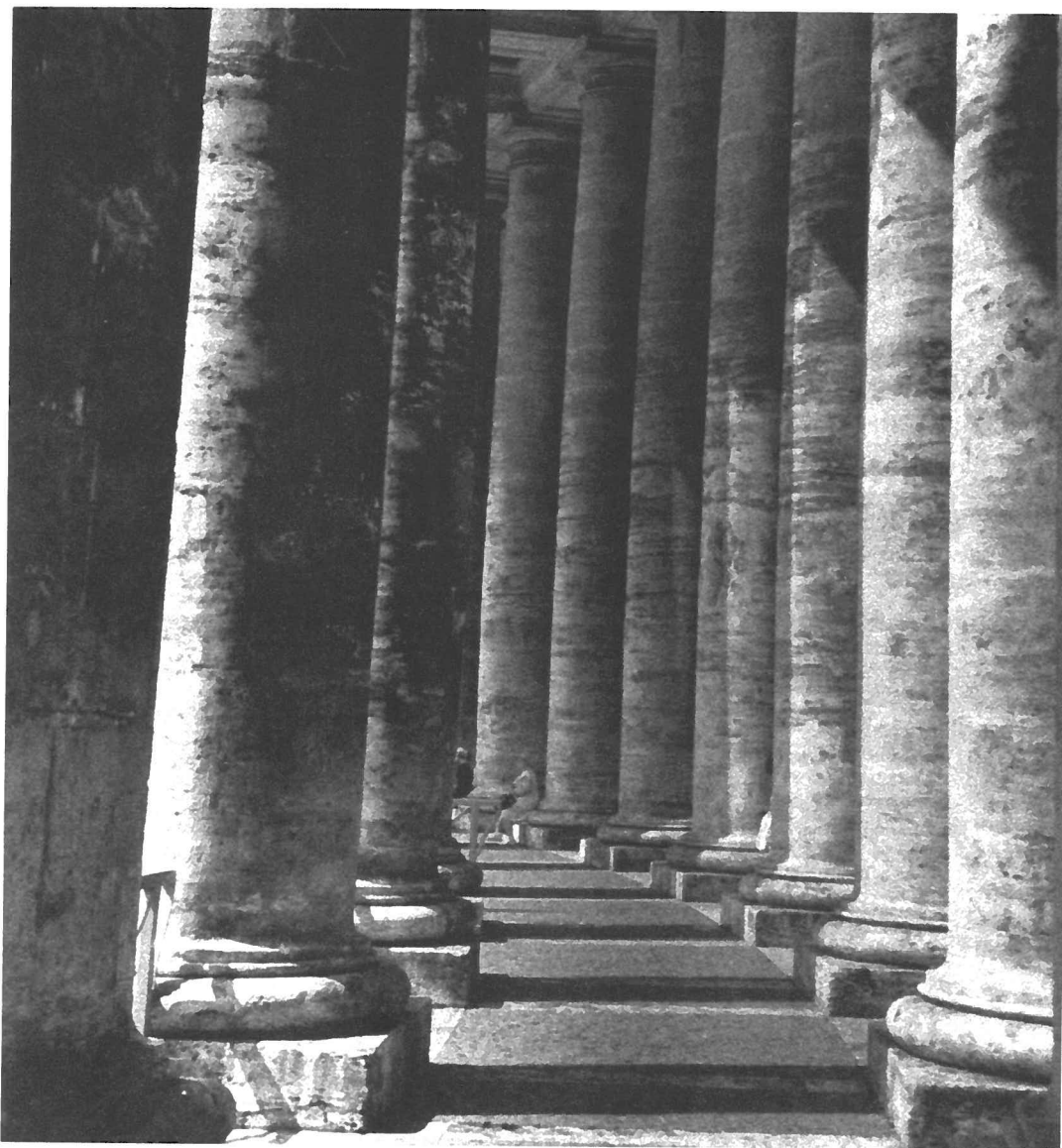


10/2

S O P H I A

W I S D O M

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



Enduring
LEGACY

VOLUME 10 • 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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SOPHIA Mission Statement

Sophia offers a forum for Christian women to speak to one another about the joys and challenges of living faithfully in an uncertain, changing world. Its pages give voice to women's stories – their experiences in church and society, family and workplace, their aspirations and disappointments, their successes and failures. It invites expressions of joy and sorrow, concern and outrage. In doing so it hopes to affirm women in their quest for spiritual, emotional and physical wholeness and for the full expression of their gifts in all spheres of life.

Sophia was conceived and brought to birth by Mennonite Brethren women and celebrates Christian sisterhood. Its desire is to welcome differing voices. It hopes to challenge women and men of all ages as they live together in Christian community. The name SOPHIA (wisdom) expresses our desire to search and know the wisdom of God through the Scriptures and our experience as followers of Jesus Christ.

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).

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- Support our community.
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Enduring Legacy

by Lori Matties

I recently received a book that contained the journal and letters of my great-great-aunt, Annie Leake Tuttle. Annie, born in 1839 in Parrsboro, Nova Scotia, grew up in a faithful Methodist family that valued "good works" as an expression of faith. There was plenty of good, hard work to do, and at the tender age of eleven, Aunt Annie was sent to live with an aunt and uncle as a helper. Throughout her childhood, Annie attended Wesleyan revival meetings, and at the age of seventeen, she had a "conversion" experience, followed by a "baptism of the Holy Spirit" that changed her life. The experience seemed to loose her tongue so that she could speak confidently in public as a testimony to her faith. It also inspired her to become a teacher, and after only three years of schooling she opened her own little classroom.

Not satisfied with her skills, Aunt Annie found a way to attend a teacher's training college. She later taught in a model school, became housemother in a home for "rescued" Chinese immigrant girls in Victoria, at the age of 55 married her widowed former sweetheart and cared for him and his nine children, all the while continuing to care for her parents and various other relatives. Many of her letters were written to a favourite niece, my paternal grandmother, offering advice and encouragement. In reading her story, I received a gift of roots; of understanding something of the personality of a part of my family and, indeed, of the legacy I carry in myself.

We receive legacies from many people, of course, not only from our biological forbears. Not everything we

receive is cherished or even welcome, but it is part of the package of odds and ends that make us up and with which we work to make lives worthy to pass on to others. Legacies are physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Some are unconsciously passed from one generation to the next, and some are quite consciously nurtured and taught, whether or not those to whom we pass them will choose to accept them.

In this issue we explore legacies of several different kinds, from the spiritual legacy of faith handed down to us in the Scriptures to the physical legacies of body image to the emo-

*What have I received from
the people and society
that nurtured me?*

*What do I leave for those
in the next generation?*

tional legacies of nurture and breakdown. We cannot help but ask the questions, What have I received from the people and society that nurtured me? What do I leave for those in the next generation? These are questions worth asking if we wish to preserve and pass on cherished gifts or to redeem mistakes and heal wounds.

Sophia welcomes your thoughts on this or any other subject; you'll see several spots where we've suggested dialogue. One such question concerns

our use of language. We recently received a letter objecting to our allowing of "foul" words in *Sophia*. Unfortunately, we couldn't respond to the letter because it wasn't signed, but we did think it worthwhile to open the dialogue to you, our readers. Until now we haven't had a formal policy, but we have generally employed high standards in all our use of language. In a very few cases we have allowed the author creative discretion in her use of words she deemed appropriate to the situation. We likened it to the very strong language sometimes used by the psalmists and other biblical writers in describing extreme emotions or situations. What is your opinion on this matter? We'd like to know.

In the meantime, we wish you pleasant reading. You'll notice a new column in this issue called "Images of God." In it we hope to explore some of the many metaphors we find in Scripture and elsewhere that help us to understand and know God better. Also, don't forget to check out Donna Neufeld's list of good books for those lazy moments in the shade. Have a great summer.

◆◆◆

Cover Art: The photos on the front and back covers and on page 12 are by Rachel Baerg, who currently lives in Winnipeg with her husband and three children. Rachel has a BFA and an MA in Art History and is preparing to teach a course in Art History at the new Canadian Mennonite University this fall. She has been recently enjoying the exploration of black and white photography.

What Better Legacy...?

By Jean Reimer

The stinking damp, the muck around his shackled ankles, the confining darkness, the muscles cramped from immobility – it was not these things that bowed his spirit and fueled his anguish, although these lesser things did their own bitter, filthy work on him, whose natural habitat was the arid, clean-aired space of the desert. It was not even the moment-by-moment uncertainty of his fate that made his body shudder with tension.

No, it was not the prison that caused his torment, it was the Question: the Question that sat behind his eyes and hounded his mind; the Question whose answer might render fruitless and horribly empty the driving purpose of his life; the Question that finally broke out of his desperate incomprehension: “Are you the One?” (see Matthew 11:2-6; Luke 3:19-20, 7:18-23).

His question dumbfounds us, for we remember the blazing clarity of John the Baptist’s focus: “I am the voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight!’” (see Lk 3:1-6, Isaiah 40:3-5, Malachi 3:1). John was alert to the Christ even in the womb; he was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth; he knew that his destiny would be to “make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (see Luke 1). In the crucible of the desert he was trained in the Holy Scriptures; there God’s voice instructed him.

When he emerges from that desert, John’s crystalline message about Jesus is a ringing trumpet call (see Mt 1, Lk 1 and 3, John 1):

“Turn your lives around; make

the way straight for the Lord’s Anointed.”

“All peoples shall see the salvation of God.”

“Behold [see!] the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

“I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”

“He was before me, and he is greater than I.”

