

SOPHIA

W I S D O M

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

Rest and Re-Creation

Koop 12/6/94

Spring 1996 VOLUME 6 NUMBER 2

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C O N T E N T S

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 and page 6 drawings by **Heidi Koop**, B.HEC., M.ED., M.DIV.
Heidi is a Winnipeg writer and artist. She attends River East MB Church.

MISSION STATEMENT

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 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)

Restoring the Soul

by Lori Matties



During the school year of 1991-92 our family spent eight months in the Holy Land during my husband's study leave. We lived in a study centre perched on the border between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, Israel and the West Bank.

Our time there was one of intense stimulation but also of rest. We left behind our home and all its needed repairs and payments, our car, our various committees and other obligations. We rented a furnished apartment in a supportive community, found a welcoming church and enjoyed the hospitality of the Middle East.

For the inhabitants of the Holy Land, most of life is not restful. The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians affects everyone. We, too, felt the tension among occupiers and occupied as they struggled to maintain dignity and security. Even as outside observers, it was difficult not to be partisan in a country in conflict.

Yet, for me, that sojourn was an experience that restored my soul. I was able to step aside from my ordinary activities, to live on a much simpler schedule and to feast my mind and eyes on the landscape where Jesus lived and walked. I discovered that the troubles in Israel are not very different now from what they were in Jesus' time, though the actors have changed. The gospel stories began to take on new meaning for me. Jesus' life and ministry among an oppressed people became more real and imaginable.

Not all of us have the opportunity to embark on such exotic adventures. But we all need times of rest and re-creation. That's what this issue of *Sophia* is about. From a five minute break to a family vacation or a personal retreat, the writers share with us ways they have found to restore their souls. Summer is when many of us have more time for such pursuits. We hope your re-creation begins here.

*

All of us at *Sophia* offer tribute to Linda Penner, who is leaving the editorial committee after five years of dedicated work. Linda was a founding member and editor of *Sophia* and has done much to shape its direction and vision. We are grateful for her contribution and shall miss her energetic spirit. Thank you, Linda, and best wishes in your future projects.

Come Unto Me

by Lorraine Dick



I frequently have the opportunity to fly across the prairies. In the winter I see furrows filled with snow. In the summer shades of green and bronze grace the horizon. Every so often a clump of trees, a meandering stream, or a farmyard break the flow. I love to watch the fields but also find myself

watching for the breaks. They give the view character.

Rest is the break in the field of our lives. Finding time for rest is not only common sense but a direct command from God, who has created us with limits on how much we can do. We need time to rest. Each night we need sleep. Every seventh day we are given a day to rest. Are we using these times as God intended?

Our tendency is to say, "Wait till...." All of us could fill in the blanks as to when we think rest or ease should come into our lives. But somehow it seems to keep eluding us, slipping away just as we seem to have got a hold of it. Busy-ness comes to its own defense to remind us of what we have promised to do, what our goals are, how much still needs to be done. Brazenly busy-ness assures us that all of our needs will be filled by doing rather than resting. I have learned that the more I work, the more work I have to do. If I take time away, the work is still there when I return. When I miss a much-needed break, however, I never seem to get a second chance at it.

A quick review of two of the words for rest in Scripture reminds me of God's promises to the people of Israel. Throughout the first five books of the Old Testament, God constantly reminded his people that they would have rest from their enemies, they would have rest after settling in their new land. In the New Testament, Jesus invited his disciples to come aside and rest for awhile. He took them from their work of helping and healing so they could regain their strength. To all of us he said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28 NRSV).

Rest is not simply a change of activity, although that may provide some relief. Rather it is about withdrawing, taking time away from what we regularly do, to refresh ourselves, to wait in repose. It means taking time to dwell on ideas, people and circumstances other than the ordinary things that cause us busy-ness or stress. It may involve

the temporary sacrifice of our plans, duties and obligations. How can we achieve the kind of rest that rejuvenates us for the tasks God has given us?

Rest means setting aside the ordinary for the extraordinary. When God rested on the seventh day, he did so to remember what he had done. This was not weariness, but a reflection on all that was good. Similarly, our rest needs to reflect on the goodness that arises from our work, our relationships, our being in God's world.

Rest must be seen as a gift from God. We must accept that gift and make use of it. Jesus calls us into his presence to relax in the rest he offers. But first we must let go "...of our sophistication, of our self-consciousness and self-centredness (and the) ever-present feeling that I have to face and meet and shoulder all these cares and responsibilities!" (*Springs in the Valley*, by C. Cowan).

While at rest, we have the opportunity to re-establish our roots. This is the time to reaffirm what we believe, to reflect on how God has worked and will continue to work in our lives. Perhaps we will discover that we have strayed from our original faith, or develop a new understanding of our life with God.

Jesus' invitation to rest came at a very stressful time during his life. His cousin, John the Baptist, was questioning whether he was the Messiah. The towns and cities, where he had performed most of his miracles and expended much energy trying to lead people to a new understanding of God, responded with blatant unbelief. And yet here came this marvellous invitation to rest, to lay down our burdens, not on something, but in Someone.

Our world is in need of women who are rested so they can carry on the work God has called them to do. Sometimes we think that the success of our ministry is dependent solely on us and so we cannot rest until it is done. We must remember that God continues to work for us even if we are not there. Listen to these words from *The Message* (Eugene H. Peterson, NavPress, 1993):

*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?
Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life.
I'll show you how to take a real rest.
Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it.
Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.
I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.
Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.*

Lorraine Dick is a graduate of Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. She has worked in Brazil for Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services and is presently Associate Pastor of South Langley Mennonite Brethren Church in British Columbia.

Multi-Layered Conversation: Anabaptist Women Doing Theology

Over 220 women and a few men gathered in Winnipeg May 9-11 for the third "Anabaptist Women Doing Theology" conference. It was a tightly-packed two-and-a-half days, containing a great variety of theological activities under the theme of "Wind and Fire: Moving the Life Among Us."

Worship sessions, which opened the conference and each plenary session, focussed particularly on the Holy Spirit and images of the Spirit as wind and fire. The woven-together music, readings, prayers, drama and symbolic acts set a tone of listening and openness, not only to the Spirit, but to one another. While public and private conversations revealed a significant range of assent/dissent among participants to the positions expressed in the papers and discussions, these differences produced no noticeable tension or rancour.

Nadine Pence Frantz's paper, "The (Inter) Textuality of our Lives: An Anabaptist Feminist Hermeneutic," spoke of the dynamic relationship between biblical texts and interpretations. Although a text has a structure and elements from its speakings that direct its meaning, text must also be "heard into speech" again for the present time.

The desire to "master" a text is strong, said Frantz, but "closes" the text by controlling or fixing its meaning—a move that deadens the Spirit. The way beyond both slavery to, and mastery of, the text is to discover its "intertextualities" as well as to use imagination to explore meanings "for us." This creates "the moment of *jouissance*, of pleasure, of meaning."

The second paper, "Anger and an Anabaptist Feminist

Hermeneutic," by Ruth E. Krall, offered guiding principles for interpretation and research on anger and its uses for women. Krall concluded by saying she no longer believes the current understanding of anger that advocates "the ventilation of anger as a force of great healing in the world." Instead, she is exploring the transformation of anger into a wisdom beyond denial or destruction.

In the discussion of "Liberated Imagination: God Image and an Anabaptist Feminist Hermeneutic," Veronica Dyck suggested we are in a "metaphorical interlude" between traditional language, which can "legitimate oppression," and new ways of speaking about God. She offered several moderate proposals for the latter, saying "The goal is not a cosmetic change...but...liberating speech about God and ourselves as people of the Word."

The final paper, "A People of Spirit: A Christian Feminist Perspective on Community," by Eleanor Epp-Stobbe, was a call to the imagination — "envisioning the church in new spaces," with her own offerings of litanies and stories for a church that can grow "connectedness among women."

Besides these voices, the conference heard many others. They were spoken in the responses to each paper, workshops, discussions in large and small group formats, and the debut of "Born Again," a collaboration by three Winnipeg women—a poet, a composer, a singer. Included in the three responses to each paper was one non-verbal response. These were a piece of music, a painting, mime, and dance. Formal respons-

es outside words was a unique concept, perhaps even ironic for an academic conference, but they proved amazingly enriching in their commentary.

The agenda was crowded; the ideas contained in the major papers did not get the rigorous debate they needed. The conference fulfilled wonderfully, however, the organizers' wish for a "multi-layered conversation." Faith and life intersected with intensity; it was a conference characterized by the energy of both wind and flame.

Report by Dora Dueck

POETRY

Positions of the soul

Prayer is a stance,
a position of the soul.

The body bends only in accordance
with the posture of the soul.
The body bows, puts palms together,
bends the knee.
The body prostrates itself
to make visible the prostrate
soul.

Prayer
is the soul leaning toward God
with every ear of skin and psyche
open, every pore
thirsting.

by Anne Le Dressay

Give Me A Break!

All of us feel overwhelmed at times by the many responsibilities and stresses of everyday life, whether at home or at our places of employment. We asked six women for their version of a quick and simple pick-me-up that helps them make it through the day.

