Passing on a blessing

J RON BYLER
MCC U.S. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Do not repay evil for evil...repay with a blessing. (1 Peter 3:9)

In San Pedro Sula, Honduras, praying for peace can put your life in danger. Pastor José Fernández de Vida en Abundancia Iglesia Evangélica Menonita shares how members of his small congregation met to pray in the streets between warring gangs.

The spray of bullets began, even before many of the church members had returned home. Fernández says the group wasn’t doing anything out of the ordinary. He believes God calls his followers to be salt and light in their communities.

Through MCC and its partner, Proyecto Paz y Justicia (Peace and Justice Project), an organization of the Evangelical Mennonite Church in Honduras, congreations are helping to train volunteer mediators in the schools to help resolve conflicts and to show them peace.

Repaying evil with a blessing has been a hallmark of MCC’s work for decades. In Europe, after World War II, MCC relief and the Pax program helped rebuild whole communities. In this issue, my uncle, Théo Hege, recalls how MCC relief workers came to Geisberg, France, to help restore people’s lives as well as rebuild their homes.

Recently, when MCC contacted relief supplies for people who fled the war in Syria, members of the Geisberg Mennonite Church wanted to participate as a way to express their Christian love for others who have been harmed because of war. “We share what God gave us in his mercy,” says Uncle Théo.

For almost 100 years, MCC has helped churches in the U.S. and around the world, to repay evil with a blessing. Thank you for supporting these ministries.

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In Honduras, MCC supports peacebuilding programs in neighborhoods plagued by gangs, threats and killings.

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Earthquake response

In Nepal, MCC relief supplies are meeting urgent needs for earthquake survivors such as 71-year-old Anita Lama, right, and her family in Lalitpur. The family was only able to retrieve a small amount of stored rice and other food, making the three weeks of food MCC provided through Nepalese partner the Rural Institution of Community Development especially valuable. And sleeping mats from MCC replaced plastic sheets they were sleeping on right after the earthquake.

Through local partners in districts including Okhaldhunga, Lalitpur and Dhelbing, MCC is at work in rural areas, meeting urgent needs from both the April and May earthquakes and planning for a longer response. Go to mcc.org/nepal-earthquake to learn more about MCC’s response or to donate.

United States

Learning together

In relief, development and peace work, MCC strives to give partners the new opportunities to work together. In Philadelphia, Pa., an MCC Global Family education project is making it possible for three faith-based organizations to work with an educational consultant on after-school and summer youth programming. They share successes and challenges and, with input from consultant Raquel Estevez-Joyce, implement changes that strengthen and grow their programs. “This framework allows us to learn…from our distinct perspectives and diverse communities,” Estevez-Joyce says. “It’s an honor to help build the bridge.”

Honduras

School kits

Jesus de Nazareth School students Kenia Yolibeth López, left, and Yerlin Lureth López, right, open MCC school kits in Chamelecón, an area of San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Last year, MCC provided 89,000 school kits in countries including Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Syria. In Chamelecón, where unemployment is high and violence is common, kits are provided to students as part of a school-based peace program. Read more about the program and this community on page 4.

School kits

THESE ARE MCC’S MOST-REQUESTED ITEM. NOTEBOOKS AND PENCILS ARE TREASURES FOR FAMILIES WHO STRUGGLE TO AFFORD BASIC SCHOOL SUPPLIES.

4 spiral or perforated notebooks (8.5 in. x 10.5 in. and 70 sheets)
8 unsharpened pencils
1 ruler (flat, flexible plastic; including both 30 cm and 12 in.)
12 colored pencils (in packaging)
1 large pencil eraser

N (NEW items only)

School kits are distributed in useful, double-drawstring cloth bags (11 in. x 16 in). You may sew the bag yourself, request bags from a drop-off location or donate contents that will be placed in a bag. For bag instructions or drop-off locations, contact your nearest MCC office (see page 2) or go to mcc.org/kits.

Mennonite Central Committee, 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 with justice. MCC works with diverse partners and responds to emergencies and developmental needs in more than 90 countries around the world. For more information, visit mcc.org.
When driving through the neighborhood of Chamelecóén, a suburb of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, it’s important to keep the car windows rolled down. It’s not because of the heat, though Honduras is often hot and humid. It’s a safety measure, allowing gangs in control of the area to see who’s in the car. Allaying suspicion, as residents like Merelyn Amaya know, can mean the difference between being shot at and quietly passing through.

