



Mennogespräch

Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario

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The Beginnings of Mission Services in London, Ontario

by Alvin N. Roth

First, I would like to make reference to a document entitled the "History of the Mennonite church in London, from its beginning in the early 1950's" which was written by John E. Adams during his time of pastoral training at Valleyview Mennonite Church.

On page 2 of this document we read, "Alvin Roth, who was instrumental in establishing the Nairn Church". From my perspective, the late Wilfred Schlegel, as the initial pastor, was the one who established the Nairn Church. Adams traced the seed for the work in London back to a series of revival meetings at the Nairn Church, with Jacob Roth as the evangelist. From my perspective the seed can be found even further back than that. A strong sense of calling to mission was a major motivation for the first families from the Maple View, Steinmann, and East Zorra churches, that left their home communities to move to the Nairn area.

One could say that the initial seed for both the Nairn and London ventures in mission was planted and nurtured by Moses H. Roth's emphasis on mission, as he taught at a little Winter Bible School in a Wellesley hall. It was in attending this Bible School that I felt a sense of call to mission. In response Madeline and I contacted the Honourable Mr. Gardiner, the Minister of Agriculture for the Provincial Government at that time, about the availability of good farm land in Ontario. He recommended East and West William Townships, the area around Nairn.

When the late Joel Schwartzentruber and the late Moses Jantzi, members of the Mission Committee of the Amish Mennonite Conference, heard about



Alvin & Madeline Roth

this, they offered to join me on an exploratory visit to the Nairn area. Following this Wilfred Schlegel contacted me; this resulted in another exploratory visit to Nairn with several other Mennonite men. It was just natural for Wilfred, with his outstanding gifts in leadership, to earn the credibility as leader and pastor of the Nairn Mennonite people.

Wilfred formed us Mennonite families from different congregations into a faith community. Wilfred initiated the mission project of 100 acres of wheat to sponsor the opening of a Rescue Mission. Wilfred asked me to go with him to London to look for, and purchase, a duplex as a building for the initial Goodwill Rescue Mission. Wilfred approached Madeline and me about selling our farm and moving to the city of London to operate a Rescue Mission for men. Wilfred suggested that Madeline and I visit Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago for four days as an orientation to Rescue Mission work. I appreciated having Wilfred as my mentor during the first years of the

work in London.

Needless to say, the abrupt change of the quiet life in a trusting rural Mennonite community, to the noisy fast moving mass of people and cars in the city, was a traumatic experience for me. This adjustment from a rural trusting community and culture to a mistrusting skid row culture, with no sense of social roots and community, took a number of years of adjustment for me. The extreme culture shock I underwent was something that I had not anticipated.

The three story duplex at 536 and 538 Talbot St. served satisfactorily during the early years of what became known as the Goodwill Rescue Mission. As a family we lived at 536 and the Mission was in the other half of the duplex. A wicket between our kitchen and the men's dining room is where Madeline served her homemade soup, which all the men appreciated. Our budget was extremely limited and the meals consisted largely of soup made from leftover garden produce from the market with "day old" bread and buns from a bakery.

It was difficult for Madeline to know how much soup to make. One day we might have ten men and the next day without warning twenty men might turn up for a meal. Back in those days cities had a practice in which the police would threaten with jail vagrants seen to be a nuisance on the streets. The homeless men were used to this, so whenever the police applied this pressure they would hitchhike to the next city. Today homeless men are treated with more dignity than back then, and I believe that the Mission was a positive influence in bringing about the change.



Mose H. Roth (CGC Archives Photo)

All we knew about Rescue Mission work when Madeline and I moved to London was what we had learned during the four days at the Pacific Garden Mission. Following their practice we had three chapel services a day before the men could receive meals or a bed. I usually preached at breakfast and at noon, and church groups came in to present a service in the evening before the men retired for the night.

