

LIFE TOGETHER



St. Jacobs Mennonite Church

www.sjmc.on.ca

Winter 2022

Pastor's Pen

Janet Bauman



Bless you in 2022!

What does it mean to offer someone a blessing? What does it mean to be blessed?

There are all sorts of blessings in the Bible—blessings for children, blessings for those called to a particular task, blessings as part of worship rituals, blessings for food before a meal, and so on. One biblical theme is that we are “blessed to be a blessing” as God promises to Abram and Sarai when they are called to leave their country and their kindred, and go to a new land: “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12: 2-3). In the Bible, blessings carried weight. They had to do with God’s purpose. They imparted life and hope. They had to do with how things were to be in God’s kingdom.

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Pictured above: the site where Jesus is said to have delivered the Sermon on the Mount, including the Beatitudes

Editorial

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Pages 6, 7, 8

As some years come to an end, I pick a theme or “motto” for the upcoming year. 2010 became a very active year for me after I picked “If not in 2010, then when?” as my motto. For 2022, I chose “Bless you in 2022”. I like it because it’s a little more outward looking with “you” in it and I think we all hope for some blessings in 2022. Not that we haven’t been blessed in 2020 or 2021 but let’s face it, we are ready for some more positive changes.

I also decided this motto would be good as a theme for the first issue of Life Together in 2022. Janet picked this theme up well in her Pastor’s Pen and I tried to connect the challenges of the past couple of years with a clay pot image. You can read about the Shahadeh family as they settle in Canada and the blessings of a couple of important ministries coming to an end. There are other notes about change and future blessings.

I’m fine with filling these pages with more of my own thoughts and interests but we’d much prefer to include your interests and contributions. If you have ideas for articles or themes, please let us know. I promise I won’t expect you to write it or be involved unless you want to be. If you have writings that you’d like to contribute, that would be great too. Please call or email me as you feel led.

Q: Do you have any ideas for future articles or content?

If so please email me at lifetogether@sjmc.on.ca or call me at 519-664-3374

Brent

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Life Together, since 1979. Formerly The Beacon est.1967; previously Keystone Literary Society newspaper.

The Beatitudes (blessings) found in Matthew 5:1-12 are one of the best summaries of the qualities that Jesus taught and modeled. Writer, John Driver in his book “Life Together in the Spirit: A Radical Spirituality for the Twenty-First Century” says, the Beatitudes both serve as a “synthesis of the entire Sermon on the Mount, and summarize the spirituality reflected throughout the New Testament (p. 9-10). While these values “characterize the kingdom of God,” they do “clash with our human tendencies” (p 9-10).

When I participated in a learning trip to Israel and Palestine in 2018, our tour group had the opportunity to visit the site where Jesus is said to have delivered the Sermon on the Mount, including the Beatitudes. There is a lovely chapel on this site, and beautiful gardens, with a stunning view out over the Sea of Galilee. In this setting we read the Beatitudes. Derek Suderman our tour leader, helped us to understand something of the radical nature of these teachings when he pointed out that the Roman city of Tiberius was visible just across the lake from where Jesus was teaching about loving enemies and praying for persecutors. Tiberius was an imposing reminder that Palestine in Jesus’ day was an occupied land.

Another significant encounter with the Beatitudes happened when we were hosted by Christian

Palestinian families in Beit Sahour just outside Bethlehem. These families experienced the daily realities of living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank—restrictions, identification papers, check points, arbitrary detentions by Israeli Defence Forces, and the separation wall. One of the host mothers kept her bible open on her table to the Beatitudes—she read them every morning. For our group, this was a profound and moving example of a spirituality that reflected the radical nature of the kingdom of God—the qualities that Jesus taught and modeled.

As I was reflecting on the nature of blessings for this article, I found the following description.

