In the midst of conflict: Responding in Ukraine | Changing weather, changing lives: A glimpse from around the globe
“The earth is the LORD’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”

(Psalm 24:1 NRSV)

As weather patterns change, people around the world are hurting. In this issue, we see how those in Bolivia and Bangladesh, in Kenya and Cambodia, are striving to adapt to climate-related challenges. As I read their stories, I’m also struck by all the other pain we’re seeing in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world. But there is hope. MCC supporters like you are offering prayer and financial support; volunteering at MCC Thrift shops and relief sales; advocating to lawmakers; and serving in other ways with MCC. Mirroring this cloud of witnesses is an equally amazing group of MCC partners and project participants who are addressing the myriad needs in the world.

Images of war in Ukraine take me back to living in war zones in Central America years ago and, more recently, to visiting camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where thousands of families displaced by ongoing violence struggle to live. In both places were greens and pepper plants, repurposed containers of flowering plants around the doors of rudimentary shelters — evidence of our God-given instinct for hope and beauty.

Recently I met with women and teenage girls at a nearby church who were assembling dignity kits (see page 3). We wished we could magically hand them directly to those newly displaced in the war in Ukraine. We wondered what the landscape looks like as they flee and how long this suffering of the earth and its people will continue. Several places in the book of Joshua, we find the phrase, “And the land had rest from war.” We pray fervently that this will soon be reality.

Many of us reading this do not depend on the land we live on for our subsistence. Nor are we in danger of war driving us from our homes. Though we often feel helpless in the pain we’re seeing in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world.

Let examples shared in these pages spark ideas for how you can celebrate and nurture God’s earth and all who live in it!

A Common Place

Volume 28 Number 2 Spring | Summer 2022

An invitation to nurture and care

ANN GRABER HERSBERGER MCC U.S. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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. mcc.org

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Copy photos: Farmer and her daughter in Bolivia are striving to adapt to the effects of climate change through MCC-supported projects. (MCC photo/Annalee Giesbrecht)

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Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Central Committee Canada and MCC Central States

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SPRING | SUMMER 2022

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New water for families

As water sources dry in mountainous regions, communities struggle, with lines to changing lives

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Thrifty 50 Challenge

Small steps, big change

Interested in exploring new ways to care for our planet? Be part of MCC’s Thrifty 50 Challenge. You’ll get one practical challenge sent to your inbox every week as part of the 50th anniversary celebration for MCC Thrift shops. With each challenge, you’ll be more equipped to care for our planet and will feel better about your eco-footprint. Sign up at thrifty50challenge.org.

Lend a hand — Dignity kits

Dignity kits provide sustainable support for vulnerable women and girls. The kits contain eco-friendly, washable menstrual pads; fill an urgent need for hygiene supplies; and help keep disposable pads out of landfills.

Contents (NEW items only)

1 reusable pad system packed into 1 MCC kit bag, includes:

• 3 waterproof base units

• 6 absorbent fleece pad inserts (4 large/2 small)

• 1 small transport bag

• 3 pair of briefs (cotton; women’s sizes small, medium or large — one size per kit; no red)

For sewing instructions, please contact your local MCC office or visit mcc.org/dignity-kits.

1 hand towel (medium weight, dark or bright colors; approx. 16 in x 26 in)

1 washcloth (medium weight, dark or bright colors)

2 large bars bath soap (leave in wrapper)

1 large bar laundry soap (such as Fels Naphtha®, Sunlight® or Zote® brands)

1 wide-toothed comb (6-in-1)

1 nail clipper (good quality)

4 plastic or wood clothespins (4 in)

4 heavy-duty safety pins (measuring 1 in and 2 in, of each size)

Instructions: Place contents in a box or bag. The kit will be re-packed at MCC in a new 2-gallon pail with a lid.

Go to mcc.org/dignity-kits to find drop-off locations, or contact your nearest MCC office (see page 2).
In the midst of conflict

Their own lives in Ukraine upended, MCC staff and partners continue to reach out to others.

