



## MCC 100 Sunday

Wildwood Mennonite Church // September 13, 2020

Worship Leader: Bruno B // Music Leader: Linda G with H&L Martens Family

Sermon: Eileen KH

### Welcome to Wildwood

Welcome to Wildwood Mennonite Church's Sunday morning worship service. It is indeed good to gather and celebrate our journey of faith. A reminder that there will be a brief business meeting after the service. Please stay online for that after the benediction. Part of the business will include the proposal for an MCC Centennial project which you were sent earlier.

Today we celebrate 100 years of compassion and service in the name of Christ – through the organization our churches have created called Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). We will hear voices of the people living out that experience 100 years ago. We will see images and hear stories of how MCC responds today to an ever-growing awareness of basic needs and injustice around the world. We will have time to talk together in our breakout rooms about how we have helped shape and been shaped by MCC. The breakouts will happen after the sermon from MCCSK Executive Director Eileen Klassen Hamm. We want to celebrate the movement of God's spirit among us as a people. Let's start with MCC's beginning...

### MCC - The Early Years 1920-1970

MCC emerged in response to a call for help from Mennonite communities in southern Russia. Upon hearing the cry for help, Mennonites in North America wanted to respond - yet the means to do that was not immediately obvious, as the various Mennonite conferences had been rather isolated from each other. It was a sometimes contentious meeting in Elkhart Indiana where representatives from 6 different groups gathered to discuss how to respond. At one point Orié Miller (one of the few people with emergency response experience) spoke up and said, "Unless you can all agree to collaborate I will not work with you. That settled things down and in relatively short order they created a committee to take up the task – Mennonite Central Committee.

P. C. Hiebert, the Mennonite Brethren pastor who was the 1st MCC Chairperson and who guided MCC during its first 33 years wrote in his book *Feeding the Hungry* (1929):

*'If there is anything out of the ordinary in the work of the Committee as a whole, it lay in the complete harmony and singleness of purpose with which it functioned throughout . . . We had to keep in mind the differences in belief and in point of view between the various Branches of Mennonites . . . We have long had the means to do bigger things in the Master's service; it took a terrible crisis to arouse in us the spirit to do them effectively and to make us forget our differences sufficiently to work together effectively.'*

Imagine for the moment that you have been asked to bring relief supplies to people struggling to survive. You've seen appalling images from Lebanon, Syria, Congo, and many more places where MCC works today. Some things haven't changed. Listen to these firsthand accounts of our own people as they responded to that call 100 years ago:

[Lamentations and Voices from MCC's Beginnings – 'Give us this day our daily bread.'](#) // Ken Dyck, Sarah Rinholm, & Bruno Baerg

Song // [Great is Thy Faithfulness](#) // Hymnal Worship Book #327 // Harv & Linda Martens Family

### Peace Candle

MCC has emerged from and has been shaped by the church to enable our faith community to offer worship that transforms the lives of people experiencing natural disaster, violence, injustice, and lack of basic needs. It is part of the church's signposting of the kingdom.

During a trip to Chimoio, Mozambique in the late 80's I was received by a delegation of church leaders. They wanted to express their perspectives on MCC's work in their midst. Their names were Rev Jonathan Simango and Julio Mapote.

*"We thank God because you, the Mennonite Central Committee, have accepted to be used by God to alleviate God's suffering children in this country...The nature of your sharing reveals to us two important elements of your (MCC's) character:*

- *Your awareness of your dependence upon God*
- *Your notion of justice in relation to your fellow human beings.*

*...When we do not share, we are faithless to (God) and we are actually stealing from God and our fellow human beings. We are creating imbalance in a world which God created in perfect balance. The world and the Church, which is supposed to be a body, beautiful and in perfect proportion, suffers from elephantitis because some parts of it grow too fat while the other parts suffer and shrink as the life-giving blood does not circulate."*

Lord, we offer ourselves to you as sign-posts of your kingdom here on earth. Grant us wisdom, courage, and strength as we give of ourselves, our resources, our time and our talents to the work you call us to. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen

**Children's Story** // [Click here for video storytime with Heather & Rehema!](#)

Today's story is [Kid's Can Change the World: School Kits to Kampuchea](#) by Nathan Pauls.



