

# IN TOUCH



Volume 28, Number 14

July 24, 2016

Just a few short weeks away is the 51st Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale. Many folks have been hard at work to make it a success; it's been double duty since the sale had to find a new home. The site chosen for the 2016 Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale is the Wayne County Fairgrounds. Our own Sandy Miller is on the executive Committee and has been kept hopping. Let's go all out and support the sale this year.

So, why should we spend hard earned money to support MCC? In the past I wrote about how MCC is our way of demonstrating tangible love and hope in the Name of Christ to those in need, and that has not changed. The MCC website lists food & water, education & health, job creation, and of course peace work here and abroad. But going a step beyond this list is how? How does this money get to these deserving projects?

People, Anabaptists from many walks of life, volunteer three or more years of their life to be the hands and feet in our name, to accompany the funds that are raised. Here, from in our own small congregation, Virgil and Kathy Troyer, Dan and Jeanne Jantzi, Doug and Lidia Zehr, Pete and Lou Erb, Rory and myself are among those who felt God's call upon their life and went to serve with MCC in far-flung spots, leaving behind the place they call home—their lives changed irrevocably. (Whom did I miss?)

Following is a condensed story of the late Al Geiser, someone that many in our church family knew well. Al's story, as told by Gladys Geiser his wife, was recently recorded in the Bearing Witness, "an online project that enables Anabaptist communities worldwide to share their stories of costly discipleship in ways that inspire greater faithfulness to Jesus Christ and strengthen the church's unity." I was touched to read that his life path was profoundly impacted by their MCC service. It was while they were serving in MCC Bangladesh, that they met and fell in love. Al had also served in MCC Pakistan. They both said that it was their early years in MCC that lit the fire within them to a wider service to the world.

***In Gladys' words...***

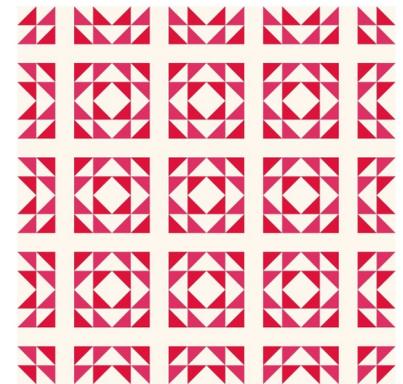
*".... After we were married, we lived in Ohio for a long time. Al's business in Kidron did well, and he and I both felt that God had really blessed him and that he needed to give back again to God some more years of service.*

*So in 2000 we decided that we would again go overseas. This time our work took us to Afghanistan. Al's work was mostly helping to produce hydroelectricity for villages that didn't have any electricity.*

*At first we were working with a non-governmental organization. Then later on Al partnered with an Afghan man who had started up his own business, and they built a workshop. Al and his partner were very good at this kind of work, and the two of them understood each other well. They had about 13 employees who worked for them, and all seemed to be going quite well.*

*Then in 2008, while he and his partner were at a funeral service for a relative of one of their employees, the two of them were kidnapped. Al was held in the mountains, not knowing what was going to happen or how long he would be there. Many days he was tied up and left alone for extended periods. Al had prayer beads just like the Afghans, and he spent a lot of time using them to say the Lord's Prayer. The syllables of the prayer worked out very nicely with the beads as he followed along.*

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*One of his captors asked him one day about why he was praying. Didn't he know that his life was in the captor's hands? Al just looked at him and said, "Yes, but in whose hands are your life?" He was told if he would just say the words and convert to Islam, they would let him go. But he said no, he couldn't do that. And wouldn't do that. (Gladys was in Ohio during this time.)*

*And then after 56 days, he was rescued and came back home to Ohio again.*

*But it wasn't long until he decided that God didn't save him just to be safe in Ohio. His partner, who also had been kidnapped and later released, didn't have the choice to leave the country and go somewhere safer to live. Al felt very strongly that God was calling him to go back. And so he did.*

*After six months he resumed to his work in Afghanistan. For two years, while I remained in Ohio, he traveled back and forth between to Afghanistan and Ohio, spending several months at each stop. In 2010, I went back with him.*

*When the people Al served would ask him why he chose this work, he would share the story of the Good Samaritan. The Afghan culture is one that tells a lot of stories. And although we couldn't go there and explicitly preach, we could tell stories.*

*In 2012 he went with his partner and an employee to a village to install a part for a project. The next morning, on their way back to Kabul, their car was stopped and all three of the people in the car were shot and killed. The news arrived in Kabul just a few hours later.*

*Maybe someday we will know something good that came out of this. And maybe we will never know. But in it all, I have always been encouraged by Al's faithfulness to go, even in the face of danger. And God's presence was with us, and now with me, through it all.*

*And so I think his life is a legacy that we can leave with our family, our church family, and with others who will go to serve not knowing how it will all end up. To know that God is with you. And if God calls you, that's the place to go.*

*And I wanted to share this story to honor him for what he did and to show that God is with us, even when it's difficult. Maybe especially when it's difficult, when we can't do it on our own. God is there.*

Rory and I can attest to this also. We took our young family sight unseen to service in rural Bolivia, and were forever changed. We wish that others might have the same joy of service. Pray about it!

Meanwhile, let's all support the MCC Relief Sale and be a part of life changing work in the service of God's kingdom, one quilt, shoofly pie, and birdhouse at a time.

The whole article about Al Geiser can be read at <http://www.martyrstories.org/gladys-and-al-geiser/>

~ Marcia Lewandowski, Missions Communicator



**August 5 & 6, 2016**

**Quilts – Furniture – Tools – Food – Fun!**

**Wayne County Fairgrounds**

**199 Vanover Street, Wooster, Ohio**

**1 John 3:17 – If anyone sees his brother in need and fails to help, what evidence is there of God's love...?**

**Proceeds of Sale go to support the work of  
Mennonite Central Committee.**

**Brochures available by mailboxes (share with a friend)!**