**BY JASON DUECK**

**PHOTOS COURTESY OF MCC STAFF AND PARTNERS**

MCC formed in 1920 to respond to hunger in what is now Ukraine. Relief worker A.J. Miller recorded how in 1922 weakened crowds echoed a cry resounding through the region. “Bread,” they called. “In God’s name, bread.” In March 2022, in the midst of conflict, MCC and its partners continue providing emergency relief, including this fresh-baked bread.

On March 6, this woman and others in Odessa receive food supplies distributed by an MCC partner who normally offers peace education and provides training for teachers and schoolchildren.

On March 9, residents are evacuated from Kharkiv, which has experienced heavy fighting. They are moved to a Christian school and senior’s residence outside the city by MCC’s partner, an organization of local Evangelical Baptist churches.

On March 15 in Nikopol, an MCC partner provides food packages and meals to local families and newcomers who have fled fighting in their towns. Many people are out of work and struggle to have the food and supplies they need, the partner reports.

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In the silence between the deadly warnings of air raid sirens in early March, the sound of a small choir, singing a song of praise, echoed out of a church sanctuary in western Ukraine.

Just the night before, Anna*, administrative coordinator for MCC Ukraine, had absent-mindedly hummed a few bars of the song during an evening tea break at the church.

Uplifted by that quiet moment of inspiration, the church’s pastor suggested some of the young people in the church record a performance of the song, hoping the lyrics speaking of God’s power and protection might offer spiritual comfort in a dangerous time.

But this hymn about God’s love and power isn’t the only thing the church and volunteers like Anna are offering to their neighbors.

In late February, Anna and her family fled Zaporizhzhia, their home in southeastern Ukraine, as the conflict edged dangerously close.

They were taken in by the church’s pastor and his family near Lviv and immediately joined the efforts of the church to house, feed and care for as many of the masses of displaced people moving to or through western Ukraine as they could manage.

They have filled the upper level of the church with foam mattresses and blankets to offer rest to the weary. They’re finding temporary homes for as many uprooted people as they can, often dozens each day. They pray with people, prepare hot meals and offer clean water.

All the work Anna is doing with the church and alongside other local organizations is supported by generous donations to MCC’s Ukraine emergency response.

For years, Anna’s work has involved supporting people fleeing from conflict in other parts of Ukraine. Now, she’s having that experience from the other side. She says that even as prepared as her family was physically to flee their home, it’s essentially impossible to be prepared emotionally for what it is like.

“When I came to the church for the first time, I entered the building and I started to cry. I started to cry a lot, I could not stop. Because I was feeling that I lost something, or I was leaving something in the past.”

“We understood that we are refugees now. We are far away from our home. It was only a few years ago we were serving refugees from the east of Ukraine. We had refugees in our church. And now I understand that in this time, we are refugees somewhere.”

And I tell them that now they’re in a safe place—praise the Lord—and that we have friends around the world.

Anna, holding flowers her youngest daughter made for her in honor of International Women’s Day, prepares a pot of borscht at a church in western Ukraine.

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And I tell them that now they’re in a safe place—praise the Lord—and that we have friends around the world.

“I cannot imagine that a week ago I was as a refugee, like, I just came here,” says Anna. “But in the last few days, I was able to welcome these people who just came from these hard places. And I can see how much fear and worry they have in their eyes. But I can understand what they’re feeling. And now I can invite them to the table to sit and to be there and to eat this warm meal. And I tell them that now they’re in a safe place—praise the Lord—and that we have friends around the world. So I try to be useful. I try to be helpful for people who just arrived here.”

Jason Dueck is a writer for MCC Canada.

Please pray for MCC staff and partners and those they are helping. Go to mcc.org for the latest updates on this response.