Lorina Marsch:

When the responsibilities and stresses of daily living overwhelm me, I have learned to take one of two options: one is to get that task that is weighing me down done! The other is to consciously put activities on hold and intentionally do nothing for a time! While passive, perhaps even prayerful, my mind has a way of continuing to work at the tasks at hand. Suddenly, things fall into place and it's time to make notes, no matter if it is the middle of the night. Putting these plans into action then becomes easy again.

Lorina is a member of the Portage Avenue MB Church in Winnipeg. She is on the advisory board of Sophia and has been editor of the German-language periodical of the Canadian MB Conference, Mennonitische Rundschau, for the past seven years.

Hedy Leonora Martens:

When overwhelmed, or on the edge of burnout, I need to seek balance. To find balance, I need to know where I am – in need of being, creativity, spiritual refreshing, altruism, community, self-care, exercise, or sleep. Swimming recreates my body and rests my mind, watching *Northern Exposure* or reading a well-written novel feeds my aesthetic soul, reading a light book soothes my mind when filled with heavy issues, spiritual music tugs me into prayer, visiting a friend tugs me into community, and nature pulls me back into being when life has become a long series of doing.

Hedy is a member of the Westwood Community Church (Mennonite Brethren) in Winnipeg. She works at Kairos Counselling, an association of private therapists who share a peace-theology faith perspective.

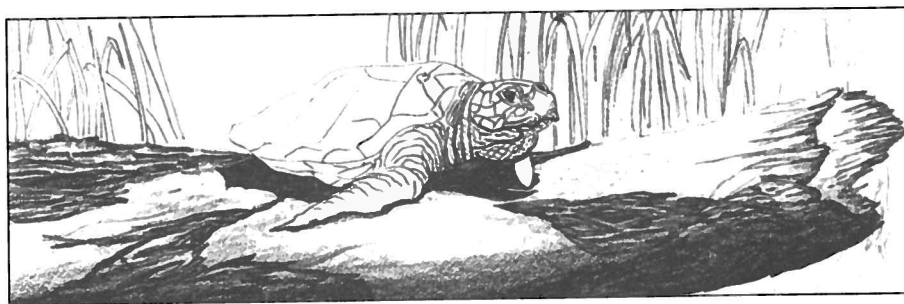


ILLUSTRATION: HEIDI KOOP

Carolyn Bergen:

My regular schedule of parenting, working in and out of the home and studying does not allow for large periods of time where I can be alone and do my own thing. My own thing usually means reading, although my current reality makes that somewhat challenging. Though riveting novels do not fit this stage in my life, I still love to read and have adjusted my chosen reading material. I try to snatch at least a fifteen-minute period most days when my son is napping or playing quietly, or while I am at work, to read a short piece of something – a conference periodical, newsletter, a professional journal, parenting magazine article, or a chapter or two of a topical book. Reading allows me to transcend the stresses of my everyday world and immerse myself, however briefly, in the pages of another world. It also helps me to focus on something that may inspire me to grow or rejuvenate me as I attempt to fulfil my roles.

Carolyn is a member of the Fort Garry MB Church in Winnipeg and works half time as an occupational therapist. At the time of writing she was on bedrest due to complications of pregnancy, which, despite its own stresses, has given her lots of time to refresh and rejuvenate.

Milly Dyck:

Born on a farm in southern Manitoba, I would not have expected to develop a liking for what has come to be one of my favourite ways of rejuvenating myself. My mother was very concerned when we children were younger that none of us would venture near the two ponds we had to water our cattle. Thus it was that she frightened all four of us from the ponds, convincing us that we would drown summarily were we even to look at them. At least that is how I recall it. Now, for the past 25 years, I have developed swimming as one of my favourite ways of regaining energy. I'm not sure that it qualifies as quick and simple because it actually takes a fair chunk of time. Yet I find it helps me feel amazingly refreshed.

Milly is a member of the River East MB Church in Winnipeg and teaches language arts and mathematics at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute. One of her most enjoyable pastimes is entertaining her granddaughter when she comes to visit from Calgary.

Marilyn L. Redekopp:

I usually find that staying ahead of stress during busy times works well. Nothing beats an hour with God before the day's responsibilities begin. The luxury of solitude and free time outweighs the momentary discomfort of sleep disturbed. It is recess from life. I catch my breath and gather my thoughts. Calm, clear, focused, I am more prepared to face the day's challenges. My most rejuvenating moments occur in nature. Spectacular settings are particularly inspiring, but even the most accessible encounter with nature detaches me from the world to focus on God. I use a devotional book with deliberate emphasis on the Scripture references from which I expect correction, guidance, and sustenance. The "acts" prayer formula (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication) works for me, but this is an intimate visit rather than a structured appointment. Adoration is particularly strengthening. God truly inhabits the praises I bring. While I praise, he enlightens and directs through supplications I've brought him. Looking heavenward, I am lost in endless blue. I ponder God's boundless love. Nature's sheer sovereign majesty whispers. Be calm. God is everywhere.

Marilyn is a member of the McIvor Avenue MB Church in Winnipeg. She enjoys family life, prayer and writing.

Lorna Boge:

As I was watering my plants, I noticed my umbrella plant looking a little wild. I cut off the protruding branches and stuck them into the soil, watering well. To my delight, the following week there was new growth. Just as my plants need rejuvenating, so do I. A good cup of coffee (no instant, thanks) and a good book, read outside if the weather permits. If I need a spiritual uplift, playing familiar praise and worship choruses on the piano or learning a new arrangement calms and soothes the soul. Another good habit I started nine years ago is walking with a good friend. Weather permitting, we walk for forty minutes. Not only do we get a good cardiovascular workout, but life takes on a clearer perspective after a good walk.

Lorna and her husband, Hans, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary this year. They and their three children are members of the North Kildonan MB Church in Winnipeg where Lorna is a worship team leader, piano accompanist and choir member.

Following Your Dream

by Mary Friesen

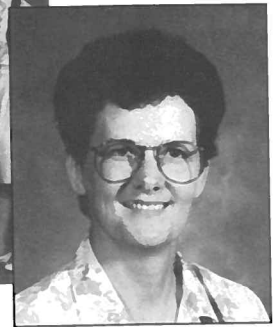
On a recent visit to my mother in her one-bedroom apartment I noticed an old suitcase in the corner of her bedroom. When I asked her why it was there, she said that it contained some “things” from her old house. Two years ago she had sold her house and moved into this small suite in an apartment building for Seniors. Although she had sold much of her furniture and household items, there were some things packed into this suitcase that she wanted to keep for sentimental reasons.

It contained photo albums, ornaments and wall hangings that were reminders of the many years of marriage and family life in the old house, a sugar bowl given to her by her grandmother, an old Bible and other similar things. At the bottom I found a large framed photograph. As I lifted it out, I recognized it as the picture of my graduating class from teacher’s training. I recalled that my dad had asked the photographer to enlarge and frame this picture, and then he put it up on the wall in the hallway next to the living room door.

It had been there for twenty-five years and now my mother thought she still needed to hang on to it. Why? As I reflected upon this I was reminded of the significance of the event of that graduation and the fulfilment of a dream.

My parents had come to Paraguay with their parents in 1927 when they were only ten years old. Their parents and grandparents were part of a conservative Mennonite group that left Canada to maintain their private schools and the German language. It was the understanding of these people that all education beyond grade six was sinful.

I was born into this isolated farming community of about 3500 Mennonites. As long as I can remember I had a dream to become a teacher, preferably a mathematics teacher. What amazes me now is that my par-



ents always encouraged me to follow my dream, knowing that there was no high school in the community, that there were no certified teachers and that those who were designated to teach the children reading and writing were always men. What an impossible dream for a five-year-old girl to want to become a teacher.

When I was ten, my parents, with several other families, decided to build a high school where children could get an education. One day these people met at our home and as I walked by, one of the men made a comment that maybe they should start with a school for boys only. I still remember the fear and disappointment going through me when I realized that such a decision would close the door to my dreams. Then I heard my father respond: “We have enough opposition already now from the community. If we start with a school for boys only, then we will face the same kind of opposition again later when we want to add a program for the girls. We must build a school for all our children now.” No need to worry, I thought.

These parents who had only a grade five or six formal education actually did build a high school. My siblings and I were able to attend and then go on to teacher’s college in a neighbouring Mennonite colony to

become the first certified teachers in our own community. The sacrifices these parents made and the opposition they put up with to reform the socio-economic-religious system of their community will always be an inspiration to me. My parents did not just encourage me to follow my dream, they also made it possible for me to realize the dream.

The day of the graduation ceremonies when I received my teaching certificate was an occasion of thanksgiving for my parents. Their efforts were bearing fruit and my dreams were being fulfilled. By providing the foundation of a high school education my parents not only allowed me to follow my dream to become a teacher, they inspired new dreams with many new opportunities. Looking at the photograph of my graduating class, I realized that this milestone was reached because of the vision, sacrifice and love of my parents. The picture on the wall of my parents’ home was about the rewards of commitment to following your dreams.

