehandedly delivered our little six-pound miracle. A nurse provided the only available light by beaming a flashlight over his shoulder. Fifteen

minutes later, babe in arms, we were making our way back home under starry African skies and swaying palm trees, the air caressed by gentle lake breezes, pungent with the scent of magnolia and oleander. We lay there wide-eyed the rest of the night, our tiny bundle asleep between us, wondering who would be first to discover our secret.

One can easily be taken in by memories such as these. But of course they don't tell the whole story. I often have to remind myself that some of my greatest frustrations, fears and loneliness surfaced during those years spent abroad. Our

medical work, though rewarding, was not easy, hampered constantly by material shortages, inefficiencies, and cultural blunders. And while the setting may have been ideal for an adventurous urban family with adequate resources and the option of leaving when the going got rough, it was anything but that for our African neighbours.

When we arrived, they were anxiously scanning the skies for signs of rain to end a two-year drought. Unable to cultivate and harvest the maize crop they were utterly dependent on, they were now eating the seeds they had been saving for next year's planting. My house helper walked the four hours to and from our home everyday to earn money for soap and oil and school fees for his children.

Local girls and boys did not enjoy the freedom our children did. If they were not walking to the lake for the daily water supply, they were minding the smaller siblings, or the goats, or gathering

wood for the family hearth. Their mothers spent the days in the broiling sun cooking, hoeing the *shamba*, walking to the market, or waiting their turns at the local grinding mill, usually with infants straddling their backs. Childbirth afforded them scarcely a break in the day's routine, let alone the luxury of a hospital visit. Often they did not name their infants, knowing the chances of outliving infant disease and malnutrition were slight.

Interestingly, it was here, amidst the poverty, exhaustive labour, and uncertainty of African life, that we witnessed some of its most compelling features. Did the spirit of community

We learned that

"simplicity"

is a relative term,

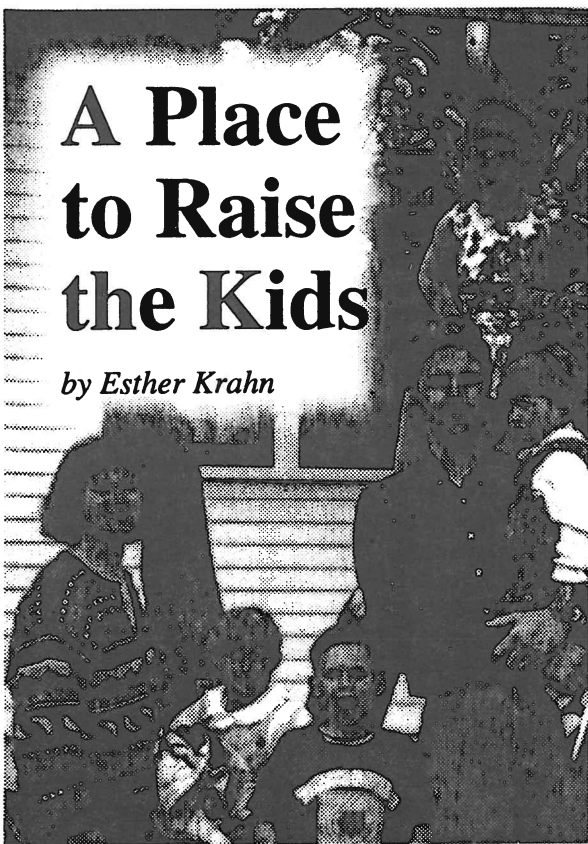
defined by

contrast and culture

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A Place to Raise the Kids

by Esther Krahn



"This is the best place to raise your kids. Yup, you call the police and they're here in five minutes." The first statement was good news to me, a mother of five young children. The second left me slightly bemused and wondering, but by September, 1988, our relocation process was complete.

We were one of four families from the Grain of Wheat Church Community who responded to a call to move to Winnipeg's north end. It was not a rash move, having been preceded by much prayer, thought and discussion. It was the result of a trip to Chicago where we had been challenged by speakers John Perkins, Tom Skinner and Janelle Goetcheus, and by the example of the Lawndale Health Care and church, ministries to the needy in the heart of Chicago. The call was to relocate, redistribute and reconcile with the poor in the city.

As I reflect on my past six years in this inner city neighbourhood, I realize that they have been anything but dull. One of the first things the four families did on moving in was to hold a "house blessing" around each of our homes. Together with our Grain of Wheat church family we walked to each of the homes, surrounded it on the outside with singing and prayers, and then went in for a bite to eat. It was a powerful time of calling on God our protector for safety and strength.

It was especially important to me that our home be a place of safety and shelter from the wild and crazy world outside our doorstep. Just last week our youngest daughter and I were forced to remain indoors

while seven houses away police struggled with an angry criminal resisting arrest on dangerous weapons charges. Another time a neighbour came to our door seeking refuge from a drunk and abusive husband, an event that would repeat itself more than once. One summer there were five or six significant fires on our block. I believe God has heard and honoured our prayers for protection.

Living in this neighbourhood has forced me to confront the demoralizing and destructive conditions in which so many inner city people live. The effects of alcoholism and sniff leave visible reminders everywhere. Loud summer parties with music cranked up soon turn to sounds of anger and disagreement and a fence being destroyed. Young children are left without supervision at the nearby school playground or are seen roaming the streets in the wee hours of the morning. One can

only guess where their parents are. Often children are the subjects of physical and verbal mistreatment. Last fall I saw a violent, inebriated man grab several boys by their shirt collars in a frightening way and then, with a crowbar, come after my husband who was watching. All I could think was, "Lord, have mercy."

The appalling squalor of nearby homes and apartments points to the indifference of the absentee slum landlords who own them. A constant flow of people moves in and out of the block on which we live. Often they just move further down the street or a few streets over, and then end up coming back again. There seems to be a web of connectedness among them. One day the pet rabbit we kept outdoors was missing. My husband asked a couple of neighbourhood kids to look out for it. Sure enough – an hour or so later they were back with the rabbit.