*MCC formed in 1920 to respond to hunger in what is now Ukraine. Relief worker A.J. Miller recorded how in 1922 weakened crowds echoed a cry resounding through the region. “Bread,” they called. “In God’s name, bread.” In March 2022, in the midst of conflict, MCC and its partners continue providing emergency relief, including this fresh-baked bread.

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Changing weather, changing lives

Compiled by Marla Pierson Lester

From Bolivia to Cambodia, the story is the same: Weather patterns are changing.

In these pages, journey with us to see how people, with bravery and determination, are facing profound shifts in their lands and livelihoods.

We care about climate change because we care about neighbors, here and across the world, all made in God’s image.

May we open our hearts to their stories.
“Rain is everything.”

At home in Makueni County, Kenya, 56-year-old Francisca Mbai recalls when rain could be counted on to come in March, April and May, and again in October, November and December. Droughts were not unheard of, but were much less common. Harvests were more assured, and rainfed lands provided enough fodder for livestock. Now more often than before, “Rain fails, and we harvest nothing,” she says.

Often then, men migrate to urban areas for work. Women, she says, are most affected by climate change because they bear the burden of figuring out how to meet the family’s basic needs and pay costs like school fees.

Through MCC partner Utooni Development Organisation, Mbai was trained in conservation agriculture and joined a savings group where she and others pool their money. Participants can take out loans, a source of capital that helps Mbai and others raise animals or start businesses, providing families with a safety net if rains don’t come.

Money from raising chickens paid for the 5,000-liter water tank (above). She used other loans for solar lights, higher-quality seeds and more.

What you can do: Talk about climate change

Talking about climate change with friends and family is one of the most effective ways to change social norms and influence public attitudes. By including climate change in everyday conversations, you’ll start to see changes in all areas of life, including the political realm. There is hope!

And you’ll be following the lead of students like Nour Mohamad in Jordan. In a land where water is scarce, she and other students in an environmental club, established as part of an MCC-supported project, talk to friends, classmates and family about the need to conserve.

Helping families adapt

- climate-resilient agriculture
- diversifying livelihoods
- improving soil and reducing erosion
- restoring watersheds, capturing scarce rainfall

“Before we didn’t have hail. We’re struggling with hail, it’s costly for our people and our crops.”

In remote, mountainous communities in Bolivia, farmers like Teofilo Colque feel the effects of climate change most keenly in how unpredictable and extreme the weather has become.

High-altitude areas that were too cold to grow a variety of crops have warmed, expanding what people can harvest. But the threat of killing frosts and devastating hail has grown as well.

In response, MCC partners are working with Colque and others to help them find new ways to use irrigation and soil conservation techniques to grow more diverse crops, even in difficult land.

“This used to be only rocks, but with the knowledge I’ve acquired, I’ve turned it into a garden,” Colque says. “Before this, nothing grew, but we’ve turned rocky land into cultivable land.”
“Sometimes once, sometimes twice, depending on the availability of food.”

In late January, the rains and winds of Tropical Cyclone Ana swept through Chikwawa, Malawi—taking with them Nduuzani Butao’s plans for a better harvest.

As a lead farmer in an MCC-supported project, 22-year-old Butao was embracing new lessons in conservation agriculture, hoping they would provide more food for her elderly grandmother, her 1-year-old daughter Hanna Danela and her teenage brother.

It was one way that she and her family could work to withstand the more erratic rainfall and frequent flooding that climate change has brought to this region of Malawi.

Instead of harvesting, though, she’s grappling with the aftermath of a cyclone that took all but one dwelling on her homestead, forcing her brother to move in with a friend. It destroyed clothes, bedding, schoolbooks and kitchen utensils—as well as stored food and chickens.

A field where the family had planted cotton, maize, sorghum, millet and cowpeas was washed away. Pests came to the region, nibbling what crops remained.

Her family was worried that if flooding continues, they may have to move to another area.

Butao’s challenge was more immediate. How could she, as the breadwinner, earn enough to feed her daughter and her grandmother?