Mary Friesen is a teacher and vice-principal at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg. She and her husband are members at River East MB Church. They have two grown children.

A Time for Retreat *by Marg Derksen*

During our studies at Seminary in the early 1980s, my husband introduced me to a weekend of solitude at a retreat centre on the campus of Notre Dame University. My memories of that experience are not great. Although the setting was peaceful enough, I found it awkward to be alone with myself. I was used to "doing." Besides, life was rich and exciting, not something from which I needed to "escape."

Several years later, I responded quite differently to another time of "personal retreat." Now I was hot and tired and struggling with malaria. My role as a young mother in an isolated town in Zaire added a component of raw fear to the normal joys and frustrations of parenting. My initial ideals were wearing thin: of being a bridge builder; of living in my neighbourhood without the usual fences and gates to separate us; of entrusting my children to the care of other "mamas" with such a different standard of living from mine. The Catholic convent across the river from our home ushered me into a place of peace and quiet—both in my surroundings as well as in my spirit. I was ready to wait and listen.

Today I am so grateful to the various Catholic retreat houses that have so often been the context of personal renewal for me. Sometimes I have simply enjoyed some much-needed rest and a good book, away from the demands of family life. Other times, when in emotional or spiritual distress, I have known profound healing in that quiet place. Occasionally the experience has been shared with my husband or a close friend as we "retreated" together.

I have spent time at three Catholic retreat centres in Winnipeg: St. Benedict's Educational Retreat Centre (Main St.), Villa Maria (St. Norbert) and St. Charles Convent



*I have known
profound healing
in that quiet place.*

(Portage Ave. at the Perimeter). Each provides a slightly different setting—some larger, some smaller, some with better grounds for walks and so on. At each place I have been graciously received and cared for by the hosts.

To reserve a private room for a day or for an overnight stay, call the place of your choice and arrange for a convenient time. The cost? Each place has its own suggested donation, which you can leave at the end of your stay. You can arrange to eat your meals in their dining rooms or bring your own lunch along if you are only there for the day. All of these places offer spiritual direction. Should you choose this option, one of the staff would guide you in spiritual exercises and prayers. The libraries and chapels offer meditation and worship resources that I have found very helpful. Persons on retreat are also welcome to participate in most chapel services as well.

The centres I have mentioned also offer planned group retreats on a whole variety of themes. These times can be wonderful for learning and growth as well as personal refreshment. For information, simply contact these places and ask for their brochures to be sent to you.

God's grace can break into my life anywhere and anytime. I have found, however, that times of sustained solitude and rest can help me to recognize and respond more readily to the work of God in my life and in the world around me.

Marg Derksen and her husband, Gerry, have three school-aged children. Marg teaches piano and is active in the children's worship program at River East MB Church in Winnipeg, where she is a member.

LETTERS

I have been reading a stack of back issues of *Sophia*. The quality content in the magazine gave me many pleasurable hours. What I found most gratifying was the depth of spirituality and the sharp focus on reality. I felt I was being counselled by wise Christian women. The atmosphere was like a group of women sitting around the kitchen table, with coffee in hand, sharing the meaningful moments and thoughts of their lives.

An issue in which contributors and readers were invited to write in with their thoughts about pre-motherhood would be timely for me and my peers. Mental health would also be a good topic to focus on in an issue.

Lynn Graham
Waterloo, Ontario

It is refreshing and encouraging to hear women express their opinions freely on so many topics, for example, church leadership, concern for abused women and many other interesting subjects. Thank you.

Mary Neuman
Chilliwack, B.C.

I find when I'm finished with an issue, I've read it cover to cover.

Lenora Suss
Steinbach, MB

Disciples in the Inner City

by Gladys Terichow

In one front yard, a black-and-white collie-sized dog looks friendly from a distance.

But move closer and the dog loses it, body-slams itself into the fence, barks and growls from the back of its throat as it flashes its fangs.

Owning big dogs is one way a neighbourhood protects itself when insurers won't insure peoples' homes anymore.

Across the narrow street, a tall boxer stands alert, watching the scene with the cool eye of an assassin.

It looks like civilization in decline.

Winnipeg Free Press, March 2, 1996.

I live in this crime-ridden, North End Winnipeg neighbourhood. I fall asleep to the sound of barking dogs and blaring sirens. When I walk to work in the morning I'm prepared for unfriendly greetings from dogs I can see, but I'm startled by unexpected growls from dogs chained up behind high fences.

Two years ago I lived on a quiet street in Morden – a ninety-minute drive from where I'm living now. I was a journalist, a crisis counsellor working in a shelter for abused women and their children, a mom, a banker's wife and a community-minded citizen involved in many committees and boards.

Why did we leave our lovely home in Morden and our comfortable middle-class lifestyle to live and work in a neighbourhood where homeowners can't get theft insurance?

In the mid-1980s my husband, Terry, and I were in our mid-thirties.

We had achieved many of our goals. We had four healthy children. Terry had earned his accounting degree. I was becoming established in a journalism career. We were involved in many church and community activities.

We believed that the ancient call to radical discipleship is just as relevant today as it was when Jesus walked on this earth. We knew that taking the call seriously could include quitting jobs, leaving home and putting first things first.

But where were the hurting people? We found some in our churches and communities and spent some time with them, but it is difficult to get involved with needy people when you are so busy with your own life. To be honest, we found it easier to help with Boys Brigades, Pioneer Girls, Sunday school and to serve on church and community boards than to build relationships with people who had many needs.

We struggled with our lifestyle. We felt we were living as though our main purpose in life was to establish and advance in careers, earn money and find new ways to spend it. We asked ourselves – how does this consumer-driven, money-worshipping lifestyle glorify God and model the life of Jesus? We could identify with the parable of the sower and the seed. The seed had fallen on good ground but the cares of the world had strangled us and kept us from producing fruit.

In November 1994, when our youngest daughter was in grade 12 and living in residence at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, we decided to get rid of some of the middle-class trappings and thought patterns we felt were keeping us from stepping out in faith. We quit our jobs, sold our house and our car and started our first assignments with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Voluntary Service Program.

Terry began work as a transportation and warehouse manager at Winnipeg Harvest—an agency that collects surplus food and distributes it to 175 food banks, soup kitchens, day cares and drop-in centers. Many of the volunteers he works with are also recipients of food banks. Their stories move him to tears and help him realize that many middle-class people are only a few pay cheques away from poverty. He is also the Thursday evening preacher at a soup kitchen. At times he feels overwhelmed by the addictions and general hopelessness, but at the same time he is encouraged by the efforts some people are making to change their lives.

I have changed assignments three times. I first began work with an inner-city newspaper, which is no longer being published. My next assignment was in MCC's communi-

cations and education department. I am now working three days a week at the North End Women's Resource Centre on the corner of Selkirk and Salter and two days in MCC's head office.

My main responsibilities at MCC are to write news releases and to assist MCC Manitoba staff with communications. When I work at the Women's Centre I organize, publicize and facilitate information sessions. Our centre provides many services, including a community phone, a drop-in center, a used-clothing store, a sewing club and counselling services.

My white, middle-class attitudes toward poverty-related issues are constantly being challenged. I've gained a new appreciation for the privilege of having been raised in a supportive home where I learned healthy coping, life and parenting skills.

Are there regrets about this decision? I miss the comforts of a larger home, a community and way of life that was familiar. I miss my dishwasher, a full-length couch in the living room and a car with a reclining seat. Sometimes when I'm frustrated I say, "I'm almost fifty years old—why do we have to live like newly-weds?—we've been through this poor period in our life. Can't we enjoy a middle-class life like everybody else?"

But I honestly believe I have gained more than I have given up. When we went to Akron for orientation, we spent a weekend in the inner city in Philadelphia. We were

the only white people in church that Sunday. The beautiful singing moved me to tears. I thought, "I almost missed this opportunity because I didn't want to give up my self-cleaning oven and self-defrosting fridge."

It was a very emotional moment for me – a turning point. Instead of focusing on things I had given up I started thinking of all the wonderful things I was gaining. I've never looked back.

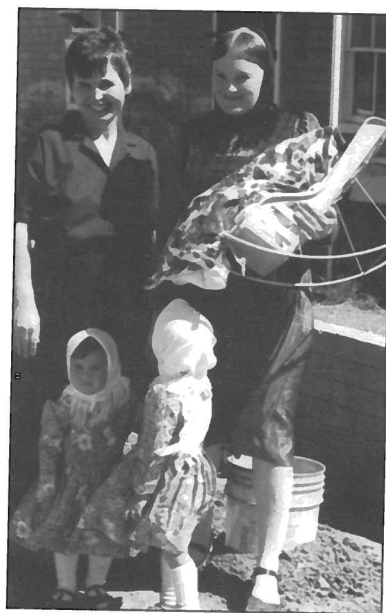
I had no idea that one of the wonderful things would be the opportunity to research, write and narrate the script for the MCC video, *Migration North, Mennonites from Mexico*.