“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

But now John is in prison, faltering in an agony of uncertainty about this very Jesus. To such a tormented one, surely Jesus will come and give answer as clear and illuminating as a lightning bolt!? Surely Jesus will burn up John’s doubts with a triumphant shout of assurance!!?

*Surely Jesus will burn up
John’s doubts with
a triumphant shout of
assurance!!?*

Some say, “No, Jesus didn’t answer John; No, Jesus didn’t meet John in his dark hour of despair.” One author in particular feels that Jesus’ answer deliberately left John in his dilemma, that Jesus intentionally did not release John from his agony of doubt, in order that John might represent all those in history, past and future, who would wonder and agonize over the ways of God and not receive a clear word, not hear God’s voice, not be assured and reassured (Gene Edwards, *The Prisoner in the Third Cell*, Tyndale House, 1991).

Was it truly so? Was uncertainty

and doubt God’s final earthly legacy to John? And if so, might God not leave us awash in a similar way? Is this God’s message to John and to us, that God does not speak a real word to our dilemmas and griefs?

No! A thousand times, no! Listen! I tell you that when John heard Jesus’ answer, he danced in that prison cell. He sang! He exulted! His “Yes!” shook the very stones of that place. Jesus’ answer left him no shred of doubt. And I think John laughed, too; a great whoop of a laugh with some chagrin in it – there was no reason for “faltering knees” now! Because Jesus’ answer came straight out of Isaiah, and hit the nub: “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: ‘the blind receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.’ Blessed is the one who is not tripped up into unbelief about me” (Luke 7:22,23 author’s translation).

John knew these “Messiah” texts intimately; they were the clearest, most unprevaricating answer Jesus could ever have given him. I won’t quote them here – go, take your Bible; read Isaiah 35:3-10 and 61:1-3; and dance with John. Laugh with him about your own “faltering knees.” Be strengthened.

Yes, Jesus’ answer gave John back his bedrock. Whether John now lived or died in that prison, Jesus was still indeed the Lamb, the Son of God, the salvation of the world, the giver of the Holy Spirit, the Lord of eternal Life. If he died, John knew he was

Continued on page 11 ►



Understanding the Speech

by Lis Vensel

It took two years for us to understand them.

After a long ride through the wintry streets of Harbin, our driver would find the lecture hall or the cafeteria on yet another campus. We were welcomed and seated at the judges' table, which was set with covered mugs of tea and a thermos of hot water. Hundreds of students lined the seats, perched on window sills, or leaned against the walls, all in parkas and fur hats. Water puddled the concrete floor after a hasty mopping. It was icy cold, because heat, like many other things in China, was rationed.

Still, my husband and I welcomed these trips to other universities. Judging English speech competitions was a break from dreary evenings of marking compositions. We learned the rules quickly: marks below seven were too embarrassing, so decimal points were added to marks between eight and ten.

Few of the speeches were original. Most seemed to be taken from English textbooks. We had rummaged through the only local textbook shop too, looking for better selections. The

size of a comic book, these slim books combined classic British or American short stories with newspaper articles, or even restaurant menus. The talks were brief, considering that a congressman or a university administrator would average three or four hours mouthing the party line. Pronunciation was often garbled, and accents thick, for the students had been sent from Shanghai, or Kunming, or Mongolia to this remote corner of Northeast China. With little regard for the students' interest or skill, bureaucrats assigned them to some Forestry University or Electrical College, perhaps to study veterinary medicine or chicken nutrition at our college.

But many of these diffident students now gripped the podium and declaimed the memorized speech with vigour, and received more than the usual polite applause. Two speeches were repeated again and again. What did they know of Winston Churchill's war, or the struggle of an African American, Martin Luther King, Jr.?

"I have a dream that one day this

nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed – we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal. ...I have a dream today! ...And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last."

Though the intonation was wrong, the voices rang out; often the consonants were askew, but the passion was obvious. At the end, the assembly would burst into wild cheers, as though they had hung on every word.

We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender....

We did not see the connection, though we saw the growing student protests on television every night on the news. Then our own students boycotted classes, marched downtown, burned buses. We began to catch a glimmer of insight. Finally the American reference made sense, as a hastily-constructed Statue of Liberty appeared in Tiananmen Square, amid the malnourished students incongruously starving themselves for democracy. By the time the tanks rolled down the broad streets of Beijing, and blocked all avenues of escape, we had figured it out.

.....
Lis Vensel, a member of Sophia's editorial committee, and her husband, Ted, spent several years teaching English as a second language in Harbin, China. They now live in Winnipeg and attend Church of the Way.

Borne on Eagle's Wings

by Helga Doerner

*As an eagle stirreth up her nest,
fluttereth over her young, spreadeth
abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth
them on her wings: So the LORD alone
did lead him ...*

Deuteronomy 32:11-12, KJV

I recently visited the library with the specific goal of learning how eagles teach their young to fly. I found books identifying every imaginable species of eagle: distinguishing their characteristic markings; describing their height, length, weight and wingspan; detailing their sharp vision and their immense strength; depicting their favorite habitats; highlighting their hunting skills; revealing their partnering and nesting patterns; explaining how frequently they laid eggs and how many; the survival rate of their young; their feeding patterns; but nowhere could I find information to substantiate the incredible image of the eaglet being borne on the parental wing.

I asked my twelve-year-old son, who has been fascinated by wild life for years, if in his readings he had come across information about how eagles teach their young to fly. Though he had done a project on eagles a few years ago, his research did not relate the information I was looking for. Yet the image of being borne on eagle's wings is so breathtaking, whether fact or fantasy, it has taken hold in my imagination.

I picture the mother eagle strong and sure. She wings through the heavens and soars on the winds. First alone, hunting food for her little ones to make them strong. Then one day it is time. She signals the eaglets to leave the comfort of their cozy nest

and step outside. I wonder what terrors the little ones feel as they peer past the bastion that has been their home. I wonder if they experience the sensation of being suspended in the middle of the universe – the endless sky above them and the boundless earth below them. What creature would want to leave the nurturing nest and fall into the wide unknown with untested wings? True, the little ones have practised flapping their wings with the safety of nesting ground beneath their feet. But what is that compared to the sheer drop of nothingness on the other side of the woven twigs that until this moment have been all they've known?

The mother eagle understands the hesitation of her offspring. She sees them perched on the edge of the nest wondering how to go on. She

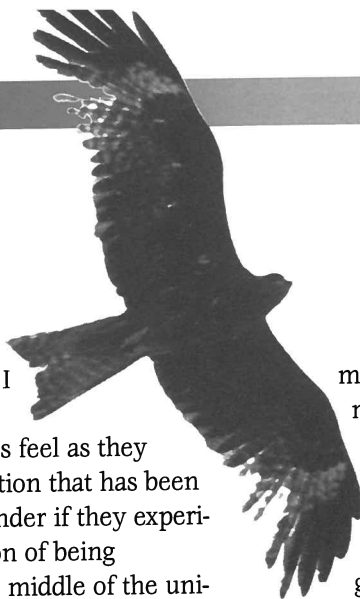
*The mother eagle understands
the hesitation of her offspring.
She sees them perched on the
edge of the nest wondering
how to go on.*

extends her invitation. The young eaglets are invited to step onto her wide and strong wing span. She is offering them herself as a secure foothold as they meet the open sky for the first time. Can you visualize their ride – soaring, dipping, drifting on her wing? It must be exhilarating – the adrenaline of fear and excitement pumping through their little bodies all at the same time. Imagine that

moment of wonder when the mother eagle drops her body a few inches or maybe a foot and the eaglets soar on their own. And the wonder turns to horror as the fragile wings grow tired and the weary bodies waver, while the ground looms ever closer. Even as the nightmare ending flashes across the eaglets' vision, strong wings appear beneath them and lift them up again.

I wonder if this is the image the biblical writers had in mind when they spoke of being borne on eagle's wings? The metaphor of the mother eagle relating to her little one is used to describe God's relationship with Jacob (see Deuteronomy 32). Like the mother eagle, God watched over Jacob and guided him into the life he was to live. Jacob – renamed Israel, the father of a people who became a nation – was borne on the wings of God and so led. It isn't surprising then that a similar image illustrates God's relationship with the Israelites, the people born of Jacob's line. When they were threatened by the Egyptians as they sought out their freedom, God, as mother eagle, intervened and bore them upon her wings to rescue them from danger (see Exodus 19:4). We continue to use this image today in our churches, reading from scriptural passages or remembering in song. Yet, for me, this symbolic imagery first became significant when I encountered it as my own.

It was on an inviting summer day of soothing breezes and warm sun that I walked with a friend over open fields. Relaxed in the ambience of a quiet setting, we felt free to



speak of our journeys over the past two years – journeys that were difficult to walk alone. It was in that conversation she gifted me with a vision of Mother Eagle God with outspread wings carrying her little ones. I could feel myself relax into this vision.

What comfort to picture God as mother eagle spreading her strong wings beneath my faltering ones and bearing me up again, when I'm tired and weary and not sure how to go on! What hope in the assurance that when I feel I have no strength to maintain the constant struggle of my journey, I am not alone! When my wings fail to carry me, another set of wings slips into place beneath my own – the wings of Mother God.

Fact or fantasy in the life of eagles teaching their young to fly, I'm not sure it matters. The symbol of God carrying humanity on eagle's wings sustained a people yesterday. Today this image sustains me. For me it is the certitude of being carried when I'm weary and having the freedom to fly with my own wings when I feel strong.

.....
Helga Doermer, a member of Sophia's editorial committee, is currently studying toward a Master of Divinity degree at the University of Winnipeg.

Opening the Dialogue

Have you experienced the protecting wings of God, both challenging and sheltering you? What other metaphors for God have helped to shape your faith?