## Scripture // *The Inclusive Bible* translation

### **Mark 6:30-44**

*The apostles came back to Jesus and reported all that they had done and taught. Jesus said to them, "Come away by yourselves to someplace more remote, and rest awhile." For there were many people coming and going, and the apostles hadn't had time to eat. So they went away in a boat to a deserted area.*

*The people saw them leaving and many recognized them, so they ran together on foot from all the cities and got there ahead of the apostles. When Jesus went ashore, there was a large crowd waiting for him, and he felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began to teach them many things.*

*By now it was getting very late, and his disciples came up to him and said, "This is a deserted place and it's very late. Why not dismiss them so they can go to the nearby farms and villages and buy something to eat?"*

*Jesus replied, "Give them something to eat yourselves."*

*They answered, "You want us to spend half a year's wages on bread for them to eat?"*

*"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Go look."*

*When they found out they reported back, "Five, and two fish."*

*Jesus told them to have the people sit down on the grass in groups of hundreds and fifties. Then Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. Jesus broke the loaves and handed them to the disciples to distribute among the people. He also passed out the two fish among them.*

*They all ate until they had their fill. The disciples gathered up the leftovers and filled twelve baskets of broken bread and fish. In all, five thousand families ate that day.*

### **2 Corinthians 5:16-20**

*And so from now on, we don't look on anyone in terms of mere human judgment. Even if we did once regard Christ in these terms, that is not how we know Christ now. And for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now everything is new!*

*All of this is from God, who ransomed us through Christ—and made us ministers of that reconciliation. This means that through Christ, the world was fully reconciled again to God, who didn't hold our transgressions against us, but instead entrusted us with this message of reconciliation. This makes us Christ's ambassadors, as though God were*



*making the appeal directly through us. Therefore we implore you in Christ's name: be reconciled to God.*

**Sermon // "Creation, Compassion & Reconciliation: MCC at 100" // Eileen Klassen Hamm**

(If you'd rather watch than read, [click here for the full video version](#) on youtube)

Greetings from MCC to the Wildwood Mennonite Church community! For those who don't know me, my name is Eileen Klassen Hamm, and I serve as the Executive Director for MCC in Saskatchewan, and as we live through these covid days, I am grateful that we have technological tools which allows us to be connected even when we cannot gather face to face. I welcome conversation about anything regarding MCC, and you will find contact information for me in the script available on the church website.

At MCC, we were planning for the year 2020 with much excitement. This is our centennial, our 100th birthday. In January, we began our celebrations with The Great Winter Warm-Up, and I know that many of you participated, along with thousands of others across North America, creating more than 9000 comforters to share around the world. And then came COVID-19.

This isn't the year of celebration that we envisioned as we approached 2020, however, it is turning into a year that is demonstrating the generosity and creativity and perseverance of the many thousands of people who make up the MCC community, here and in 52 other countries. The coronavirus is also teaching us, reminding us that we are so very interconnected with each other, all around the world.



Like any 100 year old, MCC has been witness to so many world events, including other pandemics, and also generational and technological changes; we've celebrated beautiful births and grieved tremendous losses; we've experienced some aches and pains, some regrets and mistakes, and we've had so many opportunities to share God's love and compassion in the name of Christ.



*Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, shares God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. MCC envisions communities worldwide in right relationship with God, one another and creation.*

Mission statement— a reminder of who we are/who we want to be together - owned by you and other Anabaptist churches, supported by many more ...

If someone asks me what does MCC do? I could answer – what Wildwood Mennonite Church does ... we financially support partners in 53 countries to carry out activities like education projects and water security projects.