Travelling to Mexico and learning more about the problems there taught me valuable spiritual lessons. We met a young teacher in Durango who had lost his teaching job because he allowed Bible studies in his school.

We also talked to an *Ohm*, a minister, who is not allowed to preach anymore because he supported these Bible studies. Both men said it is more important to obey God than human beings.

Their courage to challenge traditions forced me to look at my own life. Am I willing to pay the price for challenging traditions? Do I really believe it is more important to obey God than human beings? Do I know what the Bible says or do I just follow tradition?

My prayer is that I will grow spiritually and through this growth learn



Gladys Terichow with a young mother in Mexico

to reflect on the meaning of life. I pray that I will maintain values and attitudes consistent with what the Bible teaches and have the courage to reject values, attitudes and actions that don't model the life of Jesus.

Gladys Terichow and her husband, Terry, attend The Meeting Place Church in Winnipeg, though they maintain their membership at the Morden EMMC Church. Since they began their MCC assignments, their two youngest daughters have also taken assignments. Selena (18) is completing a year in Kitchener/Waterloo with SALT Canada and Laurel (21) will begin a term with SALT International in the Philippines this summer.

We asked ourselves – how does this consumer-driven, money-worshipping lifestyle glorify God and model the life of Jesus?

"Dear Friends, far and near..."

by Neoma Janz

Sometimes I think women have come a long way in being recognized as important in the church community. Sometimes I think of my mother's life (especially 1925 to 1960) and regret what I imagine to have been the exclusion of the women of her day. And sometimes I discover I may be presuming too much. That was the hunch I got last summer when my "home church" in Waldheim, Saskatchewan, was planning its 75th anniversary, and I went to the Centre for MB Studies to research the church's history.

I focused on the *Zionsbote*, the German-language periodical that served the Canadian and US MB churches from 1884 to 1964. It was published biweekly and had numerous columns devoted to church news as reported by correspondents on behalf of their congregations. Since my church was founded by American immigrants at the turn of the century, and its first minister, Elder David Dyck from Kansas (via Winkler) was well-known, the news from this church had rather widespread interest.

The correspondents, at least from Waldheim, were usually laymen, sometimes church leaders. The content of the reports fell into two basic categories, events in the church and in the home. Usually the column would begin with a description of the Sunday morning service complete with texts, a recap of the sermon and names of visitors. Other related activities such as evening services, Bible conferences, funerals and weddings were described. Then news about the congregation would follow, often taking up the bulk of the column. Here is where the names of the women appeared, in the descriptions of sickness, birth, the "sewing circle," social events and visiting relatives.

The ill were named, such as Mrs. Epp who went to the Mayo Clinic for medical help and Mrs. Anna Andres who had been released after a three-year stay at the Tuberculosis Sanatorium. Mrs. Willems who suffered with an open leg-sore for many years also wrote about her personal struggle before submitting to an operation to remove a double goitre. Undergoing any form of treatment involving anaesthetic or surgery seemed to be a life-and-death matter, and the emotional and spiritual agony was openly confessed.

There was great anxiety over epidemics that threatened the children, and periodic village immunizations were reported. One family lost two daughters in four months. First, three-month-old Rosella succumbed to encephalitis after a six-day illness, and then eight-year-old Evelyn died

of appendicitis. The lengthy description of her suffering and the parents' grief is difficult to read.

Sixteen-year-old Rosie Buhler, who loved school and was a devout Christian, died of a brain aneurysm. At her funeral the minister noted that just a week earlier she had served at the tables at the church's conference. When a local adolescent boy was killed in an accidental shooting the funeral text was taken from Isaiah 66:13, "He will comfort as a mother."

The funeral of elderly Mrs. Warkentin filled two columns, detailing speakers, texts and contents of sermons, hymns and choir songs. (No church leader received a lengthier tribute.) An appeal for prayer was made on behalf of Mrs. Neufeld, whose husband was killed in a car accident leaving her with eight children.

Women's activities such as the *Naehverein* (sewing circle), with its annual auction of handmade articles, were applauded, as was the beginning of a club for girls. A meat-canning bee for MCC Relief in 1948 was described. The presence of women in singing groups and choirfests was noted, and the descriptions of engagement celebrations and wedding ceremonies (with no mention of dress) would be hard pressed to find so much coverage today.

There were also nuances of inclusiveness such as referring to the women as "sisters" and to a minister's wife as his *liebe Frau* ("dear wife"—which does not sound patronizing in the context). The use of *Geschwister*—a word that includes both male and female, married and single—unified the sexes. Birth announcements were couched in endearing terms and the participation of children in special services was described. Even reports of poor crops, frozen gardens and harsh winters would have related to women as much as men.

These anecdotal columns did not concern themselves with theological or world "issues," which could be read about elsewhere in the paper, but I suspect it was to these newsy church reports that many readers turned first to satisfy their sense of community and caring. And they didn't sound trivial or marginal to me, knowing how limited church and family associations often were and how much the women's lives were dominated by their domestic roles.

I'm not suggesting that great gaps did not exist between the genders, nor that the sense of exclusion was less painful than today, but I felt the attention given to common family concerns made them as important as the big issues. It was also heartening to realize that along with the large churches of Hillsboro, Mountain Lake and Reedley, the people of my little church had a fair hearing too. No wonder my mother read this periodical with great interest and satisfaction.

Neoma Jantz and her husband, Harold, live in Winnipeg. They have three grown daughters and are members of River East MB Church.

When I Run

by Wanda Derksen



Wanda and Waldy Derksen

*A thirty minute run
keeps my body lean
and strong.
It also gives me time
to think.*

Running is a gift from God. It was a gift given to me more than twenty years ago when I was a young teen with a lot of emotion and unknowns to sort out. I would throw on my cut-offs and T-shirt and lace up my shoes and off I would sprint around the block. When I was angry at limits set on me I ran. When I was worried about friends, school, work and my future I ran. When I worried over weight and looks I ran more. Running helped me to sort out issues that concerned an adolescent. At age thirteen a mile was like a marathon. When I was done running and worrying I felt I had accomplished something. I would shower, put on clean clothes and start my life anew.

Now at age thirty-eight I run because of what it gives me mentally and physically. Running gives me an efficient and virtually free cardiovascular work-out. A thirty-minute run burns lots of calories, strengthens muscles and bones and keeps my body lean and strong. It also gives me space to think. A run gives me time to be alone with my thoughts. For a stay-at-home mom with three active boys, one hour outside running is a slice of heaven. I let my thoughts wander. I think about the houses I run past and the people who live there. I plan my day, our summer holidays and what I will cook for supper for the next week. While I run I pray. I pray for my children and my family. I pray for my friends and anyone who pops into my mind. I pray for people driving in their cars on Henderson Highway. When I run I also have imaginary conversations with people—a friend whom I feel I have neglected or with whom I have some unfinished business to complete. These thoughts do not happen at home when there are children to care for and things to do. Running gives me time to think.

Running also offers a challenge. Anyone who has ever tried running knows how discouraging and painful it can be. The heart pounds and the legs wobble. Sometimes it feels like you might never catch that next breath. Five minutes feels like an hour and you wonder how you'll ever make it home. When I started running, fifteen minutes was a major accomplishment and more than two miles was a rare occurrence. But even after those fifteen minutes I felt energized and motivated to deal with my day. Now a normal run for me is six to eight miles depending on the time of year. I have completed three Marathons. In recent years I have fallen in mud, been drenched by passing motorists, lost toe nails, and nearly fainted from overexertion. Nonetheless, I still love running. I am thankful to God that my body is healthy and strong. For me, the physical and mental energy that running gives far outweigh the pain and discomfort.

An employment counsellor by profession, Wanda Derksen runs and raises three young boys in Winnipeg. She and her husband, Waldy, are members at Jubilee Mennonite Church.

Why We Go Camping!

by Doreen Martens

They say a change is as good as a rest. My husband says a rest would be a good change.

Which is why his idea of serious rejuvenation is a short-but-sweet couple of days in a fancy hotel in a nice city, with gourmet meals served on china, a maid to hang the towels straight, a jacuzzi to lounge in of an evening and, above all, no 3-year-olds launching themselves into our bed at 5:46 a.m., shouting into the nearest adult ear an urgent plea for a bowl of honey-nut sugarballs.

I, on the other hand, have always sought quantity over quality. Give me funding equal to his ideal luxury weekend and I'd stretch it over a month of adventure in some developing country, washing my laundry in a bucket, eating street-vendor dishes I couldn't pronounce and sleeping fitfully on the night bus to Ouagadougou.

This might have produced some tension in our marriage had we had a getaway budget equal to either of our dreams. That not being the case, we've followed Abraham and Sarah's example: We go into the wilderness, pitch our tent and hope for the best.

It was I who pushed the camping concept. You'll love it, I told my dubious mate. Fresh air! Nature's beauty! Falling asleep to the hooting of owls, waking to the rhythm of the sun! I regaled him with happy memories of camping as a child—of long days spent swimming in little lakes, eating hot dogs browned on a stick, catching frogs in a bucket, slow-roasting marshmallows on the day's last coals, giggling in the snuggly comfort of a sleeping bag.