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Tulip Time in Winnipeg

by Barbara Slater

The tulips bloom in a scraggly
circle around the apple tree.
Cracks in clay gumbo
spread.

Early May and black dust
blows in off the Prairie stinging faces
filling our mouths
with grit.

Each day I search
for fresh blades in the soil.
It's almost a grief
this green longing
this hunger for bloom.

.....
*This poem and "Sabbath Truths" (p 19) are from Barbara Slater's recently published volume, **Second Wind** (Jack Fish Press, Winnipeg, 1999). Barbara and her husband, Jim, live in Winnipeg and attend St. Aidan's Anglican Church.*

Sometimes I am a child
eclipsed by my grandmother's shadow,
she in the doorway, the sound of robins
piping across the lawn, sunlight
pressing around her,
her arms full of red
white, deep lavender tulips
their acrid scent
spicing the air.

Snipping the long stems
she places them one by one
in the silver vase,
ice water
clouding the edges
water beads streaming down.

I taste the dry wind
and remember.



The Body Beautiful: Beast or Birthright?

by Connie Epp

As a child, I remember watching my teenage sisters arguing in the kitchen with my mother as they tried on the dresses she proudly sewed for them. The rather heated discussions always revolved around the depth of the neckline or the height of the hemline. The issue at stake was our very conservative rural church. If a woman's skirt was too short (exposed knees) or the neckline too low (exposed collarbone) or she wore makeup or earrings, a subsequent sermon would elaborate on the sinful ways in which "some women" flaunted themselves. Even though names were never publicly mentioned, everyone in the small church knew who was being referred to. And so, to sin or not to sin was always the big question in our country kitchen.

Nearly half a century later, we think we have come a long way. The average North American woman today is free to make choices in all aspects of her life including what she does with her body. But are we really making free choices, or has the source of manipulation merely changed hands? Maybe we've traded one type of blatant oppression for a more subtle and sophisticated way of being fooled into thinking we're in control. Women's magazines and billboards persistently remind us that we need to keep up with "the look." We need to repair our damaged skin cells, wash away our gray, rejuvenate and replenish our natural oils, stay slim and trim, and remain forever young. We are bombarded by contradictory messages that advocate "be your own woman" but at the same time warn us about being overweight, disproportioned, sporting unsightly blemishes, wearing last year's styles, or developing (gasp!) wrinkles.

The vast majority of today's advertising is focused on the outer woman who, we are repeatedly informed, is so obviously in dire need of repair. Key words that appear again and again are "mask," "hide," "cover up." We are led to believe that if we can disguise ourselves, nobody will notice that we are flawed and, as a bonus, we might even fool ourselves.

Our Great Creator vehemently insists we are not flawed! Everything in God's creation is evaluated as "good" and even "very good." God doesn't make second rate stuff! Psalm 139 says, "For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (NRSV). We are all uniquely and intentionally well designed by the Holy One even if the advertising world insists otherwise. The

Bible's Song of Solomon, which celebrates love, revels in the physical beauty of the lover for the loved one. It highlights the lover's features. "Your eyes are doves...your hair is like a flock of goats.... your breasts are like two fawns.... your thighs are like jewels...your navel is a rounded bowl.... your nose is like a tower of Lebanon....You are altogether beautiful my love; there is no flaw in you." This woman, who is perfection epitomized to her lover, would today be considered a prime candidate for Weight Watchers and reconstructive facial surgery. She would definitely fall into the "before" category in the makeover section.

While we may think today's fashion trends are primarily concerned with appearance, it is important to note that "the look" isn't complete without a hearty dose of attitude baggage. Simple observation of pale anorexic mannequins, TV fashion shows, or billboard slogans teaches women that they are in competition with one another. The bottom line is that we need to look better than our neighbour. Mannequins

haughtily stand back to back with their hands on their hips, models have that smug disinterested "I don't give a _____" look, and magazine fashion spreads tutor us on how to solicit more "oohs" and "ahs" than anyone else at the office Christmas party.

How can we be community for one another, how do we show compassion, how do we become approachable people when we choose actively to engage in society's definition of the body beautiful? As we strive to be fashion's ideal woman, don't we become less and less approachable? Jesus demonstrates that it is in our vulnerability, our transparency, our honesty, that we are blessed and become valuable to God, to neighbour, and to self.

As we give ourselves permission to accept the fact that we have been created "very good," and as we build on that foundation, there will surely be less and less of a need to cover up and pretend we are something we are not. The fact that we are not stylized carbon copies of one another and that we are indeed one-of-a-kind is truly a marvelous gift from God and a sign that our loving Holy Parent sees us each as special children and true partners in restoration.

As we come to realize our value in the eyes of God, we see that our self-worth is born from a far richer source. We are not compelled to paint our beauty on from the outside but can freely allow it to radiate from that deeper inner source. We grow to realize that different is good. We learn that we are irreplaceable original works of art, not mere photocopies of famous super-models. Consequently, taking

Our Great Creator vehemently insists we are not flawed!



US VENSEL

care of ourselves and cherishing our bodies can flow from the knowledge that we are loved rather than from a desperate fearful attempt to mask our ugliness. The two philosophies stand diametrically opposed, one originating from God's unfathomable love and the other from an accusation of dysfunction by advertisers, motivated purely by monetary benefit.

And so we do have a choice. But true choice requires conscious alertness and a willingness to look and risk moving beyond the obvious or the popular. Modern culture advocates a beauty that highlights our inadequacies in order to fill its pockets. The Creator highlights boundless love in order to fill our souls. What do we choose?

.....
Connie Epp recently completed her B.A. in Theatre and Theology at the University of Winnipeg and Concord College. She and her husband, Ken, have two teenaged children. They are members of River East MB Church.

Deeper Than Words

by Talia Pura

All parents leave a legacy for their child, whether they are conscious of it or not. When I was five years old, I was taken to see the circus. I was more than simply enthralled. I thought of nothing else for days and weeks afterwards. I told my mother that I wanted to be in the circus when I grew up. Her response was swift and decisive. "Christians don't do such." That ended the matter. I knew that I was a child of God and would never do something contrary to the will of God for my life.

I was left confused as to why it was all right for Christians to watch a circus but not to participate in one. It was my first exposure to the world of

movement and its beauty. For the rest of my childhood I wanted to move, but growing up Mennonite gave me no vocabulary to do so. Although my mother had long since forgotten her comment on my circus ambitions, and my parents had no objections to my training in dance, it was simply unavailable in the small town in which we lived, where dancing was viewed as sinful. In the privacy of my recreation room I moved anyway and never called it dance.

When I grew up, I knew that God wouldn't have given me that much ability and desire simply to throw away. I studied ballet, jazz and modern dance and performed professionally for many years. The only thing that I couldn't do was tell my grandmother that I was anything more than an actress, which was also true. That at least, though foreign to her understanding, was acceptable.

How ironic that now I am not only allowed but encouraged to dance before the Lord in the Lord's own sanctuary. For me, it is an act of pure, undistilled worship, deeper than my words or thoughts could ever attain.

The legacy I hope to leave my children is the freedom to explore whatever God has given them to use to God's glory, as unique and much-loved creations of their maker. They may touch another human being in a way that no one ever thought of as spiritual before, given through them, with God's love attached.

.....
Talia Pura lives and moves in Winnipeg. She is a member of the River East MB Church.

Lorina: A Mennonite Queen

by Eleanor Ewert Martens

Lorina Marsch, wife, mother, Rundschau editor and Sophia board member, died in November 1999 of a brain tumour. The following tribute was given at her funeral.

I never would have guessed Lorina and I would become friends. I had known of her and about her for many years, my earliest memory perhaps being when she and Roland were students at MBBC. They were among those "foreign" students of whom my father [Professor David Ewert] was so proud. He spoke especially admiringly of those students who decided to become missionaries and so I recall a certain reverence attached to Roland's and Lorina's names and I'm sure they came up in family prayers from time to time. In later years I knew Lorina primarily as a pastor's wife and then the courageous soul who edited a German church paper, the first woman in our Conference ever to do so.

My impression of Lorina from a distance was that she was the "perfect" Mennonite woman. She expressed her faith simply but with confidence and clarity. She embraced the world with her prayers. She spoke well – when asked – but never too loudly or dissentingly. She stood quietly and compliantly beside her husband as he led churches and conferences. She was generous and kind. She smiled a lot. She was a willing servant, a superb mother,

She had longings and passions and struggles and hurts, and so she became real to me.

dutiful wife and I'm sure a great cook and cleaner too. She dressed appropriately. In her later roles as returning college student and editor, she spoke volumes without having to say much at all. Her message that it was "OK" for Mennonite women to develop their intellects and

contribute to the public domain came gently and unobtrusively. She was a Mennonite "Queen," the Proverbs 31 woman, the embodiment of Christian virtue and grace, the kind of person our mothers taught us to emulate and hoped, and fervently prayed, we would become.

Which is why I, with my less ordered faith and unruly opinions (especially when it came to women) didn't think we could ever have that much in common. I first came to know Lorina in a more personal way when we asked her to join the advisory committee of *Sophia*, a journal started by an editorial collective of Mennonite women in 1991 for the purpose of providing a forum for women's voices in the Mennonite Brethren church. We sought her



expertise as a journalist and editor and her many connections within the MB network. But perhaps just as much we sought her name on our masthead. There were those who viewed our fledgling efforts with suspicion, and we needed someone who could help us gain credibility among Mennonite readers. Who better

than the publisher of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, a paper doted on by my 95 year old grandmother?

