

aCommon Place

WINTER 2012



Learning to speak

Through targeted efforts of an MCC-supported training center, hearing-impaired children in China gain skills.



ON THE COVER:
Hearing-impaired
students including
Jianhao, front, study at
an MCC-supported
training center in China's
Sichuan province. Photo
by Silas Crews.

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*Beginning with this issue, you'll notice a new feature of A Common Place (on page 23). Hello is a page of children's content related to one of the countries featured in the magazine. Print additional copies of this page and find more children's resources at **hello.mcc.org**.*

Coming in Spring 2012: Guatemala



Photo by ACT Alliance/Paul Jeffrey



Responding to disaster: In partnership and over time

Don Peters
MCC Canada Executive Director

As I read the articles in this issue of *A Common Place*, I reflected on a recent 'heads-of-agency' meeting of the Policy Action Group for Emergency Response (PAGER), a Canadian coalition.

Through plenary and small group discussion, we explored the day's topic, "The Changing Face of Disaster Response: Trends and Challenges," and reflected on how our understanding of disasters and our response to them has changed over the last two decades.

One salient idea that linked our discussions was that having a history of involvement in the local context, including with local partners, is essential to effective disaster response. We can't do good work alone. We need our partners!

I came away from that meeting affirmed that MCC has been headed in the right direction for a long time.

When we respond to disaster, as in East Africa or Haiti, our response is part of our overall engagement in the country over many, many years. The actions we take to meet current needs are part of MCC's overall strategy in the country and, when possible, are carried out via existing partnerships.

We commit to three priorities in carrying out our mission: disaster relief, sustainable community development and justice and peacebuilding. These are not separate priorities. They need to be integrated and while we will never get this integration perfect, we are on the right track.

An effective disaster response, as our work in East Africa and Haiti demonstrates, emerges from our efforts in community development and justice and peacebuilding.

As we respond, we strive alongside communities and local partner organizations to fulfill the Lord's requirements "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

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Ms. J. Wang works one-on-one with students such as 4-year-old Jiaxing, helping them learn to form sounds.

Cover story

Learning to speak

Through one-on-one lessons and activities throughout the day, children at the Guang'an New Hope Deaf Child Training Centre, supported by MCC's Global Family program, learn to speak.



Zhenwan, middle, and Hongchun, left, are parents of Xingbo, a student at Guang'an New Hope Deaf Child Training Centre. Xingbo's grandmother Juxiu holds a bag the family is sending to the center for Xingbo.



Xingbo, 6, and other students work during a class at Guang'an New Hope Deaf Child Training Centre.



By Linda Espenshade
Photographs by Silas Crews

Hundreds of chicks peck in Zhenwan's courtyard, reachable only by a dirt footpath that climbs a hill in the countryside of Huaying, China. Sitting atop the hill is a wide concrete structure with four, one-story rooms side by side.

In one room, Zhenwan tucks the chicks at night to protect them from snakes and weasels. Another holds sacks of grain. The other sparsely furnished rooms are where Zhenwan, a village leader, lives with his wife and his extended family. Until recently, Zhenwan's 5-year-old son, Xingbo, lived with them too.

Today, Xingbo is a two-hour bus ride away at Guang'an New Hope Deaf Child Training Centre, where he is learning to speak. Each day, staff members at the center, supported by MCC's Global Family education sponsorship program, spend hours working in groups and one-on-one with hearing-impaired children, building the skills the children need to speak.

For four years, Xingbo used gestures, patient persistence and an occasional head butt to get what he wanted. Zhenwan thought his son was just late to develop speech,

but when relatives prompted, Zhenwan took his son to a doctor, who prescribed hearing aids and speech therapy.

The diagnosis was a blow to Xingbo's parents, who, like most Chinese parents, rely on their child to support them financially when they get older. Without being able to hear and speak well, Xingbo's economic capacity is about as limited as that of his father, who has one arm, and his mother, who has Down syndrome.

"I was very, very sad and very, very disappointed," Zhenwan says. Now his son, too, must deal with a disability. Zhenwan was determined to give Xingbo the best chance he could. He bought his son hearing aids, even though they cost about what Zhenwan earns in two years of raising chickens, and enrolled his son at the center for speech therapy.

"The hearing aids will make him grow up as a normal person," says Zhenwan, who borrowed the money from family and friends. "That's my best wish." Zhenwan is appealing for government assistance to help pay for speech therapy, but that money, too, may have to be borrowed.

In spite of China's significant economic gains and its efforts to reduce poverty over the past three decades, Zhenwan represents the rural poor whose development lags far behind the prosperity often reported in Western media. Figures from 2005, the most recent year that survey-based estimates are available, show China with more than 200 million people living on less than \$1.25 a day, according to the World Bank.