In the weeks after the storm, she worked for others and was paid mostly in flour. Asked how many times the family had meals per day, she answered: “Sometimes once, sometimes twice, depending on the availability of food.”

MCC is providing food assistance to 500 of the most-affected families in the region for two months, helping to nourish families for today—but unable to control what the weather may bring later this year or next.

“Sometimes once, sometimes twice, depending on the availability of food.”

After Hurricanes Eta and Iota stormed through Central America within two weeks in November 2020, Amadeo Castillo and his family returned to their home in Choloma, Honduras, to find a half meter (1 1/2 feet) of mud inside.

That year was one of the most active hurricane seasons on record, with Iota being the strongest hurricane so late in the season, says Bruce Guenther, MCC’s director of disaster response. “As in other regions of the world, we are seeing the impacts of climate change play out, impacting millions of vulnerable people.”

By November 2021, thanks to materials from MCC and the Comisión de Acción Social Menonita, a development organization born out of the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Honduras, Castillo and his family stand outside their repaired home, complete with a new zinc roof that keeps them dry.

“Sometimes once, sometimes twice, depending on the availability of food.”

Children in Honduras attend an MCC-supported trauma healing workshop after the hurricanes.

MCC relief kits offer needed supplies for families in Guatemala after Hurricanes Eta and Iota.
What you can do: Make the change

Small changes in your personal lifestyle can make a big difference in what’s happening to the environment—things like recycling, riding public transit or cycling. When we see ourselves as part of the solution, we can serve as an example to others.

Need inspiration for steps you can take in your own life? Dig into the stories of people like Jane Hartzler, who volunteers at an MCC Thrift shop in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, work she views as “saving the planet by recycling.”

“Back then, all of the farmers, and my family too, grew rice irrigated only by the seasonal rains.”

In Cambodia’s Prey Veng Province, Chhin Ya stands in the rice field that was sufficient to provide food and a livelihood for her and her parents when she was young. But droughts have ruined harvests and reduced yields. As crops failed, the family borrowed money for food. Their debt grew. Her daughter dropped out of school and migrated to work in a garment factory. Her husband also left the district to find work.

Through MCC partner Organization to Develop Our Villages, though, she was able to establish a fishpond and a garden she can water from the pond. Although the region struggles with ponds, lakes and canals that often dry up, her food security and earnings have improved—enough that her husband stopped migrating for work and now helps her raise fish and vegetables.

“Raising fish provides income for food, household items, planting supplies and clothing for grandchildren.”

As pests proliferate with increases in heat and dryness, MCC partners are helping farmers find ways, including savings groups, to better withstand the losses they sustain.

“In a remote community in Karella District, Uganda, Samson Dekeny points out the remains of his sweet potato plants, their leaves yellow from drought, the insides eaten by pests. “This is mainly a crop we use to sell. We use the money for school fees, medical bills and emergencies at home.”

If rains do come, but weeks later than expected, “People suffer because the yields they get during that time do not support them up to the next growing season,” he says.

Through MCC partner Dynamic Agro-pastoralists Development Organization (DADO), Dekeny is using conservation agriculture to help his crops withstand drier weather. He also uses intercropping, planting various crops side by side throughout the year, so if one fails to produce, others may succeed.

And he is working to protect the environment. “I planted 50 trees, mostly teak trees. As you can see, I put my mango right here. They are mostly for my family. This is just because I have this in mind, that trees are very OK,” he says. Long-term he hopes that planting trees will create a healthier environment, leading to more rain that will support crops like his sweet potatoes.

“There is hunger. There are diseases. Cattle rustling increases. When there is rain, all these things reduce.”

In a remote community in Karenga District, Uganda, Samson Dekeny points out the remains of his sweet potato plants, their leaves yellow from drought, the insides eaten by pests. “This is mainly a crop we use to sell. We use the money for school fees, medical bills and emergencies at home.”

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“Because of changing weather, there are more pests, so we farmers are using more insecticides, which is affecting our health.”