She declared to us right from the start that she was not there to participate in debates about gender or to challenge our church's stance on women. But she was interested in hearing and promoting what women had to say. She remained with us as researcher, writer, advocate and supporter for five years until the time she and Roland left for Germany in 1998. And it was during that time that I came to know and love Lorina, a friendship that in no way betrayed or diminished the earlier image I'd had of her. It was all true except there was more: she had longings and passions and struggles and hurts, and so she became real to me.

I believe that one reason Lorina stayed with us as long as she did is because she found among us a solidarity and understanding she did not find in other circles. Something unique happens when women gather together to create: there is a blurring of the abstract and the concrete, the theoretical and the practical, the personal and the political. Working around themes and ideas always manages to unravel something in one's own experience: deep matters of body, heart and soul which, when shared, lead to the knowledge that others have been there and understand. Lorina felt "safe" in our group to share some of her pain at often feeling overlooked and undervalued as a woman in church publishing. It disturbed me greatly despite the fact that she bore it with a forgiving spirit and was never disloyal or bitter. I believe she found among us a sort of refuge from the lonely tensions of her job. Perhaps she discovered a language that helped name these experiences and a framework that contained them. I felt honoured at her trust and willingness to be vulnerable with us and share the joys and sorrows of her journey.

But what will always stay with me when I think of Lorina is her final time of sharing before she and Roland left for Germany this last time and she had to take her leave from our board. The sacrifices Lorina made near the

end of her life, I think, qualify her for sainthood. There she was – 57 years old with a good job, a lovely home, newly married kids, small grandchildren and well in view of a pleasant retirement among a multitude of friends and supporters. And she was leaving it all to go and live among strangers in a dingy apartment in a bombed-out city. It was not an easy move, and I recall sensing the agony of pulling up roots, the turmoil over selling and giving away her things, of caring yet not wanting to care. But she felt firm in her commitment and believed God was in control of this new quest propelling her into an unknown future. And while I marveled at how she could endure all this loss and questioned why God would ask it of her, she spoke of her sense of peace and willingness to submit. My admiration knew no bounds.

And so when I heard that only a short while after this new ministry had begun, she was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour, it all seemed so twisted and cruel, a callous rejection of her sacrifice, a tainted benediction that mocked her sacred act of devotion. I'm sure Lorina did not think of it this way. I am told she carried her illness, as she did her life, with dignity and grace. Perhaps she had already heard, as Frederick Buechner puts it, the "whispers from the wings of the stage."

I am grateful that our lives were able to touch, however briefly, and for what she taught me about Christian humility, forgiveness and courage. I offer my comfort to Roland and the family and send my dear sister on her way with the words of a Gaelic blessing:

Deep peace of the running wave to you
 Deep peace of the flowing air to you
 Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
 Deep peace of the shining stars to you
 Deep peace of the gentle night to you
 Moon and stars pour their healing light on you
 Deep peace of Christ the light of the world to you.

.....
Eleanor Ewert Martens, a former member of Sophia's editorial collective, is the Nurse Coordinator at Hope Centre, an inner city community health clinic in Winnipeg. She and her husband, Ray, attend River East MB Church.

From the Source

Continued from page 4

going to the real Zion – he was going to that *voice* in the desert, he was going *home*.

John hands this same two-edged legacy down to us – the written Word of God and Jesus, the Living Word. No matter what prison comes to us of despair, grief, trouble, illness, evil or death, the bedrock of truth that John knew in Jesus Christ is the same bedrock that steadies our feet. Jesus always answers us with himself.

This bedrock is our legacy to now pass on to others – the best and only true legacy there is.

.....
Jean Reimer is a member of Church of the Way in Winnipeg, and also of Cornerstone Bible Church in Steinbach (formerly the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church). She is a member of Wycliffe Bible Translators, and worked in West Africa in translation and literacy for 18 years. She now resides in Steinbach, but continues to work full-time with Wycliffe.

Where did we come from?

In 1996, Canada was home to 5 million immigrants, a 14.5% increase since 1991. The increase was slightly more than three times the growth rate of Canadian-born people. An average of 235,000 immigrants per year were admitted to Canada between 1990 and 1995. In the 1950s the average was 150,000. It was less than that in the subsequent three decades.

In 1996, European immigrants accounted for less than half the total immigrant population, due to a growing influx from Asia and the Middle East.

In 1981, 67% of Canadian immigrants were born in Europe. In 1996, that rate declined to 47%. Immigrants from Asia and Middle East increased from 14% in 1981 to 31% in 1996.

Where are we headed in our families?

The number of two-person families doubled between 1971 and 1996, while the number of families with eight or more persons was less than 10 percent of the 1971 rate. There is less than half the number of six-person families than in 1971, even with a growth in population.

Summary: The average number of persons per family declined from 3.7 in 1971 to 3.1 in 1996.



Reunion: *A Gift of Love*

by Betty Klassen

RACHEL BAERG

My husband, Ernest, and I learned of the acute need for foster homes for babies in the late 1950s from our neighbours across the street. I had enjoyed teaching a grade 1 class but had resigned in favour of caring for our own little ones. Ernest was very busy not only as a teacher but also as a pastor, having founded the Bergthaler Mennonite Church in Winnipeg (now Home Street Mennonite Church). Our neighbours pleaded with me to consider caring for a foster infant. I was quite certain we would not qualify because we had no extra bedroom, but to please our neighbours we gave them permission to submit our name to the Children's Aid Society. As a result, we and our home were checked and, to our surprise, accepted. We had to promise total care and total cooperation whenever the society would ask us to give the children up again.

The first baby entrusted to us was tiny, premature Stefan. Along with the baby came instructions, among them what to do in case the baby should die while in our care. This affected me so seriously that I lay awake throughout the first night, listening to his breathing. He developed very well, though, and in two months' time he was adopted.

We were offered another baby immediately, but I asked for a three-week intermission in which to do some extra work, such as sewing for our boys. It was very difficult to go from twenty-four hour responsibility for a child to his complete absence. I had to dismantle the crib after Stefan left; it was too hard to walk past the empty little bed.

Kimberley, our second foster baby, came to us at three months and stayed for a year and nine months. We enjoyed very much having a little girl in the family. The boys liked to play with her, thus helping to care for her. Kimberley had been abandoned by her mother, but one day when I took her downtown to shop, her mother saw us and contacted Children's Aid to reclaim her. It was difficult to give her up to this mother who still seemed so irresponsible, but after several court hearings we had to release her.

Angela was our third foster child. She came to us in April 1963 at five months, a very unhappy child who could not settle down. She cried and cried. After several days of carrying her in my arms constantly, I was so exhausted I wondered aloud one evening whether we'd have to admit failure and return her to the Children's Aid. For Ernest this was out of the question. We would follow through on what we had begun. In response I said, "Then you have to help me."

I wondered whether Angela might be protesting the fact that I was not her mother. The social worker shed a bit of light on the matter by telling me that Angela had come

from a home where there were about seven or eight other young children and that she was sleeping in a big bed with a number of them. Here she had a large crib all to herself.

Very gradually, improvement came and we were able to enjoy this child as part of our family. In time her blond hair curled naturally and the mischief in her eyes added charm to her smile. She endeared herself to our extended family and church community.

Angela was available for adoption. She had been registered Catholic and so no parents of other religious affiliation would be considered. Most adopting parents want infants, so by the time she was about eighteen months old, Angela's chances did not seem very promising. But she was tested and rated equivalent to a three-year-old. This, the social worker claimed, was due to the atmosphere in our home. The social worker was confident that any parents who saw this child would want to adopt her without hesitation. She

arranged for a meeting to acquaint other social workers with Angela. When we arrived at the designated time and place, Angela, wearing the frilly white blouse and leaf-green jumper I had made for her, willingly took the social worker's hand and walked bravely into the room filled with strangers. She was so beautiful! When the social worker returned her to my care, she said, "Angela stole the show!" Everyone had been impressed and enthusiastic.

We had been asked to include Angela in our plans for fall when suddenly news came that there was a couple willing to consider adopting her. At their first meeting they knew they wanted her. After a few more visits, the time came for us to say farewell. Angela was almost twenty months old. She had been in our home for a year and three months.

On the morning of her departure she was dressed up, her white shoes freshly polished. The boys were walking with her outside, close to the house, while we were waiting. She was unhappy, perhaps intuitively so. I wiped her tears and tried to comfort her. After our last hugs and kisses had been given and she was settled in the social worker's car with her package of belongings, we waved goodbye as we watched her leaving familiar surroundings to embark on the new chapter in her life.

My son Alvin and I, both fighting back tears, went into the house. He exclaimed, "We should never do this again!" I had not prepared myself adequately for the sadness of this occasion. We had thought it would be best for Angela to have parents. We had prayed for this, and yet the parting was so hard. Friends, too, had prayed about her adoption but sympathized with us now in regard to our sense of loss.

*On the morning of
February 7, 1991,
our phone rang.
"Is this the home of
Reverend Ernest
Wiebe? Did you have
a foster daughter in
the early 1960s?
Would you be willing
to meet with her?"*

Some people claimed they could never care for foster children because they could not bear to give them up. We, on the other hand, had been taught that one does it for the time one spends with them, for the contribution one can make in a child's life in a very formative stage. And so we dwelt on the good memories we had of each child rather than on the difficulty of the final separation. Matthew 18:5 says it well: Jesus said, "...whoever welcomes a little child...in my name welcomes me" (NIV).

For years after these events we were asked whether we had ever heard from Kimberley or Angela again. The answer was always, no, we were not permitted to stay in touch.

After an interval of over twenty-six years, on the morning of February 7, 1991, our phone rang. The caller identified himself as Ken Reddig. He had a series of questions: "Is this the home of Reverend Ernest Wiebe? Did you have a foster daughter in the early 1960s? Do you have baby pictures of her? Would you be willing to meet with her?"