An invitation to accept Christ was given after each service. Men did respond to the invitation and following the practice of Pacific Garden Mission, we tabulated conversions for a news sheet which was mailed monthly to the Mennonite churches of our conference. However, along the way I was not able to continue this in good conscience. I had not known nor anticipated the emotional and spiritual confusion, pain and suffering I was destined to experience. I was forced to find my way through several disillusioning experiences which tested my faith to the breaking point.

One disillusionment came from the fact that most of the conversions did not last. I initially felt affirmed and assured that God was with me and blessing my preaching.

It was exhilarating for me when men who had taken a stand for Christ gave their testimony during chapel service. At the same time I did have some uneasy feelings because of the fact that many conversions did not last.

It happened that on one particular evening my faith was shattered. During the service, with some encouragement from me, a man who had professed salvation earlier gave a ringing testimony to his faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. Needless to say my response

to his testimony included affirmation for him and praise to God. After the service another man who had never made a profession came to me privately and asked me if I knew why the other chap could give such a powerful testimony. He informed me that they had a couple of beers together before they came to the Mission. As I said earlier, my faith was shattered. All the good feelings I remembered having when men responded to the invitation now seemed empty and hollow. No wonder the man who gave his testimony could express himself so fluently. The beers helped him to overcome all inhibitions. I felt like I had been fooled and deceived. I was devastated.

In that moment of desperation, I discussed my disillusionment with a



Goodwill Rescue Mission, 1961 (CGC Archives Photo)

psychologist friend who worked with alcoholics. In a soft and gentle voice he asked me, "Do you think it is possible, Alvin, that when a man responds to your invitation, that it might do more for you than for him?" In the midst of all the confusion and pain, in view of what I had experienced I could not help but agree. What an insight this was for me!

Originally the Mission policy had been for men to stay only four days

and nights a month. With the influence of the newly formed Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario in the city, a more humane attitude began to prevail with reference to homeless men. Some prominent London citizens came to see me and suggested that I do away with the four day and night a month policy and let the men stay as long as they needed shelter. I had great difficulty accepting their suggestions. My four day and night policy was based on scripture. In view of the fact that the Bible says, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God," I felt obliged by scripture that if a man did not attend the service he did not deserve what followed, i.e. a meal or a bed. The Bible also says "The way of the transgressor is hard." I naturally

concluded that if men did not choose to accept Jesus Christ during the period of four days at the Mission, then they needed to experience some more that "the way of the transgressor is hard."

Men who professed Christ as Saviour could stay longer at the Mission than those who didn't. Maybe a little more hunger and cold on the streets might serve as an incentive for them to accept Christ as Saviour and then to enjoy the related benefits. I found myself in a real bind. The City of London asked me to practice an open door policy, but I struggled with feelings of guilt at the very thought of it.

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Joel and Sarah Shwartzentruber

After some time of serious soul searching and study of the scriptures I was happy to find what I believed to be the answer to my dilemma. The peace of mind and heart I experienced when I came across the account in which Jesus cleansed ten lepers and only one came back to say thank you was a great relief to me. In 1956 the open door policy came into effect. In this case as throughout my life, I have experienced how difficult it is to unlearn and relearn, or to change my understanding of certain scriptures in order to meet need at the point of need in the way Jesus did.

Having gone through a number of these disillusioning experiences, my faith was severely tested and shaken. For some time I didn't know what to believe. In the midst of mental turmoil I turned to the social sciences for some answers. While I gained some insights into possible reasons for the instability and lack of continuity of the men who made professions of salvation, I also discovered that human beings have spiritual needs that psychology alone can not meet. I then decided to try to integrate the truths in the social sciences with my new understanding of the Good News of Jesus Christ, to form a holistic approach to evangelism.

During this time of personal change and growth, the work continued to grow in a number of different ways. With the help of young people from our rural Mennonite churches, we attempted our first Daily Vacation Bible School. This was in a tent in a depressed area of the city during the summer of 1951. Out of the Bible school began a Sunday School for children from unchurched families. Erma Kropf, originally from Cassel Mennonite Church, came to the city to help at the Mission. She taught a class of children at the Rescue Mission on Sunday forenoon after the men had their breakfast and left the Mission.