Blessings are “places where the divine peaks through into our broken world.” It follows then, that the invitation for us is to “bring those glimpses into the lives of others.” In this understanding, blessings do not deny or ignore the very real pain and struggle we encounter in our world. But they help us to know that goodness, love and hope can still be found in spite of the pain, and often right in the midst of it. Can we make a habit of looking for places, every day, where “the divine peaks through”? And can we bring those glimpses of the divine into the lives of others? What small acts of kindness can we take each day that bless someone else? May God bless you to be a blessing! ■



*Left:
Church of the
Beatitudes
and gardens
on the site
where Jesus is
said to have
delivered the
Sermon on the
Mount, including
the Beatitudes*

Blessings of the Past, Present, and Future

Brent Horst

SJMC Annual “Quilts for the World” May Quilt Show

It has not been possible to host the quilt show for the past two years due to Covid, and the committee has decided it's time to not hang up the quilts another year! I want to acknowledge all the work that has gone into holding these events for over 20 years. Thank you to everyone involved! Each year, in addition to all the advance planning, organizing, and promoting of the event, it took about 60 volunteers to physically set up the exhibits, and then take it all down four days later. During the show, greeters welcomed people and monitored the visitors, answering any questions they might have. For years, someone even slept in the church overnight to protect the valuable artifacts! Ask Oscar Weber about that experience. I guess that's the only time it's okay to sleep in church! Over the event's existence, almost \$100,000 was raised for Mennonite Central Committee and thousands of people enjoyed the many aspects of quilting and other textile arts. These events were a blessing to many people in many ways.

A great article about the SJMC Annual Quilts for the World show was written by Ella Brubacher and can be found in Life Together, Fall 2014 issue, pg 15. You can also find it on the SJMC website at: http://sjmc.on.ca/newsletters/Fall2014_web.pdf

The Mennonite Men's Bowling League

This league has officially folded and the remaining dollars in the kitty were donated to several charities. The league ran for decades out of Elmira Bowl. After this location was sold and bowling was no longer available in Elmira, the league tried a year at the Victoria Bowl in Kitchener. Ernie Metzger made a valiant effort to keep it going and even invited women to join us but it wasn't to be. Due to the waning number of bowlers and the ongoing pandemic restrictions it was decided that 2020 would be our last year of operations. It was a great run, and many men had a great time bowling together over the years. Anyone want a trophy??

Sprucelawn Apartments of St. Jacobs

Sprucelawn Apartments will continue to provide affordable housing for seniors under the new management of Beyond Housing (formerly MennoHomes). Laverne Brubacher has chaired the Sprucelawn Board for 14 years. He sees this merger with Beyond Housing as the best solution to completing the Sprucelawn Board's vision of expansion. The current Sprucelawn Board will remain in place as a committee of the Beyond Housing Board until the new building is completed. The new 28-unit addition (20 one-bedroom and 8 two-bedroom) will be added to the current 30 units. This project is moving forward beginning in early spring, to be completed and ready for occupancy in the summer of 2023. Sprucelawn has been a blessing to its residents since the early 1980s when a group of people from the three St Jacobs churches – Lutheran, United, and Mennonite — saw the need for affordable seniors' housing. Some people from our congregation live at Sprucelawn and it's great to see there will be more affordable senior housing built in St. Jacobs soon.

Blessings of the Past, Present, and Future, continued on page 5

Doris “Getting to know you” Kramer, Retiring from Life Together.

From the early stages of Life Together, Doris has been interviewing people and writing our “Getting to know you” feature. Last year, Doris decided it was time to retire. I gave her a bit of a rough time, telling her that the Queen is still working, but truly Doris has done a great job over so many years and many people were blessed by her writing. Looks like she’s done over 50 of these interviews and articles over the last 20 years. Thank you Doris for sharing your many gifts with so many of us. Happy retirement! ■



Brent Horst

Bless Your Imperfect Clay Pot!

Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.
Isaiah 64:8

I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. Genesis 12:2

If we consider ourselves to be clay pots, then I think we would show some wear and tear. We have chips from being handled roughly and experiencing all that life has to offer. We have cracks and maybe even some large holes. As much as we may feel otherwise some days, I think we would still look pretty good and are useful to our Maker and others. We are still blessed to be a blessing.