"Yes to all questions! Is it Kimberley or Angela?"

"I don't know, I've just been asked to help locate you. May I give your phone number to her so she can call you?"

"Please do!" This was exciting!

Angela called shortly after lunch from her office where she had received the news that we had finally been located. She had been so overwhelmed that she had to take several hours to compose herself before dialing our number. She related that she had grown up with her adoptive parents just north of Winnipeg, that she had an adopted sister, that she had found her birth parents years ago; that in her background was a large family and that she had half-siblings; that she had married, that they had a daughter; that, as she watched her baby grow she had begun to wonder, more strongly than ever what she herself had been like when she was a baby. Where had she been? Were there some pictures? She had a deep longing within her to find the "missing piece of the puzzle."

She had begun her search for us the previous fall. She contacted an organization called New Faces, which had been started to help people find each other. For several months the search was futile. Then the director followed through on an idea. Perhaps his friend in the Archives, Ken Reddig, could help. He asked. Ken knew where to begin. He went to the phone books from the early '60s and checked for a "Wiebe" at the address Angela had been given from her file. When he found the name, with "Rev." in front of it, he followed up by calling the General Conference of Mennonites office. And so it was, just twenty minutes after he received the request, he reached me by phone.

Angela and I talked for a long time. I sensed that her underlying question was really, "Why didn't you adopt me?" She said she always knew she had been taken away from a

place where she would have preferred to stay; no one ever had to tell her she was adopted. I explained that we had not even had the freedom to consider adoption; that we had been made very aware of the law that at that time prescribed that she could be adopted exclusively by Catholic parents. This seemed to be helpful information.

Angela told me my voice matched my hand-writing. This puzzled me. My hand-writing? Yes, she said, she had a letter I had written. How could that be? She promised to show it to me. We planned to meet as soon as possible. When I told Ernest about it that evening, he exclaimed, "This is a miracle!"

The next days were filled with happy anticipation. I selected all the photos we had taken of Angela. I checked some boxes and found the baby clothes we had had for her, blouse and jumper included. When Angela arrived at our house a few days later, we were delighted to "recognize" her – she was the grown-up version of the little girl we remembered. I showed her the photos and promised to make reprints. I gave her the baby clothes she had worn and observed how gently she treated them, as items of great value.

She showed us a photo album of her girlhood years. She showed us the letter I had written. It was like an introduction to Angela, written to ease the transition to her adoptive parents. In it I had described her routine, habits, things she could do, say and understand. I had forgotten I had included this writing with the things she took along when she left us. Angela also brought her adoption paper. In it was the comment that she had been a very "irritable" baby and that this had changed during the time spent in our home. It was a comfort for me, even after all the intervening years, to discover that she was irritable before she came, not because she came.

This "mountaintop" experience of joy preceded our journey through the "valley of the shadow of death." Two weeks after our initial visit with Angela, Ernest suffered a heart attack at home. After eight days in the hospital and another heart attack, he died. Angela sent flowers to Ernest during his week in the hospital and attended the service at the funeral chapel the evening before the funeral. There she met my family.

Since then we have visited by phone and also in each other's homes. This past August, Angela, her daughter and I went to visit Ken Reddig. Ken claimed he has seldom had such a happy outcome of his efforts to help people reunite; also, he claimed, it's very rare for a foster child to search for foster parents.

.....
Betty Klassen (formerly Wiebe) recently remarried and lives in Winnipeg with her husband, J.M. Klassen. They are members of Home Street Mennonite Church and River East MB Church respectively.



Angela's Response

I'm what is referred to as an "adult adoptee." I was adopted when I was a year and eight months old. There is not a logical reason, but I have always known that I was adopted. Society says that children do not, or perhaps cannot, remember their lives as babies, but I believe otherwise.

My biological parents were teenagers when I was born. My mother gave me up for adoption believing that it was best for me. In some ways it was but in some ways, no, it was not. I feel very ripped off that my own mother did not raise me, but I also feel that there was a reason for why things were and are the way they are. One thing I can say is that I would never give up a baby for adoption because of my experiences and the way my life has turned out.

When I was eighteen years old I found my biological parents. I can honestly say that I was very happy to finally

meet and talk with my "real" mom and dad. This was a very big piece of the puzzle that had been missing from my life. I was lucky that they and their families accepted me.

Another part of the story is about the foster parents who looked after me when I was a baby till I was about twenty months old. This was the Wiebe family. I cannot say how, but I've always known in my heart that they cared for me and that I was happy living in their home. When I left their house to live with my adoptive parents I was very sad. I don't know why I know this, but I just do. Some experts say that adoption doesn't hurt a child. They say they can't remember. Well, they are wrong. I remember that something was not right; that it was different. I knew that I had been taken away from a place where I was happy.

My life has been very rocky and disruptive and I do not know if I would be a different person had I been raised by Betty and Ernest Wiebe. I really would like to think that it would have been different. These things we don't know and of course will never know.

I'm thankful that I was able to meet the Wiebe family and was very happy that they had pictures of me when I was a baby. This to some people may not be a big deal, but to me it was. Another piece of the puzzle was filled in. As far as I'm concerned this was another step closer to finding out who I am and where I come from.

One memory from my childhood that I always thought was a dream was of the house that I lived in with the Wiebe family. Betty gave me the address of the duplex where they resided when I was in their care. One day I checked it out. I was shocked. This was the house in my dream! In my dream we were standing across the street at the bus stop and someone was talking about the lady that lived upstairs. I was only a small child and yet I have one memory of my life with the Wiebe family. I think that's quite awesome!

I can say this. My story has a very happy ending, just like a fairy tale.

I am very blessed to know my foster family, the Wiebes. I'm very blessed to know my biological parents and am fortunate that when I was a young child a family adopted me.

.....
Angela, her husband and their daughter live in Winnipeg.

Who's minding the kids?

Females are four times as likely as males to spend more than 60 hours per week on childcare. But the male and female rates are similar up until 15 hours per week, when the female rate climbs and the male rate diminishes.

*We have heard with our ears, O God, our
ancestors have told us, what deeds you per-
formed in their days, in the days of old.
Psalm 44:1 NRSV*

The Prayer of an Anabaptist Woman

by Jane Woelk

Merciful Giver of Peace and Justice, hear my prayers concerning the history of the Anabaptists: Jesus, supreme example of what a peacemaker should be; you told the crowds on the mountain that the peacemakers will be blessed. Mennonites through the centuries have been known for their peacemaking activities, beginning in the sixteenth Century. They took to heart Philippians 4:7, when the first Christians were blessed by the words, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Peace has been a way of living for Mennonites and has been expressed most prominently by their conscientious-objector status during war times, when they would work at alternate service but would not take up arms.

Holy, Great Provider, help me to embrace and understand the reasoning that motivates these people who pronounce their faith by defining themselves as peacemakers when all around them persecution and conflict have reigned. During the Anabaptist movement, a movement to instill newness of life, men and women were rebaptized in defiance of the church and state political system and were tortured, imprisoned, decapitated, drowned or burned at the stake for this action. For a community of believers who sought peace with their entire being, Lord God, they certainly caused much conflict and unrest by their actions. Did they pray as the Psalmist prayed:

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror, My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O Lord – how long? Psalm 6:1-3

Prince of Peace, since you established your kingdom by way of the Church, Anabaptists did not feel that it was their right to execute vengeance, and therefore would not raise their fists or swords against another soul. In Menno Simons's own words in 1550, "The regenerated do not go to war, nor engage in strife.... They are the children of peace who have beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and know of no war. Spears and

swords of iron we leave to those who alas, consider human blood and swine's blood of well-nigh equal value" (Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision*).

This policy continues to this day and was articulated in 1942 by the Mennonite Central Committee: "...We believe that this way of life means the fullest exercise of love, Scriptural non-resistance to evil, and complete avoidance of the use of violence, including warfare" (Kauffman, Harder, "Anabaptists: Four Centuries Later: A Profile of Five Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Denominations").

Eternal Giver of Life, hear my prayer as I agonize over what effect this stance had on the Anabaptist women and children over the past four centuries. I think of the mothers who, in the 1520s, were chained to their homes so that they could not spread the good news of Anabaptism. Those were the fortunate ones. Others, such as sisters Anna and Ursula Maler, were drowned for their faith in 1529. Others were killed for harbouring Anabaptists in their homes. Children stood and watched as their mothers were taken away, without resistance, to be charged and



condemned for their beliefs. Did their faith endure these horrendous experiences?

Do not, O Lord, withhold your mercy from me; let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever. Psalm 40:11

I remember hearing a story, Father of Heaven and Earth, of Kathrina Redekopp in the early 1900s, a woman heavy with her fourth pregnancy (yet she was childless as all of her children had died) who ran out of her home in Southern Ukraine to stand in front of her husband, Abram, who was about to be shot by soldiers. She did not raise up a hand, but she succeeded in saving her husband's life. Did David's words come to mind during that hopeless time in her life?

You have seen, O Lord; do not be silent! O Lord, do not be far from me! Wake up! Bestir yourself for my defense, for my cause, my God and my Lord! Psalm 35:22-23

Oh, Great God of our Petitions, I ask you, how could Abram stand by and watch his pregnant wife be raped, then stabbed to death, and finally, watch his child be cut out of her belly by rebels, without defending her? Is this what taking a peace stance is all about? I don't quite understand; please forgive me Great Forgiver of all Confessed Sins, for my hesitancy to accept this as a part of the peace stance.

Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people; from those who are deceitful and unjust deliver me! Psalm 43:1

Then there was the typhoid outbreak of the early 1900s when, one week after her husband died of the fever, Mary Janzen stood by helplessly as Russian rebels stole what food remained in her pantry. Should her heart have been at peace as she contemplated how she would feed her five children as well as her unborn child? I ask whether those rebels would have been so brave if they had not known that the Mennonites had taken a stand of non-resistance? In her devastation, did Mary question you as the Psalmist did?

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest." Psalm 22:1-2

God of all Nations, remember in the mid-1930s when hundreds of husbands, brothers and sons were forcibly removed from their homes in the quiet, peaceful Mennonite farming communities of Russia. Only women and children were left behind, and most of those males were never seen or heard from again. Have the hearts of those women and children been at peace since that horrific night? Can the peace that only comes from you calm and soothe their pain?

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Psalm 13:1-2

In the twenty-first Century, God of all Ages, the pacifist church of Mennonite Brethren ironically encourages persecution of their own women by stipulating that in church leadership settings, they are to remain under the dominion of men, instead of under you, oh Lord, whether you have called them, or not. Why, oh Supreme Entity of Equality, are Mennonite churches accepting of the labours of women as long as they are in subordinate roles? Why are they behind most denominations in working toward wholeness among all people in the church? Many women wonder, as David did in the Psalms:

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Psalm 42:5

Like King David, I have many unanswered questions about what being protected by the All-empowering Protector means, and what your "blessing the peacemakers," entails. Give ear to our soul-wrenching inquiries, O Lord.

Ruler of all Anabaptists, I implore you to work in our hearts and create peace where there is unrest and justice where there is conflict. Assist us and all future generations of the Anabaptist movement to love and work toward peace and wholeness in all aspects of life. Give us patience as we wait for positive change in all of the above areas.

You, O Lord, will protect us; you will guard us from this generation forever. On every side, the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among humankind. Psalm 12:7-8

.....
Jane Woelk completed her BA in Conflict Resolution Studies this spring. She hopes to focus her energies on her own conflict transformation home business, mediating conflicts in families, and teaching conflict and anger management in schools. She and her husband, David, parent two teenagers and are members of McIvor Ave MB Church. Jane is a member of Sophia's board.

Lisa Woelk, Jane's daughter is fifteen years old.

Opening the Dialogue

How have you experienced peace theology?

Send your thoughts and ideas to:

Opening the Dialogue

c/o Sophia Magazine

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A Legacy of Forgiveness

by Valerie Boucher

"Eternity is not something that begins after you are dead. It is going on all the time. We are in it now." Charlotte P Gilman (1860-1935)

"It would be nice, in our lifetime, to leave a significant, positive legacy." My husband, Bruce

Generations pass quickly. We think back to our grandparents' lives and they seem but a whisper in time. Yesterday, I sat watching people while waiting for my husband. I saw an older woman getting her grocery cart. Only yesterday, she was 45 like me. Today, she is old. "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12 NIV).

My grandparents struggled and starved, lived in war zones, endured the terror of lawless bandits and godless government. Grandfather stood, gun in hand, to defend his village. I'm inspired by his courage. Grandmother died young. Her life stirs nostalgia within me. Music and love of life is her epitaph.

My second grandmother was my friend. She loved the Lord and those in her world with all her heart. She stands with open arms and a big smile in my memory. Grandmother was noisy and brash; a round, small person. Laughter was her trademark. Sadly, her last days were sickly and depressing. And yet, what stays with me is her chicken soup and *peroshky*, her big smile, dirty glasses perched on

Who does the housework?

Females over age 15 are almost twice as likely to spend 15-29 hours on housework per week as males. Males are twice as likely as females to spend no time per week on housework, including yard work and home maintenance. Females are more than four times as likely as males to spend more than 60 hours per week.

20 percent are poor.

The rate of children under 18 living in low-income families has changed little since 1982, when 19% of children were poor. Now 19.8% have low incomes, down from 21.3% in 1993.

her rosy-cheeked face. Her life taught me reality.

My other grandfather was a quiet man dedicated to his family and a writer in his own right. I find some roots.

Dad starved the first sixteen years of his life. The war in Europe marched through the streets of his childhood. His family escaped to freedom in a cart full of loved ones and scant belongings. Today he is a loving and godly father. His life teaches true parenthood.

My mother was born here in Canada. She grew up on a farm in southern Manitoba. Her mother died when she was eight years old. Not allowed to see her buried, how could she understand what was happening? The little child became the little mother, baking bread and cooking meals for six brothers. Today she is a woman of quiet strength.

From a letter to my daughter...

Remember the boat ride on Friday night? *Oma*, you and me? This weekend has painted a beautiful picture of *Oma*, *Oma*, leaning on the railing, being pals with you and me.

My mother, your mother, you
the three of us.

Oma hobnobbing with her cousins, her eyes bright,
her cheeks flushed with happiness
This family, this is dear.

Oma, sitting and watching the baseball game with me
cheering and keeping score
She is beautiful
she has grace
the years are kind on her
she is our heritage of womanhood

Gentleness, beauty, wisdom, kindness,
love, these attributes describe our Mary

As the years grace us
these attributes of hers
will describe us as well,
only with different flavour.

Hardship made good people, and these people loved God. For this inheritance, I am thankful. Years ago, a good friend of mine asked me, "What do you want to see at the end of your life?" We were walking along the beach, the sun was setting, the water lapping. Years later, when my first marriage was ripped apart, my dad challenged me with a similar thought. "How you react today will profoundly affect your children and your children's children."

I wept. I was overwhelmed with a feeling of immense responsibility. I felt pitifully small and insignificant, and at the same time, the future well-being of my

children and grandchildren rested within the decisions of my heart. Overwhelming.

I chose forgiveness. And turned my back on bitterness.

May I never forget where I came from. I thank God as I gather the golden nuggets of my past and try to learn from the good and the bad. Some really have to struggle to rise above past legacies that have dealt some rough blows. But rise above we must. Our life is too short here on earth.

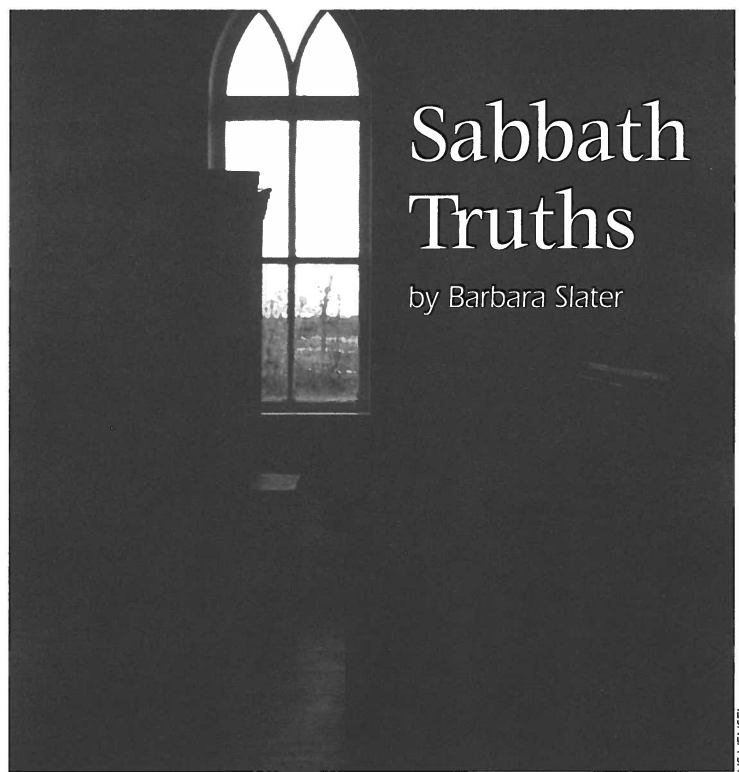
My children have seen me struggle to get up out of the dirt of a broken marriage. They too; and they are learning to rise above the legacy of divorce. They live with the reality of their daddy not being there for them. Now I stand, dirt washed off, face washed from all those tears, and I see I have the rest of my life to leave the best I can.

It's not up to me to tell my children what legacy I leave behind. It is up to them to understand it for themselves. It is my heart's desire to be a true follower of Christ. For no matter what comes our way, with God we can make it through. In that struggle we leave our legacy.

The narrow path is under my feet. Legacy, from generation to generation, means a lifetime to make it good. Pray it so. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways, acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Today, I am a grandmother.
Need I say more?

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*Valerie Boucher, homemaker,
mother of eight (at last count), lives in
St. Andrews, Manitoba.*



Flat light
sweeps down over the Prairie,
the fields picked clean
for winter. A single patch of rapeseed
spreads its gold
close to the road.

We poke down the highway
early for church.
Our conversation
mundane
mere scraps of cloud.

A sense of lightness.
The blue air
beckons.

This gentle field we walk in,
how did we get here? Old images
linger my guilty rages
your silences
the crossfire of words
so much chaff
once forced out.

Knots of fear
we would always be
strangers.

The only respite
secret loves.

Adulterous yearnings
etched in the dark.

Each spring
we planted a garden
dug in compost
scattered seed. Evenings
we walked the straight rows
searching for green, sifting
soil through our fingers.

What wisdom
spread its roots
blessing the children
surprising us
with its occasional
blooms?

The timber church
shifts in the wind. Light
sifts through stained glass
crimson sapphire gold.

We kneel side by side
my arm pressed against yours.
A pocket of air
where the stone has been.
A sunburst of thanks
for the new softness
the calm.

W.W.J.R.?

(What Would Jesus Read...?)