In late 2014, this already tense neighborhood became a war zone—with two gangs fighting each other for control. The school where Amaya taught became a gang stronghold at night. In the mornings, teachers would sometimes find bullets in their classrooms, and once encountered gang members on the roof shooting at police below.

One day, when the bus service Amaya used stopped coming to Chamelecóén because of the fighting, she tried to catch a bus on the other side of the territorial line. She was forced back home at gunpoint. A gang member followed her and shot at her feet as she walked away. “I just started to cry and asked God to hold me in his hands,” she says. The gang member kept the gun pointed at her, telling her she should never come back.

The terror is not hers alone. “All people here in this community could...”
It is in this context that Vida en Abundancia Iglesia Evangélica Menonita (Life in Abundance Evangelical Mennonite Church) strives to bring hope and peace. The congregation, which once drew some 200 people, now has about 70 in its services. Four members were among bystanders murdered in the conflict in the last two years; many others fled the area after being told by the gangs to leave or be killed.

Despite the violence, the church feels strongly it needs to stay, doing its best to improve the community. One strategy is participation in a program of MCC and Proyecto Paz y Justicia (Peace and Justice Project or PPJ), an organization of the Evangelical Mennonite Church in Honduras.

The program trains volunteers to present in schools once a week, teaching fifth and sixth graders lessons on respect, forgiveness, self-esteem, education, human rights and conflict resolution. Students from those classes are chosen as mediators, teaching the same lessons to fourth graders.

By reminding children of these values, ideally they will be better equipped to deal with the violence around them—and more able to remember that they can choose to be different. MCC supplies funding for the staff at PPJ and covers program costs such as stipends and transportation for the volunteers.

From 2012 to July 2015, MCC worker Héctor Mojica of Ponce, Puerto Rico, created educational material for the project and led trainings with volunteers and some of the lessons with students.

Amaya is project coordinator in Chamelecón and helps find the volunteers along with Vida en Abundancia pastor José Fernández. “The aim is to give students alternatives to violence, and to show them peace,” Fernández says. That’s the hope not only in Chamelecón but also in other neighborhoods of San Pedro Sula and in the cities of La Ceiba and Tocoa, where the program also operates.

While the context in Chamelecón is extreme, gang violence and drug trafficking are concerns in many areas of Honduras. In Tocoa, for instance, parents are fearful enough for their children’s safety that they don’t go to the city’s free playgrounds, instead choosing to drive to a fenced playground with an armed guard where they have to pay admission.

That environment has clear effects on the children who grow up there. At one of PPJ’s workshops, when students were asked what they want to be when they grow up, one said a narcotics trafficker. Others said they want to be hit men.
For Nicolas Rosales, a regional coordinator for the Evangelical Mennonite Church, a board member of PPJ and father of a participant, the project is one way of contributing to a larger picture of peace. “It brings a lot of blessings to society,” he says. “Unfortunately a great part of society is suffering, and what we can do through the peace and justice projects is little. But I think with what we do, we make a difference.”

In Chamelecón, pastor Fernández (read more about him on p. 10) says he’s noticed that in recent years gangs brought in new members from outside the community, and he suspects that’s because young people in Chamelecón aren’t as interested in gang life anymore.

“In Chamelecón, pastor Fernández (read more about him on p. 10) says he’s noticed that in recent years gangs brought in new members from outside the community, and he suspects that’s because young people in Chamelecón aren’t as interested in gang life anymore.

“We want to really strongly work with children and young people…so that the moment comes when a young person says, ‘I don’t see the need to join these gangs,’” Fernández says. “That’s why it’s very important to strengthen the work in the schools and keep on working with the children of the community.”

For Nicolas Rosales, father of project participant Heidy Rosales, (see page 19) and a regional coordinator for the Evangelical Mennonite Church, the project provides a way to contribute to a larger picture of peace.

It’s a struggle, though. In 2013 and 2014, massive numbers of people were forced out of Chamelecón, including at the end of 2014 all the volunteers of the peace program.

When a gang says it’s time to go, it’s not a simple phone call. It’s personal. Gang members show up at a person’s house, asking questions about family members they suspect are connected to the rival gang. They go through cell phone records and if there’s enough evidence of a connection, the family has 24 hours to leave.

By the time one gang was forced out of the community near the end of last year, stretches of four or five blocks had only one or two families left, and the level of confrontations and shootings was unprecedented.

But the church didn’t give up on the idea of bringing peace. “We never closed the door as the church. To the contrary we worked harder and more,” says Amaya. “God gave us the hope that this will stop. And if we would have stopped, it would have been shutting down the only light. We were a light of hope as a church.”