Involvement with the men from London's skid row put us in touch with other needy people as well. Homeless and destitute women began coming to the services at the men's Mission. After the evening service either I had to tell these women to leave, or offer them some form of shelter for the night. We still had two buffalo robes which we had used as covers to keep warm while driving in a sleigh or cutter in the winter back in Wellesley. After the men had retired upstairs for the night I threw these buffalo robes on the floor in the chapel upon which these homeless women slept for the night.

When the number of women increased I was convinced of the need for a separate residence for women. I asked one of the men who helped at the Mission to watch the real estate ads in the London Free Press for a reasonably priced house with a low down payment. He soon referred me to one for the price of \$10,000, with only \$100.00 as a down payment. With the Mission Committee in the New Hamburg and the Wellesly area, I decided to borrow \$100.00 from the bank and bought the house at 668 King St. With some rooms upstairs and a fair sized room for around five or six women, and a couple in charge, we were able to manage. Some years later a larger building was secured which finally became the property of the Western Ontario Mennonite Mission Board.

Quintin Warner House later became a reality as a treatment centre for men who wished to change their life-style of dependency on alcohol. This was the first half-way house for alcoholics in Ontario. Our having on loan a staff member from the Addiction Research Foundation may have influenced the Addiction Research Foundation's opening of its first experimental halfway house in Toronto in the



Alvin Roth, 1961

following year.

Later on, to deal with the stress between mothers with children and single women, another branch began as we housed homeless families in separate facilities. The residence for the single women was given the name Rotholme, while the place for families became known as Family Centre. A group of young business and professional men, who were concerned for the welfare of the homeless and destitute teenage girls in the city, requested my assistance in opening a residential service for these girls. After a house was purchased and the service in operation, the Board of Directors agreed to accept their offer to include Teen Girls Home under the corporate Mission umbrella.

Initially, as mentioned earlier, the work in London was known as the Goodwill Rescue Mission, and operated directly under the Mission Board of the Ontario Amish Mennonite Conference. When the work had earned credibility with the city and began receiving public funds in 1956, a local advisory board was formed, which reported annually to the Conference. At this time the name was changed to London Rescue Mission. In 1969 the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference agreed

to relinquish all deeds, titles and mortgages at which time a local ecumenical board of directors incorporated the services of the five branches under the name Mission Services of London.

Roger Smith, who had come to the original Goodwill Rescue Mission in 1952 and had demonstrated genuine conversion to Jesus Christ, became my

assistant several years later. He has given many years of service and leadership to the Mission that originally helped him find his way to God. He retired as Executive Director this Spring.

When he first began to hold annual Mission dinners, women from various city churches would assist with the catering. Rev. Ann Graham, a United

Church minister, assisted in the formation of Women's Auxiliary to the Mission. In addition to their monthly luncheons to raise money for the work, the Auxiliary catered for the Mission's annual dinners. They also opened and staffed a used clothing centre. The Women's Auxiliary still actively supports the work of Mission Services.

The Valleyview Mennonite Congregation Emerges

by Gloria Janzen

In January 1951 when the Goodwill Rescue Mission was opened in London, Alvin and Madeline Roth found themselves working with alcoholic adults from depressed economic backgrounds. They felt that prevention was just as important as working at a later cure. So a Daily Vacation Bible School was opened in July of that year. It was held at Governor Simcoe School, first in a tent and later in the building itself, in the Horton/Clarence St. area of the city. This remains an economically depressed area to this day. Bible School teachers were drawn from the churches of the Ontario Amish Mennonite Conference. The Daily Vacation Bible School continued successfully at this location for three years.

During this time, the work at the Goodwill Rescue Mission had been expanding and required more time. As the original reason for coming to London, it had the highest priority. Consequently, the Daily Vacation Bible School at Governor Simcoe School was discontinued after July 1953.