(Nepal)

We invest in food aid and food security development projects with Canadian Foodgrains Bank, because many of us come from people of the land, and the smell of healthy earth in our nostrils makes us want everyone in the world to be well fed.



(Uganda)

We send our own people to be Service Workers and SALT participants to walk alongside church and community partners around the world, because we believe that together with people unlike ourselves we will learn how to build healthy and peaceable communities.



We collect school kits and relief kits and sew comforters with our hands, for people we may never meet, because we hold this crazy notion that if we pour our love into these physical gifts, the people who receive them will know in some small way that they are not forgotten, they are not alone, even when they are facing displacement and great uncertainty. This is our Board Chair, Dan Siebert, in a hospital in North Korea, late last year.



We resell, reuse, repurpose our clothes and furniture and tools, and give all kinds of volunteer time to support our Thrift Shops, because we have learned over the decades that these Shops become community spaces where we learn to know each other, and where dollar by dollar we transform tshirts and dresses and lamps and picnic blankets into funds for health clinics and trauma recovery workshops



(Lebanon)



and peace clubs



(Zambia)

and home reconstruction after earthquakes.

We put on fun festival events like the Relief Sale and cook thousands of sausages and sell plants and art because we enjoy working together for a shared vision of a world where basic human needs are met and we can work together toward peace and justice.



We support refugee families coming to Canada, walking alongside them as they enter our education and health and employment systems, listening to their stories and sharing our own, crying and laughing together as we recognize our common hopes and dreams.



(Canada)

What does MCC do? We do what Wildwood Mennonite Church people do, sharing God's love and compassion for all, in the name of Christ. We are so grateful for your generous and ongoing partnership in this global ministry.

Why do we do these things? I'm going to offer three reasons this morning using three scriptures as starting points.



The first reason is our origin story. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth – the light and the darkness, the waters and the sky, the land and the plants, the sun and moon and stars and seasons, the birds and the fish, the animals and the humans. And God saw everything, and it was very good.

This story, at the very beginning of the bible, frames our understanding of the world and of God and of all the stories and invitations that follow. The world has a Creator. That Creator God is interested, not only in humans, but also in light, water, land, stars, trees, fruit, birds, cattle and fish. The created world bears the imprint and likeness and presence of the Creating God. The created world is interconnected. We all breathe the same air and drink the same water. The created world is God's world, and is good, is full of God's love and abundant goodness.

The creation story is one of the foundational stories that shapes our MCC ministry. We are moved to act by God's love, the Love that created the world, that continues to create in the world, the love present in people everywhere created in God's image.

There are incredible stories unfolding in our created world every day. Some of them are beautifully generous, reflecting the goodness of creation. Some are horrifyingly violent and ugly. Many stories are full of anxiety and unknowns, like the spread of the coronavirus through countries and communities.

And in the midst of these stories, just like 100 years ago in South Russia



where people were starving, we are called to be the church. What does it mean to be the church in our world that is both created in goodness and also full of broken stories?



(Syria)

This is Rev. N, pastor of the National Presbyterian Church of Aleppo in Syria. When Aleppo was under siege, Christians and Muslims died defending each other's places of worship, Rev N says, "This shows how we are living together, and how we are suffering together . . . during the crisis people forgot their religion and remembered one thing: we are all human beings." The building of N's church was destroyed in the siege of 2012. Yet through the siege church members continued to worship and to reach out to the community around them. Today, N's congregation continues to distribute monthly cash allowances and shipments of blankets, hygiene kits and warm clothes from MCC coordinated by the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches.



This image is an example of a kind of Japanese artwork called kintsugi. It is the art of repairing broken pottery with gold. The mended piece is believed to be more beautiful, more valuable, and stronger, because it has been transformed through suffering. The damage is actually made more visible, by filling the cracks with gold. Something that has a history, has suffered damage, can become more beautiful. Sharp shards can become beautiful and treasured, if they are cared for. In so many ways this speaks to the activities that we have been able to do together over the decades through the presence of MCC. Together we have been glinting gold. We, ourselves, are wounded people, broken in various ways, but also mended, healed and full of grace. Together we have seen glinting gold in others. In Matthew 25, Jesus speaks about the least of these – the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the incarcerated ones, and invites us to see his face in their faces. And we have, again and again, seen beauty in pain. We've seen Jesus. We stand with the least of these because that is where we belong. The world may be broken but it is also our beautiful home, and God is here with us, love is here with us, loose in the world, flinging hope around.