As 2015 began, Vida en Abundancia found new volunteers to continue the project. Despite the challenges, Fernández believes the work will pay off, giving young people a different mindset.

“To plant in them a desire to be more than what their past was…we think we’ll reach that and we will start to see this effect,” he says.

Emily Loewen is a writer for MCC Canada. Nina Linton is a photographer from Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.
José Fernández

A Mennonite pastor shares about the challenges violence brings to his community and how the congregation is working for a more peaceful future.

AS TOLD TO EMILY LOEWEN

José Fernández is pastor of Vida en Abundancia Iglesia Evangelica Menonita (Life in Abundance Evangelical Mennonite Church), which supplies volunteers for a peacebuilding program of MCC and Proyecto Paz y Justicia (Peace and Justice Project or PPJ), an organization of the Evangelical Mennonite Church in Honduras.

The church is called to be salt and light and there are certain contexts which provide an opportunity to be that more strongly.”

“I’m the pastor at Vida en Abundancia Iglesia Evangelica Menonita (Life in Abundance Evangelical Mennonite Church) in Chamelecón, a neighborhood of San Pedro Sula, Honduras. My family moved to Chamelecón when I was 14 from downtown San Pedro Sula. It was a completely different community at that time. Today it’s known as a community with a lot of violence and development problems. At that time it had a lot of prospects.

I’ve been married almost 17 years to Lidis Lemus. When my family first moved here, her mother rented an apartment to my family. Her mother was the person who told my father that he should get to know God. We joined the church later that year, and that’s where I met Lidis.

In 1995, I graduated from a technical institute and then worked as a mechanic. Lidis and I needed to ask God for direction. Together we accepted a faith challenge. I quit my full-time job as a mechanic to work in the church.

The context has changed here. It was a gradual process beginning around 1995. Although the population was increasing, the number of schools, health centers and public spaces for families decreased. There were no opportunities for young people, and the gangs began to recruit. When I remember my childhood, many of those friends became gang members.

The gangs offered everything young people wanted: belonging, respect, resources. From 2007, drug trafficking grew to a much higher level. There were more territorial fights that were much more intense, until the place turned into a war zone.

Some brothers and sisters couldn’t come to church anymore because they lived in another sector that was controlled by another gang; they would have had to cross from one territory to another one, which was too dangerous.

Our church felt the calling to see God’s work in this difficult context. We held services in public spaces, prayer campaigns, shared food with the community and families, and we started working with the children of families of gang members—just to show that there is still life in the church.

In 2013, the police came to my house to question me about the death of three women. We had former gang members in our church and the police suspected that they were connected to the murders. The police threatened me and then hit me. They wanted me to kneel down at the fence but I said, I only kneel down before God. It was a very hard experience to realize that our lives were basically in their hands. After this, Lidis and I decided we would stay but our children would leave. But our daughter Andrea said the children had decided something already—“What we have to pass through we have to pass through as a family.” We received this conviction from our children as a sign that God wanted us to stay.

There is a moment where people start to see you as a symbol of God. A lot of people came in the middle of the night to our house asking for prayers. So we as a pastoral family represented sort of the hope that God will do something. If we would have left, our exit would have meant the loss of a great part of their hope that they had.

It’s like being in a boat and then the storm starts. You remember the story where Jesus woke up in the middle of the storm? He didn’t leave the boat in the middle of the storm, right? But he asked the father that the storm would calm down. We felt definitely that that was the role and the responsibility for us to stay.

But there have been moments I came home and thought, what did we just do? Why do we run such risks?

For example we had a prayer session out in the street at night—about 300 feet away was an armed group of gang members, 300 feet on the other side was the other gang. They threatened to start shooting at each other, but we were in the middle praying.

We felt anything could happen at this moment, but actually it didn’t really matter because we’re God’s people and God says I want you to be at peace.

When we finished the prayer campaign, we put all our equipment back in the church, and they started to shoot at each other one by one. Some of our brothers and sisters had not even reached their homes when the confrontation started.

I don’t think our church has done something that is special or out of the ordinary. I just think the church had the opportunity to play its role. The church is called to be salt and light and there are certain contexts which provide an opportunity to be that more strongly. We still have a lot of dreams that we want to fulfill as a faith community—the work is just started.”
Long-term ties in western Europe
MCC relief after World War II built lifelong relationships.