However, it had become abundantly clear to the Roths that the children they had worked with had no other source of Christian training. In August 1953 the Roth car made the first of many Sunday morning rounds through the Horton/Clarence St. area to pick up children for Sunday School.

This Sunday School was held in the dining room at the rescue mission while the men were out. To begin it included only five or six children. Erma Kropf was the first Sunday School teacher. She had come to London in February 1953 to help at the mission on a temporary basis. However, when the Sunday School was started, she decided to stay, supporting herself by doing housework.

In the autumn of 1953, Alvin Roth

spoke to the pastor at Nairn Mennonite Church about the need for better Sunday School facilities. This resulted in the Nairn congregation making a down payment on one half of a large semi-detached house at 368 King St. in London. Later, the London congregation took over the mortgage and purchased the property for the sum one dollar.

In the beginning the King St. location was called the Forest City Mennonite Mission, but later its name was changed to King St. Mennonite Church. The building included a large double room at the front which served as a chapel with seating for seventy. There was an apartment at the back which was eventually taken over by the expanding Sunday School. There were also rooms upstairs which were rented out.

Around this time, a number of other Mennonites moved to London. John and Beulah Wagler came in November 1953 specifically to help with the work at the mission and the Sunday School. Other names from those early days were Alfred and Verna Ropp, Sarah Horst and Janet Bechtel who ran the Golden Rule Bookstore.

The first official service at the new location was a Christmas program which took place on the Sunday before Christmas in 1953. Other than that, only Sunday School classes were held at King St. It wasn't long, however, before Alvin Roth was preaching every Sunday evening. This became a pattern that remained until the early 1960's when the congregation had both a new pastor and a new location. At that time preaching became part of the Sunday morning activities as well.

At King St. a major emphasis was working with children. This included Sunday school, children's clubs and Daily Vacation Bible School which was

reinstated at this location. In early 1954 25-30 children attended Sunday School. The clubs and Sunday school eventually had 50-60 children in attendance.

In the late 1950's more couples, especially young Mennonites, became associated with the church. In 1959 the Married Couples' Fellowship and the W.M.S.C. were organized.

In 1957 Alvin Roth found himself stretched to the limit, serving both as pastor and the superintendent at the rescue mission. Late that year the congregation began a long and frustrating search for another pastor. Finally, in December of 1960, Ralph Lebold, who was then attending seminary at Goshen College, accepted the call and came to London in June 1961 after finishing his degree.

On January 14, 1962 the church was formally organized with a constitution and a charter membership of around twenty.

Members of the congregation began to question whether to renovate the King St. building or relocate. After initial investigation, they discovered that their area of the city was designated for urban renewal. So the search began for a new location. Several sites were considered, but in June 1962 land was bought at the corner of Briarhill and Melsandra in the north-east part of London. The land was in a subdivision that was just being developed and the hope was that the church would grow with, and become an integral part of, the community.

On July 1, 1962 the first worship service was held in the new community. It had been necessary to vacate the King St. premises, so permission was obtained from the London Board of Education to use Hillcrest School until it was possible to

move into the new building. Construction began on November 25, 1962 with congregation members contributing labour on regular "work nights". Some members also worked on the site during the day. On May 5, 1963 the congregation moved their worship services from the school into the church basement and the "work nights" continued. At long last, the building was completed and Valleyview Mennonite Church was dedicated on June 16, 1963.

Much has happened since concerted effort was made to contact and involve members of the community in the life of the church. Daily Vacation Bible School, which had played such an important role from the beginning, was once again resumed in the summer of 1963 with an average attendance of a little over one hundred children. Wayfarers' and Torchbearers' clubs were also started for the neighbourhood children. These children's programs continued until the early 1970's. By the time, the church had found new ways of meeting the needs of the children and families of the community.

Another successful way of involving the community was found in the Community Carol Service. December 1963 saw the first of these popular annual programs. They had a high degree of community participation and continued until 1972.