An exception to the general disarray are the elderly folks who pride themselves on keeping flowers and gardens in top shape. Their well-kept yards provide a delightful contrast to the majority which have fallen prey to vandalism and dogs.

I have learned that living here is really not that different from living anywhere else. People are people; regardless of where we live, all of us need to be loved, valued and treated with dignity. By being a stable family in this community and by being present to it, we've had many opportunities to share the love of Christ. I've played baseball with the kids on the street, listened to a neighbour confess to all the "bad" things she did on the weekend, visited with a lonely senior, prayed and investigated when I saw an ambulance pull up at a neighbour's house.

These needs are probably more evident here and the need for Christ's redemption so plain to see. Nonetheless, I've come to realize that no matter where I am, if the Lord has called me, He will not fail me. This knowledge has given me the strength and desire to live in the inner city. And yes, the one time I've had to call the police they were there in five minutes.

Esther Krahn grew up in Calgary, Alberta. In 1977 she came to Winnipeg where she completed a B.A. at Mennonite Brethren Bible College and the University of Winnipeg. She is married and, as a mother of five young children, is kept busy at home. In addition to involvement in the Grain of Wheat Church Community she is completing the second year of the Formation for Healing Ministries course at St. Ignatius.

Gifted - Who Me? The 28th Annual MB Women's Conference, Brandon, Manitoba

by Merrill Unger

As I step back from this year's MB Women's conference, a whole range of impressions and a mosaic of images remain with me.

The first impression came on entering the church and finding the foyer crowded with women of three generations, from college students to senior citizens, answering to every description. It was a comfortable diversity.

The worship band, Refiner's Fire, lent their musical talent, the flowing movement of the tambourines focussed our minds powerfully on God, and the use of sign language connected our minds and hearts as we sang, "Soften my heart."

Reverend Barbara Mutch, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Regina, was our speaker. She spoke of the gift of God's son to us, and reminded us that as women we are especially gifted for relationship, and that we are never as much like God as when we are giving. She skilfully pulled us along with powerful stories and word pictures.

While she gave us an affirming, traditional message on giftedness, we heard another message, nonverbal but significant: she was using her gifts in a position still out of reach for Mennonite Brethren women. Barbara never mentioned the subject of lead-

ership; she skilfully and unmistakably modelled it. While we were being ministered to by a female, ordained pastor from another denomination, many of us remembered last summer's MB General Conference in Winnipeg and the vote against women in leadership.

While I sensed overall goodwill and community at the conference, there was also some disagreement and concern expressed in the workshops that introduced more controversial issues.

I will remember the beauty and harmony of more than 200 women singing, "The woman at the well." With the fearful and rejected Samaritan woman we felt, collectively, the unconditional love and acceptance of Jesus through the words of Barbara Mutch. Jesus has gifted us; these gifts are to be used, not put on a shelf.



Barbara Mutch



Craft Display

PHOTOS: AGNES DYCK

Merrill Unger, *Richmond Park MB, Brandon*, served as campus chaplain at the University of Brandon this past academic year.

Consulting on Authority in Denver

One hundred representatives from various Mennonite Brethren conference boards met in Denver, Colorado, April 7-9, for *Consultation 94*. The consultation is an occasional gathering, not to make decisions on conference issues, but to discuss and test the level of consensus on topics that will be raised for debate and decision at delegate conventions.

The topic for *Consultation 94* was "Ordaining, Using and Misusing Authority in the Church." The Consultation spent the first evening grappling with questions about the nature of power and authority, and then moved on to discuss the more concrete, and manageable, topic: ordination.

The participants agreed that widespread uncertainty about the meaning and value of ordination is symptomatic of confusion within the denomination about the nature of leadership within the church. The Board of Faith and Life, which convened the consultation, was encouraged to continue to take leadership in bringing clarity to these issues.

The Consultation did not address directly the issue of gender-based distinctions. However, several speakers noted that discussion on the nature of pastoral authority will contribute to the discussion of women in pastoral leadership.

Although the Consultation did not attempt to describe precisely the exercise of authority in the church, it did embody a collectivization of power. The process, combining small group and plenary discussions, was inclusive and unifying for participants from different regions and from different experiences and ministry.

Of the thirteen women attending the Consultation, eight were from Winnipeg: Irma Epp, Mary Friesen, Salome Hiebert, Lorina Marsch, Peggy Regehr, Dale Taylor, Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen and Lynn Voth.

Dale Taylor, Concord College

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and celebration flourish because of adversity or in spite of it? Who knows?

The reality was that people absolutely depended upon one another - for identity, for information, for provision, for entertainment, for solace, for hope. Everyone belonged somewhere, to some group that guaranteed acceptance and care. In the absence of technological distractions, laughter, dance, song, and conversation helped forge those vital interpersonal links of appreciation, understanding and connectedness.

In the absence of certainty or control over what tomorrow might bring, each day found its own special significance as a gift, an opportunity, another blessing from the hand of God. While work was important, so was leisure. Our African neighbours did not define their worth through effort and exertion, as we often do. Quiet moments were welcomed, not feared, as opportunities for rest, reflection and communion with nature, kin and God.

Yes - Africa taught us a lot about the simple life. We learned that "simplicity" is a relative term, defined by contrast and culture. We learned that, try as we might, some elements of that pleasant life can never be transferred to this time and place, although they may entice us back some day. Most importantly, we learned that simplicity may have as much to do with spirit as with setting, with priorities as with place.

Eleanor Martens is a nurse, practising community health. She and her husband Ray have three children and attend McIvor Avenue MB Church.

poetry

The Face of God Behind the Veil

by Vange Willms Thiessen

The benediction
Punctuates the gathering
Of brothers and sisters
Who have spoken
But the face of God
Behind the veil
Is silenced.

The believers
Disperse, ambivalent
The joyous celebrate
The sorrowed grieve
Because the face of God
Behind the veil
Remains hidden.

This face of God
The woman who loses
A coin, then lights a lamp
And sweeps the house
When she finds the coin
Invites her friends
To rejoice.

This face of God
The one who longs
To gather the children
Like a hen her chicks,
Spreads comfort and care
Under her wings to
All who come.