By Donna Neufeld

I've got the itch. It is drawing me, slowly, inexorably; with long, languid, sunbaked days and empty hammocks crooning my name from shady green depths.

Summer Reading. The life blood of warm-hearted months. A thread that re-weaves the frayed ends of life, and presents me whole to face September's baffle.

A simple matter of whisking into the local library to snatch up the latest well-written novel that moves me with its prose, delights me with its wit, and baffles my soul with truth and beauty... NOT!

I want something lighter than Dostoevsky, weightier than Harlequin. I want a thriller without having to wade through #So/o&! every four lines. I want mystery and a touch of romance without all that premarital sex. And I want it all at the Public Library. (Yeah, right: and have Santa deliver world peace and get me into a size 8 swim suit at the same time!)

Not so fast, ye scoffers and mockers – I am here to tell you that there is hope!

Through years of trial and error and dogged determination, I have compiled a list of Christian books that goes beyond the few tepid novels on the obligatory "Inspirational" rack.

I have hunted out fictional works written by Christian authors aimed at the secular audience. I don't know their personal theology, and cannot promise all meat with no bones. I chose works for the list because a positive view of Christianity plays some role in the story; they are well written but not well known; and each of them have offered me a taste of glory, enchantment and delight!

The List

Fantasy

The Book of the Dun Cow, by Walter Wangerin. A gentle fable set in a barnyard, where a Rooster leads the others in standing against an Evil washing over the land. Well done – a favourite I always revisit.

Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold, by C. S. Lewis. This expanded folk tale – Cupid and Psyche or Beauty and the Beast – is very simply told but resonates with rich spirituality. Different style than most of Lewis's works, so don't go into it expecting Narnia, and it's a better read.

Science Fiction

The Space trilogy by C. S. Lewis: 1. *Out of the Silent Planet*; 2. *Perelandra* (sometimes titled: *Voyage to Venus*); 3. *That Hideous Strength*. I would have never included this (assuming that all Lewis's works are universally known), but many people have never even heard of these three novels. The books follow a scientist named Ransom, and are written in the fashion of 1930s science fiction. Fun, thought provoking; they must be read in order.

Action Thriller

Haywire, by James Mills. A great alternative to Forsythe and Clancy. It's got a few bones, but the meat of the book is exciting and true to the fast-paced action thriller form. A Christian book in this genre is rare indeed.

Mystery

Fool's Puzzle, *Irish Chain*, etcetera, by Earlene Fowler. Light reading about a thirty-ish Californian widow – Benni Harper – who leaves the ranch to start a new life directing a folk art Museum. Then she meets A Man.... Fun, with well-drawn characters, quilt patterns and some romantic spice! There are more books in the series, but the first two are key to it all. *Read in order!*

Supernatural Thriller

Various books – mostly short stories by Flannery O'Connor. This southern woman's stories stunned me. All right, at first I didn't actually understand them, but then I laid hold of an explanatory book, *Flannery O'Connor: A Proper Scaring*, by Jill P. Baumgaertner, and whole new worlds unfolded before my eyes. Some of the titles to look for are: *The Violent Bear It Away*, and *Everything That Rises Must Converge*. Do not attempt these books without Baumgaertner's text by your side or you'll miss the whole thing!

Numerous Titles (*All Hallow's Eve*, *Descent into Hell*, *War in Heaven*, *The Place of the Lion*, etcetera) by Charles Williams. Williams, a member of the Inklings with Tolkien and Lewis, writes dark and complex novels, heavily laden with atmosphere and symbolism. His books are not to all tastes, and they are hard to find. But persevere – Williams's mystical word pictures return to me almost daily with fresh force and insight. A good "first" book may be either *The Place of the Lion* or *All Hallow's Eve*.

The Man Who Was Thursday, and the Father Brown detective series (various titles, mostly short stories) by G. K. Chesterton. *The Man...* is an intriguing look at anarchy in a world without God, written in the early twentieth century. Strongly written, rife with paradox; the portrayal of God's heart toward us moved me deeply. The Father Brown stories are classic mystery puzzles with delectable insights into Christian character. What can I say? I love (though don't always understand) Chesterton!

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When not reading in her hammock, Donna Neufeld is busy raising four children and working at many creative projects. She and her family live in Winnipeg.

A one-day conference sponsored by the MCC Manitoba Women's Concerns Committee was held on March 25 in the beautiful surroundings of Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. The day's theme was "Moving Towards Wholeness: Mennonite Women in the New Century." As the attenders entered the sanctuary, all eyes centred on the banner made by Anna Klassen, and the wood sculpture made by Lenora Kehler, both of which pictured a bare-footed young woman reaching out her hands to the sky in worship of God. The woman was in a dance-step motion beside a life-giving tree. These works provided a stark and poignant portrayal of a woman seeking wholeness in God's presence.

Tina Fehr-Kehler from Altona shared the perspective of the planning committee on the purpose of the conference, which was to address the sense that women are struggling to become complete and whole people. She spoke of women not needing to walk alone in envisioning a new future of moving from brokenness to wholeness, because we can walk with each other on this lifelong journey towards wholeness.

Christine Longhurst led the gathering in healing, whole, hopeful worship, sharing the story of the man beside the pool of Bethesda who needed to wait for the waters to stir before climbing in and receiving health and wholeness. She invited all to let God's love into the most painful, broken parts of their spirit.

The worship sessions led all through reverent prayers and songs, which focused on looking to God in hope for wholeness, throughout all of the trials of life. The liturgical prayers were a gentle combination of praise and petition for renewal.

The keynote speaker was Kathryn Mitchell Loewen, the MCC Canada Women's Network Coordinator, who spoke on living the "dance" of faith as women. She used the image of a potter in the intimate act of shaping the clay and working it until it is balanced and whole, as the way God is intimate with women of faith and as how God

Moving Towards Wholeness: A Conference to Remember

by Jane Woelk
and Christine Kampen



envision the final products and shapes them throughout their lifetime until they are balanced and whole. Sharing of stories and being touched by God and others are two of the steps in the dance towards wholeness.

Several workshops were offered for the morning and afternoon sessions. Some of the topics included: "Women and singleness," "Women and Leadership," "Women in Conflict," as well as others related to marriage, family and church work themes. The workshop leaders were extremely knowledgeable in their particular fields and all invited the people present to experience wholeness in relationship with God.

The offering gathered was to be sent to train birth assistants in India, who, it is hoped, will combat the high infant mortality rate by providing pre-natal and post-natal care for women living there. Enough funds were gathered to train around 300 birth assistants. The people present were also invited to contribute to a fund that would be used to promote Women's Concerns in Manitoba because the funds originating from MCC are limited.

At 8:00 P.M. all gathered together for a coffeehouse held in the fellowship hall of Bethel

Mennonite Church. The first performer was the vocalist Monica Schroeder whose melodic, lyrical songs touched the longing for wholeness in her listeners. Sarah Klassen shared several of her poems about Mennonite women and some from her new book *Simone Weil: Songs of Hunger and Love*. The stark reality and beautiful imagery held the audience's attention, and captured the history of her people.

Cara Luft, a gifted singer and musician, then shared several folksy, guitar-accompanied songs about God's call to freedom, others about love, and some that were simply whimsical. A wonderful evening fasha was served, amid special decorations that had been provided.

Thank you to the coordinators, Tina Fehr-Kehler, Christine Enns, Merrill Unger, Lori Unger-Brandt, Christine Longhurst, and Jessica Kehler for a job well done.

The Legacy of the Present

by Ron Sonnichsen

Thinking about legacies often takes on two temporal directions. We can think about the legacies bequeathed upon us by past generations and accept them with gratitude or rail against them with bitterness; or we can think about what legacies we will leave for generations to come, either with pride or anxiety. Legacies are about extensions of space and time and qualitative contributions and achievements. But let us take stock of the present moment, for it too is a facet of our legacy.

Reality already has your fingerprints all over it. Reality is whatever is before you this very instant as you read these words. Pause for a moment. Imagine that time has stopped. Reality is what is before your eyes – take a look. It is what you now hear – listen. It is the temperature of the air, the aches and pains, tickles and itches you feel right now. Everyone who crosses your field of vision, who fills the air with their voices and noise, affects you in some way, however slight. And we affect others in the same way.

Every action you do, every word you utter, every attitude you unconsciously project, shapes and unfolds the world for good or for ill. Every moment of your existence adds or subtracts from the Beauty, Goodness, and Truth of the world. I suspect you feel this terrible responsibility, though you may not be aware of it or pretend not to care. But whether or not you are conscious of this fact, whether you participate or remain indifferent, you still live, speak and play out your legacy. This thought could burden you or it could help you live with more deliberation, attention and intention.

Realize this: You were given the gift of life, and you are also a gift to Life. All the sub-atomic events, molecular

reactions, genetic recombinations – indeed, all events of human history – have ended up in you. Right now you are an end point of the past's legacies. And you are a legacy, continuing the whole process, participating in Life's endless, incessant flow. As such, you bear the weight of past choices and patterns. You may be hemmed in by anxieties and fears, resentments and disappointments, failures and successes. These may have been your family's legacy – Grandpa's attitudes, Grandma's fears, your parents' hopes, your family's ways of relating, the defenses you learned along with any incurred guilt or shame.

The result is that you often hide the gift that you are for fear of being hurt and rejected. This fear limits your choice as to how to respond to the Reality of the present. Your anger, jealousy, envy, habits, your drives to succeed, control, possess, deceive or play games thwart your being known to others and also limit your choices. What is it that we do with each other that causes so much hurt and anger, anxiety and isolation?