In March 1969, the first edition of *zone 25*, later known as *Outlook*, was published. This was small community newspaper for the inhabitants of the city's postal zone 25, the area in which Valleyview Mennonite Church was located. Community members were encouraged to contribute news and articles to the paper, but most of the work, (writing, illustrating, editing, printing and delivering) was done by church members. Publication of this paper continued until the late 1980's.

In the 1960's there was a new emphasis on attracting and working with the Mennonite students that were in the city. This effort was spearheaded by Arnold and Gladys Gingrich who had moved to London in the early 1960s. Largely through their efforts, including several conferences on Mennonites and Fine Arts, Valleyview became a church which was alive with students every school term. Their presence added an air of youthful exuberance and excitement to adult education classes. Every idea was discussed, challenged and dissected

down to the minutest detail. Summers at Valleyview Mennonite Church, by comparison, seemed very tame indeed. Unfortunately, Arnold Gingrich passed away 1970. There continues to be an active student group at Valleyview to this day, although the group is not as large proportionately as it once was.

In September 1966, a Voluntary Service unit was started in London. Within the first year the unit had eleven members. Positions were found for them at local psychiatric institutions, the London Rescue Mission (formerly the Goodwill Rescue Mission) and Valleyview Day Nursery. The members of the unit were actively involved with the boys' and girls' clubs as well as the church youth group. Over the years the number of unit members has decreased and in 1982, the V.S. Unit changed its administrative ties from the Mennonite Board of Missions in Indiana to M.C.C. in Winnipeg. The unit presently has two members.

One month after the V.S. unit was started in 1966, the Valleyview congregation began another ambitious community project which continues to this day. The first tentative discussions on opening a day nursery at the church took place in January 1964. However, it was not until October 1966 that they bore fruit with the official opening of Valleyview Day Nursery Care Centre. The nursery is considered to be a service to the community as well as a

natural bridge between the church and the home. However, the Nursery program is not intended to be means of forcing the church upon the family. Open five days a week, it initially had an average daily attendance of eight children. By September 1969 the program had expanded to twenty-four children with permission from the city to enroll thirty-four. In 1980 the Boullee St. Nursery was opened in a low income area near the church. This project was intended not only to look after the children but also to be a source of support and education for the parents. In 1984, after several years of operation and an ever growing debt, the congregation regretfully decided that the Boullee St. Nursery would have to be closed. Families that required daycare were absorbed into the nursery at Valleyview and an attempt was made to meet the needs of the parents through evening meetings and discussion groups from time to time. Today Valleyview Child Care Centre has an average of forty-three children enrolled. It remains an important link to the community for the church.

The congregation has had five pastors since the church's dedication in 1963. Ralph Lebold continued in that position until 1974. During that time he spent two years at Crozier Theological Seminary doing graduate work. Walter Friesen filled in as interim pastor for one of those years. In 1970 Glen Horst



Valleyview Mennonite Church



Ralph Lebold, 1970 (CGC Archive Photo)

became associate pastor and from 1974 to 1981 he took on the full-time position. Millard Osborne was pastor from 1982 to 1987 and the current pastor, Mary Burkholder, joined the congregation in 1988.

When Ralph Lebold returned from his study leave in August 1968, he had the training necessary to allow him to train other pastors. Discussions on how best to utilize Ralph's new skills were started in 1967 with the proposal that Valleyview become a training centre for persons wanting to become professional ministers. By late 1968 the appropriate

steps had been taken and the pastoral internship program was born. The program was jointly administered by Valleyview and Goshen Biblical Seminary. In September 1969 the first training began with three pastoral interns, one of whom was later to become Valleyview's pastor, Glen Horst. This program turned out to be a very

enriching experience for all involved. However,

to maintain a program of this sort, qualified personnel must be available. It finally had to be terminated in 1981.