This face of God
Who lifts the infant
To her cheeks, bends down
To feed and holds the hand
Then leads with cords
Of human kindness children
Back to their home.

This face of God
So long kept
Still, subdued
Quiet, held back
But now, like woman
Birthing; gasps, pants
And cries out.

This face of God
Crying in the streets
Takes her stand
By the gate
Her voice will not be
Silenced, her lips
Speak truth.

The daughters
Giving birth have
Rent the veil; molded
Stained with pain
The feminine face of God
Sees light and
Finds a voice.

(Lk. 15:8-10, Mt. 23:27,
Hosea 11:1-11, Is. 42:14,
Prov. 8:1-7)



Reflections on Letting Go

by Ester DeFehr

Our unexpected decision in April 1991 to move to North Carolina gave me no time to think about what my life would be like three months later. Consequently, I did not foresee the hurricane of losses coming my way. With one loss after another, I slowly began to feel the impact of the move, and naming the losses became a necessary exercise. The loss of my children who were leaving home; the loss of women friends; the loss of my church family; the death of my dog Nordic; the sale of our home.

I always considered myself a "roll with the punches" kind of person and couldn't understand the wreckage strewn in the corners of my life. In Rodale's *Synonym Finder* I found other words for loss: deprivation, bereavement, sacrifice, exhaustion, corrosion....

Interwoven with these losses runs the thread of what I've mockingly called *la gran catamenia*, creating its havoc and trying in its ugly way to put a curse on me. "Should I or should I not take estrogen?" You know - *la gran* debate begins and friends aren't close by to advise! But every hurricane has an eye where the storm calms and gives you a chance to take stock and try to figure out how you will weather the second half. I came to the realization that this was going to be a solitary, unaccompanied walk. I also realized I'd have to do away with Rodale's synonyms and replace them with positive words beginning with *repair*.

Building friendships

I launched my plan for survival. In order to work through my losses, I would have to begin with a new circle of women friends while keeping in close touch with my old ones. My friends have always been my life-line. It's not that I don't have a good relationship with my husband. It's that I believe even in a healthy marriage husband and

wife can't be everything to one another.

In order to maintain a balanced, clear mind, I believe it's necessary to build good relationships with people of our own gender. My women friends have earned the privilege of being very frank with each other. We take care of each other; we have great fun; we give each other a new lease on life.

Dave and I began to visit various churches and invite people for dinner after the service. It's neat how, when you look for important things in the right place - church - you find what you need. The first two couples we invited became, and still are, a very important part of my life-line. One woman is a Mennonite (and Mennonites are rare in North Carolina); the other is a Quaker minister. My circle began to form with two people I could talk to, pray with, and join for Bible study Tuesday nights.

Finding the music

My friend Richard Krohn told me years ago that "classical music calms the savage mind." He had heard of a study done with prisoners who were calmer when classical music was piped through their cells. Now, I know my friend did not for one minute believe my mind was savage, but he did think my choice of

music was somewhat - loud and on the wild side (1290 FOX). I took his advice and turned on CBC, leaving it on all day. Richard was right. I realized that music calms me right down and unclutters my mind. With worship music, I meditate. But in total defiance of my good friend, sometimes when I'm travelling alone down the interstate, I turn to 102.9 and crank up the volume full force, open the windows and sing at the top of my lungs:

"Honey you are my shining star,
Don't you go away.

Stay by me till my dying days..."

Nothing like a good love song to bring a smile to your face and a feeling that everything's all right!

Humour and love

Developing a sense of humour is crucial. It takes courage to live. Life can become too serious. Laughter releases tension, provides a new perspective, gives me courage to go on. It leads to love. Being too serious, too critical of people, turns us into negative, unhappy people nobody wants to be around. Humour, love, seeing God in people gives us joy, peace, love.

Many of the things I've had to give up will remain close to my heart where I'm trying to transform them into happiness and blessing. I'm a truly blessed mother when my children come home for holidays, bringing their school friends for me to adopt and so extend our family. I mother them all, boss them around just like my own. My church family is being formed in a church I'm beginning to love as I loved McIvor MB.

My dog lives on in the huskies I visit down by Spring Shore Road. I'm making my apartment beautiful by filling it with friends, flowers and laughter. This is a conscious effort, something I work at. Slowly my mind begins to rest after the move, to let go. Loving people clears the vision. Loving people puts God right beside us and turns our losses into gains.

As for losing *la gran catamenia*, I'll go to lunch once a month with my women friends to continue *la gran* debate, and possibly start pumping estrogen.

Ester DeFehr is originator and publisher of *Sophia*. She and her husband Dave moved to North Carolina in 1991 for business reasons. Ester enjoys weaving, painting and people.

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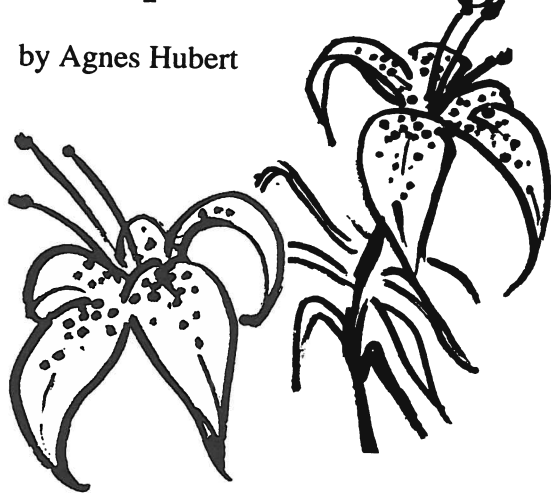
own gender.

"Live simply so that others may simply live." "Living more with less." Our cherished slogans of the late sixties and seventies. Then, as a society, we hurled ourselves into the greedy eighties with never a backward glance. Now it may be time to think again about simple living, or "travelling light," as the theme of this issue puts it.

For me, the most disconcerting aspect of this topic is that only comparatively wealthy people can think about it. I used to think all people who take obedience to God seriously should strive to live simply. But only people with leisure derived from affluence worry about living simply. For the vast majority there are no choices. There aren't enough resources; the question just

Is it Really Simple Living?

by Agnes Hubert



doesn't arise. This paradox has sharpened my eyes to the ironies in this whole question.