BY EMILY LOEWEN
PHOTOS BY NINA LINTON

In Enkenbach, Germany, Rainer Schmidt holds a photo of Pax volunteers walking down the same street where he and others continue to live in houses built by Pax.

At the age of 85, Artur Regier vividly remembers the night he fled his family’s West Prussian farm.

It was 1945, and he was 15 years old. With gunfire from the Russian army less than two miles from their home, he, his mother and two brothers galloped away on horseback.

It would be nine years before they had a home of their own again. They sailed on the Baltic Sea with more than 1,000 refugees on a boat built for 250, then spent three years living in a Danish camp.

Finally, in 1954, they moved into their own home in Enkenbach, Germany.

That home was built by young volunteers in Pax, an MCC program that provided Mennonites in the U.S. an alternative to military service and, in post-war Europe, helped to rebuild war-torn areas and to offer a bright spot of hope.

In Enkenbach alone, the efforts of Pax built 115 housing units and a building for the Mennonite church.

Enkenbach is full of stories like Regier’s—accounts of people who were forced to flee as youth and built new lives with the assistance of MCC and its Pax program.

There was Louise Sauer, who lived in a camp in Russia for two years, then in wooden barracks in Germany with no bathroom or running water. When her family moved into the new home, she says, “It was like heaven for us children.”

Or there’s Edith Forth, who left home with her family when she was just 10. “We thought in two days we’d be back home, but we never made it back,” she says.

Her family moved into a new Pax-built home on the first Sunday of Advent in 1954. “That was a great moment for us, and without MCC’s help, it would have never been possible for us to own a house again after World War II,” says Forth, who worked alongside Pax volunteers for several months.

Between 1953 and 1961, approximately 120 Pax “boys” went through Enkenbach. (Almost all participants were men, mostly young men, but a handful of women also volunteered in Pax locations.)

Their legacy lives on in more than just the physical homes they built. Children gathered at the Pax house for snacks and Bible study, listening to the radio and playing games of table tennis in the basement. Pax participants started their own choir, and refugee youth joined in—forming the seeds of what today is the Enkenbach Mennonite Choir.

Ervie Glick of Harrisonburg, Va., was a member of that...
Sisters Agnes and Emma Hirschler, whose home was built by MCC, also helped put together kits and through that, Hege says, they “encouraged the younger generation not to forget the help we got when we were in need.”

The shipment, sent through MCC, was coordinated by the relief committee of the Swiss Mennonite Church (Nothilfe Gruppe, or Emergency Group) along with French churches. It contained 1,500 hygiene kits, 65 handmade comforters, 294 purchased blankets, 791 relief kits and 144 pairs of handmade socks along with supplies like towels and sheets.

In Germany, the Enkenbach Mennonite Church, where Regier, Sauer and Foth attend, also has donated money and supplies to MCC’s relief work through Mennonitisches Hilfswerk (Mennonite Relief), an organization of 60 Mennonite churches in Germany.

Now, 70 years after the war’s end, it’s a way that many whose communities received help through MCC can give back—passing on the blessing that they received to others whose lives have been upended by conflict.

“When Mennonitisches Hilfswerk calls for special offerings for MCC projects, I am always ready to give,” Regier says. “I always remember that I have received help from MCC when I was in need after World War II.”

Emily Loewen is a writer for MCC Canada. Nina Linton is a photographer from Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Edith Foth holds a photo of herself and her parents, Cornelius and Helene Foth, in the same window where the image was taken nearly 60 years ago. Edith still lives in the home, built by Pax, that the family moved into when they came to Enkenbach after being displaced during World War II.

choir while he served with Pax in Enkenbach, and he also remembers playing hockey in the winter with the youth from the Mennonite church. But his most vivid memory from that time is of Monday evenings when the Pax members went in groups of two to spend the evening with a family who had moved into one of the new houses.

The families would share photos and stories from the homes they fled and of the journey to Germany. “Airplanes would strafe their columns of refugees, their horses and wagons, and they would dive into the ditches and run to escape them, the airplanes. It was just awful,” he says. So families were very thankful once they could move into the homes built by Pax. “With the new homes, once they got established they could find meaningful employment and get their feet on the ground.

MCC relief in Europe wasn’t only in Enkenbach. Shortly after the war, food, clothing and relief supplies were distributed across Germany, and in the 1950s Pax built homes in several areas around the country.

France also received help rebuilding damaged areas. Many in the small town of Geisberg remember 1946 to 1949, when MCC relief workers built houses as well as a nearby home for orphans.