In addition, the majority of Chinese primary and middle school students are eligible for free tuition at their home schools, leaving parents to shoulder only the costs of textbooks, uniforms, school meals and extra classes. For many poor families, even these school expenses can be high.

But students with disabilities such as Xingbo face an even greater burden because their schools are not free.

Schools for children with disabilities are located in the bigger cities and they are costly, far beyond the geographical and financial reach of poor, rural families. Xingbo's best hope for getting an education is to learn to speak and listen well enough to function in public school. That's



During breakfast, children's hearing aids are put on and checked. The center works with children as young as 2-year-old Qirui, front.

Children spend their days practicing their speech. That happens through group exercises such as this one, as well as through playtime. Of the center's students, 11 are boys and three are girls.

children's use of language is constantly encouraged. She says the children have lived so many years

dles help without the children realizing they are learning. Every day Wang also works with each individual child. With early learners, she places students' hands on her throat so they can feel where the sound comes from. With her other hand she holds a mirror so students can compare the shape of their lips with the shape of hers as they say words.

without being able to express themselves that the teachers want them to speak loudly. It teaches them confidence.

Being in a friendly environment where all the other children are wearing hearing aids and are dealing with the same problem also helps to build that confidence, she says.

Classes involve much repetition—Wang points to a picture on the chart, says the word and the students repeat it. While doing physical exercises, the children jump and move to rhymes and songs they have memorized. Even playtime involves speaking. Children must say a word to play with the wind-up, walking turtle.

“Ow-oh-ee,” the children repeat as part of their daily tongue exercises. They must learn to move their tongues and shape their lips so they can make the sounds used in Chinese words. Blowing bubbles, plastic horns and can-

She asks more advanced students to repeat simple sentences, using gestures and pictures to demonstrate their meaning. Able to follow simple instructions, they respond to Wang's request to move chairs and tables and help the younger ones.

Wang learned much of what she teaches through books and seminars she attended with support from MCC. Her education is in accounting, but her interest lies in teaching.

“My job is very significant because it can change the destiny of a child,” Wang says. “Some children, just because of the training, have already changed.” For example, she says, former student Xueping, 7, is now in public school. “She is so smart, maybe she will be a skilled person in the future. It could change her whole life because of this,” Wang says.

the goal of the Guang'an New Hope Deaf Child Training Centre.

Like Xingbo, students come to the training center for speech therapy after they get their hearing aids, which allow them to hear well enough to learn to speak. Since 2006, MCC's Global Family program has helped pay for rent, utilities, electronic equipment and meals at the center, making it possible to keep students' tuition, room and board to about \$78 per month.

Of the 14 students now enrolled at center, the youngest is 2 years old and the oldest is 9. All but two live at the center with their teacher, Ms. J. Wang, and her teaching assistants, Ms. Fang and Ms. Jin.

From the moment that Wang puts on each child's hearing aid at breakfast to the time that she takes them off at bedtime, the

Xing, 7, plays with a toy as a reward for successfully completing speaking exercises, while Ms. Jin offers toys to other students.





Baishun, 5, from left, Jianhao, 5, and Linlin, 2, enthusiastically follow their teacher in vocal exercises to strengthen the muscles needed to form words.

More advanced students such as 5-year-old Jianhao also work with Ms. J. Wang on putting words together to form sentences.



About one-quarter of the 40 children who have completed training at the school were able to go on to public school, a number Wang wishes was higher. However, even those who can't go to school can still communicate better with their families and their neighbors, she says.

Mingde, a grandparent who lives a two- to three-hour bus ride outside of Guang'an, says he and his family sacrifice time and money in hopes that his 4-year-old grandson, Jiaying (pictured on page 5), will succeed too.

They are encouraged by Wang's reports that their grandson is asking questions and initiating conversation after a year of being there. He is a

Mingde speaks about his hopes that the center will help his grandson learn to communicate.

serious student and very curious.

"If he didn't take training, he wouldn't speak well, to write, to count. How could he do in the future? Children without training couldn't even get married. No one would marry him," Mingde says. If Jiaying could communicate normally, "he could go to the university and have a good future."

Mingde, a laborer, and grandmother Biqing, who takes care of the farm, come to visit him every month to make sure he is healthy and doing OK, even though they can barely pay for bus fare. They function as his parents because Jiaying's father is in prison and his mother works in another province.

Wang says she is touched by the sacrifices that parents and grandparents make for the children, in spite of the poverty she witnesses when she visits their homes. She hopes she can help that sacrifice pay off.

"If I teach these kids well," she says, "maybe in the future they can help reduce their parents' burden too." ■

Linda Espenshade is MCC's news coordinator. Silas Crews is MCC's photographer and multimedia coordinator. In reporting from China, full Chinese names were not used for reasons of privacy.

GIVE A GIFT — GLOBAL FAMILY

Education helps change the lives of children and transform their communities.