WHAT WAS I THINKING?

What I should have remembered was that the three biggest objections

grown-ups have to camping are three things the young are oblivious to:

Work.

Lack of sleep.

Dirt.

A reasonable person might expect less of the above when "getting away from it all." So why do I find myself extolling the refreshment of being out in the woods when a long week-end in a tent only means more of all three vacation-busters?

On our first big expedition, when my son was a budding explorer of 14 months, we arrived at our destination in the California redwoods at dusk. While we adults busied ourselves putting up the tent and lighting the campstove, Christopher wandered, babbling, around the needle-carpeted clearing. Only when the chores were done, amid deepening darkness, did we discover that he had found a place of bliss only a toddler could appreciate: the center of the fire pit, where a previous camper's burned logs had created a handy and apparently tasty set of charcoal stacking toys. As I shone my flashlight on him in horror, he looked up from his seat among the ashes and smiled his biggest, sloppiest grin, bubbling black drool down a chin and shirt already as sooty as a campfire sky. By the time I'd carried him, kicking in protest, to the electrically lit washrooms to survey the mess, I looked like his partner in the chimney sweeping business.

And so it goes. My kids are the original happy campers, waking at the first chirp of a jay, happily swallowing vats of hot oatmeal on a freezing morning, whiling away the day chasing ground squirrels from one hole to another, or hiking for miles, with trail-mix breaks every ten minutes. They spend evenings sur-



reptitiously poking at the fire they've been told to keep a distance from, singing endless choruses of "Old MacDonald" and laughing themselves silly holding wrestling matches while encased in their sleeping bags, long past lights-out.

I wake up groggy from an allergy aggravated by proximity to damp earth, with an ache produced by that stone that, no matter how carefully you check, always seems to end up right under your shoulder blade. Shivering, I hover too close over the stove we're trying to light for breakfast and singe my eyebrows. Then it's off to a standpipe someplace to schlep a jug of water, and if we're doing it luxuriously, a hike to the washhouse to splash icy water on my face. Simple chores accomplished almost effortlessly at home suddenly take on major dimensions—getting a meal, washing my hair, protecting

*...he had found
a place of bliss
only a toddler
could appreciate...*

our food supplies from marauding beasts.

It occurs to me that I have voluntarily exchanged a comfortable home full of labour-saving technology for a primitive lifestyle that would have shocked my great-grandmother. Ah, relaxation!

But you won't hear me complaining. I have a reputation to uphold.

After all, I remind my husband, this is nothin'. Back in my single days, I used to slog miles into the wilderness toting a 35-pound pack, sleeping in a pup tent and drinking water from a lake. There was the time a girlfriend and I undertook a hike into the hinterlands of Algonquin at the height of mad bug season, when the swarms were so thick we had to pace back and forth madly while eating our rehydrated stroganoff flakes, to keep the black flies from feasting on fresh meat. The highlight of that long, long weekend was coming across a large pile of bear spoor in the middle of the trail, so fresh it steamed gently in the chill air. I was younger then.

I like to think this grim determination to grin and bear it has something to do with my persecuted-Anabaptist roots, or at least my hardy Canadian upbringing, schooled in the pioneer mentality of us-versus-nature. The truth is, having gotten us into this, now I need to prove that, darn it, camping is FUN.

And, as with childbirth, you tend to remember the good parts. The transcendent moment when a deer nonchalantly strolls across your campsite. The sight of a sunset glinting gloriously off a sheer peak looming in the distance. The first, heady whiff of pine pricking your nostrils. The joyous shout of a youngster who finally got the chipmunk to take the nut. The quiet moments after they've drifted off to sleep in the tent and the fire's last embers reflect the warm contentment in the eyes of your beloved.

But perhaps the moment I like best is that afterglow time, when you stand under the first hot shower in days, watching rivulets of mud wash down to your toes and drain away, and home suddenly seems like the most luxurious place on earth. Then, I feel like a million bucks.

Doreen Martens, a regular columnist for *Sophia*, continues to live, work and camp in California.

The Business of Travel

by Agnes Dyck

Ruth Wiebe, owner of Bonaventure Travel, presides in a roomy, pleasant office with large, healthy tropical plants and posters depicting exotic places to visit. Realizing she was taking a risk in beginning her own travel agency, Ruth left Assiniboine Travel in 1987, reasoning, "If I didn't try it then I wouldn't do it; the time had come." Her staff members are Tamara Mallin and Teddy Wiebe, her brother.

Obvious immediately is Ruth's interest in her clients, who include, among others, the whole range of Mennonites. She tries to find out as much as she can about them in order to help them. "Doing business is the best peacemaker of all," she says. However one might feel about another's beliefs, there is no room for partisanship when attempting to sell a tour package.

Ruth comes from a farm background. "We were strong women; we had to do everything." Shovelling grain, hoeing beets or shelter belts, gathering eggs and feeding chickens were ongoing tasks expected of the five sisters. Ruth loved the beauty of burning stubble at night, but remembers worrying with her parents about the crops, which were so dependent on the weather.

Ruth and her sisters liked to take their father on in lively discussions about church matters; however, out of respect they carefully avoided exceeding certain boundaries. There was zero tolerance for sloughing off in school and the parents encouraged them to attend university, where Ruth majored in German.

Ruth's fluency in German now stands her in good stead with older people who still prefer to speak *die Muttersprache*. The senior crowd has turned into a very good market at a time when there is less disposable income available to most people. Those who arrive in Ruth's office have good health and cash.

People's reasons for wanting to travel vary. Keeping up with others, having something to talk about, or simply being curious about other countries might be motivations. Some Mennonites visit missionaries or make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Often seniors travel to escape a Winnipeg winter. Many return to the *Vaterland* for a nostalgic visit.

continued on page 17



Ideas on Ice

by Eleanor Martens

I thought often of rejuvenation this winter as those of us in Winnipeg were dealt one icy blast after another and one of our coldest winters on record turned into a late spring. I was reminded of C.S. Lewis's Narnia where the evil White Witch had cast a spell of permanent winter over the land—the worst affliction of all!

In less severe weather Mother Nature offers us a wealth of diversions from the work and worries of everyday life. Nothing restores my soul more than a few hours spent poking in the garden or walking through the woods. But what do you do when it's winter—when the temperature hovers at -35, you're in the house a lot, and even going for a walk becomes a high-risk decision laden with potential for broken bones and bruised backsides?

You can look for the umpteenth time at your summer camping pictures and remember the blissful, lazy days spent by that pristine Rocky Mountain lake. You can get lost in the local greenhouse where flourishing hibiscus, cacti and ivy whisper of the tropics and promise warm days to come. You can listen to CDs like *Summer Vision* whose soft, tinkling melodies transport you to summer meadows bursting with wild flowers and sweet-scented clover. Touch a button and *Solitudes* can place you instantly beside a gurgling brook, a distant ocean shore or (depending on your tastes) in the midst of a pack of wild wolves. Close your eyes and listen! You can also close the blinds, as I did on more than one occasion when the sight of white on white on white became simply more than my green-starved eyes could bear.

All of these helped replenish my sensory-deprived winter self. But none of them invigorated me as much as did some of the mental adventures I embarked on during those frigid months. I have learned that, time and finances permitting, winter is often a great time to take a course, attend an interesting conference, or read some especially challenging books. They not only distract me from the rigours of the climate but usually lead me into some form of personal enlightenment, perhaps deepening my faith or broadening my outlook.

This year I participated in a reading course at Concord College where, during a series of five dessert and discussion nights, each focused on an assigned book, we grappled with the challenges of living faithfully as Christians in a postmodern world. I also took a university

course that critiqued from a global perspective the devastating effects of western-led capitalist development on people and the environment, especially in the Third World. It re-sensitized me to the issues of rich and poor and challenged my complacency about the consumerism and affluence to which I have become accustomed and yet which deprive so many of the world's people of livelihood and dignity.

Another event that gave me food for thought, especially because it related to my role in the health field, was the 44th Mennonite Health Assembly, which my husband and I attended in Chicago. This gathering of Mennonite health professionals—nurses, physicians, chaplains, therapists, CEOs of health organizations—meets annually for purposes of education and spiritual enrichment. It was a thrill to be in the midst of a group of highly-competent, deeply-committed Anabaptist Christians searching for responses to the many organizational and ethical dilemmas that encumber the health field today.

Two themes dominated the conference and were particularly inspiring for me. One of these is the continuing trend toward holism in health care. Increasingly, there is recognition that healing arises from the integration of physical, emotional and spiritual needs. As my husband, a physician, will readily admit, at least half of the "medical" problems he is expected to deal with are rooted in spiritual and social concerns. Many caregivers are recognizing the limits of traditional western medicine and beginning to embrace a whole range of alternative therapies that encompass the broader spectrum of human need. These include prayer, counselling, preventive teaching and even remedies like herbs, massage, and acupuncture, which have traditionally been frowned upon but have produced some remarkable results.

