

S P R I N G 2 0 1 0



GENEROUS LIVING

Faithful Joyful Giving

New executive director

We are pleased to announce the appointment of **Darren Pries-Klassen** as **executive director** of Mennonite Foundation of Canada. Darren succeeds Erwin Warkentin, who served MFC since 2005 and is now director of Strategic Initiatives at Canadian Mennonite University.



Darren worked as an MFC consultant beginning in 1998 when he was hired to open the Niagara office in St. Catharines, Ontario. Before that, he spent six years as Associate Pastor of Youth and Young Adult Ministries with his wife, Monika, at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ontario. Darren holds the Certified Financial Planner designation and has a bachelor's degree in theology from Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. Darren and Monika have two teenaged daughters, Michaela and Anneke. The family attends the First Mennonite Church, Vineland, Ontario.

"Darren has served MFC in an exemplary manner over many years," says Board Chair Lloyd Plett. "We are confident that his experience, education and leadership qualities make him well suited to lead a growing team and organization into the future. We congratulate Darren on this appointment and wish him God's rich blessings. Darren will continue to work out of the Niagara office in St. Catharines while MFC's head office will remain in Winnipeg."



Imagine

By Darren Pries-Klassen

When MFC received its Charter at the end of 1973, the Foundation was little more than a great idea with the hope of one day flowing dollars to church-related causes. Had someone predicted then that in 2009 MFC would operate from five fully staffed offices across the country, disburse nearly \$10 million to charity in a year and manage well over \$100 million in assets, people would have thought that statement both arrogant and outrageous. Yet today, that is MFC's reality.



This might sound like a perfect “rags to riches” script, but to present MFC in this way overlooks a key element in its story. Over the years MFC has benefited from the hard work of committed staff and board members, but what has really brought MFC to this point are the hundreds, even thousands, of people who have given generously through MFC as both an act of faith and to meet the needs of the wider church.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine. — Ephesians 3:20

Imagine what could happen if more people responded to God's generosity with generosity of their own. Imagine if all people would grow a more generous spirit and would live and give accordingly. Imagine if Christians everywhere allowed “the power at work within us” to fully take over their lives. Imagine if worthy causes the world over received all the needed funding to meet their objectives.

The growth of MFC is exciting, but of greater excitement is the growth of generous spirits within so many people. This is the real success story. When that happens, there is no telling what the future holds. May the power of God – *the one who is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine* – be in each one of us.



Relief efforts in Haiti organized by Mennonite Central Committee.

Next exit: Abundance

by Dori Zerbe Cornelsen

Sometimes preaching and hearing about God's abundance is harder than one might expect. Take, for example, January 17, 2010, the Sunday following the devastating earthquake in Haiti. On that Sunday, pastors and congregations that use the Revised Common Lectionary would have read John 2:1-11, the story of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana.

Nadia Bolz-Weber, who blogs on the *Sojourners* weekly ezine wrote, "When I realized [the suggested text] was the wedding at Cana I thought, great. Jesus at a big party making sure the wine flows freely. No one wants to hear that today. Nobody wants to hear a quaint little miracle story about how generous God is when the poorest country in this hemisphere lies in even greater waste than before. Nobody wants to hear of an abundance of wine when people on the streets of Haiti are thirsty."

In the context where there was no reason to believe that there would ever be enough, Jesus provides a sign of profound abundance. A sign points out that something important is coming — pay attention! This sign revealed a generous, compassionate Jesus that caused his disciples to believe in him. They would continue to learn from Jesus, as John records in his gospel that this extravagant generosity was to be shared liberally. Have we seen this sign as believers?

As time goes by, the urgency to respond to crises like the earthquake in Haiti fade. Our perspectives become a bit narrower again as we focus on our worlds of work, home, school, sports, credit card bills and so on. One of the biggest challenges we face is to cultivate a perspective of enough, of generosity and abundance over scarcity every day. It is a perspective that looks beyond our own needs to those of others. If we've seen the sign, we have the potential as the body of Christ to become the outpouring of God's lavish generosity in the world.

The story of the wedding in Cana reminds us that God is present where the wine has run out, waiting to be revealed in profligate abundance. Today in Haiti; tomorrow, who knows? Maybe next door. There will always be opportunities to be God's abundance as the body of Christ. Hopefully we see the signs.



Nuts and bolts: Creative giving using MFC

Generous hearts beget generous hearts. Shortly after the Haiti earthquake, clients called to ask MFC to mediate an anonymous matching fund program to encourage giving to the relief effort in the Border Land School Division in southern Manitoba. These clients wanted to do more than just make a contribution — they wanted to get their community involved as well.

MFC consultant Harold Penner contacted Tim Mendel, division superintendent, to relay the challenge of a match up to \$10,000. Mendel in turn contacted the school administrators and was met with an enthusiastic response. Students in 10 schools in the division participated. They organized bake sales, raffles and art auctions, and collected donations.

The results were pooled at the division office and came in well over the mark at \$12,790. When the clients heard the amount raised, they offered to match the full amount. And because it happened within the time frame when the Canadian government offered to match donations through CIDA, it could amount to double that going through Mennonite Central Committee in support of its relief efforts in Haiti.

“It was great that someone thought to involve the school division and to challenge the schools and students,” says Superintendent Mendel. “To entrust this to the students shows faith in them, that they are up to the challenge.”



*The Lutheran World Federation,
a member of the ACT Alliance,
sponsored this distribution of
food, buckets, and hygiene kits.*

Photo by Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance. Used with permission.

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