In 1985, after three years of teaching overseas, my husband, Barry, and I moved to Winnipeg. For two years we lived in Winnipeg's inner city without a car. We were lucky that there was a Safeway close by. We walked to the store and carried home as much as we could manage. Although we would have been happy to "buy in bulk" and to "buy when things are in season and put them in our freezer," that was not possible. We had no way of getting to the bulk food stores out in the suburbs, and we had no freezer. We were "living simply," but having no car meant that we could not display some of the other accepted signs of simple living. I realized then that some signs of frugal living were restricted to people who had a car and space for storage and a freezer.

We bought a car in 1987, and in July 1988 we moved into East Kildonan where we subsequently bought a house. We have

a garden plot, and we compost and recycle. We do some preserving and would like to do more. Last summer, I resigned from my employment. Since then I have not looked for paid work and am gaining a great deal of satisfaction from my studies and various volunteer involvements. Are we living more simply than we did when I worked? As a household, we are spending a lot less money and quite probably using less of other kinds of resources. I would need to be convinced, however, that I am living more simply.

When I think about this issue, I need to admit that I am wealthy. I have access to resources other than money and can make choices about how I use them. For example, our decision to live on Barry's salary is based not only on the amount of money he earns but on the fact that his employment is as stable as any during these uncertain times. That stability allows us to plan for the future and must be considered as wealth when we think about how we are living.

Perhaps we need to examine the slogans in the first paragraph a bit more. In this area of our lives, it seems to me that we have never quite reached the goal of "living more," or, as Jesus puts it, living abundantly, because we have concentrated too much on using less. We have tried to live simply by reducing our consumption. But what is the result of that in our society? In my experience, the net result is that we save money. Reducing our consumption has become an end in itself. We will not, however, live abundantly simply by concentrating on using less.

We need to accept and use what God has entrusted to us as faithful followers of Jesus. We are wealthy basically because we have been born in this society, and often in addition because of our own or others' labour. We cannot lessen or run away from that fact by reducing our consumption. Indeed, paying too much attention to reducing our consumption can lead to as deceitful a materialism as overconsumption. So what can we do with our wealth? Guilt is not helpful or productive. We must look at our wealth with open eyes and use it in ways that express our faith. It may mean using both money and less tangible resources to foster others' wealth by creating employment. It may mean giving more, both money and time. It may mean something that no one has thought of yet.

For me, then, the struggle is not about living simply, which is, after all, just about how I spend money. The struggle is with my attitude toward the resources to which I have access. And this struggle is characterized by shifts between gratitude for the richness of my life and fear of losing those resources. I desire the abundant life that Jesus promises. Seeking the kingdom and considering the lilies are older slogans, but perhaps more durable.

Agnes Hubert is a member of River East Church. She teaches English as a second language in Community-based Language Programs, volunteers at the Olive Branch and studies French.

Good News for the Momuna:

An Interview with Martha Reimer



Martha Reimer

Agnes Dyck spoke with Martha Reimer about her experience in Indonesia where Martha had translated scripture into the Momuna language for Wycliffe Bible Translators. At the moment Martha is in California and her future plans are uncertain.

Agnes Dyck: In 1979 you travelled to Indonesia, to a remote island north of Australia, and lived among an aboriginal tribe, the Momuna, for thirteen years. What early influences directed or encouraged you to consider such a venture?

Martha Reimer: For as long as I can remember going to church in the North Kildonan MB Church, I was exposed to the idea of people going on MCC assignments. I took it for granted that someday I would probably go on a short-term assignment too. So when I was in high school I started looking around for assignment possibilities. I was attracted to Wycliffe's literacy work. When I requested information about the work, they included a job description of a Bible translator. I read it over, saw that a translation took an average of 15 years and thought, "That's not for me." Besides, I didn't want to be labelled a missionary. So in my heart I said, "No," to the job.

But it was the Lord's call to me.

Once I knew where I was headed I took course work that I thought would be most helpful to do the job – Bible college, and degrees in the social sciences and linguistics.

AD: You spoke of a crisis experience after you began translation work, where you became aware of your spiritual inadequacies, so much so that you felt you must discontinue if you did not experientially possess the gospel you were offering to the people. You said, "My spiritual skills were not in pace with my job skills." And you claimed that job skills alone were not enough to do the work of translating scripture. Could you elaborate?

MR: Every Bible translator can expect to run into spiritual opposition at the beginning of a project, at the end and/or anywhere in between. I knew this. But when I ran into it I was still knocked down. For a year I went up and down – every time I got up I would get knocked down again. The crisis came after yet another obstacle arose: my translation assistants became sick. The medicine didn't work. They wanted to go home. They wanted to quit helping me. We were translating the miracle stories in

Luke at the time: Jesus healing the sick, driving out demons, raising the dead. But there didn't seem to be any miracles for us. We asked, but came away empty-handed.

So I said to the Lord one day, "Unless I can get in touch with you, or put these people in touch with the same Jesus who worked those miracles, I have nothing to offer them. And if I have nothing to offer them I have no right to be here." We went for broke. We asked for a miracle. Jesus gave us two. It was a turning point for us – for my assistants and for me.

When I look back, that was a very simple answer. They don't all come that easy or that simply. The years since then have shown that. Increasingly I became aware of a basic lack: the kind of "desert" training that Moses and David and Paul and the disciples had before they began their ministry. I grew up in a church, but in so many ways I did not know God or have his kingdom in my heart. It showed up in little ways – and big ones. Again the Lord brought me to the point where I either had to stop and reach out and get training, or throw in the towel.

No, job skills are not enough. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only [s]he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

AD: I understand that Momunas have a highly structured system of family networking. Could you elaborate on this?

MR: We're used to talking about the nuclear family: mother, father, children. Extensions to that family include at most aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents and grandchildren. The Momuna system is more refined. They employ more than 20 kinship terms that break down into groups of twos – dyadic relationships where each member is bound by defined obligations and privileges to the other.