The other interesting theme was the congregation as caregiver, an idea churches need to be cognizant of as they re-imagine their mission for the 21st century. As we see the role of government in public welfare decline, and social safety nets like unemployment insurance, pensions, and health coverage slowly wither away, the church may once again need to assume a more prominent role in caring for the sick and needy, both within its walls and outside.

Just the other day I talked to a fellow MB church member who is on the verge of going on welfare. Another must resort to hospital care while community health workers go on strike. Can the church afford to remain uninvolved in these desperate situations, con-

cerning itself only with the "spiritual" needs of the congregation? Can we allow a situation to exist in the body of Christ where some live off the fat of the land and others live at the margins? And what sort of logic can realistically divorce the needs of the body from those of the spirit?

Some Christian nurses are responding to this situation by developing parish nursing, church-based wellness programs that deal in a holistic way with the varying health concerns of the congregation and the community surrounding it. Even conventional sources are supporting this

trend, as evidenced by last January's *The Canadian Nurse*, which devoted an entire issue to this concept. As I see it, we in the church would do well to acquaint ourselves with such new and creative ways of being salt and light to those who are looking to us for help in these troubled times.

Thoughts like these helped get me through the winter. Now that it's June, I'm ready for some summer languor. Come next winter, I'll be looking for more ideas to keep my fires burning!

Business of Travel *continued from page 16*



*Ruth Wiebe at her desk at
Bonaventure Travel*

Tours are a great way of dealing with widowhood, although anyone travelling alone does have a disadvantage financially. The lack of companionship on a tour may also be a problem. On a cruise, however, "it's totally OK to be vegging out by yourself," says Ruth.

Most people prefer to travel to traditional haunts such as Mexico or Hawaii. Currently the trend is to take smaller tours, such as hiking or cycling in a specific area. Favourite locations for families are Disney World or a costly but fun trip to Europe. *Lonely Planet Guides* feature inexpensive tours with a higher-priced airfare but

cheaper accommodations. A great trip for families on a modest budget is to go camping in the Rockies. "We have exotic areas in Manitoba," says Ruth. "Germans love fishing in Thompson."

Ruth does not recommend spending more money than you have or foolishly yielding to social pressure to travel. Sensible insurance and common sense are the best cautionary measures. About honeymooners, Ruth notes, "Nothing depresses me more than to see honeymooners travelling on a credit card. They should go to Hecla or Minaki!"

One must be well to travel; however, there are safe places and services available for dependent individuals. Hotels have symbols indicating what they can offer tourists. In the past they might have had, for example, a symbol for fox hunting but none for people with special needs. To improve on this situation, disabled persons at the Winter Cities Conference held in Winnipeg last February were asked to evaluate the kinds of services that various cities provided for them. An International Roundtable of Advocates for Change drafted a

declaration and presented it to all the mayors.

Henry Enns of the Independent Living Resource Center has worked toward educating businesses about disability issues. Currently the Resource Center has members in 120 different countries and Henry has travelled to 80 countries himself. Recently Henry has had contact with Mennonite World Conference planners in order to address needs of dependent people at the Conference.

Ruth spoke enthusiastically of the tour to the Mennonite World Conference she is offering for next January. Henry and Martha Fast, the tour guides, have been to India fourteen times. These experienced guides will shepherd participants in a unique pre-Conference tour to the Riapur region, a rural area in which the General Conference Church has involvement. A post-Conference tour will treat travellers to a visit of the Golden Triangle, that is, Delhi, Jaipur and Agra (Taj Mahal). The tour will conclude with four days in Bali, giving travellers a chance to recuperate from what may be a strenuous visit to this Two-Thirds World country that constantly assaults the visitor with its smells, poverty and sheer numbers of people.

Choices

by Linda Parsons

My mother's family has lived since 1925 in a small farming settlement in central New Brunswick known as Maple Ridge. The view overlooking the forests, farms and little white churches can't be matched, but the land is poor and rocky. Seeds, planted amid the stones, are watered but many do not survive. Early rains play havoc with the harvest. Thick morning fog distorts the way. Yet neighbours respond to cries for help from neighbours. The community gathers together for thanksgiving, remembering the life of spring and living in the hope of another season even as the death of winter approaches.

I visited this community in October of 1990. I went to fetch my mother as one would fetch a pail of water, to take her home with me because her health had deteriorated. Our concern: Alzheimer's disease or depression. No one knew or understood.

In the following weeks, as I helped her to organize her belongings and then brought her home with me, our conversations revealed to me the pain, physical illness, masking and ongoing death-in-life with which my mother eked out an existence. There were obvious physical elements to her illness, yet more profound was a deep spiritual depression that separated her from healing and God.

I began to search to understand how God and healing did not journey together for my mum. Why didn't her faith, which she traced back to the age of seven or eight, heal the many pains and memories from which she suffered? Where was the power of Christ? Where was the God I know, the one who lives within me, is wrapped around me and remains with me? Why are healing and God one



Linda and her mother



and the same for me but not for her? I struggled.

A graveyard stands between my parents' house and the church she so loved. I began to recognize that in my mother's life, as in the lives of many women I know, there was another graveyard. Here she buried memories, anger, pain, circumstances she could not accept. This burying was common to her community in a time that demanded conformity rather than understanding, submission rather than change. As the physical graveyard separated her home from the church, her personal graveyard separated her from healing and from God.

I believe we must all discover our graveyards. We must touch, prod and poke. Very quickly we will discover that many issues we thought were dead are only feigning death. Though I don't know all the causes of my mother's pain, I do know that she spent more than fifty years burying the living.

When I was just four years old our family moved away from New Brunswick to the lure of steady employment in a nuclear research station in the Ottawa Valley. My mother never felt at home there. The land did not suit her. The trees were too green.

She didn't feel acceptance. She longed to rejoin her family as retirement approached.

In 1981, she left two daughters and a son in Ontario and moved with my father to where she believed she belonged. They built a home across from the little red school house, down the road from her childhood church, along the same ridge of land from which many subsisted.

The church once again became her "home" church. Many of those who attended were her friends from school, along with their children and grandchildren. There she found God. She did not find healing.

Mum knew that her life's choices had caused some of her suffering. For one, Dad, her husband of fifty years, did not share her faith. She was unable to move beyond the pain of that choice and others to find healing. Instead she buried them, only to find them creeping out again in physical symptoms and depression.

I came out of this time with Mum believing that God's fullness for us is in discovering the "stripes of Christ" and applying the ointment of those stripes to our wounds. Though remembering is the advent of healing, it is not healing. After touching comes

prodding and poking. Even that is not enough. It is only through opening ourselves to the power and nurture of the Holy Spirit that true healing comes.

My mother's suffering is not unique. I have observed the separation of healing and God within the lives of many evangelical Christians, especially those who live in rural Canada.

I have lived in rural Canada for thirty-three years—in New Brunswick, Ontario, Newfoundland, Labrador and Manitoba. I have attended evangelical churches in all of these areas: Pentecostal, Baptist (Fellowship and Conference), an independent church and Salvation Army. For the last eight years our family has worshipped in an Anglican church. My experience in these churches has formed much of my theological perspective.

The churches in which I worshipped and assumed leadership didn't teach surety of salvation. There was little room for error. Error (sin as defined by the church or Scripture) provided an individual with three pos-

sible avenues: change (forgiveness), repression (burying) or removal. Many folk have chosen removal; staying away until an acceptable length of time separated the present from the error, or until they could put their lives in an order acceptable to the church. Others have given up in disgust, throwing away the baby with the bathwater, so to speak. Many, especially women, have chosen repression. When acceptance within the Christian community stems from conformity rather than an understanding of God, healing and community, healing doesn't occur. Repression and burying does.

I approached my personal graveyard through a change in form of worship while living in the privacy that a city allows. Within the Anglican church, I was forced to speak, read and talk to God through the order of service. It was not simply the rector but I personally who was participating within the liturgy. This experience freed me to experiment with new forms of worship and to move from the predominantly male-oriented language and structures that governed my past worship experiences.

Re-listening to the voice of God so that I could hear the feminine, nurturing side as well as the masculine, powerful side, redefining my own cry so that it came from within me instead of from others, has moved me to healing through God. It has given me an opportunity to be a full participant in worship. It has been a springboard to community – one that grows with me, allows me to feel my pain, to prod and poke it and claim it as my own.

What I have learned from my mother's pain and my own, I desire to share with my sisters in Christ, both rural and urban, and with my daughter. May we all find healing through the gentle healing breeze of the Holy Spirit in a community of love and acceptance. May we together feel the softness of God's nurturing breast and the strength of God's guiding hand. "Come, Holy Spirit, come."

Linda Parsons lives in Winnipeg where she works with international students for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. She and her family attend St. Margaret's Anglican Church.