Here too, the memories are of more than construction. Though Théo Hege was only 7 when the MCC workers arrived, he remembers having them at his family’s home on Sundays and receiving candy or stamps for his collection. “They introduced us to Christmas caroling as well as the sunrise service on Easter morning,” he says. Now that he’s older, that relationship with MCC remains—though Hege is on the other side of the equation. When Geisberg Mennonite Church collected relief supplies for Syrians, he helped contribute. “I think that program is an expression of Christian love to those who have less than we have,” Hege says. “We share what God gave us in his mercy.”

Alfred Hege, left, Rene Hege, Jean Hege, Oscar Hege and Théo Hege walk around what was once a children’s home in Geisberg, France. This building is one of many that MCC helped to build in the small village in the late 1940s.

Klaus and Greda Wiens stand outside their home in Enkenbach, which was built by Pax. The Pax program provided an alternative to military service for Mennonites in the U.S. and helped them move to Europe.
Changing perceptions in Tanzania

In Tanzania, people with albinism are at great risk of violent attack and skin cancer.

BY MARLA PIERSON LESTER
PHOTOS BY TERRY MORTON

In a Mennonite church in the rural Tanzanian village of Chitare packed with some 180 people, workshop facilitator Specioza Kifutu guides the crowd in voicing what they’ve heard about those living with albinism—an inherited condition where people lack pigmentation or coloration in their skin, hair and eyes. The answers are chilling. “The hair of an albino will bless a family.” “Why bury albinos? It will become one.” “Why bury albinos?” “Why bury albinos? They disappear anyway.”

They have long been stigmatized and marginalized by their families and communities—with babies with albinism sometimes killed at birth or left to die from neglect.

In addition, over the last several years in northern Tanzania, rumors that the body parts of people with albinism will bring great wealth have led to killings, mutilations and grave robbings; at least 75 people have been murdered since 2000.

On top of that, skin cancer is an ever-present, often-fatal danger, with youth almost always developing precancerous lesions by the time they are 15.

In response, MCC, in partnership with Albino Peacemakers and the Tanzania Mennonite Church and with the support of Rotary International, is bringing workshops on albinism to rural communities throughout the Mara region.

The church is called to this work—to be a prophetic voice, to see beyond what the community is saying about people with albinism and to care for all, says Jumanne Magiri, general secretary of the Tanzania Mennonite Church.

“Who is my neighbor?” he says, referring to the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Good Shepherd.

“Your neighbor is somebody who’s in need, and these people need protection.”

As the program began, Terry Morton of Klamath Falls, Ore., MCC Tanzania’s albinism peacebuilding coordinator, remembers surveying people with albinism to see what needs they felt the most strongly.

What topped the list was not addressing violence, despite recent attacks, nor skin cancer, although most people with albinism in Tanzania die of cancer by their 30s.

“It was that people in their communities would know that they are people just like them,” she says.

In areas where people often think only infidelity or a supernatural cause could result in two dark-skinned parents having a child with albinism, workshops teach that albinism is inherited when both parents carry the recessive gene for it.

Participants hear from people living with the condition, including Sister Martha Mganga, founder of Albino Peacemakers who has spent the last 25 years using her experiences with albinism to educate and inspire. A traditional healer helps counter myths that albino body parts have supernatural properties.

“Much of the information is new to participants—sometimes even to those with albinism, says facilitator Kifutu, who is the program manager.

“Your neighbor is somebody who’s in need, and these people need protection.”

Realizing the gaps in education, Mganga met with participants living with albinism to talk about skin care. Afterward, Maiga began using sunscreen and wearing her one long-sleeved shirt as much as possible—changes that have made her skin less red and painful and reduce her chances of developing skin cancer.

Learning a neighbor had threatened to abduct her, workshop leaders helped her family enroll her in a boarding school for blind and visually impaired students, including many with albinism.

Take student Cecilia Dotto Maiga. Before a January 2015 workshop in her home village of Wanyere, no one had talked to her about albinism or the effect sun had on people with the condition.

“It’s only knowledge that will be the solution,” she says.

The project proposal anticipated each workshop reaching 30 people. Attendance at many has topped 100. And for Kifutu, that’s a welcome sign that people are eager to learn.

The facts about albinism are reaching far more people than expected.

People are eager to learn. And for Kifutu, that’s a welcome sign that people are eager to learn. “It’s only knowledge that will be the solution,” she says.

Marla Pierson Lester is managing editor of A Common Place magazine.

