

timbrel

jan/
feb
2011

WOMEN IN CONVERSATION TOGETHER WITH GOD



The Christian Practice of Hospitality

Inside:

- **Hospitality Re-Learned 4-6**
- **Prayer as Hospitality 7-9**
- **Bible Study: Toward a Culture of Peace 10-11**

THE PUBLICATION OF MENNONITE WOMEN USA

The Christian Practice of Hospitality


When I think of the Christian spiritual practice of hospitality, my mind immediately goes to the years our family spent living in Indigenous communities. Here, we experienced biblical hospitality from those who so often had very little to share materially. However, they shared their material wealth generously, and shared their time even more graciously. Relationships were more important than any other priorities they may have had—relationships with others as well as their relationship with God. This kind of hospitality to others and to God is truly a Christian spiritual discipline: we have to arrange our time and our lives to accommodate God and others. This takes commitment and discipline. It means being prepared to open your life to guests even if they arrive at an inconvenient moment as well as setting aside time to listen and speak with God.

Americans are known today for their busyness. And they truly are busier than ever. The question to ask is whether the activities Americans are busy with are at the exclusion of hospitality to others and to God. If we do exclude the practice of hospitality because of other priorities, then perhaps it is time to take stock of how we spend our lives. What would we choose as priorities if we knew we only had a few weeks or months to live? The answer to this question may help us reset our priorities.

With the beginning of this new year, may we each discipline ourselves with the help of God to become more intentional about offering gracious hospitality when it is not always planned to those we love and to those we merely encounter in our daily lives. May we especially work at the discipline of offering hospitality to God.

In this issue of *timbrel*, Phyllis Pellman Good writes about how easy it is to be “bothered by the wrong things” when we contemplate offering hospitality. Gladys Geiser writes about hospitality as being the things we can do for others when they are experiencing suffering as she tells the dramatic story of her husband’s kidnapping in Afghanistan. May this issue of *timbrel* help you “re-learn” what hospitality can mean in your life.

Sister Question for March–April

In preparation for the next issue of *timbrel*, which will focus on Prayer and Fasting, consider: **In what ways do I practice the disciplines of prayer and fasting?** Send your response to <PattyB@MennoniteWomenUSA.org>. 

timbrel is the official publication of Mennonite Women USA, a ministry of Mennonite Church USA. *timbrel* provides a place for women to share diverse perspectives and stories and express our prophetic voice as we seek to follow Christ.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official position of Mennonite Women USA or the board for Mennonite Women USA.



Patricia
Burdette

Cover: A teapot, cracked and repaired many times, symbolizes hospitality to Gladys Geiser who sent this photo to use with her story (See story p. 7).

Courtesy photo

All scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

contents

Hospitality Re-Learned by <i>Phyllis Pellman Good</i>	4
Prayer as Hospitality by <i>Gladys Geiser</i>	7
Bible Study by <i>Elizabeth Soto Albrecht</i>	10
Three Windows, Three Women	12
Grapevine	15
Across the Border, Across the Ocean by <i>Jan Springer Rheinheimer</i>	16
Home, Hearth & Health by <i>Susan Mark Landis</i>	18
Stirrings by <i>Heidi Martin</i>	20
Response to Sister Question and Cup of Water	22
On the Road with Rhoda	23

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is a proud mother of two teenage girls Yentli and Sara, and is happily married to Frank Albrecht. An ordained pastor, Elizabeth works at Lancaster Theological Seminary as coordinator of field education and consultant for their cross-cultural seminar trips.

Gladys Geiser, Kidron, Ohio, completed 8 1/2 years of service in Kabul, Afghanistan where she taught in an international elementary school. Currently she is volunteering at MCC Connections in Kidron, OH as well as teaching ESL classes. She plans to go back to Kabul with her husband in the spring of 2011.

Phyllis Pellman Good, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is Senior Editor for Good Books. She especially loves to read and cook, but doesn't seem to have enough time to do either as much as she wishes! Many of the cookbooks she has authored are especially for those who have little time to cook but want to feed their family and friends at home.

Susan Mark Landis, Orville, Ohio, is Denominational Minister for Peace and Justice, Mennonite Church USA. As a mother, teacher, and minister, Susan teaches peace to all generations as a way of following Jesus—and because it is a great joy!

Heidi Martin, Strasburg, Pennsylvania, is a 2007 graduate of Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio with degrees in English Literature, Writing, and Wellness. Heidi is a freelance writer who enjoys baking and bicycle riding.

Jan Springer Rheinheimer, Hopedale, Illinois, is a pastor and spiritual director in the Mennonite church. With her husband Don, she concluded a term of service with Mennonite Mission Network in Riobamba, Ecuador in December 2010. She is looking forward to spending more time with her children and granddaughters.



Hospitality re-learned

by Phyllis Pellman Good

I should be reading this article instead of writing it. The facts are that I've received hospitality far more often than I've offered it. So this is mostly a confession and a report from along the way.

Hospitality, it seems to me, is embodying open generosity, often spontaneously. It involves making one's time and space available to others, often in one's home and certainly inside one's head. I'm afraid I come up pretty short on all of those fronts.

I think I know why. I'm an introvert with a too-full schedule. Plus, I can be calculating.