The Valleyview congregation had its beginnings in the Ontario Amish Mennonite Conference, later known as the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference. Its member, now numbering 130, are not all from that group however. The surnames in the church directory tell a story of a very dynamic mix of people and backgrounds. There are Mennonite names of almost all stripes: Roth, Good, Zehr, Hunsburger, Koop, Penner,

Neufeld, Schmidt, Suderman, Froese, Janzen, Wiebe, just to name a few. However there are also many non-ethnic Mennonite names: Bonniferro, Graffagnino, Ghebreslasie, Grzybowski, Hamilton, Lankin, Portillo, Rivera, Saito. Because of our wide diversity of backgrounds, discussions were started in the early 1980's about co-affiliating with more than just one Mennonite conference. Accordingly, in 1985 Valleyview Mennonite Church became a member not only of the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference but of the United Mennonite Conference of Ontario and the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec. Currently it is a member of the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada.

This has been a sketchy and somewhat selective story of the Valleyview Mennonite Congregation from its early beginnings to the present. Much of relevance has not been discussed, for instance: the work with refugees; the involvement with the Limberlost community; the development of Agape Fellowship through the efforts of some members. However, it's the story of people coming to a new community, some to stay and some going again, of programs being initiated, dropped or reshaped as the needs of the people and the surrounding community change. And the story is not over. It continues on.

Dear Editor,

I should begin by explaining who I am. I am a member of Danforth-Morningside Church. My parents came to this area of Toronto at the beginning of the century and had close ties with the church or "Mission" as it was known then.

I am writing about a paragraph which appeared in Mennogespräch last September. The article is about "Mennonite Women"; written by Lorna Bergey. It is an excellent article, but it contains an inaccurate statement. The article describes this community on the outskirts of Toronto as poverty-stricken British settlers and relates the Mennonite church's work of distributing food and bedding to these poor people.

This community of British settlers consisted of hard-working English, Irish and Scottish immigrants, who had emigrated from large industrial cities "back home". Indeed their lives here were hard, as they built tarpaper shacks and lived without plumbing and electricity, or paved roads. But they were hard-working, solid citizens who worked all day in factories in Toronto, and returned to their shacks which they worked on in the evenings and weekends. To get to a bridge over the Dan River, they had to walk long distances to the south of them, through the bush. My father worked at the Canadian Pacific Expockets on overcoats.

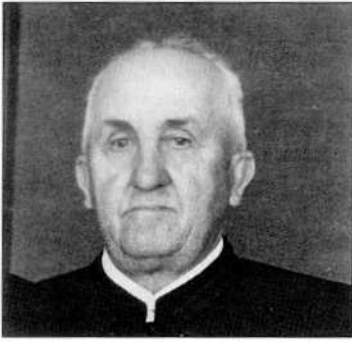
I think the error in the article probably occurred because the workers out here used to return twice weekly to the slum area where the Mission was originally located to distribute food.

There is an article in the archives written by one of the first members here - Harry Chapman. He relates how much the Mission meant to him. He says in part "What a happy group they were.....I felt at home from the start." The role of the Mennonite Church here in this suburban area was one of friendship and fellowship - not of distributing food or bedding.

When Lewis and Edna Weber came to Toronto in 1922, most of the British had finished their modest homes, and Lewis states in a December 1925 issue of the Youths Christian Companion that the people out here were "thrifty, enterprising working-class, most of English, Irish and Scottish extraction, who transformed a settlement of tarpaper cottages into the prosperous Danforth District". Muriel Purdon

The Missionary Aspect of the C. O. Witness

An address by Bishop E. J. Swalm at the Mennonite Mission Board Meeting, Kitchener, May 20, 1945
 Reprinted in memory of this well-known leader - ed.



E.J. Swalm, 1897-1991 (Canadian Mennonite Photo)

It affords me great pleasure to speak to you on this subject that is so dear to my heart. I have no words to express my profound appreciation for the boys who are giving and have given their CO witness as at this time.

