

GENEROUS LIVING


Faithful Joyful Giving

Blessed to be a blessing

by Kim Penner

From an early age, my parents taught and modeled stewardship for us. Each member of our family put something into the offering plate. We were taught that God provides for us in every way: emotionally, physically and financially.

As a child, I came to trust God and rely on his faithfulness when I was upset, lonely or in trouble. God provided for me emotionally. My faith was what I needed. When I left home and became a student, I developed financial needs. My trust in his provision expanded to envelope this new need.



*God provides, it
just doesn't always
look like I expect it to.*

I think everyone knows that for students, money is usually a huge concern. What stands out about financial responsibilities as a student is that you are learning how to manage it all for the first time! This has often been overwhelming for me in the past few years, but miraculous as well.

With no expectations on my part, and by simply doing my best in school and trusting God as best I could, God provided for me in ways that I could never imagine.

Since I became a student I have been the recipient of many blessings including:

- Scholarships and bursaries, including the Christian Ministries Study Fund established by my church, Wanner Mennonite, and administered by MFC
- The wonderful generosity and support of my parents and grandparents
- Coming across many God-given opportunities including a chance meeting at a funeral that led to a great summer job
- Individuals in my church who remembered the difficulties of student life and sent cards with money that allowed me to see a movie or share pizza with friends, or maybe just do some laundry.

One of the hardest lessons for me was to depend on God and give it all to God and then trust. I'm still working on that one.

One of the easiest lessons to learn (and a powerful one at that) was how giving money away can be fun. I'm so happy that I have been able to give back, even in some small way, to my church and beyond, like to Mennonite Central Committee.



Through the generosity of others, I have been able to share more. Although trusting in God's provision is often extremely frightening and the answer may not always be what I want, I have experienced God's faithfulness. I've witnessed first-hand the way God takes care of me and learned that he will continue to do so in the future.

Kim Penner is a graduate of Canadian Mennonite University and is currently pursuing her Masters of Theological Studies at Conrad Grebel University College. She attends Wanner Mennonite Church in Cambridge, Ontario.

Receiving Graciously

by Edwin Friesen

One of my most difficult experiences with receiving happened when our son Ken died. People wanted to minister to us in our devastating loss, but I found it hard to receive. I saw myself as the strong one but now I was weak. I felt I had nothing to give and found it very hard to receive.

Many people feel awkward being on the receiving end. In fact, many people see receiving as demeaning, as beneath their dignity. Since childhood we have been taught that giving is not only better than receiving; giving is really the only virtuous option. After all it was Jesus who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). But is giving always better than receiving? Could there be times when receiving is not only better, but when that is the only Christ-like response?

Though most people prefer to see themselves as givers, all of us are first and foremost receivers. God, as the primary giver (1 Chron. 29:11-14), has gifted us with the resources of the world, life, abilities and opportunities. God has also given Jesus to be our Redeemer (John 3:16) and the Holy Spirit to be our guide. Our lives are further enriched by church, friends and family. Yet many of us conveniently overlook the many different ways in which we receive from God, people and the world around us.

Society has assigned the financially poor to be receivers and the rich to be givers. Giving makes us feel powerful and gives us an elevated social status. To receive implies need and strikes at our cherished self-image of independence. You can be proud and give but it takes humility to receive graciously. It is in receiving that we give dignity to the giver. Jesus gave dignity to the woman who anointed him with perfume (Mark 14:3-9) by accepting her gift without protest. Jesus also gave dignity to the women who supported him and his disciples from their income (Luke 8:1-3). It must have taken special grace, especially in the culture of the day, for a group of self-reliant men to accept the financial support of women.

Everyone longs to experience the blessings of giving but we frustrate that when we refuse or belittle gestures of kindness. We are all called to receive at some point in our lives. Only when we take turns being giver and receiver will fellowship flourish. That is God's way.

Edwin Friesen served as a stewardship consultant at MFC for 13 years until his death in October, 2008. During that time he wrote over 70 articles and authored several of MFC's principle resources.



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Nuts and Bolts: The MFC Grant – practicing what we preach

By Ginny Hostetler, Grants Coordinator



As a donor-advised foundation, MFC forwards gifts to the charities our donors wish to support. We also believe in practicing what we preach. The MFC Grant Fund is our way of extending generosity to charities that are teaching and practicing generosity in their own settings.

MFC has a new focus for its Grant Fund on ventures that specifically encourage generosity and faithful financial stewardship. We award grants to congregations, conferences, and charitable organizations engaging in creative projects that promote responsible and generous living.

You can find an application form and instructions on our website: Mennofoundation.ca/charities/grants/mfc-grant.

In your application explain how your project will specifically encourage generous giving and faithful Christian stewardship. In order for your application to be considered, it must have this specific focus, however, we welcome many creative expressions of this focus such as, works of art or drama, publishing or broadcasting projects, training/teaching events or materials, debt support groups, etc.

Our Grants Committee gives priority to projects from MFC participating conferences and their affiliate congregations and charities. For more information, contact the MFC Grants Coordinator or your local MFC Consultant to find out more.

Mennonite Foundation of Canada, Head Office
12-1325 Markham Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 4J6
1-800-772-3257 contact@mennofoundation.ca

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