The greatest investment that a man can make for his future is to get a wife. He'll have to pay for her for the rest of his life, of course – payments to her fathers, and uncles and brothers. But it's a

retirement plan at the same time. The young men who will be marrying his daughters will be paying *him* benefits for the rest of *his* life.

I was curious to see how I would be worked into the kinship system. For many of the early years I remained an outsider. In more recent years I began to be called "mother." The young men who worked with me were my "children." Since I didn't have a husband the Momunas were at a loss sometimes to explain me to visitors. They ended up saying I was a sister of the male missionary in the village. Weren't all white people related to each other like they were?! Well, why not. At least it was better than being called his second wife.

AD: You are fluent in the Momuna language. In order to translate well you needed to become familiar with local idioms. How is that reflected in the translation?

MR: The Momuna translation is a very idiomatic one. If I were to translate it back into English it wouldn't sound like the King James Version at all. It sounds the way people talk – every day talk, not book talk. Part of the reason is that when we first began to translate, the Momunas were not literate. They had no alphabet, no books. They learned to read while we translated the first gospel. At first, written communication was so new that almost anything on paper – whether the grammar was good or not – was acceptable, just as long as it communicated. But by the time we finished translating the second book they had begun to develop editorial skills.

I discovered this one Sunday morning when the Easter story was read during the church service. Afterwards my translation assistants came running to the house: "That story was so badly translated we could hardly read it. Before, when you used to ask us, 'Is this the correct way to say it?' we'd always say, 'Sure.' But it wasn't. Now we know better. We've already written the corrections into the book." I laughed. We'd come a long way.

The Momuna language works differ-

ently than English does. For example, a Momuna can say with one verb what it would take a whole sentence to say in English. On the other hand, Momuna has no abstract nouns. So they can't talk about salvation, for example, without explicitly spelling out who saved whom. Or about denial without spelling out who denied whom.

A high percentage of Momuna scripture appears in quotes. This is because in Mamuna every thought or intention of the heart is expressed as a quote. Take doubt for example. There is no single word for doubt. So James 1:6 cannot read simply, "But when he asks he must...not doubt...." It reads, "But when he asks God, 'Give me such-and-such,' he must not think, 'Will God give it to me or will he not give it to me?'"

Finding the right vocabulary was always a challenge. I had no dictionary. I had to make one as we went along. But how to find the word? How could I translate the stories of Jesus or Paul's trials when the Momunas were not familiar with Roman concepts of law, justice, trial, sentencing, punishment? I often told stories, I acted out situations, I looked for opposites, I made lists. Often I had to say, "Lord, help, I can't find the word." Soon a situation would come up that revealed the word I was looking for.

So I found that my translation skills increased with experience. But at times I knew that what I needed was something from God. I needed inspiration too.



Momuna



Martha Reimer and assistant

AIKOSOO

A true story by Martha Reimer

Aikosoo was my friend. She was an old woman. Her eyes were sightless, her teeth bad, and her hair, once white, had yellowed from malnutrition.

She had a special place in my heart. She had given me the first gift I had ever received from a Momuna – a sweet potato. She couldn't see my white skin. She couldn't see that I had plenty of food in my pantry. She just heard me talking Momuna and knew I was a friend. I wanted to give something back to her; specifically I wanted to read scripture to her, but we had none ready to read.

When I got sick and left the village for more than a year, I couldn't forget Aikosoo. "Lord, please don't let her die before I can read to her."

The day I returned to the village I headed straight for her house, up the notched tree trunk that served as a ladder, past the dogs, to her allotted corner by the fire. Usually she sat there weaving string bags. This day she was lying on the floor, covered with an old sack. Her daughter said she was not well, she might be dying. "Lord, please..."

Two days later she was sitting up. "Are you well?" I asked.

"No," she said.

"Are you dying?" The Momunas talk very frankly about death.

"Who knows...", she said.

"Well, when you die, are you going up to the Creator Father's house in the sky?"

"Oh, no, I'm much too bad for that. I'm going south." South is the place of misery and stench where all the common people go after death, so the people believe.

"But do you want to go to the sky? You may go there if you are a relative of the Creator Father," I persisted.

"That's impossible. I'm way too bad for that."

"No it's not. It's very easy to become the Creator Father's relative. All you have to do is pray. Do you want me to help you?"

I said the Momuna words for a prayer of repentance which I asked her to repeat phrase by phrase. She had trouble doing that and finally blurted out with her own prayer: "I don't know how to pray. I get all confused. Creator Father, take hold of me. Don't let me go."

Aikosoo became God's relative that day. I visited her daily and reminded her of who she had become, for her memory was failing and she would forget. Or perhaps her heart couldn't quite believe yet. Finally one day she said, "Yes, it's true. I have become God's relative."

I was translating scripture by this time, so I read to her daily while she began to share her daily food with me – a sweet potato one day, a banana another, half a piece of taro the next. I took these gifts even though I knew that some days it was all she had to eat. But she insisted. I didn't dare refuse her that one joy of giving. I started bringing her cooked peanuts which were easier for her to chew than roasted ones because she didn't have many teeth. She was overwhelmed.

"Are you my daughter that you give to me?"

One morning Aikosoo's grandson came into the house. "Aikosoo can't stop talking about heaven," he said. "She dreams about it. It's all she ever talks about."

"She's going to die soon," I thought, "and the Lord's preparing her."

The next week a flu epidemic hit the village. Aikosoo didn't do well. Within a few days we all knew her time had come.

"Let her go," said the Lord. "You've done your part. Now let me do mine."

Aikosoo died the next day. They wrapped her in the bark slab that had served as her sleeping mat and carried her to the garden. As they finished digging the grave someone ran back to the house to get a red skirt she must have owned and put it on her. I had never seen her wear it.

They lowered the body into the grave and began filling it with dirt.

"Not even a prayer?" I thought. I was the only one crying. Everyone had already expressed their grief the night before. Suddenly Te-nee, a translation assistant, stopped them. "I will pray," he said.