As one part of the climate changes, problems in other, new areas can suddenly loom large. In Panchbibi, Bangladesh, rising temperatures mean more insects are hatching, threatening the harvests of farmers like Buli Murmu.

The usual response is chemicals, often in Bangladesh farmers will use higher doses of commercial pesticides and fertilizers. But Murmu is taking a more natural approach.

Through a project of MCC and a Bangladeshi partner, Peoples Union of the Marginalized Development Organization, she and others in her community are turning to vermicomposting—raising worms that help to break down organic material and provide affordable compost.

“If we use this compost in the fields, we don’t need pesticides. Our crops will be more nutritious,” she says.

What you can do: Take advocacy action

As Christians, we are called to speak with and on behalf of vulnerable people (see, for example, Exodus 1, Exodus 5–12, Esther 4–8).

Being an advocate is an act of hope and love. Writing a letter or signing a petition tells lawmakers that you care about climate change and helps hold governments accountable. Learn more at washington.mcc.org.

In a 2021 cross-country bicycle ride, 18 young adults cycled 3,737 miles, raising awareness about climate change and advocating to government officials.

“No sooner had I planted than rains disappeared. This season, we hardly produced any crops, and the price of maize has doubled …”

When Pascal Nizeyimana was growing up in Rwanda’s Bugesera district, the rains began in September, and farmers immediately planted cassava, sweet potatoes, bananas and other crops. Harvesting was in January.

Farming today is much more challenging, he says. “We have to apply fertilizer and pray that we get rain. For example, the peanuts I planted in October ultimately failed. It’s February, and they didn’t produce anything.” Instead of growing all the food for the family and food to sell, his family now must buy all their food. “In turn, this has led us reducing the food portions for the household members, and sometimes we adults don’t have lunch so our children can have enough food.”

Lessons from MCC partner Peace and Development Network in conservation agriculture have helped him reduce soil erosion, retain moisture and improve soils, and he has received support through Friends Peace House, another MCC partner, to get livestock and irrigation equipment to grow crops in the dry season.

Yet, he says, “With every season getting more unpredictable than the one before, I am worried that we may be more food insecure in the future.”

Give a gift – Where needed most

As you can see from the stories on these pages, the needs sparked by climate change cross through the breadth of MCC’s work in disaster response, food, water, health and more. Your gift meets urgent needs today and supports efforts to help people adapt to long-term changes and challenges. Donate in the enclosed envelope, give online at donate.mcc.org or contact your nearest MCC office (see page 2).
Gabriel Acarapi Chuca grew up in a community where my grandfather was a farmer and, like most of us here, we belong to an Indigenous community. We’ve been brought up knowing that we need to wake up early and help on the farm and land to support the family.

Ancestral knowledge was very present in my family and community. For example, let’s say there are two mountains over there. My grandfather raised sheep and he would say, “This year, don’t take the sheep to these mountains to graze.”

We would ask him why, and he said, “Because we need to give space for the grass to grow and to reproduce.” And that allowed the grass to rest, and it stopped soil erosion. This was also true for other values, like mutual support and taking care of the environment. Because of all the technologies that have arrived, that important ancestral knowledge has been lost.

What PRODII (MCC partner Programa de Desarrollo Integral Interdisciplinario; or Comprehensive Interdisciplinary Development Program) is doing is not bringing new knowledge to people. That knowledge was already there. But it got lost at some point, and we’re trying to recover it.

I learned that the weather used to be better, it used to be good. Rains used to be spread out during the season, maybe from September to January. But now, rains that should be spread across a longer period of time come all at once and damage the crops. The weather is more extreme. It’s warmer than it used to be, and communities can grow more diverse crops. But they are also experiencing more frequent problems, like hail that can come and destroy crops in an instant.

A nearby community has a lot of hail every year and it’s very bad for our people. Eventually we’ll have some measures to address this problem. Sometimes I think we could have a net on top of the crops to catch the hail and turn it into water. But our communities don’t have the economic resources to do that.