Our second scripture story this morning (Mark 6:30-44) is the only story of Jesus that is recorded in all four of the gospels. It must be significant. We often call it The Feeding of the 5000, though that is a bit of a misnomer, because the number only refers to the men. With the women and children there may have been 15-20 thousand people! Let's look at the story ...

The story begins with an invitation to rest. Jesus invites his disciples to a quiet place, a solitary place. They've been pouring themselves out, haven't even had a chance to eat. Does that ever happen to you? Jesus knows the importance of the rhythms of work and rest, of renewal and service.

But in this story, the retreat is short-lived, because the crowds followed. And, I love what it says in vs. 34, Jesus "had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd." That word "compassion" is a beautiful word. A powerful word. The root meaning of the Greek word is "gut reaction." Compassion means you would do anything for someone, it means you're all in. Jesus' head may have been calculating some minutes of sleep, but his gut/his heart is with the people. The heart doesn't calculate. You can't dabble in compassion.

So, sit with this for a bit. Jesus had compassion on these people, Jesus still has compassion on people. Our Creator is a compassionate God, and you/we are the object of this compassion. God is all in for you, for us. Let that feed your soul. And maybe, we also need to be reminded of the power of compassion in our own lives. If God has put someone or something on your heart, give yourself to that. Compassion is one of the clearest signs of God at work.

Back to the story, which is taking on more urgency now. A massive crowd has gathered, it's getting late, the people are hungry. And Jesus says, "Give them something to eat." Well, the disciples start calculating ... "We'd have to work for a year to feed this crowd." But Jesus isn't interested in calculations. He isn't interested in what they do not have. He wants to work with what they do have. "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." "Five loaves ... and, um, here's two fish." More than just bread. They are learning about the mystery of God's abundant compassion. There's always something more, if you are willing to look for it. And now ... the miracle happens.

5 loaves plus 2 fish divided by thousands of people = 12

This is the math of God's compassion. It is the economics of God's kingdom. The final, beautiful touch of this story is the leftovers – "12 baskets." The baskets mentioned here are small personal baskets/containers that Jewish men were known for always having with them - like backpacks for school children. The story ends with this tidbit – that each of the 12 disciples – who had worked

for so long, who had been hungry and tired when this started and then just kept on working to serve others – each of these guys got their fill of the meal too. There's enough for everyone. God's creation and compassion is enough.

As we look back over the 100 years of MCC's ministry, we humbly recognize so many moments of God's abundantly providing enough, as God works with what we do have.



(Some of you have probably heard me tell this story before, but I find it such a profound one.) Fawzia is an ethnic Yazidi woman in Iraq. They are a religious minority who have been targeted by ISIS and have moved out of fear of their lives. Fawzia is a participant in an MCC-supported beekeeping project. She received five bee boxes 2 years ago and now has 16 bee boxes which provide her livelihood. And not only that, she has taken two displaced families (25 people in total) into her home. When asked why she was willing to set aside so much of her home, her answer is simple. "Where would they go if I don't accept them?" Compassionately sharing food and shelter with others created in the image of God on this good earth.



This is our scripture card at MCC for this centennial year, from 2 Corinthians 5 which is our third scripture for this morning. The apostle Paul wrote these letters to the new Christians in Corinth, almost 2000 years ago. The group, interestingly enough, is made up of both Jewish and Greek converts to Christianity, two communities that didn't logically interact. The Jews prided themselves on their religious group identity and the Greeks just naturally knew they were superior to everyone else. But all these folks had somehow become intrigued with the gospel of Jesus Christ which Paul says is calling them to reconciliation across divides.