"Father, Aikosoo is like Anna and Simon (we'd just translated that story). They waited a long time for their Saviour. Then one day they saw him with their own eyes, and they rejoiced. Aikosoo was like that too. She waited a long time to know you. Then she became your relative and her waiting is over. And now you have taken her to the sky to be with you. Thank you."

Travelling... How?

by Doreen Martens

We moved recently to a new place about twenty miles down the road—a distance just long enough to rekindle one of the more typical arguments that simmer among cohabitants.

I speak, of course, of the "stuff" problem.

People basically fall into two categories: a) habitual savers of stuff, and b) people who prefer to live with a minimum of stuff.

Those who like to save stuff wonder how the others can bear to throw out, give away, sell or otherwise dispense with stuff that still has some possible use or value. Those who like a minimum of stuff wonder how the savers can stand cluttering up their living space with stuff that won't be needed tomorrow or, for that matter, a year from now.

These two kinds of people always seem to find each other - as siblings sharing a room, housemates, spouses. And they can drive each other crazy.

I fall into the "saver" category. I think of myself as a sort of historian, an archivist of family memorabilia, a shrewd consumer and recycler, a wise steward of that which has been provided for my sustenance and enjoyment. Someday, I believe, my old objects will be recognized as valuable antiques, my old newspaper clippings will become educational tools for my children, and I will finally figure out what that plastic whatchamacallit that lives in the junk drawer is for.

My husband calls me a packrat.

He's the kind of guy who wouldn't own a photograph of himself as a child if his mother hadn't preserved it. Who doesn't have a single article of clothing he hasn't worn within the last two weeks. Who's baffled by the fact that I have four filing cabinet drawers full of articles from baby magazines, recipes I've never concocted, scholarly pieces I never got around to reading at university and old file folders that are still good for another use, if I could just find time to relabel them.



A "consider-the-lilies" kind of guy.

Me, I guess I'm more like the children of Israel, who wandered in the wilderness for forty years but always managed to find room on the tent-packing list for a lot of pretty objects with which to adorn the Tabernacle.

So when we decided to toss our tent onto a road-weary U-Haul camel and trek to another oasis, there was a lot of "discussion" about all that stuff crammed into boxes, bags and bundles in the closets.

"You're not going to take THAT, are you?" he'd say, half-pleading, half-appalled.

"This? This?" I'd sputter. "This is a bunch of credit-card receipts from our honeymoon! These are souvenirs! Look, here's that restaurant we went to, remember? You can't expect me to just THROW THESE OUT, can you?"

He'd sigh and go back to taping boxes.

OK, maybe I'm foolish and sentimental, but someday we may both be grateful for a scrap of paper that can jog fading memories of our carefree youth.

The real mystery is, why do people who view the detritus of everyday life so differently seem to pair up together?

Maybe we're drawn to each other, recognizing in some subconscious way that either path, taken to an extreme, can be troublesome.

People who lack the compulsion to save stuff are in serious trouble when they're chosen for a random tax audit, when their kids are required to bring a family heirloom for show and tell, or when that mysterious whatchamacallit tossed into yesterday's garbage is suddenly discovered to have been an \$80 part that fell out of the washing machine.

People who collect too much stuff are the kind who wind up shame-facedly admitting to their compulsion at a meeting of Packrats Anonymous or being sued by the city for the cost of cleaning up their junk-filled back yard.

I've been saved from that embarrassing fate by having a life partner who keeps requiring me to justify my archival selections before they're heaved onto another truck. And I'm saving him from a future with no history by keeping a scrapbook of his life and a box of mementos.

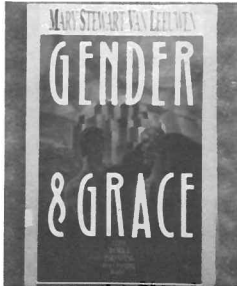
Like a good, discreet packrat, I'm keeping them in my spacious new closet. That's what closets are made for.

Doreen Martens, a regular columnist for *Sophia*, keeps her memorabilia in California.

ILLUSTRATION: BETTE FLETT

***Gender and Grace* by Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, IVP Press, Downers Grove, 1990.**

Reviewed by Donna Stewart, Fort Garry MB Church.



I came to this book with three gender-related questions: Why does the church conform to the world in its treatment of women? Why, considering women's powerlessness, is there so much fear of women, not just in pornography, but in everyday interaction between the sexes? And why are Christian men flocking to conferences to recover their lost masculinity?

Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen answered all three questions in *Gender and Grace*. A cross-cultural psychologist teaching at Calvin College, Van Leeuwen has the scholarly resources to integrate biblical and general revelation.

Starting from a joyful creation theology, she moves swiftly to Pentecost and its implications for "the battle of the sexes." But she is relentlessly aware of the Fall and ways it continues to affect men and women to acceptance of it via social enmeshment.

In Part two the author tests against biblical truth scientific theories of nature and nurture. She concludes:

We cannot invoke biology to excuse our moral failures as men or women. Our lives are permeated with a God-ordained freedom and accountability that works through, but at the same time transcends, our biological assets and liabilities (p.105).

In the next section: Parenting and Partners, Van Leeuwen examines the inconsistencies in "scientific" explanations for the universality of male dominance and female subordination and details how fallen relationships between the sexes perpetuate themselves.

Research in Africa enables the author to compare gender roles and achievements in different cultures. She concludes that "underfathering," characteristic of urban industrialized societies as well as polygamous cultures, leads to a fragile masculine identity and consequent fear of women. In this section she makes a compelling case for co-parenting, and an even more compelling case against idolatry of the family. Her kingdom-oriented "hierarchy of values" will be a rebuke to many of us. The last section evaluates our society's sexual idolatry and comments on a responsible approach to homosexuality.

Gender and Grace makes accessible an enormous body of research, but Van Leeuwen never claims too much for social science. She is honest about its ideological biases. She is also honest about the sexist biases of some religious thinkers. More remarkably, she is fair! On the "male headship" question, for example, she recognizes a range of hermeneutical positions apart from her own.