We are trying to adapt. With MCC, we are addressing issues of agrobiodiversity and how to face climate change.

It’s important to adapt with ancestral knowledge, but also by using new technologies that are coming up. I think that’s the only way that we will be able to learn to live with climate change.

My main concern is water and how to take care of it. We can’t do anything without water. People need to keep enough water for hygiene, for cooking, for irrigation. I’ve heard it said that in 50 years people won’t work for money but for water. Communities that have access to water will survive, but cities and places that don’t have a good water supply will perish.

It’s important to keep working on how to maintain our water sources. That’s a big part of what we do. Right now, we’re promoting the use of integrated watershed management systems. These systems soak up water from rainfall, from the roots of plants and even from dew.

Sometimes I describe it to people like this: Say we have a towel on our table and we pour water onto it, that’s the system. If we pour the water straight onto the table, that water falls right off. The integrated watershed management system is developed to be like a towel, to soak up water.

The idea is to maintain the amount of water in the streams so that it doesn’t go down over time, and that can improve the amount of water that people can have. We’re working hard on that in the different communities.

We want these watershed management systems to be examples, demonstrations for other communities.

We have an emphasis on approaches that are sustainable in the long run. Many institutions have come and have brought chemicals for people to use, but that’s not sustainable because it damages the soil. And then when institutions leave, people can’t continue doing that. We’re promoting the use of locally available materials, like compost made out of manure and biodegradable materials.

That’s basically what we do, and we do it as a team. Our work is comprehensive. It crosses through other areas like health and education.

Our dream is that we can work with the communities so that when our projects are finished and we leave, people are still using the approaches that they learned from PRODII.

Our goal is to keep growing. We’re sure that there will be more challenges in the future, but we’re hoping that with the foundations we are setting, we’ll find more ways to grow sustainably.

I think of one woman who’s been with PRODII since the beginning. She’s applied every single thing that she has learned from us. In her land she has some terraces where she’s producing a wide variety of crops. She’s an entrepreneur and leader in her community. I always feel very proud when I go to visit her because she’s really an example of everything that we have done.

Gabriel Acarapi Chuca is a technician with MCC partner PRODII, working in remote Bolivian communities. Rachel Watson of Kitchener, Ontario, is an MCC communications and program support worker in Bolivia.

Gabriel Acarapi Chuca, far left in red shirt, describes how integrated watershed management systems work as he and others from MCC partner PRODII (Programa de Desarrollo Integral Interdisciplinario; Comprehensive Interdisciplinary Development Program) meet with MCC staff. (MCC photo/Annalee Giesbrecht)

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My main concern is water and how to take care of it. We can’t do anything without water. People need to keep enough water for hygiene, for cooking, for irrigation. I’ve heard it said that in 50 years people won’t work for money but for water. Communities that have access to water will survive, but cities and places that don’t have a good water supply will perish.

It’s important to keep working on how to maintain our water sources. That’s a big part of what we do. Right now, we’re promoting the use of integrated watershed management systems. These systems soak up water from rainfall, from the roots of plants and even from dew.

Sometimes I describe it to people like this: Say we have a towel on our table and we pour water onto it, that’s the system. If we pour the water straight onto the table, that water falls right off. The integrated watershed management system is developed to be like a towel, to soak up water.

The idea is to maintain the amount of water in the streams so that it doesn’t go down over time, and that can improve the amount of water that people can have. We’re working hard on that in the different communities.

We want these watershed management systems to be examples, demonstrations for other communities.

We have an emphasis on approaches that are sustainable in the long run. Many institutions have come and have brought chemicals for people to use, but that’s not sustainable because it damages the soil. And then when institutions leave, people can’t continue doing that. We’re promoting the use of locally available materials, like compost made out of manure and biodegradable materials.

That’s basically what we do, and we do it as a team. Our work is comprehensive. It crosses through other areas like health and education.

Our dream is that we can work with the communities so that when our projects are finished and we leave, people are still using the approaches that they learned from PRODII.