\$300 provides an MCC Global Family sponsorship for one year.

Send contributions in the enclosed envelope, go to **globalfamily.mcc.org** or contact your nearest MCC office. (See page 2.)

One of the two students who live close to the center and go home each night, 5-year-old Baishun whispers new words to his mother, Cangmei, before he falls asleep.



The founder of an MCC partner organization, Peace in China, and a former participant in MCC's International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) talks about how she discovered her passion for teaching and peace.

First person

Leah Wang

As told to Linda Espenshade

I feel very lucky that I can do work I enjoy that is also meaningful. You can have lots of energy and enthusiasm if you think your job is meaningful and helpful to others.

My first job, when I was 20, was not meaningful. It was in a factory which made small farm trucks. After that, I went back to school and studied accounting at Shanghai Financial and Economic University. I became a certified public accountant in a foreign-owned company, but there was conflict between me and my boss, who was Chinese. When she forced me to resign, I went to a different city to study English so I could report her to her supervisor and get revenge.

While studying English, I became a Christian through people who, step by step, helped me to learn more about God. I learned about forgiveness from studying the Bible. I sent my former boss a Bible instead of reporting her. I became a teacher in a language school, and I found out teaching was much more fun than accounting.

After two years, I moved back to my hometown to set up my own English school, to share God's love and help people know more about Christ, and to take care of my mom.

There, I heard about MCC's International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) and how I could learn more about another culture and teach others about Chinese people and culture. From 2005 to 2006, I was part of IVEP, living in Canby, Ore., working as a teacher's assistant in an elementary school and worshipping as part of Zion Mennonite Church.

The people at Zion Mennonite deeply influenced me by how they loved me. I got lots of spiritual support. They welcomed me, took care of me and lived out their Christian faith. One thing I didn't expect was the way that everybody in this church, whether a farmer or a city worker, all give their money to support MCC's worldwide projects. Even though they never left the country, their lives connected with the whole world.

Also, I went to a Mennonite history training program. I learned about nonviolence and how, during the second World War, some Mennonites refused to serve in the

army. Because of their pacifist convictions, some were even put in jail.

I went to a lecture where a person came back from the Middle East and spoke about how people use their bodies to protect others. They walk children from one village to another to go to school safely. Or they stay with people who raise goats or sheep, so their enemies are less likely to take their things or kill them. This amazed me.

Peace can begin just by one person. You can help one family or one person to get peace just by yourself. For me, peace was not my business. For most Chinese people, peace is not their business. It's the country's business. They have to use the army to protect the peace.

When I got back from my year with IVEP, I started to teach again. I also got married and had a daughter. I began to think about having a peace camp for young people from different countries. In northeast Asia, because of historical reasons, there is still lots of hatred, misunderstanding and stereotypes of each other.

The first peace camp happened in China in 2009 with Korea Anabaptist Center of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and World Friendship Center of Japan. It was in the mountains. The young people had a half day of indoor activities such as role plays, dramas and teaching on nonviolent communication skills and a half day outdoors focusing on group-building and cooperation. At night, we mixed roommates from different countries. It's amazing to see how easily and quickly they can make friends with each other, even without strong language ability.

It's true that in a peace camp, we can't change big groups of people's thinking, but we just start from small groups. They can spread what they have learned from their experience.

The peace camp experience strengthened my thinking about doing more peace programs. In early 2010,



Leah Wang sits with a student, Cherry, at an English class at Sea Turtle Foreign Language Training.

I started Peace in China and Sea Turtle Foreign Language Training, two organizations in the same building.

Peace in China offers half-day or full-day training, teaching people what peace and conflict is. We also helped coordinate peace camps in 2010 and 2011 and exchange programs, including hosting university students and volunteers from Canada and the United States. Sometimes with the visiting groups, it's exhausting, but to see how they can be changed and learn from this trip is very important to me.

Sea Turtle started with 30 students. We now have 80 students, from kindergarten to sixth grade, who come three hours a week for afterschool training in English. We are not just teaching them language. We use the language to teach them more about the world.

After the first peace camp, I was looking for ways to get more training. Last year MCC paid for me to go to a peace training in Beijing, and this past summer I spent two weeks at the first Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (sponsored by MCC).

In the future, Peace in China wants to start a program in primary and middle schools to teach kids about bullying. We also want to teach mediation training to people who work directly with conflicts.

I tell people who work in Peace in China and Sea Turtle that it is very important to find meaning in your job, rather than just trying to make money. Through my work I share the love and care God gives to me. That's how I can do it. Otherwise, if it's not to share God's love with people, you just do it as a work, not with passion. ■

Leah Wang is the founder of Peace in China, a cross-cultural and peacebuilding training program, and Sea Turtle Foreign Language Training, an extracurricular English language training program for children. MCC funds annual peace camps through Peace in China and also helps fund the Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute.