Deep losses do penetrate the clay vessels of our lives and create holes. At those times, everything just goes out those fresh openings in our sides. We leak out energy, tears, thoughts and even hopes. We can't think of anything else, and it takes all our energy just to hold our pot together. We may, or others may, put some duct tape over the hole, which helps for awhile. Eventually the tape loosens, and the hole is open once again. Time doesn't really heal the hole either and sometimes just as we are starting to heal, we are dropped or banged up once again. Over time and with hard work we slowly fill in the edges until the orifice becomes a crack and eventually the crack is filled in. Very little leakage happens by that time, although the scar left is a constant reminder. For to heal completely, we must remember.

Through it all we are still useful, needed and blessed. Even when we have a gaping hole we are still seen and loved by others. Others may be strengthened by the fact that we still show up, even with the large flaws in our vessel. They may be touched by the extra care that all those around us are showing to us. They may grow in their own compassion as they care for us themselves. Or they may just be glad that they are not us and feel more grateful for the minor cracks their own pot is showing. They may also feel hope as they see us heal, slowly but surely. We are still blessed, and we are still a blessing to others, even at our lowest points.

No matter what, these chips, cracks and holes in our clay selves are all part of life. So are the wonderful things that we have to fill our vessels of life. The love and care from others fill the soul of our clay pot. Great memories and even joy are found within us. We realize often that we were wonderfully made and that we were made in God's image with a purpose. Each of our clay pots is unique, and it holds gifts that only we have to share with the world. It may not always feel that way and many days will be a struggle, but then most good things take time and effort.

May you feel blessed with the clay pot that you have been given for your life. May you rejoice and be glad in it. May your life vessel be celebrated by you and by all those around you who love you so dearly. May God's face shine upon you and may you be carried by God's love and grace each day. May the hope of Christ sustain you and God's Holy Spirit strengthen you. Bless you in 2022. ■

Getting to Know ... The Shahadeh Family

Refugee Committee



The Shahadeh family, which includes Mohammad, Fatin, Nour (14), Belal (12), Rama (9) and Mahmoud (6), arrived in Canada on September 29, 2021. Due to violent political unrest and destruction, they fled their home in Homs, Syria in 2012, ultimately landing in Jordan. For those interested in learning more about the Syrian conflict and civil war, there is much on the internet and an excellent novel in our church library called *Homes: A Refugee Story*.

For the Shahadeh family, life was also not easy in Jordan. Adults did not have status to be employed and, although the children were able to attend school, they were not welcome there. It was very difficult for them to access medical care. Thankfully, SJMC was able to sponsor and welcome the Shahadeh family to Canada. Mohammad's brother and family, who live in SJMC's church house, and his sister and family, who live in Waterloo, were also thankful and relieved to have them arrive safely. Settling in a new country where most speak an unfamiliar language is

challenging, especially during a global pandemic that has made it more difficult; however, the Shahadeh family has been up for the challenges, which have included accessing medical care for some pre-existing medical conditions. All of the children are attending and doing well in school and Mohammad and Fatin have begun studying English online. The family has begun to connect with their neighbours and access community resources in the Sunnydale neighbourhood. They are looking forward to doing more of this as pandemic restrictions ease.

Until we can meet in person, we would like to further introduce you to the Shahadeh family through this recent interview, for which cousin Alaa, who lives in St. Jacobs, expertly translated amid a great deal of family fun and laughter.

Above left: Mohammad and Fatin Shahadeh (back left and right) with their children Nour (centre back), Belal (middle), Mahmoud (front left) and Rama (front right), at Mahmoud's 6th birthday

Above right: A cake to celebrate Belal's 12th birthday

What do you like about living in Canada?

- Mohammad likes the peace and quiet, the very nice people and the beautiful nature.
- Fatin enjoys Canada's beautiful nature, especially the fall season.
- Nour likes the way they teach in school and the change of seasons.
- Belal likes having so much space and grass to play soccer.
- Rama likes the parks, playgrounds and going to school.
- Mahmoud likes having a yard with space to play with his brother.

What has been hard about living in Canada?

- Mohammad finds Canada's cold climate hard.
- Fatin finds Canada's cold winter hard because people stay in their homes and don't see each other.
- Nour finds Canada's very cold weather hard.
- Belal really likes Canada, even if the weather is cold. He is getting used to having boys and girls together in school.
- Rama finds our very cold winter weather hard.
- Mahmoud said that, so far, he doesn't have any problems living here.