No question about it, I could benefit from an honest and

My temptation to prepare shockingly amazing food for guests took two solid blows as those memories surfaced recently. Clearly, I was allowing myself to be bothered by the wrong things. Clearly, I need a somewhat revised and updated view of hospitality.

thorough discussion about how to be truly hospitable when my life is more than filled with:

- a highly demanding job that I thoroughly enjoy
- family responsibilities which I love, but which are, nonetheless, time-consuming and resistant to fitting into neat schedules
- volunteer assignments which seem always to need more time, no matter how much I give
- the needs of Merle's and my modest home and daily lives which require at least some of my regular attention
- a deep wish for some time to read in order to keep my mind and spirit afloat

In our thrumming, over-scheduled world, many of us think

we're doing pretty well if the closest we get to hospitality is meeting close friends for a meal in a restaurant.

I am not complaining; I am not making excuses. I am simply confessing that practicing hospitality requires deliberate effort and intention. Perhaps hardest of all, it can mean suspending schedule and time to give oneself to another. None of this is new; it just seems that the practice of hospitality has fallen into some jeopardy. But how can it possibly work when our lives are filled out past the edges, when we don't have any margins left open?

Well, I've recently been witnessed to. Funny how certain experiences from the past can lie quietly within one's mind until, just in time, they suddenly rise up. Many years ago, I learned from Paul and Alta Mae Erb that they invited every Hesston College student to their home for a meal. Paul had heavy administrative duties; Alta was on the teaching faculty, so they lived crowded lives. But they were intent on these face-to-face visits with each student. "We always served chili," they explained without apology.

Some years later, I was in Chicago for a church meeting. Members of Reba Place Church invited us into their homes for supper one evening. I remember feeling blessedly relieved as I sat down to a single main dish and salad at one of the leader's tables.

My temptation to prepare shockingly amazing food for guests took two solid blows as those memories surfaced recently. Clearly, I was allowing myself to be bothered by the wrong things. Clearly, I need a somewhat revised and updated view of hospitality. As someone who wants to live as a faithful Christian, I know I am not excused from offering hospitality because I have a full life and spend more hours away from home than at home.

So I'm practicing a small step. Something which I've found right in front of myself and couldn't ignore. I'm trying to be more mindful of others. To be more ready to be available. To step out of my schedule—willingly—if I sense I'm needed.

These days this often means that I listen. Mostly, these conversations begin with me asking a question or two, "showing interest," as my father-in-law phrased it. I'm not looking for or expecting anything major. I'm not hunting or prying. But now and then this



Phyllis Pellman Good in the kitchen, where she'd like to spend more time!

Courtesy photo

simple beginning leads past polite conversation to substantial idea-sharing or unburdening. Without regard for time.

When I sense I'm in one of these moments, I try hard to give myself to the conversation. No checking emails if I'm talking on the phone, no planning supper menus for the week. Instead, I try to listen fully and wholeheartedly.

In that moment, I try to lay aside my schedule and running list of other obligations. I want to be respectful and open to the other person, to give myself as fully as I can to being present and listening. I try to refuse to calculate an outcome.

I'm still a clock-watcher and sometimes a grudging listener. I know that I desperately need the two-sided wonder that hospitality is—when one gives and receives nearly simultaneously and deals in values that can't be calculated.

I am not a therapist nor a consultant. I don't offer professional advice. Instead, I simply listen and learn, believing that my time is not totally my own, and that when I share it with others, I become more fully the person I am called to be. That it happens is more important than where or when it happens.

It is essential, this intersection of time with others, when we are open and give from our lives, our minds, and our spirits. Otherwise, we are in danger of losing our way, I believe. This is the heart of hospitality.

These days I'm more likely to invite a friend to meet me for breakfast in a restaurant than to come to our home for a meal. I love to cook, and Merle and I both enjoy having friends to our house. But to make sure we do get together, and don't delay until I have time to grocery-shop and cook, we are catching more meals out. I consider it a peepie step toward hospitality as we hope to practice it eventually and more completely. Until then, I will give myself to listening as hospitably as I know how. 🍷

Phyllis Pellman Good experiencing hospitality and the traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony.

Courtesy photo

Prayer as hospitality

by Gladys Geiser

The old cracked teapot sits on a small wooden stand in my house, its cracks somewhat mended with tar and wire. Its spout is missing, but it remains a symbol of hospitality. “Won’t you have some tea?” is not only an invitation to share tea with someone, but also an invitation to share your thoughts, joys, and life. This symbol of hospitality, though mended in a fashion, has cracks and chipped edges. Similarly, our experiences in Afghanistan have somewhat cracked and broken us, but God’s love and care still hold us together, fashioning and molding us. How does one respond then when hospitality gives way to hostage-taking and kidnapping replaces kindness?

This is my story as I waited for 56 long days the fall of 2008 for my husband, Al, to be released from captivity. It illustrates how our church cared for us during a time that was traumatic, emotional, and completely out of the realm of ordinary or expected life events. Caring is a form of hospitality—a way to show others you care enough about them to take time to do something for them, pray for them and with them, and provide an open avenue for love to flow. And, although committees at Kidron Mennonite Church (KMC) have met and discussed ways of being more hospitable, when a crisis loomed before them, they rose to the challenge, without a committee, becoming prayer warriors and caregivers in truly remarkable ways.

British Airways brought us into Islamabad, Pakistan in 2000. Then we waited for a little mail plane for the short hop to Peshawar before heading overland to Kabul, Afghanistan where we would be working. We lived in Kabul—not so many people knew where it was in 2000—and after months of language study, we both began our work in earnest. Al worked with a group of Afghans building small turbines to make hydroelectricity in areas outside of Kabul,



*The Geisers (l to r)
Al, Gladys, Mary,
Kaitlyn, Franklin,
and Andrea.*

Courtesy photo

and I taught in a small school for international children whose parents were working in Afghanistan. Things went well for us; we made many new friends, and carried on a relatively normal life even during Taliban days, despite ups and downs.

