

## **Director of Church Ministries Report Ralph and Grace Gliege**

I am writing this report from Fresno, California. This is considered to be the “golden state” with an abundance of oranges grown here. The trees, loaded with ripe golden oranges just two weeks ago, now grudgingly bear the weight of ruined fruit after two weeks of frost. This should not happen in California, but it has!

In a similar way the church is to be bearing fruit in abundance. The conditions must be right for the church to the “golden state” of the nations. The church must drink deeply from the spring of living water, but unfortunately all too often the church digs cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. (Jeremiah 2:13). The church often bears the weight of programs that fail to bear much produce.

This seems like a dismal way to begin an annual report. My report is not intended to be gloomy, but my hope and prayer is that in my absence from the Convention, my report can challenge the Mennonite Brethren Church in Saskatchewan to drink deeply from the living waters so that fruit can be produced in abundance. Water is a source of life. The points in my report will begin with the letters that spell the word WATER.

**W**ait upon the Lord. “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” (Psalm 27:14). I have observed over this past year a fatigue in both the pastors and the churches. This is not a spirit of discouragement, but a tiredness and weariness. My challenge to the Saskatchewan MB Churches comes from Isaiah 30:15 – “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength.” It’s interesting that salvation and strength (both strong terms) come through repentance, rest, quietness and trust (all considered to be acts of weakness). I believe there has been too much dependence on programs and activities and not enough quietness and rest in the Lord. My encouragement is for the church to find strength in trust. Stop long enough to stand in awe of the Lord as you worship Him and bow before Him in prayer. Be strengthened through the mystery of His presence. Stop a little longer to ponder and remember as you observe the Lord’s Supper. Renew your covenant with the Lord and the Church at baptismal services. Wait!

**A**ttempt great things. After waiting we should be ready to attempt great things for the Lord. “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10). This past year we had the joy of participating in a number of pastoral commissioning services. We praise God for the provision of new pastors who are willing to attempt to do great things for God. Several pastors moved on this past year. That takes courage too! We had the privilege of ordaining a pastor. Ordination is a step of total surrender to God – that takes courage! We have observed congregations attempting great things to reach out to their communities. Lives are being touched as great things are being attempted.

**T**hanksgiving. “We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess 1:2 & 3). In this past year we were able to attend or preach at a Sunday service in 24 out of the 30 churches in Saskatchewan. We have had personal contact with all the Lead Pastors and most of the Associate Pastors. Our hearts are filled with praise and thanksgiving for pastors, men and women, who stand tall in the Lord, even in spite of some fatigue. We praise God for a genuinely warm welcome in all of our churches. I praise God for a godly executive who have such big hearts for this ministry. We are truly thankful for these four months of sabbatical that have been graciously given to us.

**E**ncouragement. “Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.” (Philemon 7). What a thrill to have been involved in the recognition services for eight pastor couples this past year. The intent of these recognition services is to encourage these pastors in their ministry but to also recognize them for the encouragement they have been. These eight couples were recognized for a cumulative total of 70 years of ministry! Way to go!

Death does not seem to be an event that one should talk about under a section dealing with encouragement. The death of Shantelle Almeida was so sudden and seemed so untimely but in spite of the darkness of the hour, a spirit of encouragement shone through brightly. Shantelle was a trophy of God's grace. She was so ready to meet her Lord and Savior. The congregation at Prairie Winds Church and Pastor Joe have stood solidly through this storm. What a testimony! What an encouragement! What a great model of a congregation that has been drinking deeply from the spring of living water.

**R**enewal. “but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.” (Isaiah 40:31) “Be silent before me, you islands! Let the nations renew their strength!” (Isaiah 41:1). Interestingly, this renewal takes us right back to the beginning as we wait upon the Lord. This year some good times of renewal have been experienced through events such as the Leadership Forum in November, the Pastoral Retreat in October and an Orientation for new pastors. For me, personally, this has been a year of renewal through much learning in several classes taken through Briercrest Seminary. I am happy that the formal part of this learning will climax this April. I hope I can continue to take an active posture of learning and renewal.

May God help us all to continue to drink deeply from the springs of Living Water. Then we will truly have a Heartbeat for Harvest.

I have not included names of pastors or churches in this report. Those names have been included in the bulletin inserts sent to the churches.