Now today some Christians have put Paul into a pretty small box and insist on interpreting his words about reconciliation within an individual, spiritual realm, as though his concern is only for our eternal souls, and not for our everyday lives in our very real and complex world. But when we look at Paul's words within his own historical context, we can see how courageously Paul is challenging the political and social structures of his time. I think today Paul would be at a Black

Lives Matter protest. Paul has experienced the Spirit of God moving and making deep connections across differences. The ekklesiai, the church, is to be a witness to a “beloved community” which crosses and challenges lines of race, and class, and gender. Everyone is invited. Everyone can belong.



(Germany, Peace House)

One of the Mennonite congregations in Germany runs the Peace House which supports refugees. Women from this congregation together with Muslim women refugees are forming friendships and quilting together, making blankets which MCC sends to Syria where these women are from.



(Saskatchewan)

When the COVID outbreak began in Northern Saskatchewan, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner put out a call for handmade masks to share among the northern communities. Randy Klassen, our Indigenous Neighbours staff person, sent the call to our blanket makers and sewers, and within 2 weeks, we had 1500 masks to share with northern communities.



(Saskatchewan)

Refugee sponsorship and newcomer settlement create new communities with an amazing diversity of languages and cultures, as you know well. This photo is from last year’s summer day camp called Raise the Peace, which is intended to give children opportunities to build peace skills together, across quite an array of differences, to build communities of compassion & reconciliation.



As we look forward to MCC's second century of ministry, may we continue to build strong relationships beyond ourselves, creating compassionate and gentle spaces. And, like the children, it won't always be perfect, but it will always have the potential to witness to God's Spirit of amazing goodness and reconciliation.

These words of reconciliation from Paul continue to be a really radical message today in our own divided up world. Boundaries and borders created by people crumble when the Spirit of God blows through our lives and our world. Our small lives are redeemed into a large and expansive story of God's grace for all. Don't be afraid. It's God's world and God is making all of us new.



<https://mcccanada.ca/mcc-webinar-series>

For more stories from MCC, I invite you to join us for our monthly webinar series, featuring a wide variety of stories from projects around the world. Each month we explore a new topic, ranging from the impacts of our material resources to how MCC is responding to COVID-19. Experts in the field give us a behind-the-scenes experience, sharing their own stories. You are welcome to register for upcoming webinars and browse through past recordings. Last month, we heard from our colleagues in South Sudan.



[mccsk.ca/go-100](http://mccsk.ca/go-100)

And, if you're missing the opportunity to support MCC through the annual Relief Sale, we've cooked up something unique for this year called Go!100 to encourage creative fundraising for families, individuals, and church communities and to help us replace some revenue lost without the relief sale and with the temporary closure of our Thrift Shops. Check it out!

Friends, this is God's created world. And it is good. And in this good and broken world we are invited to receive and offer compassion and reconciliation. Thanks be to God.

Let's pray together:

Creator and Creating God, we give you thanks for this good day and for this beautiful Wildwood church community. In these pandemic days, we are made more aware of our global interconnectedness, and we invite your Spirit to accompany us as we find creative ways to continue to reach out to vulnerable people here and around the world. Even as we physically distance, we hear your call to share our loaves and fishes with all who need sustenance. Even as we care for our families and communities, we hear your call to reach across borders and barriers, perhaps now virtually or financially, to build caring relationships. Be with us, today and this week, as we live out our days as your followers. May your grace and peace be our guide. Amen.