Prayer meetings became a lifeline for me. For 56 days, we searched scripture for words of promise and encouragement.

Then in August 2008, everything changed when word was received that Al and his colleague had been kidnapped. The next time I spoke to him was during a very short phone call when he said that he would be “there” for a while. That was the beginning of a new journey for me and for my church as they lovingly walked with me through the days ahead.

Our pastor at KMC, Terry Shue, had been notified of the kidnapping and knew that I would be coming home to Kidron as soon as it could be arranged. He had already contacted a few friends, relatives, and immediate family to meet and pray together. We didn’t spread the news much because we were trying to keep it out of the press, but slowly more people were informed and they started attending the prayer meetings, too. They “skyped” me at 6:30 AM Kabul time (10 PM in Kidron), to talk, sing, and pray for Al and me. The prayer group assured me of their love, support, and prayers during this difficult and fearful time. My first stop after arriving at the Cleveland, Ohio airport and meeting my family was the prayer meeting at KMC.

Terry made a general announcement on Sunday morning reiterating the need for no press coverage. For my benefit, he also requested that people not ply me with questions, but instead tell me that they were praying for both Al and me, and to show support in other ways. Hugs were an excellent way to get the point across that they cared and shared in my concern.

Prayer meetings became a lifeline for me. For 56 days, we searched scripture for words of promise and encouragement. No one knew how long the kidnapping would be, but no one ever



Kabul, Afghanistan with rugged mountains in the background.

spoke about being tired of meeting together. And so for 56 days our church passionately prayed together for Al's safety, his release, his captors, and the journey of waiting. We sang songs and prayed earnestly, shed tears, encouraged each other, and shared dreams and thoughts that had come to us. We spent time in quietness when words wouldn't come, feeling God's holy presence. God's peace gave me rest and hope. Next to my house, the church became my safe haven, especially the "prayer room."

In God's remarkable timing, it was just before a prayer meeting while I was still in the parking lot before entering the church that we received word of Al's rescue. That prayer meeting was the most memorable of all as we formed a circle, sang, prayed, and with tears of joy thanked God for the good news we received. With smiles on our faces we continued praying, spending more time praising God through song and sharing in the joy and thankfulness we all felt.

Shortly after Al's rescue and return from Afghanistan, he and I spoke in church on Sunday morning. Sharing the story was the beginning of healing for both of us, but in addition to that our pastor led us in a service of healing, another way to show that "we care and we will help you through this as best we can, with God's help." Using the pitcher and bowl that had been up in the front of the church during this time, he washed our hands before anointing us with oil, symbols of cleansing and healing.

Are these forms of hospitality: sending cards, praying, hugging, encouraging through visits and chats, phone calls, emails, Skype, accepting the person even though you may have many questions you may want to know the answers to, and providing counseling if needed? Yes, indeed, and a cup of tea (or coffee) shared with friends isn't a bad idea either! 🍵

Resources

Books

- Homan, Daniel and Lonnie Collins Pratt. *Radical Hospitality*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete P, 2002.
- Newman, Elizabeth. *Untamed Hospitality*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos P, 2007, 7.
- Pohl, Christine D. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans Publishing, 1999.
- Russell, Letty M., J. Shannon Clarkson, and Kate M. Ott, eds. *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox P, 2009.
- Sawyer, Nanette. *Hospitality—the Sacred Art*. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2008.
- Sutherland, Arthur M. *I Was A Stranger*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon P, 2006.

Websites

- Foster, Jason. "Christian Hospitality—A Way of Life." Winter 2008. < <http://faiethepchurch.org/files/Documents/Discipleship%20Resources/Hospitality.pdf>>.

Toward a culture of peace

by Elizabeth Soto Albrecht

Luke 4:16–21: When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Luke 4 begins at the start of Jesus’ ministry, following his temptation in the wilderness. In verses 16–21, Jesus is reading the Scripture in his home synagogue in Nazareth. He selects from the scroll of Isaiah a portion of the songs of “the Servant of the Lord” (Isaiah 61:1–2 and 58:6), using these ancient writings to confirm his calling and vision of the “kin-dom.” The words are familiar to the people of his hometown, but Jesus puts a new twist on the words, telling them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled.” The Isaiah text Jesus reads sets out the values of God’s kin-dom in building a culture of peace: to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to restore sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

“Peace at any price.” Those were my friend Maria’s words when she heard her children arguing with each other. I asked, “What do you mean, Maria?” In a fearful voice, she confessed that she gets anxious when she hears her children raising their voices, yelling at each other. As a pastor, I understand where that fear comes from. She saw abuse when she was a child and wants peace in her home. I invited Maria to examine with me how Jesus brought peace.

In Jesus’ time, the Roman Empire’s political peace was known as Pax Romana. The empire used force to bring “peace,” but Jesus’ peace came not through violence, but through loving one’s enemies. Read the song of Mary, known as the *Magnificat*, in Luke 1:46–55. This song expresses Mary’s feelings when she was chosen to carry the “Good News” into this world. She felt empowered with

This Bible study is an excerpt from the Bible study guide by Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Seek Peace and Pursue It: Women, Faith, and Family Care, which is available from Mennonite Publishing Network.