Our goal is to keep growing. We’re sure that there will be more challenges in the future, but we’re hoping that with the foundations we are setting, we’ll find more ways to grow sustainably.

I think of one woman who’s been with PRODII since the beginning. She’s applied every single thing that she has learned from us. In her land she has some terraces where she’s producing a wide variety of crops. She’s an entrepreneur and leader in her community. I always feel very proud when I go to visit her because she’s really an example of everything that we have done.

Gabriel Acarapi Chuca is a technician with MCC partner PRODII, working in remote Bolivian communities. Rachel Watson of Kitchener, Ontario, is an MCC communications and program support worker in Bolivia.
Serving in Nepal

Names: Luke and Kaitlyn Jantzi

Hometown: Kitchener, Ontario (Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church)

Assignment: From our base in Kathmandu, Luke oversees MCC’s work in Nepal, serving as MCC representative for Nepal and reviewing projects and plans. Kaitlyn provides mental health resources and counseling across the MCC system.

Typical day: Starts when our children (Leo, 7, and Mirabel, 5) wake us up. We take them to the bus stop on our electric scooter (doing our best to reduce our contribution to pollution here). Then Luke heads to the office. After a staff devotion, everyone gets tea and heads off to work. Kaitlyn works from home, seeing clients online, planning webinars and providing mental health resources as requested. The children get home around 4 p.m., and we spend the evenings much like we did in Canada—supper, LEGO® play, stories and then bedtime. After that, we sometimes have meetings with staff in Canada or the U.S. (time zone changes make this work best), but we also are able to kick back and relax in our cozy apartment.

Joys: Being a part of such an excellent team. The Nepal staff have a wealth of knowledge and wisdom, and grace for our learning curve, which has been a gift. Further joys have been watching our kids flourish in this new environment. Nepal is rich in culture and beauty, and we share awe and wonder as a family, which brings us closer. We have had opportunities to travel around the country, including into the mountains and throughout the Kathmandu Valley.

Challenges: Arriving in Nepal during a major spike of COVID-19 in 2020. With no access to vaccines and a precarious health care system, it was a strange and challenging time to adjust.

On climate change: Shorter monsoon rains mean a shorter growing season and greater food insecurity. Our children have indoor recess not because of rain or cold like in Ontario but because of pollution. These are reminders of the ways in which we humans are having a direct impact on the climate and our own health.

FIND YOUR PLACE
Go to mcc.org/serve or linkedin.com/company/mccpeace or contact your nearest MCC office to learn about current MCC service opportunities.

For children

PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

How can you greet someone in Arabic, one of the languages of Palestine and Israel?

marhaba (Say “MAR-ha-bah”)

My name is Rand Ajarma.
Age: 14
Lives in: Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine

I live with my mom, my two sisters and my brother in Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem; my father passed away last year. After school, I usually have classes in dabka (traditional Palestinian folk dancing) or music practice, and I like to play soccer, draw and read. Also, I’m always interested in learning more and more about Palestine because there is so much to learn and so much that is hidden or untold. I think all people should take more interest in Palestine and learn about the peoples’ roots and culture to keep it alive.

I started attending an MCC-supported summer camp when I was 5 years old, and I’ve participated in it every year since then. Sometimes we get to go on field trips to different areas in Palestine that we’ve never seen before or go swimming on a hot day. I also really enjoy our water balloon fights.

My favorite food: lasagna
My favorite subject: social studies
What I want to be: psychologist, journalist or interior designer

Olive, I love you

The olive tree, perhaps the most common tree here, is deeply valued for its ability to thrive and send down deep roots in a land where water is hard to come by. You’ll find olive trees everywhere—in gardens, parks, roadsides and the yards of churches, synagogues, mosques and schools.

FIND YOUR PLACE
Go to mcc.org/serve or linkedin.com/company/mccpeace or contact your nearest MCC office to learn about current MCC service opportunities.

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