

MCC News

December 2019

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Summary: In 2020, Mennonite Central Committee will celebrate 100 years of relief, development and peace in the name of Christ.

MCC celebrates 100 years of global ministry

By Linda Espenshade

One hundred years ago, calls for help came from Mennonites in southern Russia where war, disease and famine had left them in desperation.

“Brethren! Help us, we are perishing!” wrote one man to Mennonites in the United States. “The famine is raging more and more and suffering is increasing daily, yes, hourly.”

Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren groups formed a “central committee” in July 1920 to coordinate their responses to this crisis. Together they pledged to help hungry people, including those who were suffering in southern Russia (present-day Ukraine).

Over the next several years, the committee, which took on the name Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), provided food for as many as 25,000 people at times, as well as shipping in tractors and seeds to plant for the future.

One century later, MCC is celebrating the ministry that grew from that first endeavor. Throughout 2020, the public is invited to explore MCC’s history by participating in commemoration events, comforter making, giving opportunities, storytelling and more.

Today MCC serves in more than 50 countries, including Canada and the U.S., providing humanitarian relief, encouraging sustainable development and strengthening peacebuilding initiatives.

“MCC’s work, then and now, is motivated by a desire to share God’s love and compassion for all in the name of Christ,” said J Ron Byler, executive director for MCC U.S. “We hope you celebrate with us and give thanks as you see how God has worked in the lives of people impacted by MCC.”

The Great Winter Warm-up

One of the ways MCC and its supporters show their compassion for people in crisis is to send comforters. Every year, MCC distributes more than 50,000 comforters and blankets made or donated by volunteers.

On Jan. 18, the public is invited to be a part of The Great Winter Warm-up, a comforter-making event held across the U.S., Canada and Europe. Volunteers will attempt to complete 6,500 comforters in one day. Details are available at mcc.org/great-winter-warm.

“People who get these comforters realize they are getting something personal,” said Byler. “Someone has chosen the fabric and crafted the comforter with their hands. They understand this is a gift of love.”

National celebration

On June 19-21, MCC will host Celebration 2020, the U.S. national celebration of MCC’s history and ministry. Held in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the weekend events will be a

time of thanksgiving to God; and for the supporters, partners and workers who have made MCC's ministry possible.

In addition to a Saturday evening celebration, participants can enjoy food, music, demonstrations, children's activities and storytelling at Friday events in Akron and Saturday events in Ephrata and Mountville.

Registration for the *Century for a Century* bike tour, *Pax Ultimate* Frisbee® tournament and an MCC Thrift shops bus tour will open closer to the event. Those who want to express their interest now may email centennial@mcc.org.

Leonard Dow, a stewardship and development specialist, former longtime pastor and MCC board leader, will be the keynote speaker at the livestreamed Saturday evening celebration at Manor Church, Mountville.

On Sunday, MCC representatives will worship and share in local churches and a children's musical based on the book "Swords to Plowshares" will be performed.

For details about Celebration 2020, visit mcc.org/celebration-2020.

There will also be celebration events in Europe, for example at Haarlem Mennonite Church in April 2020 or at the Mennonitischer Gemeindetag at Weierhof in May 2020, and in other countries. To find out more about events in Europe, contact the MCC West Europe office in Strasbourg, e-mail: westeuroperep@mcc.org.

100 stories for 100 years

No anniversary is complete without stories, photos and videos. MCC's "100 stories for 100 years" online collection provides glimpses of the people and ministry of MCC over the years. The collection shares stories about remarkable people, such as Lois Gunden, who protected Jewish children from death camps, and Issa Ebombolo, who started hundreds of peace clubs in schools all over Africa.

They describe how simple resources like canned meat and tarps give vital support to vulnerable people facing the devastation of disaster, and how MCC and partner organizations have worked together, for example, developing new farming techniques over time, right up to today's initiatives that help farmers cope with climate change. Stories will be added throughout the year at mcc.org/100-stories, where you can also sign up for monthly email alerts about the collection.

Your stories and gifts

Thousands of people have served with MCC at home or in other countries; contributed to vital efforts such as meat canning, relief sales, thrift shops and material resources centers; supported MCC with gifts of money, kits and comforters; and in other ways experienced MCC's work firsthand.

They have stories to tell, too. Anyone who wants to share a photo, video or a short vignette about their MCC experience can do so on the "Share your story" web page at mcc.org/share-your-story.

Saulo Padilla, MCC U.S. immigration education coordinator, shares on the web page how he arrived in Calgary, Alberta, in 1986 as an immigrant from Guatemala and the son of a political refugee. Later, he signed up for an MCC skills training, which he called "a window to self-awareness and a path to new life opportunities."

“As I work with immigrant communities in the U.S, I am reminded of how new opportunities can heal past trauma and provide life-giving opportunities. I am eternally grateful for the people at MCC who offer recent immigrants an opportunity to have a new hope.”

To continue MCC’s work and to expand it beyond this centennial year, MCC is encouraging people to give an extra financial gift through the New Hope in the Name of Christ centennial fundraising campaign.

In order to find out how to make donations to MCC from your country in Europe, contact the MCC West Europe office in Strasbourg, e-mail: westeuroperep@mcc.org.

“In the midst of reminiscing and celebrating the work God has done through MCC in the last 100 years, we are grateful for every single person who has supported our ministry,” Byler said.

“With each gift of money, of time, of prayer, you are reaching out your hands of love to people at home and across oceans and continents. Thank you.”

Linda Espenshade is news coordinator for MCC U.S.

Photos available: To download these photos, click on the [2020 photo collection](#). If you have any questions or need help with the system, contact BrendaBurkholder@mcc.org or 717-859-1152, ext. 60276.



Photo #98894: This feeding center in Trans-Volga, Russia, circa 1922, was one of 140 MCC-supported centers in southern Russia that distributed 38,600 rations daily at the peak of the relief effort in 1922. (MCC photo)



Photo #93178: Teachers Abroad Program (TAP) participant Mary Yoder works with students (names not known) at the Mosoriot Teacher Training College, Mosoriot, Kenya. In 1962, MCC began TAP to address the need for teachers in African countries. The program continued for 25 years and involved 800 teachers, many who worked in church-run secondary schools and teacher training colleges. (MCC photo)



Photo #99051: Nicholas Mardoché carries a case of canned meat from a delivery truck to a storehouse in Camp Galilee, which became home to many people, including Mardoché, after the January 2010 earthquake struck Port-au-Prince, Haiti. (MCC photo/Ben Depp)



Photo #98964: “Our well is a blessing,” says Molita Nacuduzi, a participant in an MCC-supported clean drinking-water project with the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) in the small village of Chitongo, Mozambique, in 2019. “It is good for us all, [especially] for us girls who used to make that long and dangerous walk each day.” (MCC photo/Paul Shetler Fast)



Photo #91813: Angie Batiz and her daughter Angelie Batiz immigrated to the U.S. from Honduras. With the help of the New York Mennonite Immigration Program, which came out of a partnership between MCC and the New York City Council of Mennonite Churches, Batiz and her daughter have been empowered to apply for documents to live, work and go to school legally in Bronx, New York. (MCC photo/Frederick Yocum)