Seek Peace and Pursue It was developed by Mennonite Women USA and Mennonite Women Canada.

the privilege given to her. Jesus' surroundings shaped his sensitivity toward those in need. From humble descent, he came to teach us the gospel of peace.

In the same way Jesus did, we must speak and live out the good news of the kin-dom within our homes. We need to feel that the Spirit of God is among us to proclaim healing, restoration, and peace in our families.

Families today face unique challenges; instant messaging does not mean we are having good communication. That everyone in the family has a cell phone does not translate into being connected. Sometimes these high-tech devices are just one more reason to

PONDER

1. *How are technological relationships different from face-to-face relationships?*
2. *How can speaking for peace bring conflict or make people uncomfortable?*
3. *Reflect on your own gifts and calling and write a personal mission statement. How do these gifts complement your commitments within your home and church families?*
4. *With your family members, reflect on your mission and compose together a peace mission statement. (For an example, see pages 66-67 in the Bible study guide).*

avoid having human, skin-to-skin contact with children. We are allowing these text messages to substitute for a hug or a kiss. People need human contact in order to build a culture of peace. Electronic devices are useful in maintaining the connections we already have; unfortunately they are often used to avoid or substitute for the real connections we all need. *Cybernetic* families are just not the same as *energetic* families fired up with Jesus' love and peace.

The five indicators of God's kin-dom we read in Luke 4:18-19 can bring healing and hope for families. Let's encourage those members who are contributing toward change—first in our homes, and second in a world that needs transformation. 📌

Pray: God, be for us the model of peace. Help us to make our families models of peace for a violent and hurting world. Help us to bring healing and restoration in the family of God. Amen

Three Windows Three Women



Hospitality

*Kristi Winings, 37
Colfax, Wisconsin*

I have always felt God's presence during still moments: being warmed by a winter fire, watching laundry blow in the hot sun, or listening while autumn leaves fly through the air. Even in less peaceful moments we are able to serve the Spirit with our hospitality if we have a QUIET SOUL.

A quiet soul requires:

An ORDERLY LIFE, which though not necessarily perfectly clean and organized, reduces chaos, blesses you and your family, and opens the door of hospitality to the Spirit. If the Spirit were a guest in our home, we could not be welcoming if we are too busy to notice, too busy to listen, or too busy to serve (Luke 10:38–42).

FAITH that God will never leave or forsake us even if the world around us feels impossible (Deuteronomy 31:8).

TRUST in our Good Shepherd to care for our every need. God doesn't take our troubles away and might require us to work excruciatingly hard, but God will provide (Psalm 23, Ecclesiastes 2:24).

ATTENTIVENESS to the blessings that God gives. They surround our every moment, our every movement, our every breath. We need to live a life that reflects our awareness and our gratitude (Philippians 4:19).

An EMBEDDED KNOWLEDGE of God's Word. We must hide it in our hearts, but that first means we must read it on a regular basis. With three young children, homeschooling, farming and more, I admit I struggle with this. Receiving scripture in my inbox has been a great help (Psalm 119:11).

Romans 12:13 tells us to "practice hospitality." When we have an orderly life, believe we will not be forsaken, trust in his provision, are ecstatic about our blessings, and internalize God's word we will have a quiet spirit that allows us to serve God's gentle and ever-so-quiet spirit even amidst a busy life. 📖

Monica Harnish, 47
Bluffton, Ohio

"*Nossa casa e' sua casa*. Our house is your house," my mother would say, influenced by the warm hospitality that she received as a missionary in Brazil. As a child, I remember helping her with pride to make our guests feel special and at home, setting up the guest room with pressed sheets and neatly folded towels, or preparing a tray with sugar, cream, cups and coffee for guests coming for an afternoon visit.

I have many other role models who exemplify gracious hospitality. My grandmother was always prepared to feed a crowd, whether it was for family, foster children, or drop-in guests. Our Aunt Margaret gave all her guests royal hospitality, especially our young son, Lucas, when we lived close by. He loved visiting Aunt Margaret because she would prepare his favorite meal of macaroni with real cheese and peas. And then there's our neighbor, Ellen, who often sits outside in the summertime by her front door under a shade tree. She has extra chairs available for neighbors and friends who are walking by and invites them to sit and chat for a while.

So I have been humbled by those for whom hospitality comes so easily. Maybe it's the combination of our own and our three boys' busy schedules, but we don't always feel we have the time to host. Maybe it's because I feel more like Martha than like Mary, and I'm working so hard on "just one more thing" that I don't feel that I can relax and enjoy being a host.

Recently our family has gone through many transitions. We moved to another house in town, my father moved to a skilled care facility, and my mother has moved in with us. We are blessed to have her living with us, and I finally have the opportunity to tell her, "*Nossa casa e' sua casa*. Our house is your house." 🏡



Editor's note: This column is a forum for women to share perspectives on the current timbrel theme. It introduces women spanning their 20's-30's, 40's-50's, and 60's and above. If you are interested in writing for this column, please contact editor, Patricia Burdette, at <PattyB@MenoniteWomenUSA.org>.

*Pat Hershberger, 71
Woodburn, Oregon*



Hospitality is welcoming others into our space. Hospitality for me is not confined to my home but is also found in the casual meeting on the street or in the store, or in a large gathering, or meeting with coffee for long conversation. Hospitality means being approachable and glad to see the other. Knowing me to be more task-oriented than otherwise, I need to remind myself of this question—“What will I remember from this day a year from now, or even six months?” That helps me keep some balance.