GLEANINGS

✚ **Irma Epp** of the Mclvor Ave MB Church in Winnipeg spent three weeks in Zaire last Nov/Dec, where she was the guest speaker at an MB Women's Conference held in Kikwit. The five-day conference revolved around the theme "Women's Participation in Rebuilding the Church." Irma came home excited about the many ways in which African women are on the move. She relates how their new societal roles as entrepreneurs and family breadwinners are prompting them to call for greater equality and recognition in the church. We hope to hear more about Irma's adventure in the October issue of Sophia.

✚ **Margaret Fast** visited Laos earlier this year, where she witnessed the effect of landmines that are still

harming people. During her visit she was able to speak with parents who had lost children in this destruction, and share with them her own experiences in losing a child.

✚ **Cynthia Ens**, Concord College student and member of Mclvor Ave MB Church in Winnipeg, recently won the Tudor Bowl for her singing at the Winnipeg Music Festival. Another Concord student, **Jennifer Ediger**, of River East MB Church, won the Faculty Prize for Excellence in Christian studies for her study of the colonial encounter with native peoples of North and South America. Congratulations to both!

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A Father's Friend

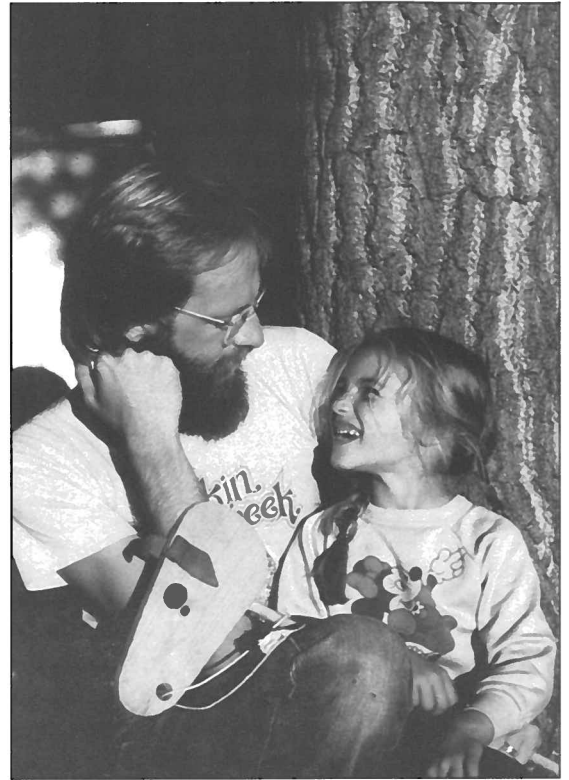
by Paul Hiebert

*And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said,
Speak to us of children.
And he said:
Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's
longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you, yet they
belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not
your thoughts.
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of
tomorrow, which you cannot visit,
not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but
seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries
with yesterday. (Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet)*

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.' " (Matthew 18:2-3 NRSV)

"Dad, can we go for a ride?"

This was a question I was asked three or four nights a week by our daughter during her elementary, junior high and even, though less often, into her senior high years. Even before she could speak, we would carry Melanie to the car and go for a ride, knowing this would finally relax her and put her to sleep. The older she got, the longer the rides became, usually taking us to Lockport or close to it and then maybe across the river and through the North End. As she neared the magical age of sixteen I drove throughout the city, teaching her how to find her way home, knowing the day would come when I would wait at home for the sound of the car coming up the driveway, which would then allow me to relax and drift off to sleep. These are now the days in which I am living.



I seldom refused her request, so we spent many hours together, talking about our days, our dreams, our friends, our faith, our family, the church and the many other pieces that made up our lives. I asked many questions, hoping for answers that would help me understand the world she was discovering through her own experiences. We listened to her music and talked about it. Some of it made me feel my age. Some of our drives were spent with just the music and few words between us. But I always felt special because my daughter was beside me. For Melanie the rides were a ritual to prepare her for sleep, and for me they were an opportunity to be with her.

Too soon the father chauffeur is replaced by a driver's license, and as the girl becomes a woman, other friends have the privilege of sitting beside her during evening rides. And so, for the past few years, I've wondered if I said everything I should have said during those critical years. Did I listen enough? I'm sure I could have said more, and listened better.

Her world is so different from what mine was when I was twenty years old. We had so many choices and had no need to worry about the future. Melanie and her generation will inherit many of the problems my generation has helped to create. They are promised less of the good life than we have enjoyed—fewer employment opportunities, more competition for the jobs that are available, no guarantees that education will get them anywhere, less pay, a tired earth, a long wait until our generation has worked enough to secure our future.

Many feel only hopelessness and despair while others live one day at a time, with an optimism that somehow things will just work out. Some work to understand the mysteries of life and to discover their place in history. I have learned to be excited with them about the time they live in, to try to see the world through their eyes, to be open with them about my own journey and share the story of my faith, my friends, my joys, my pains and my hopes. And I hope we as an older generation will seek justice for them as we evaluate our needs against theirs, and then as we discover hope together, work to develop creative, sustainable employment opportunities with them.

Once again I am reminded, “Unless you change, and become like children....” I can’t

say I understand fully what Jesus was suggesting as he used the children to define the character of Kingdom members, but I am inspired by the openness and honesty of young people as they search for meaning for themselves in this world that seems now so much more complicated and challenging than when I was their age.

Looking back, I am grateful that Melanie has let me into her world enough to make me feel that I am her friend as well as her father. She has helped teach me to love children and young people through my experiences with her and her friends. Her thoughtful approach to the teachings of Jesus and their implications on her lifestyle encourages me. Her honest search for truth helps me to remember that Jesus invited us to follow him and in doing so to add to the ongoing narrative of truth. Her deep commitment to her community reminds me of the importance of being a true friend.

We don’t go for rides as we used to, but fortunately she still appreciates a ride to university or work a few days of the week. We sometimes eat lunch together. So we still talk. I probably enjoy her life too much, and occasionally I am requested to ask fewer questions about her schedules, courses, friends, work, spiritual life and future in general. But it’s all right. I know already that every day she makes the world a better place. I also know that she loves me. And that she is one of my best friends.

Paul Hiebert is a self-employed designer. He and his wife, Bev, live in Winnipeg and enjoy their children, Melanie, Matthew and Kati. They are members of McIvor Ave MB Church.

GLEANINGS

Continued from page 19

- ✦ **Helen Penner** loves to quilt. This winter she participated in a contest where she was given three swatches with which to create a scene. The result was a Winnipeg cityscape that included buildings where members of her family have worked. The quilt now resides in her husband, Ken’s, office.
- ✦ **Terrilynn Goertz** recently completed a mural (at right) for the nursery of McIvor Ave. MB Church.

Sophia welcomes submissions for “Gleanings.” News about women’s accomplishments, happenings or other items of interest to readers should be sent to the address on page 2.



A SUMMER READING LIST

For your summer reading pleasure, we thought we'd offer comments on a few of our favourite books. And, a new thing, reviews of a few favourite movies.



LORI MATTIES

In the Womb of God: Creative Nurturing for the Soul, by Celeste Snowber Schroeder. (Liguori, Missouri: Triumph Books, 1995)

I should have taken the time to read this book slowly, savouring not only the words but the beautiful design. Schroeder's reflections are carefully crafted and thoughtful. The book is the result of a time of solitude that began during a time of forced bedrest during the last part of her pregnancy with twins. It continues through the early months of nurturing the twins and her three-year-old son.

The eighteen short chapters explore metaphors of God as nurturer and of Schroeder as the nurtured child "in the womb of God." She shares her struggle to accept the present moment and, more than that, to celebrate it as a work of art. In this period when time to practise her roles as liturgical dancer, educator, and writer is rare, Schroeder observes in her role as mother and playmate, the gifts of parenting and companionship that God offers, as well as the strong feminine image of the eagle that soars in the skies to protect and nurture its young.

The gift of beauty in the ordinary is the overwhelming theme of this book. Waiting, birthing, breastfeeding, tears, grief, loneliness, childhood, interruptions, pushing the boundaries, all these are food for reflection to which Schroeder turns her attention.

For those who struggle to find unity in a life fragmented by many roles, for those seeking strong feminine, nurturing, images of God, and for those wishing to share an intimate spiritual exploration with this artist, I highly recommend this book. But read it slowly.

DEBRA FIEGUTH

Walking Across Egypt, by Clyde Edgerton (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1987). The unlikely pairing of an independent, feisty,

but somewhat naive 78-year-old widow named Mattie Rigsbee, with a juvenile delinquent, Wesley Benfield, and the adventures they get into are what make this book one of my favorite novels of all time. Mattie is always thinking, "What would Jesus do?" The title of the book is Mattie's favorite hymn, which, if you get a hard copy, is included at the back of the book. "Like Moses, we are walking into the promised land," the hymn (actually written by Edgerton) says.

We are Still Married, by Garrison Keillor (New York: Penguin Books, 1989). Keillor's essays and short stories are fun to read because they resonate so deeply yet so humorously with our human foibles, especially conservative Christian foibles. Though I like most of Keillor's books, this one includes "The Young Lutheran's Guide to the Orchestra" and other favorites. Essays are short, light, and good for not-so-serious summer reading.