To introduce what I may have to say may I refer you to a few verses in the book of Acts, first chapter, verses 6,7,8. Our subject this evening calls for that particular part of that witness. I have no apology to offer for this witness and at the outstart may I say that I am pleased to be affiliated with a group such as this. There are at present, according to accurate figures, about 10,300 COs in Canada under an ASW (Alternative Service Work) contract. Some people would say that is nothing for the country to be proud of but I say it is something to be grateful for. In World War One there were approximately 200 COs as far as was known. This was probably due to a smaller callup at that time. But I am happy to know that as this witness has gone forth there has been a response from the public which shows that this witness is becoming more appealing and helping the general public to see more of the horror of war.

One evening, at the CO Forestry Camp at Green Timbers, B.C., the Superintendent was talking to his Deputy in a following manner: Deputy — "What do you think of these COs?" Supt. — "What do you mean? What I think of their work, character, or what?" Deputy — "No, what do you think of their belief?" Supt. — "Well, I'll tell you, they really have something." This conversation was heard by several of the CO boys who by being victims of circumstances were close enough to catch the two men discussing them. These men had never let on that they had been impressed by the witness of the boys. It might be encouraging if we knew how far our witness has gone. The CO witness is nothing else than the Christian witness. It seems to me this is the inevitable witness. May I say that while the war in Europe is ended, and we thank God it is, could men like Eisenhower and Montgomery preach the gospel there? They would be embarrassed if they sought such a mission. The work they have been engaged

in runs counter to a ministry of love. Their witness would be greater had they practiced in time of war the principles of peace, showing that they were interested in constructive work. I might also add that I believe a CO could preach the gospel of love in Europe with much more effect.

During the past year and more it has been my privilege to visit some of the CPS (Civilian Public Service) camps in the United States, as well as our own ASW camps which had been operating in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada. I travelled 8000 miles in the United States making visits to the various camps and units on my slate. What they have done to me, and for me, has greatly enriched and helped me and has given me a vision as to how far reaching our witness may be. I want to say that this CO witness and the various aspects impressed me in an unprecedented manner.

The missionary aspect of this witness is something noticeable; we should be grateful for it. The MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) must finance their own CPS camps in the U.S. These take in non-peace church men as well as their own, and if the non-peace churches do not support their men, the MCC does. Five dollars monthly is paid to outsiders as well as Mennonites. Jehovah's Witnesses display their faithfulness when payday comes, although not necessarily at all other times. They then use this money for literature of their own trying to dissuade those very ones who have shown them such kindness. The story is told of a certain CO from a non-peace church (quite antagonistic toward COs) who was talking with his camp director, also from a non-peace church. The CO had been complaining all along about camps and their conditions. During the conversation the director said, "Has your church given you food, clothes, and pay?" The CO had to admit it had not. The MCC was doing this for them. This witness had such effect that the director said, "When this war is over, I think we should both join the Mennonites!" There is also a personal witness in the respect that boys from more evangelical churches contact those from less evangelical churches and make many personal contacts. In many instances the more evangelical boys have convinced their friends that there is such a thing as being born again.

In one of the B.C. camps a camp watchman was brought to accept the Lord through efforts of the CO boys and the camp minister. He was contacted only twice, and the foundation for this had been laid by the sincere witness of the COs. An instance is related of the two boys in the U.S., who while on a leave from camp, were eating in a restaurant. Nearby were two well dressed ladies watching them. The one, after some time, thought he should let them know where he stood, for this is probably what