Tanzania’s albinism peacebuilding project proposal anticipated each workshop reaching 30 people. Attendance at many has topped 100. And for Kifutu, that’s a welcome sign that people are eager to learn. “It’s only knowledge that will be the solution,” she says.
Hello

HONDURAS
How do you say hello in Spanish?

HOLA
(Say OH-lah)

My name is Heidy Rosales.

Age: 10

Lives in: Tocoa, Honduras

I live in a city in northern Honduras with my parents, my little sister Nicole and my older brother Ilmer.

I get up every morning at 6, put on my uniform and get ready to go to school. The school my sister and I go to starts at 7. My father drives us to school on his motorcycle before he goes to work—he’s a regional coordinator for the Evangelical Mennonite Church in our region of the country, Colón.

After older students came to teach us lessons about self-esteem and stopping conflict (through an MCC-supported peace program), I was chosen to be a mediator. Now, I help teach those lessons to younger students in my school.

School is over at noon, and my mom picks us up then. After school, I do my homework, and I help my mother around the house. I do chores like sweeping the floor. I like to play with my sister. We have a ball and dolls that we take outside to play with under a tree in our yard.

My favorite food: fried chicken and tajadas (plantains)

My favorite subject: social studies

What I want to be: owner of a company that creates new things

Heidy Rosales helps at home by washing the dishes.

Word search
Find the words highlighted in Heidy’s story.

Words:

- X L J T W E S A G O B M
- S Y E X C C N Y P R O
- K E O S H I I A L

Find your place
MCC has workers in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, as well as in Canada and the U.S.

Go to serve.mcc.org, contact your nearest MCC office or follow @servemcc on Twitter to learn about current service opportunities.

MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to Christian faith, active church membership and biblical peacemaking.

MCC representatives

Name: Karen and Major Treadway

Hometown: Clinton, Miss. (Northside Baptist Church)

Assignment: As representatives for MCC’s work in Vietnam, we spend some days in the office in Hanoi and other days in meetings with partners and MCC workers.

Typical office day: Days begin with a common place for a morning of work, taking office, and we gather with Vietnamese staff who care deeply about the people of Vietnam to have a cycle of prayer and meditation. Joys: Witnessing and being a part of cross-cultural learning and sharing—those “aha” moments of getting something about life in another culture. We also find great joy in working with Vietnamese staff who care deeply about the work of MCC in not only Vietnam, but also in other countries around the world.

Challenge: Working in two different cultural interpretations of time. In the U.S. and Canada, where MCC’s home offices are, time is firm, definite, planned, exact. In Vietnam, time is important, but the level of its priority rarely supersedes the importance of relationships.

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Typical office day: Days begin with a common place for a morning of work, taking office, and we gather with Vietnamese staff who care deeply about the people of Vietnam to have a cycle of prayer and meditation. Joys: Witnessing and being a part of cross-cultural learning and sharing—those “aha” moments of getting something about life in another culture. We also find great joy in working with Vietnamese staff who care deeply about the work of MCC in not only Vietnam, but also in other countries around the world.

Challenge: Working in two different cultural interpretations of time. In the U.S. and Canada, where MCC’s home offices are, time is firm, definite, planned, exact. In Vietnam, time is important, but the level of its priority rarely supersedes the importance of relationships.

Name: Karen and Major Treadway

Hometown: Clinton, Miss. (Northside Baptist Church)

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making a difference

month by month

Find options to give monthly on the enclosed envelope, by going to mcc.org/donate or by calling your nearest MCC office listed on page 2.

“We feel blessed to be in the situation we’re in now. We just want to use some of our resources to help bless other people.” — Katerina Bauman, St. Jacobs, Ont.

As Matt Bauman, a high school English teacher, and his wife Katerina, a family physician, began married life together in 2014, they made a decision to begin giving to MCC monthly. They’re working to pay off student debt but say the needs in places such as Syria are so urgent that they were drawn to the idea of helping immediately. “We’re just in the process of trying to let go of the things that would keep us from finding our lives,” Katerina Bauman says. “For us, giving is so important because it changes your perspective. It’s just the first step.”

For Michael George, a social studies teacher in Souderton, Pa., regular giving to MCC is a way to respond to need around the world. It links his passion for social issues with his Christian faith and reflects the stories he heard growing up — both from MCC workers in his church and from his father, whose Palestinian family received food from MCC decades ago.

“It’s a way to feel like I’m making a difference in the name of Christ for things that I care about.” — Michael George, Souderton, Pa.