I discover the Bible has much to say on welcoming others, but perhaps the words that caught me early on were these: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2). Could I be on the lookout for angels? The greatest influence upon me was how my mother modeled hospitality and I grew up in that environment for which I give thanks.

Of the many things that make my life enjoyable, one is having a group of people in our home enjoying each other’s company, and of course, food makes it much easier to have conversation. Long ago I learned a cup of coffee or tea eases the flow of talk, and sitting at a table makes contact with another much easier as well.

About 40 years ago, I began a neighborhood “Heart to Heart” home study group. I found it rather scary to initiate the first invitation to my neighbors, but we grew to love each other as we shared our ordinary experiences. Those friendships have remained over time. Hospitality can stretch our self-imposed boundaries.

As business people we often were at events that called us to meet a “stranger” and quickly we learned there were no strangers; we all share many common life experiences and many times common values. Could there have been “angels” in that mix of business folk?

A few years ago I led a Sunday school class study using *A Christian View of Hospitality: Expecting Surprises* by Michele Hershberger. I recommend this study to others for personal reading and for group study/discussion. 📖

***MW USA Mission
and Vision:***

Our mission at Mennonite Women USA is to empower women and women’s groups as we nurture our life in Christ through studying the Bible, using our gifts, hearing each other, and engaging in mission and service.

Mennonite Women USA invites women across generations, cultures, and places to share and honor our stories, care for each other, and express our prophetic voice boldly as we seek to follow Christ.

Grapevine

MW USA awards 2011 International Women's Fund scholarships for church leadership training

Mitzi Escorcía
Colombia



Blanca Richard
Paraguay



Emilse Bobadilla
Colombia



Maria Palomares
Colombia



Laura Ruiz
Colombia



Valeria Alvarenga
Brazil

Each year MW USA awards scholarships to international women for church leadership training through the International Women's Fund (IWF). Fourteen women will receive awards totaling \$10,000—six new and eight returning students from eight countries in Africa and Latin America. New recipients are pictured here.

Returning students being funded are **Albania Molina**, Honduras; **Elizabeth Vado**, Nicaragua; **Fada Perez**, Nicaragua; **Mimie Mukendi**, Congo; **Maria Calderon**, Nicaragua; **Maricela Godinez**, Guatemala; **Nathalie Kananga**, Congo; and **Emilia Amexo**, Ghana.

Each IWF applicant is referred by a Mennonite agency.

Plan now to attend a Women in Conversation retreat in 2012

Into the Wilderness: The Journey of God's Beloved

Keynote Speaker: Meghan Good, Albany, Oregon

Retreat is offered in two locations:

April 13–15, 2012: Laurelville, Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania

April 27–29, 2012: Cross Wind, Hesston, Kansas

Across the Border

Opening the heart

by Jan Springer Rheinheimer

Hospitality is being willing to open one's heart and home to those who enter your life space. My husband, Don and I just returned from a two-year Mennonite Mission Network assignment in Riobamba, Ecuador. After spending two years in Riobamba, hospitality is defined as Riobamba Mennonite Church, Beatriz, Daniel, Patricia, Lucia, Johnny, Monica, Jacky, Pedro and many others who made space in their lives for us and others. I am sure that by now you have caught on that for me, the word hospitality is connected with the new church we helped God plant in Riobamba and the church family.

When we arrived in Riobamba in 2008 we began to work with a small Bible study group that wanted to become a more formal Mennonite Church. As we began to work to form the church, part of our job was also to host work teams and visiting teams. We would need the congregation's help with this hosting. We quickly found out that most of our small congregation of about 20–25 people (including children) had never hosted anyone in their homes and certainly not people they didn't know from another country with a language they did not understand. When we asked for their help, their resounding answer was "Yes! We will host those who come to visit in spite of our anxiety."

They hosted all of the guests with open arms and loving hearts. There were many groups that came: from Colombia, from many churches in the United States and at one time, they hosted an Iowa youth group of 7 and a work team of 16 from Illinois with only a week's break between them. They provided meals, transportation, and sightseeing trips for them. More importantly they openly offered their love and presence to those who came. Their hearts were touched and their spirits encouraged by those who visited, for at times the Mennonite Church in Riobamba feels alone in its faith and far away from other Mennonite churches. Their hardest struggle with our many guests in the end was saying goodbye.

Across the Ocean

There were tears, prayers, email addresses exchanged, and invitations to come back soon and often. They now declared that these guests were no longer guests but family and friends. Their openness to host strangers from a foreign land created sisters and brothers in Christ—even when their home was small, they were struggling financially, and communication was very limited. Many also felt afterwards that they had “entertained angels.” So the word “hospitality” has a different spelling this day: “*hospitalidad*”. I realized, too, that those who visited felt the hospitality, for when I asked, “What were the things you most enjoyed about your visit to Riobamba?” that was often the first response: the people and their hospitality.

We found amazing hospitality among the indigenous people (Quechua) in Ecuador. Often when we went to visit those in the countryside, we could not leave without eating. We were fed generous meals as guests even when it was obvious the people did not have much. Our plates were piled high and often we could not eat all that was given. In that case we were expected to take whatever we could not eat home with us. We were often fed what is considered a special meal of *cuy* (guinea pig.)

We have now been back in the US for about a month and we have found that hospitality abounds here as well. Part of our assignment for Mennonite Mission Network was to travel for three months to share our experiences. We are experiencing the hospitality of people who are generously making space in their homes and lives to welcome us back.