What do you miss about living in Jordan and Syria?

- Mohammad, Fatin, Nour, Belal, Rama and Mahmoud all said that they miss their family, including five cousins, and friends

What do you think about winter in Canada?

- Mohammad said that they had snow in Syria and Jordan, but never very much. It would go away in a few days. He has never seen as much snow as

we have in Canada. He finds it very cold and very pretty.

- Fatin has never seen this much snow but said it is very pretty. She finds our winter a bit depressing and sad because it is very cold and people can't do much.
- Nour was surprised by the amount of snow we have but finds winter very pretty.
- Belal likes to play outside in the snow.
- Rama really likes how winter looks but not how winter feels.
- Mahmoud really likes winter and is happy with it.

What are some of your favourite foods to eat?

- Mohammad likes to eat kebabs and tabouli.
- Fatin enjoys eating kabsa rice.
- Nour especially likes eating broasted chicken.
- Belal likes eating shawarma and pizza.
- Rama's favourite food is shawarma.
- Mahmoud loves to eat pizza!

What do you like to do in your free time?

- Mohammad likes to play video games.
- Fatin enjoys baking and working around the house.
- Nour likes to draw with pencils and watch TV.
- Belal loves to play soccer and video games.
- Rama likes playing with her Barbie dolls and art.
- Mahmoud has fun playing with his brother and sisters and going for walks with his dad.

What is a dream you have for the future?

- Mohammad wants to learn to drive and get a car, maybe even his dream car.
- Fatin wants to see her children get a good education and have good jobs.

- Nour wants to study and become an elementary school teacher.
- Belal wants to study and become a policeman.
- Rama would like to become an artist.
- Mahmoud wants to travel back to Jordan and Syria and see where he is from.

What would you like to ask the people of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church?

- Mohammad didn't have any questions but is happy, grateful and says thank you to SJMC for helping his family.
- Fatin wondered if all of the sponsors are related and if it has been difficult sponsoring them.
- Nour, Bela, Rama and Mahmoud did not have questions, but say thank you to everyone.

Fatin also wondered what sponsoring their family has been like for the sponsor group. Although it has not always been easy to navigate government bureaucracy, get the kids established in school, find appropriate medical care, and manage finances in a time with rising costs, we have loved getting to know the family and helping them resettle in Canada. We admire their positivity and resilience, and we pray that all of their dreams come true! Inshallah (God willing).



Above: The Shahadeh family at their home in Waterloo



Left: SJMC Refugee Sponsorship Committee

Pictured left to right: Linda Kruger, Karen Martin, Marcy Ninomiya, Beth Metzger, Kevin Derksen



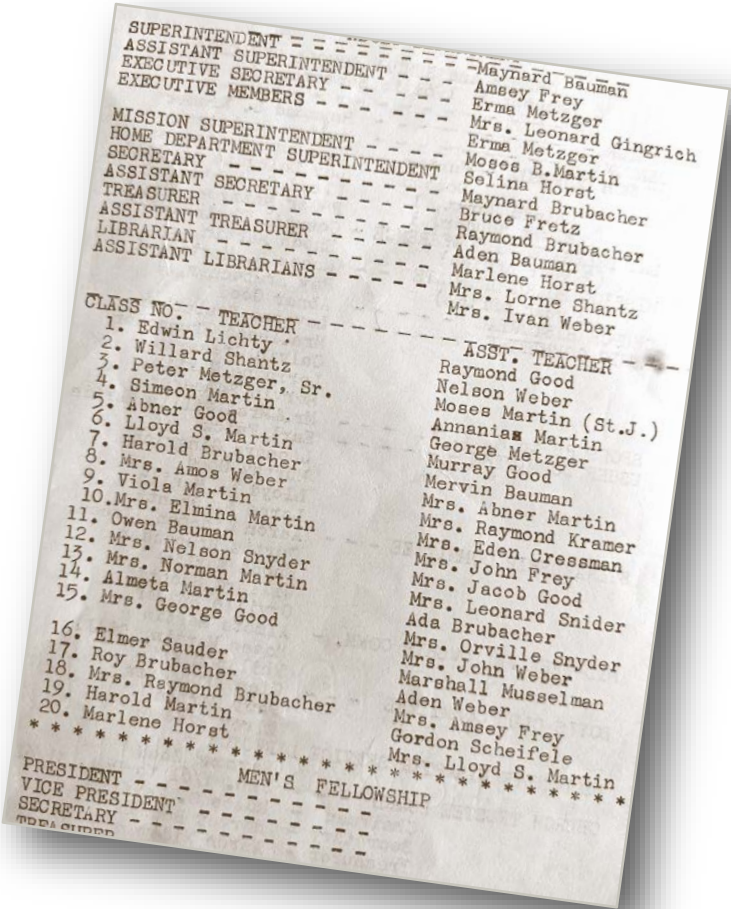
What's In A Name?