Gender and Grace is refreshingly free of the self-pity and blame which characterize both the men's and the women's movements. Best of all, the book integrates faith and science in a way that illuminates both.

Whether we come to the book as individual Christians looking for light on gender issues, as teachers seeking to be fair in our treatment of both sexes, or as parents looking for facts, we will find this book a rich resource.

(This review first appeared in the *Teachers' Christian Fellowship Supplement*, a publication of Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship.)

***Clutter's Last Stand* by Don Aslett. Cincinnati, Ohio, Writer's Digest Books, 1986. 276 pages.**

Reviewed by Wanda Derksen, Valley Gardens MB Church

Are you a saver? Do you have closets and drawers bulging with stuff you do not need? Do you keep old wrapping paper but never use it? If you answer yes to any of these questions, *Clutter's Last Stand* could be a useful tool to simplify your life. Written by the owner of a cleaning company, this book humorously describes the place and effect of clutter in our lives, and how we can begin to "de-junk."

Illustrated with humorous cartoon characters, Aslett's book describes the plight of a Junkee. Junkees replace thoughts with things. Creativity is usurped by accumulation. There is an "endless urge to have more. Enough is never enough" (p. 31). Junk is described as anything that distracts from life rather than enhancing it. The message is to de-junk.

Aslett's description of a cluttered life goes beyond "things" to include activities and relationships. The use of junk food, drugs and alcohol are depictions of cluttered lives. People have emotional clutter, such as holding a grudge, which occupies the mind and weighs one down. According to Aslett, even some relationships are junk and need to be dissolved.

This book offers a convincing argument for de-cluttering your life. As well as giving a step-by-step manual on how it can be done, *Clutter's Last Stand* suggests a philosophical world view that echoes Christian principles. The message is to let go of greed, envy, wasteful living, over-dressing and under-loving in order to make room for joy, love and fulfilment. According to Aslett, "clutter doesn't enrich life, it ends up confusing it" (p.102). De-junking makes room for more living. The message is clear: Free yourself from clutter and live a richer and more abundant life.

Sophia's "Top Ten" Ways to Unclutter Your Life

(not necessarily in order of priority!)

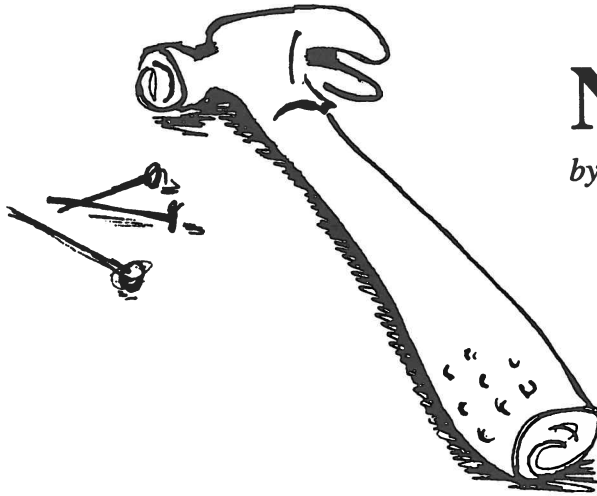
1. "Buy not when cheap is. Buy when need is." Take all flyers and dump without perusing. You will save time reading and pursuing bargains, and save money by not buying things that may be a good price but you have been getting along without. You'll have fewer storage problems.
2. Give away anything you haven't used for a year.
3. Skip desserts, except on special occasions.
4. On high energy days, make a list of jobs that need to be done, then stroke them off as they get done.
5. On low energy days, relax! You can clean up on high-energy days.
6. Get rid of false guilt. Learn to say no. You deserve it and so do the people around you. When you do more than one job in the church, you deprive others of the privilege of serving in that position.
7. Consider a clean, orderly house, and square meals as bonuses, not priorities. Spending time with family and friends is more important.
8. Stay away from other people's garage sales.
9. Leave the TV off.
10. Appreciate what you have (not what you'd like to have).

On the Other Hand... Sophia's Top Seven Ways to Clutter Your Life

1. Get on the (Christian) banquet circuit. This will make you feel good and guilty at the same time, will fill up countless Friday and Saturday nights and give you a chance to hear some really unremarkable humour and speeches at bargain prices.
2. Believe that it matters what people think of you, your husband and children or your house. This gives you a reason to keep pleasing, nagging and worrying.
3. Bake everything yourself, sew everything yourself, grow everything yourself. You only live once, do it all!
4. If you can talk yourself into using the services of a cleaning person, even occasionally, be sure to clean

up before she arrives (especially if she's from your church).

5. Walk, of course, but do it briskly. Read, of course, but hurry (a new bestseller is born every minute). Pray, of course, but on the run. Do it all.
6. Don't trust your own common sense or ability to make thoughtful choices about parenting. Keep reading the experts for their ideas and try to implement as many of them as possible.
7. Say yes to all the opportunities you are given. Do lots of things for the right reasons, and a few besides for the wrong ones.



Nails

by Phil Loewen

I like nails. I've likely threaded tens of thousands of them through my fingers in my carpentry days. I think Jesus, being a carpenter, was fond of them, too. They look innocent enough sitting in a box by themselves. But enough used in the right places will keep a house standing for two or three of our lifespans. Underrated, nails are.

I also like (read love) my daughter, Jacqueline. She was about four when I took her along for a brief stint of father-daughter bonding on my way to pick up some of those nails. (Her younger brother Daniel needed a diaper change so I left him at home.) Jacqueline and nails on the same day. Robin's Donuts wasn't even in contention for being the best part of my day.

After the nails were loaded the man at the order desk asked how I would be paying for my 1000 pound payload. "Put them on my account," I said proudly, "Phil Loewen & Son Construction!" Jackie (Jac) was quiet for a moment (a long time for her, both then and now) and then asked why it wasn't "Phil Loewen & Daughter Construction." I suggested we talk about it on the way home. The guy behind the counter suggested we deal with it on the spot. To mitigate my embarrassment I gave Jac some sugar cane which kept her quiet until we reached the safety of our truck.