So I was again reminded of the way hospitality can happen in the wealthiest or the humblest home with a beautifully set table or mismatched dishes and silverware, with gourmet food or coffee, bread, and cheese, in the US or in Riobamba. We learned much about hospitality in Riobamba, Ecuador, and were so blessed by those who touched our lives in many ways.

No matter where you are, it is important to take time to see the hospitality that is happening around you, even in unexpected spaces. 📷



Father and daughter (Pedro and Mafer) prepare for a going-away supper for us before we left Ecuador to come back to the US.

Courtesy photo

Backpacks for Peace

Adapted for MC USA by Susan Mark Landis

Young peacemakers need nurturing. Our Mennonite children need to know that their church community cares about them and wants to support them as they make peaceful choices. At Pittsburgh 2011, the Peace and Justice Support Network will give children peace packs. While the children decorate them, our volunteers will be able to talk to them about Jesus and peacemaking. The children can then put peace handouts and other items in their backpacks. Each time they use their peace pack, they can think about peacemaking and that their church encourages them to be peacemakers.

Many thanks for your choice to nurture peacemakers!

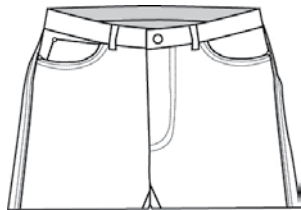
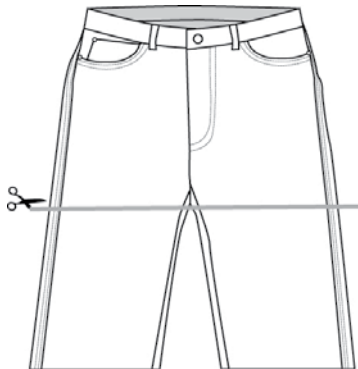
Want to nurture peacemakers but not a seamstress? Help us think—what can we give children to put in their peace packs? You can write notes of encouragement, send crayons or pencils or pens, tablets to draw on...what else can we think of?

The size of the backpack is determined by the size of the jeans you choose. For children, the best sizes are children's jeans size 6 through adult women's size 10/men's 28" waist. Any color is fine, but don't use low-riders or the pouch will be too narrow. You may use jeans with holes in them, but please patch any holes in the actual peace pack so children don't lose their treasures. You might want to use heavier than usual thread and needles when sewing through many layers of jeans!

Instructions

Preparing the pouch

- Lay the jeans flat.
- Cut straight across the legs just below the crotch and then cut the crotch seam so that now the jeans look like a miniskirt.

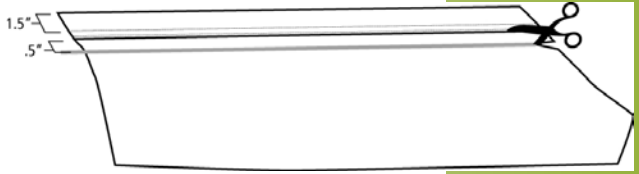


- Set this "miniskirt" aside.

Making the straps

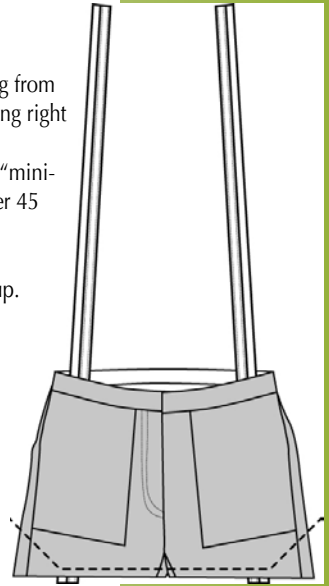
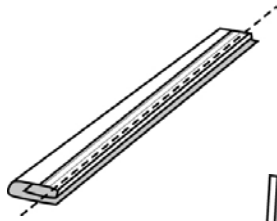
- Using the two jean legs that were just cut off, cut on both sides of the double outside seam—half inch on one side and 1 to 1.5 inches on the other.
- With wrong sides facing up, fold the half inch side over the double seam.
- Then fold the cloth again so that the first fold lines up with the other edge of the cloth.

- Pin together, flip over and sew along the edge to make the straps.



Attaching the straps

- Turn the “miniskirt” inside out and lay it flat.
- Take the two straps and thread them through the inside of the “miniskirt” so that they slightly stick out the bottom opening. Make sure both straps are the same distance from the outer edge (about two inches), and pin in place.
- Pin together the rest of the bottom opening of the “miniskirt.”
- Make sure the rest of the straps are not in the way and begin sewing from one side at a 45 degree angle down to the “mini skirt’s” bottom opening right next to where the strap comes down.
- Continue sewing across the strap, straight across the bottom of the “miniskirt.” Immediately on the other side of the second strap, make another 45 degree seam to the far edge.
- Tip: Sew over the strap area several times to make it more secure.
- Turn right side out again and lay with the front of the jeans facing up.
- Bring the the straps around the back side and secure them with a pin to the inside back waist.
- Sew across the straps several times to make them secure.



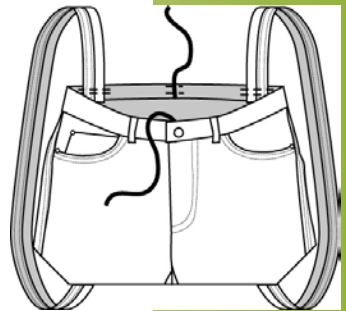
Three closure options

- Cut a shoelace in half. Securely sew one half to the back inside waist and one directly across from it on the inside of the front waist.
- Attach Velcro on the inside back of the waist and directly across on the inside front of the waist.
- Bandanas may also be used as a closure by threading them through the belt loops and tying the ends together.