I just finished watching the Annual General Meeting of MennoHomes in which they announced their new name, Beyond Housing! I thought Dan Driedger, Executive Director, did an excellent job of describing not just the process of renaming MennoHomes, but more importantly the reasons behind it. He referenced an analogy of when moving into a new home, some things, (for example a chair) get placed somewhere in our house with the thought that “we can always move it later”. Dan commented that somehow often “later” never comes and the chair remains in the same place for decades. MennoHomes was founded over 20 years ago, so they decided this was the year for a new name. Its values and purpose remain the same, but the new name is more inclusive and supports the vision that goes beyond providing affordable housing. They provide a place to call home.

I found some old SJMC bulletins from the 1950s and was a little taken aback by the names listed. Every married female was listed as their husband’s name preceded with “Mrs.”- Mrs. Raymond Brubacher, Mrs. Abner Martin, Mrs. Elmer Sauder, Mrs. John Weber, etc. Men were just listed with their first and last names, as were the single women. I noticed a double wedding announcement in 1955 that listed all four names of the persons who were to be married, but after that, married females’ first and last names seemed to be forgotten. Today some women change their last name when they get married and others do not. I’m not going to debate the accepted practices in the 50’s or whether women should change their last name when they get married. I haven’t researched when the change was made within our community to drop the pattern of identifying women only by their husband’s name. However, I think we can all say, with hindsight, that was a good change!

Still, we might mourn the loss of some identity as many longstanding Mennonite organizations are dropping “Mennonite” from their names. The Mennonite Savings and Credit Union was renamed to Kindred Credit

Union a number of years ago. Dan also mentioned the example of the Mennonite Foodgrains Bank that served its mission to share donated grains around the world for many years but really took off when it was renamed to The Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Other denominations and more people could now feel a part of its purpose, which remains the same. As Dan said, if we “move the chair” (and maybe also reupholster it), it is still a chair with the same original purpose.



What we call each other and what we call our organizations are important but let’s not call married women only by their husband’s name just because we don’t want to make the effort or take some risk of change. Let’s embrace a little reupholstering and some moving of chairs as our organizations grow and gain more widespread support, as they continue to live out our original missions, or sometimes even a broader vision. ■

Mr. Andrea (Horst) Feick

Celebrating Advent and Christmas



Top: Carollers Stephanie, Marcia, Daryl, Mark; Lucy reads from the Christmas story during "Curbside Christmas" at SJMC, December 19, 2021

Left: Tim and Sonia light an advent candle

Below: Jenny at the piano



January Activities Usher in a New Year



Top: Mary, Edna and Irma of SJMC Women group work on quilts destined for the Ontario Mennonite Relief Sale Quilt Auction, scheduled for May 2022

Left (Page 10): Kristine reads during Children's Time; Eternity Sunday November 21, 2021

Right: Pauline leads junior Sunday School outdoor activities

Below: Junior youth, sponsors, and parents from SJMC, Bloomingdale, Floradale, and Elmira Mennonite churches had a blast sledding on Elmira Golf Course hills



Life & Times



Maria Das Gracias (Gracinha)

Retired from 25 years working as a letter carrier

Childhood Home: Limoreiro, Pernambuco, Brasil

Present Home: Elmira, Ontario

Age: 64 Surname: Melo



Jayne Brubacher

Retired after 31 years as a Work Experience Facilitator Education Assistant for Upper Grand D.S.B (I loved my career). Previously a server, RN, and worked with Don at Hostess Potato Chips