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**Sermon – Creation, Compassion & Reconciliation: MCC at 100**

For 13 September 2020 [recorded on 9 Sep 2020]

Wildwood Mennonite Church

Presented by Eileen Klassen Hamm, [eileenklassenhamm@mccsk.ca](mailto:eileenklassenhamm@mccsk.ca), 306-665-2555

Contact: Joe H

Theme: creation, abundance, hospitality & reconciliation, MCC 100 years

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2:4a, Mark 6: 30-44, 2 Cor 5:16-20

Resources: MCC Centennial resources

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**Song of Response // [Now Thank We All Our God](#) // Hymnal Worship Book #86**

I invite you to join in the song Now Thank We All Our God. This song was written in 1636 by Pastor Martin Rinkart in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War that devastated Europe. His hometown of Eilenberg, Saxony had been hit with the plague and then famine and some 8000 people had died. The song began as their family prayer before meals and after the war was sung as a national hymn of thanksgiving. It was again an expression of gratitude for Mennonite refugees after passing from the Soviet-controlled zone into the British-controlled zone of occupied Germany after the Second World War. Pastor Hylkema, who witnessed the event describes it this way:

“And then they came, an endless flow of exhausted, shabby, and miserable people emerged from the train.... Quietly, they gathered in a group and suddenly the sounds burst forth echoing in the large railroad station: ‘Now thank we all our God.’ One verse, and then another. There was that same happiness, that same offering of praise and glory to God.



“A train attendant asked me, ‘What kind of people are they?’ ‘Mennonites from Russia,’ I replied. Then he said thoughtfully, ‘I’d like to be a Mennonite, too.’”

### Sharing Time // ["Hey Wildwood..." online sharing](#)

Not hearing from one another in person through the Sharing Time is a significant loss for many of us. It's not the same, but one way to express your grief, anxiety, prayer requests and gratitude is through the "Hey Wildwood" link above. If you're able, join us for our Sunday Morning Zoom gatherings, or check your email for the sharing items from last Sunday. Or maybe now would be a good time to pause your reading to call someone from church or elsewhere that you haven't heard from this week. **Note: Our regular sharing time this week was replaced with a breakout session to share about our experiences with MCC.**

### Breakout Rooms

- What has been your connection with MCC?
- How has your engagement with MCC's vision impacted you?
- How has your involvement shaped the work and vision of MCC?
- If you have been involved in a service ministry other than MCC how did that impact you?

### [MCC – The Power of Partnerships: MCC into the Future](#)

### Congregational Prayer of Gratitude // Eileen Klaassen

God of our salvation, Lord of all creation, we give thanks to you today for the outreach of the church through Mennonite Central Committee.

Thank you for using MCC to bring your scattered church closer together while also sending us out around the world as ministers of your love in action.

Thank you for the multitude of people over the past century who have devoted themselves for one year, three years and sometimes decades to serve in Christ's name.

Thank you for the churches and communities that have received MCC workers and that reach out in love to care for their neighbours and even their enemies.

Thank you for the thousands upon thousands of volunteers each year who piece and tie comforters, can meat, pack kits and make blankets, sift through donations at thrift shops and sell food at relief sales.



Thank you for all who give of their time and their resources in support of MCC's ministries, including children who gather pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters for MCC through My Coins Count.

Thank you for taking MCC and transforming its efforts into a channel of your love. Guide us and lead MCC over the coming years and decades, making us into faithful servants of your son, Jesus.

This morning we remember the people of our congregation

- We think of those we have not seen in person for a long time
- We remember those who are looking for new work, and possibly for new direction.
- Those who are feeling overwhelmed with responsibilities of caregiving and those who cannot be near the ones they love and care about
- Those who are sick
- Those who continue to grieve the death of loved ones
- For those who have found the strength to recognize righteous anger and know within themselves that they are valuable and loved persons.
- We continue to pray for the safety of children and teachers, EA's, and janitorial and other staff in the schools.

We are grateful

- for...
- that we are able to worship together virtually, and that there are those who have explored the safety issues so that some of us can begin to worship in person next Sunday.

Great is your faithfulness, Lord! In these times of change and loss, help us to remember to be grateful for all that we have and to be faithful stewards of all we have been given! May we strive to follow the footsteps of Jesus, whose example we follow, and in whose name we pray. Amen.

**Benediction // [Whatever You Do](#) // Sing the Story #52**