Take a moment to write a special note to the young peace-maker who will be wearing your peace pack. You might include a prayer for them, a favorite Bible verse or a blessing. Hide it in a pocket! Done!

These peace packs will be used at Pittsburgh 2011, July 4–9, 2011. You may either mail your peace packs to PJSN, 11885 Keener Drive, Orrville, OH 44667 by June 30, or bring them along to Pittsburgh with you. If you are bringing them to Pittsburgh, please send an email to <SusanML@MennoniteUSA.org> to let us know how many you are bringing to help with our planning.

Many thanks for taking the time to nurture young peacemakers! 📷



Beaches and bees

by Heidi Martin



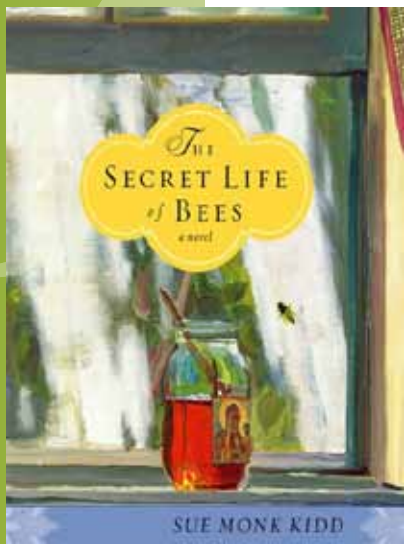
Watching *The Secret Life of Bees* with a group of women may be compared to a trip to the beach. Some may like sitting on the sand enjoying the view. Some may like the water tickling their toes as they wade. Others dive head-first into the tumultuous waves. There are various components to the ocean, but it is all the same water. Similarly, *The Secret Life of Bees* may ignite anger, sadness, frustration or a deep sense of warmth. Some viewers focus on the theme of forgiveness. Others may pick up on the idea of freedom. Still others observe the destruction of abandonment and abuse. There are various themes in the movie, but it is all the same story.

The move is based on Sue Monk Kidd's novel, *The Secret Life of Bees*, published in 2002. The story of 14-year-old Lily immediately caught the attention of readers world-wide. It sold more than 6 million copies and was on the New York Times bestseller list for

over two years. Published in 35 countries, the book is quickly becoming a modern-day classic.

Based in 1964 in South Carolina, the story tells of a 14-year-old girl who accidentally killed her mother at the age of four. Since then, Lily's father has remained love-less and abusive toward her. So Lily runs away in search of a place where her mother used to live. She takes along her housekeeper, Rosaleen, the name of a town written on the back of a picture and hope of discovering a new life in the midst of the Civil Rights movement. The story tells of how she finds August, June and May Boatwright—the calendar sisters who raise bees and sell honey with a black Madonna on the label—and how her healing heart opens to give and receive the gift of love.

The theme of hospitality is evident throughout the story. The most obvious form is through the way the Boatwright sisters open their home to a hurting child who is clearly lying about her past. Hospitality is also evident in the way that August and June care for their younger sister, May. May is a woman who carries the weight of the world upon her shoulders and often wanders out to the “wailing wall” to grieve her heavy burdens. Her



special needs are not intimidating or cumbersome to her sisters. A third way in which hospitality is demonstrated is through the Boatwright sisters' relationship to Zachary Taylor, a high-school student. They allow him to work as beekeeper to save money for college. More than that, they allow him to dream of a future as a lawyer even though black lawyers were unheard of during that era.

No matter how one is called to open up her heart, the movie emphasizes three commonalities between the various types of hospitality:

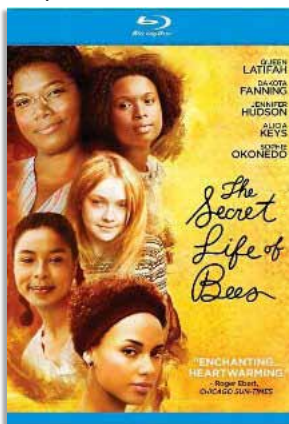
"Every little thing wants to be loved," were the words of August Boatwright when she and Lily tend the bees together for the first time. August ticks off a list of rules when handling bees as she dresses Lily and they walk to the hives. The last and most important rule is not to fear, but to give love even to the tiny, countless bees.

Lifting someone's heart is what matters. The Boatwright sisters live in a house painted the color of Pepto-Bismol. Though August and June despised the color, they painted the house a brilliant pink because May said the cheery brilliance lifted her heart. May's heart mattered more to August and June than a house of any color.

Love rises. In the last lines of the movie, Lily notices a new depth of strength and love growing within her own heart. It is the fruit of hospitality from the Boatwright sisters. Isaiah 58:9, 10 refers to this:

"If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday" (NIV).

Light and love and hospitality rose within the Boatwright sisters and overflowed into Lily so that light and love and hospitality is rising in her. And it will overflow from Lily and into others so that the cycle will only continue. It's like the waves of the ocean that never cease to tumble onto shore again and again and again. 📺



Stirrings

Response to Sister Question:

Editor's note: Each issue, we print responses to our Sister Question. The question for January–February was: **How does my church (or how do I) practice the Christian**

spiritual discipline of hospitality?

Rosalie Grove, Elkhart, Indiana responded: A special memory of hospitality for me is my first visit to Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart. My divorce was in process and I needed to find a new church.