No matter how locked into such patterns you may feel, you still have choices that can change these patterns. You and I are not doomed to keep spinning our collective historical wheels. But to get unstuck, you have to survey your situation, take stock of your present and formulate strategies based on available options and resources.

Stopping and asking questions is part of this process. Where are you now in your life? With whom do you relate? What are your priorities, goals and deepest desires? What is the quality of your relations? If you were to pass away from Being today, what would have been your impact on life and the universe? What impact would Life and the

universe have had on you?

You are a witness to the lives of others; others are witnesses to your own life. You are a witness to all that you have seen and heard, tasted and smelled, touched and wondered about. What experiences have you savoured? What experiences have you wished for but have not had yet? What regrets do you have? Who has influenced you? Whom have you influenced? Whom have you loved? Who has loved you? Whom have you hated? With whom have you parted company – for what reasons, with what words, what feelings? Who has helped you, whom have you aided with word or deed?

What beliefs have you cherished? Which have you outgrown? What ideas have fed you? Which have held you down?

The questions could go on, the questions that give us pause and consideration of what really matters in life. The questions we live, the answers we seek, should be taken in slowly and pondered, for within them is the very stuff of our legacy. They help us live within the bounds of our own mortality and make the choices we need to make to fulfill our deepest needs and desires and keep all created life going. As John Donne has asked, and we may ask ourselves, if I must someday die, what can I do now to fulfill my desire to live?

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Ron Sonnichsen likes to read and think and write. He has a BA in Religious Studies from the University of Manitoba and an MDiv from the Winnipeg Theological Consortium. He works with interesting people who are mentally challenged. He is a Mennonite at heart, catholic in spirit and worships and occasionally preaches at Sparling United Church.

Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood

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by William Pollack, Ph.D. (New York:
Random House, 1998), 398 Pages

Reviewed by Helga Doermer

Our sons are in crisis. This is the assumption grounding *Real Boys*. William Pollack presents the reader with his interpretation of the male crisis – the crisis confronting our sons as they navigate confusing and conflicting expectations during their developmental years and beyond. He draws his authority from his experience as clinician and researcher, whose clients are predominantly boys and men.

Real Boys expands the basic assumption. Pollack outlines the nature of the crisis – the dichotomy between what boys are really like and the boy myth they find themselves caught up in. He also explores relational elements affecting boys. Specifically, he highlights the relationships between mother and son, father and son, boys and their peer group, as well as boys' experience of the academic system.

Though crisis may take different forms, Pollack emphasizes three particularly critical issues that leave our sons exceptionally vulnerable and at risk for depression and even suicide. One is the difficulty in diagnosing depression in boys. Another is the element of violence inherent in the male experience. The third is the interplay between being conditioned to live by the "boy code" and the trauma of parental divorce.

Real Boys is a blend of storytelling, observation and practical antidotes for rectifying the crisis. Pollack's hope is that, in addressing the crisis facing our sons, those in contact with boys (parents, teachers and the wider social milieu) will be provided

with tools to enable our sons to develop skills to more successfully navigate the expectations placed upon them.

Pollack does meet his goal of surfacing issues that push our sons into crisis and he does provide practical suggestions for turning the tide. However, to the discerning reader, it becomes apparent that some of Pollack's suggestions indicate his own biased ideas of what it means to be male. The crisis is real and the antidote needs to be as individual as each of our sons.

Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls

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by Mary Pipher, Ph.D. (New York, G.P.
Putnam's Sons, 1994), 293 pages

Reviewed by Lori Matties

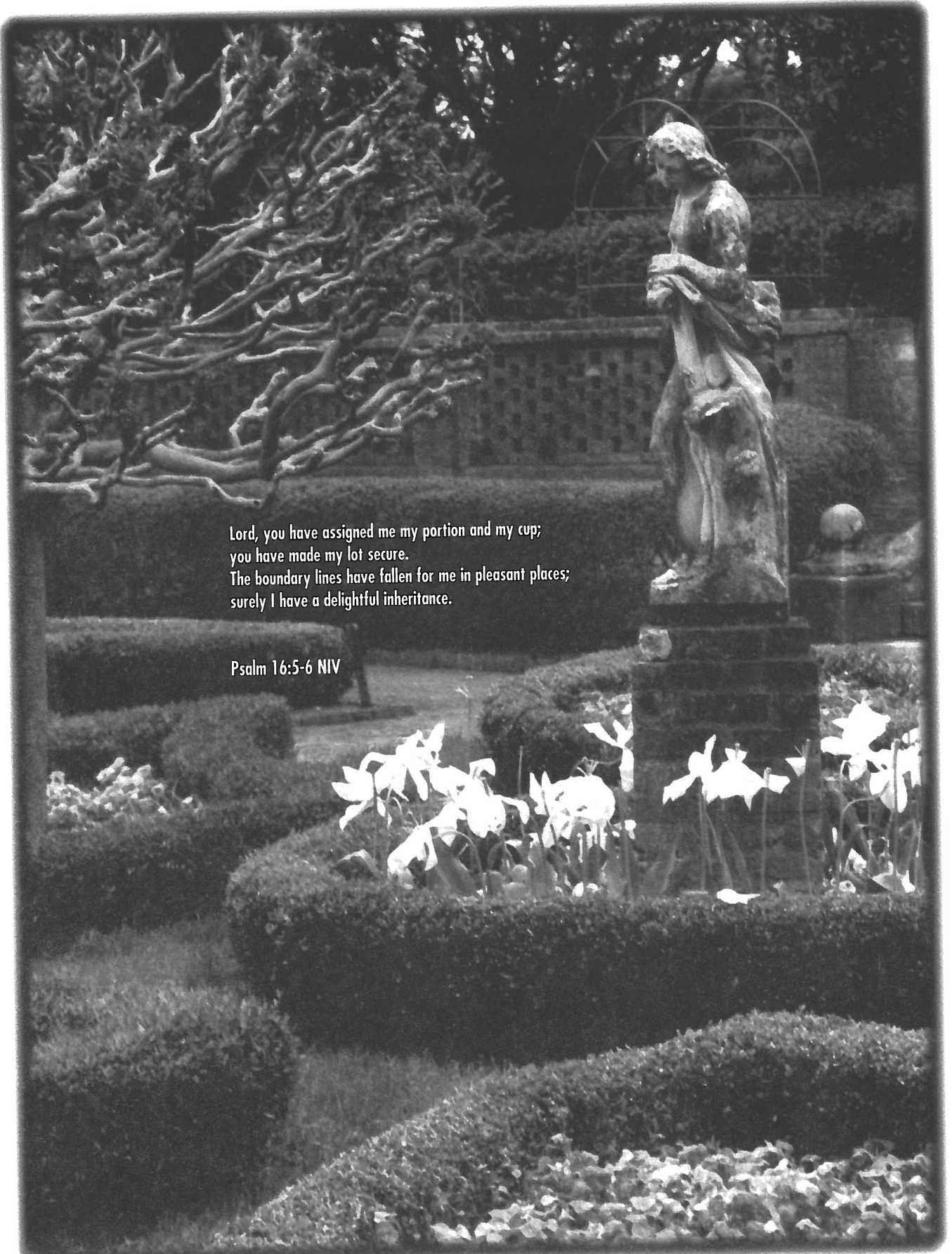
Reviving Ophelia grew out of an attempt to understand the world of adolescent girls today. As a counsellor who works with many of these girls, Mary Pipher wondered why they are having more trouble now than those of her generation of the 1960s. Why, she asks, do girls who in childhood are happy, confident and interested in many things, become uninterested, unconfident, and often self-destructive? Her conclusion is that today's girls do face more difficulties than previous generations: "They are coming of age in a more dangerous, sexualized and media-saturated culture. They face incredible pressures to be beautiful and sophisticated, which in junior high means using chemicals and being sexual. As they navigate a more dangerous world, girls are less protected" (p 12). Many are overwhelmed. Their bodies are changing, and they are being encouraged to distance themselves from their parents at a time when they still very much need the guidance and support parents can give. They lose their true sense of self as

they rely on peers and the media to dictate image and interest.

The book covers issues such as family and discipline systems, depression, thinness, chemical abuse and sexuality. Pipher uses many examples from her counselling sessions, making the book interesting and easy to read. These chapters give a good understanding of the societal issues adolescent girls face and of the often confusing behaviours that result.

In her work, Pipher encourages girls to rediscover their true selves, the things that really interest them, the values they hold deeply as opposed to the values and opinions of those around them. She encourages girls to evaluate what the media and their peers are saying in comparison to what they themselves really believe. Pipher also works to strengthen families, which she says are under great pressure and are often blamed for the problems children face. Although most families experience some tension in adolescent years, in Pipher's experience, girls who live in families in which love and expectations are strongly expressed fare better than those in which love is strong but expectations are low or loosely defined. Girls in families that are weaker in love but strong in expectations and those where both are weak have a harder time than those in the first two cases.

Pipher's strongest criticism is toward those aspects of culture that pressure girls to assume false selves. She encourages all of us to resist "junk values" and to work toward a culture that values and protects people regardless of gender, age or shape. While the book is not written from a faith perspective, and while some of it has become dated in the few short years since it was written, I think it offers valuable information and encouragement to anyone who wants to help adolescent girls navigate the often confusing and hurtful world in front of them.

A black and white photograph of a garden. In the center-right, a statue of a woman in classical attire stands on a pedestal. The garden features meticulously manicured hedges in various shapes, including a large, rounded one in the foreground. Several white flowers, possibly lilies or irises, are in bloom. In the background, there are trees and a decorative metal archway. The overall atmosphere is serene and well-maintained.

Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup;
you have made my lot secure.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
surely I have a delightful inheritance.

Psalms 16:5-6 NIV