Childhood Home: Benjamin Rd, Waterloo, Ontario

Present Home: Elora, Ontario

Age: 69 Surname: Schneider



Sue Wideman

Retired RN, having worked in hospital and also in the community

Currently volunteering at vaccine clinic

Childhood Home: Punkeydoodle's Corner, New Hamburg, Ontario

Present Home: St. Jacobs, Ontario

Age: 66 Surname: Brenneman

Some of my favourite smells, sounds, tastes:

- roasting coffee (triggers childhood memories) ■ "green smell" of pine, cedar and mint
- rain on dry ground, breaking waves or splashing water ■ laundry drying outside
- train whistle in the distance ■ classic guitar
- taste of coffee, citrus fruits, cumin and fresh coriander

- coffee, sauteed garlic ■ fresh bread, chelsea & cinnamon buns, Vietnamese/Thai food, Sushi, Caesar salad, truffle cheese
- smell of SJMC basement reminds me of my Bible School days ■ grandkids laughing; the words "I Love You" ■ waves crashing, robins in spring ■ sound of motorized vehicles remind me of my dad

- cinnamon baking ■ fresh cut grass
- fresh bread with apple butter
- red nibs ■ children playing outdoors
- baby's laugh

Some things you may not know about me:

- 9th child in family of 12
- attended an all-girls Catholic school for 15 years ■ graduated to be a primary school teacher ■ involved in competitive sports for most of my life

- competed in plowing (age 10-14) and Queen of the Furrow 3x at International Plowing Match ■ loved judging cattle and crops in competition and stooking with my dad ■ Educational Assistant of the year (2017-2018) for Upper Grand D.S.B ■ love visiting Quebec City

- "most promising secretarial student" in high school ■ have 3 sisters and 3 brothers
- first job in Digby, N.S.
- attended two room school for grade 1 and 2, walking 2.5 miles twice a day (uphill both ways)

Personality traits others would say I have:

- funny, good sense of humour
- enjoyable to be with ■ patient ■ resilient

- creative ■ generous, caring ■ good sense of humour ■ impulsive, stubborn ■ good listener

- quiet ■ hardworking ■ compassionate
- helpful ■ kind

My interests include:

- exploring the outdoors: kayaking, camping, biking, exercising ■ reading: history of people, places, and times ■ socializing with family and friends near and far

- looking after grandkids, family visits ■ baking, cooking, trying new recipes ■ entertaining, eating out ■ drives with Don ■ baseball, volleyball
- watching grandkids play (swimming, lacrosse, speed skating, crawling)

- reading ■ volunteering
- medical mission trips ■ spending time with grandchildren ■ camping ■ gardening

Some favourite lifetime memories:

- growing up sharing living space with 16 family members (for a time with only 1 bathroom and no running water)
- the birth of our children and granddaughter
- trips to Brasil and Europe to spend time with family
- numerous memorable and emotional moments shared with Richard

- Bible School at SJMC (age 3 to grade 8)
- having Grandma Schneider live with us
- Don's proposal on bridge at Green Acres Park
- births of Lori and Kevin
- holding grandbabies for first time
- graduating as a Registered Nurse

- marriage and children ■ growing up on a farm with lots of siblings
- large family get togethers
- medical mission trips
- having a life mate to share life with
- walking to school down country roads with sister and neighbours

Other vocations I might have chosen or would choose:

- I had the desire to become a physical education teacher

- architect, interior design, contractor, speech pathology, nutritionist

- carpenter

Where I like to play or ponder:

- by a lake or the ocean, especially after dark when the moon and stars reflect on the water

- relaxing by our pool ■ at cottage, sitting on the dock ■ in shade of our red maple tree
- walking on the beach

- while gardening or in backyard
- on long walks ■ while camping

Some items on my "bucket list":

- continue to be able to keep spending time together with family and friends, near and far

- spend more time with family and friends ■ return to Hawaii with Don and our family ■ new travel to Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Greece and Newfoundland ■ skydive; live to see grandchildren grow up!

- visit Switzerland and more of Europe
- river cruise
- hike the entire Bruce Trail