The greeter, Wilma Dyck, then introduced me to a woman, Marie Miller, who was there without her husband. We talked and then sat together. In fact, for many months we happened to meet early in the hall and then we sat together. That felt very welcoming for someone who was not used to sitting by herself. God and the people of Hively partnered in extending hospitality.

Shar Doell, Henderson, Nebraska responded: I love hosting! The surprise blessing of hosting guests in our home has been the amazing opportunity for spiritual growth for me! When we host a guest speaker for the church we like to invite others to join us for a meal; the conversation is always rich and meaningful. My greatest blessing was hosting Mennonite Women USA leaders for PREP this past summer; we enjoyed an all “girls” gathering in our home! The conversations that occur around a cup of coffee provide the opportunity to support and encourage each other and to learn much about the larger church community. ☑



Rosalie Grove



Shar Doell

Cup of Water

Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward (Matthew 10:42).

Your gifts provide funds for church leadership training for the fourteen women receiving International Women's Fund (IWF) scholarships in 2011. Grants totaling \$10,000 will provide education for six new and eight returning students from eight countries in Africa and Latin America (see page 15).

If you would like more information, or to become a personal or group sponsor for any of these women, please contact MW USA. Scholarships range from \$500 to \$1,200. Your gifts are needed to fund our global church ministry through church leadership education for Mitzi, Maria, Laura, Emilse, Valeria, Blanca, and the eight returning students.

Send your check to MW USA, 722 N. Main St., Newton, KS 67114-0347. See our website <www.mennonitewomenusa.org>for more information. ☑

ON THE ROAD WITH RHODA

Sister Care travels in a little red Kia

“On the road with Rhoda” took on new meaning this October as Carolyn Holderread Heggen and I traversed the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference co-presenting the Sister Care seminar—first in Caldwell, Idaho, then in Salem, Oregon, and lastly, in Ritzville, Washington hosted with Montana.

I marveled at the beauty of Oregon’s Willamette Valley, stopped in awe to view rocky sunset silhouettes, smelled the desert sage, relaxed beside Idaho’s Payette River, listened to the ocean waves at the coast; then we drove through the Columbia River Gorge stopping at Multnomah Falls on the way to Washington’s wheatland prairie.

While our western sisters are geographically many miles from most Mennonite centers and institutions, their commitment to Christ and the church, their welcome to me as an Easterner, and their warm reception and response to Sister Care was truly the most inspiring part of this journey. 📷



Rhoda and Carolyn with their trusty Kia (above)

Meghan Reha, Seattle, Washington and Margaret Kauffman, Kalispell, Montana (below)



Linda Dibble and Louise Claassen, Albany, Oregon (above)



Linda Dalke, Dallas, Oregon speaks as the woman at the well in John 4. (left)



Jana Oesch, Caldwell, Idaho depicts a friend of the woman with paralysis in Mark 2 (below)



Rhoda Keener is executive director of Mennonite Women USA. Contact her at 5207 Heisey Road, Shippensburg, PA 17257-9242; 717-532-9723; <RhodaK@MennoniteWomenUSA.org>.

Photos by Rhoda Keener



timbrel

Jan.–Feb. 2011
Vol. IX No. 1

Editorial Office: 17827 Carson Road, Butler, OH 44822-9427; 740-694-1759.

Editor: Patricia Burdette <Pat-tyB@MennoniteWomenUSA.org>.

Contributing editors: Marcella Hershberger, Bristol, Ind., Heidi Martin, Strasburg, Pa., Mary Meyer, Fresno, Oh.

Graphic designer: Nancy Miller, Newton, Kan.

Copy editor: Rosalie Thiessen Grove, Elkhart, Ind.

Circulation: Berni Kaufman, Newton, Kan.

Mennonite Women USA office, 722 N. Main Street, Newton, KS 67114-0347; 316-281-4396, or 866-866-2872; <office@MennoniteWomenUSA.org>; <www.mennonitewomenusa.org>.


timbrel (USPS 689-k320) is published bimonthly by Mennonite Women USA. Periodicals postage paid at Newton, KS 67114-0347 and at additional mailing offices. Printed in the USA.

Postmaster: Send changes of address and all correspondence about subscriptions to the Mennonite Women USA office, 722 N. Main Street, Newton, KS 67114-0347.

MW USA Presents Gifts to MDS



Rebecca Sommers, Kevin King, and Elaine Good hold up some of the wall hangings given to MDS by MW USA

MW USA in a Sister-Link project for the past five years. During this time, over 150 wall hangings were made by women across the US and donated to homeowners whose homes were damaged in severe storms. The wall hangings, gifts that were a way of saying “we care about you” to these homeowners, were presented to the homeowners after MDS completed their work on the homes. Eloise Yoder, Archbold, Ohio is the current coordinator of this Sister-Link. 

Past presidents of Mennonite Women USA, Rebecca Sommers (left) and Elaine Good, present wall hangings to Mennonite Disaster Service executive director, Kevin King, for the new MDS offices in Akron, Pennsylvania as a thank you for partnering with

Subscription rates: One year, six issues, \$15; two years, \$28; and three years, \$39. **Group rates of 10 or more (copies sent to individual home addresses):** One year, \$13; two years, \$24; and three years, \$33. Add \$3 for subscriptions outside the USA. Subscribe to *timbrel* by sending the appropriate funds to MW USA, PO Box 347, Newton, KS 67114-0347. To order online: <www.mennonitewomenusa.org>.