DORA DUECK

The Shipping News, by E. Annie Proulx. (C. Scribner & Sons, 1993) A novel set in Newfoundland, full of interesting characters and amazing description. And short sentences. Like this. The kind of book that requires some initial perseverance but is worth it in the end. It gave me a yen to visit Newfoundland.

Prayer, by Richard Foster. (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992) In short, warmly-written chapters, Foster "names" and explains the many experiences of prayer. These can be read and practised at one's own pace; a wonderful guide for some summer spiritual growth.

ELEANOR MARTENS

The Seven Story Mountain, by Thomas Merton (Harcourt, Brace and Co, New York, 1948). I would never have guessed a book written before I was born could become a favourite! This is the autobiography of Thomas Merton who, growing up, immerses himself in all the intellectual and cultural riches of the 20th century. Brilliant, involved, wanting to "taste and see" it all, he slowly begins to recognize the impoverishment of his own soul. At age 26 he rejects it all and enters a Trappist monastery. I love this book because every page sparkles with the eloquence, the humour, the humanity and the deep spirituality of this latter-day saint.

Island of Tears, Island of Hope, by Niall O'Brian (Orbis Books, New York, 1993). I was profoundly moved by this account of the desperate plight of peasant sugar-workers in the Philippines. The author is an Irish-born

Catholic priest who was imprisoned and exiled during the Marcos dictatorship for his decision to share the struggle of the poor on the island of Negros. He raises questions that are familiar to Anabaptist peacemakers: "How does Jesus call us to resist evil in the world?" This book challenged me to revisit my peace theology but was especially inspiring for its many heartrending stories of how people live with hope and courage in the midst of injustice.

The Illustrated Out of Africa by Karen Blixen (Cresset Press, London, 1985). Another re-issued classic, this is a book I turn to for "re-fuelling." The sheer beauty of the language, embellished by the exquisite drawings, charm the reader as would a poem or a song. Most people think it is the story of the romance so popularized by the Meryl Streep/Robert Redford movie saga. Not so. It tells rather of the romance of the Norwegian author with the fascinating people and landscapes of Kenya, an ode to a vanishing way of life. One does not have to have lived in Africa to feast on the haunting, exotic images evoked by this superb storyteller.

AGNES DYCK

To My Children's Children, by Sindiwi Magona (Interlake Publishing, New York, 1990). Sindiwi Magona, writing for her grandchildren, vividly records her difficulties as a poor black woman in a relentlessly reinforced apartheid system. Her life as a black, as a woman and as a writer epitomizes the plight of a suppressed people struggling for justice. This is autobiographical writing at its best.

Women Who Do Too Much: Stress and the Myth of the Superwoman, by Patricia H. Sprinkle (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1992). Who said, "Satan drives us; God leads us?" Frantic busyness, a disease of our time, needs some careful scrutiny. Sprinkle discusses the problem with humour, concrete examples and clear direction about how to let go: "drop, delay and delegate."

Having Our Say: The Delaney Sisters' First 100 Years, by Sarah L. and A. Elizabeth Delaney with Amy Hill Hearth (Dell, New York, 1994). Two delightful black sisters, both single and over 100 years old, share their homespun philosophy about living. Humour, courage and faith have characterized their long pilgrimage. This story is sure to warm your heart.

Writing Your Life: A Journey of Discovery, by Patti Miller (Allen & Unwin Pty, St Leonards, Australia, 1994). This Australian writer's enthusiastic guide to writing autobiography or biography lures the

reader/writer into a labyrinth of personal memory. Simple workshops, augmented by many brief examples of fine biographical writing, and coupled with recognition of possible difficulties a beginning writer might encounter, make for a great reading experience.

VIDEOS

DEBRA FIEGUTH

Muriel's Wedding – It helps to like Abba, but even if you don't, this Australian comedy (sort of) is a wonderful look at what it means to belong. Muriel is a lonely character who wants more than anything else to get married, but has illusions about what that means. It's a story about relationships, about being somebody, about loving and being loved. Most memorable line: "Since I met you, my life has been better than an Abba song."

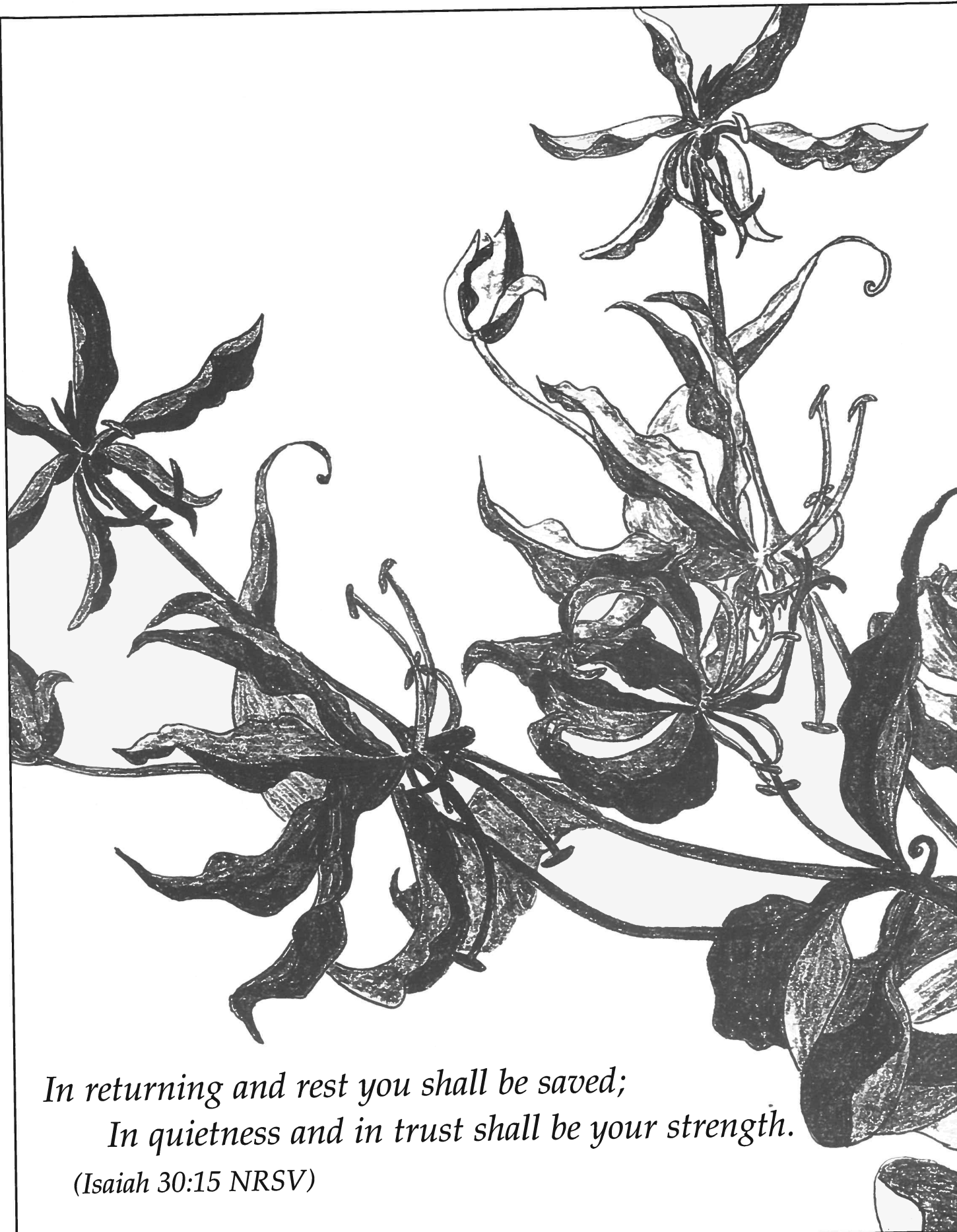
Babe – Another Australian movie, *Babe*, is for children, but adults love it too. Babe is a pig that thinks he's a sheep dog. The relationships among the talking animals are great, the farmer who is too soft-hearted to butcher Babe is precious, and the story is thoughtful. I loved the huge flocks of sheep, too, and the little animated mice asides.

ELEANOR MARTENS

The Postman (Il Postino). This movie is worth seeing just for its visual delights (makes you want to get on the next plane). Set in a fishing village on a small island off the coast of Italy, it captures the brilliance of Mediterranean terra cotta against the sun-drenched magnificence of sea, sand and sky. But even more charming is the poignant tale of friendship between the simple village postman and the famed Chilean poet Pablo Neruda who comes to summer on the island. Don't let the English subtitles deter you. The story literally unfolds before your eyes.

AGNES DYCK

Dead Man Walking. This award winning film, based on a portion of Sister Helen Prejean's autobiography, deserves the attention of the Christian community. Capital punishment in all its horror absorbs the viewer, but more than this, the difficulty and necessity of accepting and extending forgiveness develops in such a manner as to draw the observer into the complexities of our universal dilemma: when will the violence end?



*In returning and rest you shall be saved;
In quietness and in trust shall be your strength.*

(Isaiah 30:15 NRSV)