they were wondering. He turned to them and outrightly told them he was doing work in a CPS camp for the the government; in other words, that he was a CO. The one lady told him to stop. She said that was enough of that talk. She told him they had a brother who had been for years in a mental hospital, a victim of insanity. She told the boys how the doctors had often wondered regarding his recovery, until one day when a CO came as a ward attendant. She said that her brother began to improve, and that he has now recovered. Said she, "You don't have to tell us anything about COs. We're going to see him at his home now after three years separation." Another story is told of a wife of a CO working in a T.B. ward in a hospital. One day one of the patients, a woman, was thought to be dying. Doctors had given here only a few hours. The patient said, "Call that CO girl to my bed." The CO wife came in. The patient, in a soft whisper, said to the CO wife, "I wish you would hold my hand while I die. Will You?" The girl did. And as she did she thought, "My heart goes out to that poor soul. I'll be the only person to see her die." And so in the few remaining moments the CO wife bent down and whispered a little message of love and the gospel and the patient, although mentally ill, had enough mentality to grasp the few simple thoughts and before the last breath was uttered, expressed her thanks and feeling that she had received the Lord into her heart. My friends listening to me tonight, if that would have been your mother or sister or wife on that death bed, would you not have been happy to know that some saved person had been holding her hand and had saved her before she slipped away?

The greatest witness, I believe, that is being given today is in the many mental hospitals throughout the United States. The public almost stands aghast that these people should do such a menial service from the standpoint of love, and not money. I say furthermore that we must not consider our witness as past. It is just beginning. There are going to be opportunities after the war which will be just as great, if not greater, than during the war. Food, clothing, and numerous supplies will be needed in countries ravaged by war. I believe our people will rise to this challenge. I believe our people will contact others in relief service who are not in sympathy with us, yet they will respect us and possibly come to know our convictions and follow us.

If we fail to rally on this great work and witness we have failed impress the world that the love of Christ has constrained us to undertake this service. Through these contacts we will be able to tell of Christ who died and rose for us. Think of the countless opportunities that lie ahead. Let us show forth our CO witness and the missionary opportunities will open us in great numbers.

Book Review

reviewed by Len Friesen.

J. Winfield Fretz, *The Waterloo Mennonites. A Community in Paradox*
Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1989; 391 pp.

This study of Waterloo County Mennonites has many strengths. Author J. Winfield Fretz is founding president of Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, and its first sociologist. *The Waterloo Mennonites* has successfully walked the line between being an overly biased "insider" and a disinterested "outsider", managing in the process to deal empathetically with Mennonite "of the horse and buggy" to those "of the two car garage". Representing almost two decades of research, observation, and reflection, the study also bears the marks of mature reflection that is often absent in more rapidly researched and produced works. Finally, Fretz's care in setting the proper contextual basis for this study leads to carefully prepared discussions on many aspects of the Mennonite experience. Thus, for example, a discussion on Mennonites and faith is preceded by an introductory section on the components of faith, including a

mention of beliefs, rituals and symbols. Such careful preparation considerably broadens the scope and corresponding value that this work will have for many readers.

The study itself is divided into 20 chapters dealing with both historical and contemporary realities of Waterloo Mennonites, who are divided into three groups: progressives, moderates and conservatives (see pp. 43-45). These are then examined under a variety of themes, including "faith", "education", "occupation", "leisure time", and "mutual aid".

The detailed information on the Old Order Mennonites will make this book especially valuable, and reflects the extraordinary ties that the author has built in that particular community. One wonders, however, if the impression offered of Old Orders as being firmly resistant to change (p. 296) would be as true today as it was when much of the data for this study was collected.

Indeed, it could be argued that Old Order Mennonites have experienced more profound change in the last decade (especially in the widespread adoption of telephones and sharp reduction in the use of work horses) than has occurred amongst even "progressive" Mennonites. In addition, those interested in the mix of "new Mennonites", including the recently formed Spanish and Hmong fellowships, will be disappointed as the focus is clearly on the Swiss and Dutch/Russian "branches".

Nevertheless, by masterfully combining academic research skills, astute observations, and telling anecdotes, J. Winfield Fretz has produced a wonderful work. It serves as a fitting marker of his longstanding fascination and concern in the varied experiences of Waterloo Mennonite communities.

I would like to become a member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. I will be informed of all Society events, will be eligible to serve on the various committees of the Society, and will receive Mennogespräch as part of my membership.

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