To state that this incident was a watershed in my life would stretch things a bit. It was, however, one of numerous situations that eventually helped to establish a new order in the way I viewed women and girls. Friends and counsellors who genuinely cared for me, patiently and gently encouraged me as I reshaped my beliefs, and for this I am grateful.

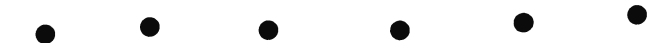
The business name has since been changed to a more generic Touchstone Builders, but of greater significance is the altered attitude and subsequent behaviour.

My wife Sue and I have been truly blessed with three beau-

tiful children - Jacqueline 11, Daniel 9, and Matthew 7. (It sounds like they were planned, doesn't it?) I constantly struggle not to take this good fortune for granted.

It was on February 11, 1982, that I first felt Jackie move inside the safety of Sue. I remember, too, how often she got the hiccups when Sue would drink iced tea. Those were special times that had an impact on my life. (Jacquie just came downstairs and read the above paragraph. She said that if that had really had an impact on my life, I needed to get out more.)

And the more I get out, the more opportunities I have to help champion the cause of treating females as equals. Many situations crop up every week, where I can help, in some small way, to change someone else's perception of women and girls. Substituting "firefighter" for "fireman" in a book I'm reading to Matthew, and then explaining why, will help him to appreciate early in life what had taken me decades to learn. Refusing to be a part of conversations where a woman is being objectified can also make a statement. None of this involves changing clothes in a phone booth. It's more a matter of "walking the talk," as they say. The efficacy of such ventures lies often in the persistent smaller activities. Underrated, these smaller deeds. Not unlike nails.



Phil Loewen is the human resources manager at Willmar Windows. His wife, Sue, is often convinced that she has four children to rear as opposed to three kids and a father. He enjoys camping with his family and watching Sue drink iced tea.

ILLUSTRATION: BETTE PLETT

- ❖ **Esther Horch** (see interview in *Sophia*, Vol 3, No.1) died peacefully in her home on January 29, 1994. She became the first dean of women at MB Bible College and served as social worker and an educator in various settings in Canada and the United States. She will be remembered for her faith and her graciousness.
- ❖ **Lydia Harder**, visiting professor at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, delivered this year's J.J. Thiessen lectures on January 13 and 14. The topic of the lectures was "Discipleship Revisited: A Mennonite/Feminist Reading of the Gospel of Mark." Harder, who comes from a family of theologians and church leaders, recently completed doctoral studies at the Toronto School of Theology.
- ❖ Manitoba MCC Women's Concerns sponsored Lydia Harder in two evenings of informal dialogue on feminist theology.
- ❖ **Elaine Braun, Dora Dueck, Bonnie Isaak and Marlene Peters**, all from Valley Gardens MB, have just completed their sixth annual quilt. After enjoying the creative and social part of quilting, the women offer the result to MCC, MBCI, the church or another agency for fundraising.
- ❖ **Tamara Fast**, co-owner of Chemcrest Corporation (manufacturer of polyurethane products), and **Ruth Wiebe**, owner of Bonaventure Travel, were part of a Mennonite Central Committee mission that travelled to the Middle-East, January 16-23. The group of ten business persons investigated trade and investment opportunities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip between Canadian, American and Palestinian owned businesses.
- ❖ **Lori Unger** was elected president of the student body at Concord College.
- ❖ Fourteen women were elected to committees at the Manitoba Conference of Mennonite Brethren churches. Among these were **Lynn Voth**, elected to the executive committee as secretary, and **Salome Hiebert** and **Dale Taylor**, elected to the Committee of Reference and Counsel.
- ❖ Christian Palestinian women wrote the text for the 1994 World Day of Prayer service, held March 4.
- ❖ Mennonite Voices in Dialogue: Women Doing Theology, a forum for Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women, will be held June 23-25, 1994, at Bluffton College. Papers to be presented will include *Forgiveness* (Gayle Gerber Koontz and Dorothy Jean Weaver), *Atonement* (Rachel Reesor and Mary H. Schertz) and *New Vision for Anabaptist Feminism* (Pamela Klassen and Wilma Anne Bailey). For information contact MCC Women's Concerns 717-859-3889.
- ❖ **Donna Stewart** has been a valuable member of the Sophia collective, serving on the advisory board, writing articles and helping with distribution. We wish her well as she moves this summer to Vancouver, where she will continue to be a *Sophia* promoter.
- ❖ The Women's Network held its third general meeting on April 30, at Concord College. Participants heard reports from the steering committee and from **Dale Taylor**, who was sponsored by the Women's Network to attend the Denver consultation in April. **Connie Epp** led the group in worship and celebration.
- ❖ **Irmgard Baerg** of Concord College successfully organized a four-part Festival Series of choral concerts. A first for Concord, the series explored both traditional and new music, and each concert was accompanied by art displays and festive food treats. Irmgard herself conducted Winnipeg's premiere performance of David Fanshawe's "African Sanctus," which combined slides and tapes of African religious music with the Christian mass.

THE QUIET IN THE LAND?

Women of Anabaptist Traditions in Historical Perspective

CALL FOR PAPERS

The first academic conference on Anabaptist Women's History is planned for June 8-11, 1995, at Millersville University in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

The purpose of the conference is to bring together historians and other scholars of women to examine women's experiences in Anabaptist traditions from the 16th through the 20th centuries (Amish, Mennonite, Hutterite, Brethren, and other communal societies and Pietist groups). The Coordinating Committee encourages proposals that represent a broad range of disciplines and consider a spectrum of difference in such areas as race, class, region, sexuality, and nationality.

Proposals for single papers / presentations should include a 500-word abstract and a one-page CV. Complete sessions should include a brief description of the session, names of presenters, CV's, and paper abstracts. All materials should be submitted by October 1, 1994, to:

Diane Zimmerman Umble, The Quiet in the Land Conference
P.O. Box 1002, Millersville University, Millersville, PA 17551.

For more information, call 717-872-3233, fax 717-871-2003, email Di_Umble@daffy.millersv.edu.

*Come to me,
all you that are weary
and carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.*

MATTHEW 11:28
New Revised Standard Version