Facing hunger in East Africa



Photo by ACT/NCA/Laurie MacGregor



About 80 percent of Kenyans are farmers, many of whom are able to grow just enough to sustain themselves and, in good years, to help family or neighbors in need, explain MCC Kenya representatives Martha and Ron Ratzlaff of Calgary, Alta. “When there is a failure of a harvest, it has an immediate effect. There is no storehouse to go to,” Ron Ratzlaff says. And as food becomes scarce, its price becomes increasingly volatile. In Kenya, the price of maize, a staple food, has gone up 80 percent in the past year.

Photo by ACT Alliance/Paul Jeffrey

Across East Africa, more than 13 million people are suffering from drought and hunger.

As MCC responds with emergency food and efforts to help communities withstand future drought, staff emphasize how a slow-onset disaster such as this drought is different from a hurricane or earthquake.

Those facing hunger today, on the whole, have watched their losses slowly multiply.

“People have been coping in this situation for a very long time,” says Bruce Guenther, program coordinator for MCC’s Food, Disaster and Material Resources department.

Even before months of severe drought, communities were feeling the effects of a gradually drier climate and less predictable rainfall. “It’s not only this one shock,”

Guenther says. “It’s shock after shock.”

And the results are devastating for farmers such as Nduku Mwanza, a mother of eight from Munathi, Kenya.

Now, with this crisis added to previous setbacks, “all the assets of the family are gone,” Mwanza says.

Her sorghum was eaten by insects, and her animals, which in rural Kenya act as savings accounts for farming families, have all perished. “The cows died first and then all the goats,” Mwanza says. “I had four cows, but now we have none and there is no milk for the children.”

Mwanza’s children are in their second year of missing school as the family struggles simply to survive.

Amid hunger, families are forced into heartbreaking

Continued on page 17



Photo provided by MCC Kenya

Nduku Mwanza

Nine-year-old Habiba Hussein Hassan and her family are among the thousands that fled drought and war in Somalia and arrived at the Dadaab complex of refugee camps in northeast Kenya. In addition to educational support, MCC is helping meet basic needs in Dadaab by providing 38,000 school kits, 2,900 blankets, 500 sewing kits and 6,000 mosquito nets. Also, through a partner organization, World Concern, MCC is supporting vouchers for food, non-food items and water for displaced Somalis and their host families in Dhobley, Somalia, near the Kenyan border.





Photo provided by MCC Kenya

In Kenya, self-help groups or community groups are provided with beans or split peas, wheat or maize and cooking oil to enable them to work on sand dams and related projects. Sand dams capture millions of liters of rain in the collected sand at dam sites, which previously looked like dry riverbeds. These dams not only provide a source of water for the local population, but they increase the level of the water table, aiding in the growing of crops and increasing food security around the dams. This helps to cushion communities from the effects of future drought. Tree- and grass-planting efforts promoted alongside sand dams help prevent soil erosion and provide a way for families to earn cash through the sale of fruit, animal fodder and firewood.



MCC photo by Dan Diehdger

Despite the severity of this drought, long-term MCC work on sand dams is helping to make a difference in communities such as this one in Mukika, Kenya. "Even though the big picture is dire and the hunger is there, there are success stories," says MCC Kenya representative Martha Ratzlaff. A member of the community, 71-year-old Monica Ndinda Makewa, says sand dams built through MCC partner Utooni Development

Organization are helping to keep water in the ground and allowing some trees to survive even though most crops and pastureland have perished. "I do see some farmers doing well in our group," she says. "They have many terraces close together and they have many trees. Their farms are covered in trees. That is the way forward, but for me it is a constant struggle as I have no water for the trees and there are many termites." Despite these

obstacles, she was eager to take part in a food-for-work effort to improve the land around the sand dam and help rainfall seep into the ground and water table. "I am happy that I could dig so many terraces," she says, "so that when the rain comes I will be ready and can store the water before it goes to the river." And she maintains hope for the future. "We are living under God's protection," she says.

decisions—whether selling land, losing animals or buying food instead of paying school fees—that set back their lives not just now, but for years to come.

MCC, in addition to responding with emergency food assistance, stresses projects such as food-for-work efforts to build sand dams that give Mwanza and others a chance to improve their prospects for the future while earning the food they need now.

Meeting emergency needs is vital. "If people can't meet their short-term needs, they continue to spiral down in this cycle," Guenther notes.

At the same time, MCC strives to give people ways not only to survive but also to continue building on what they do have.

As you see these photos, please pray that families in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia will have the food they need for today—but also that, even in the midst of crisis, they find opportunity to regain what they have lost over the past months and to lay the foundation for a brighter future. ■

Responding to drought doesn't mean only providing food. When people have fled home because of hunger, they must completely restart their lives. Despite overcrowded conditions, students and teachers are establishing classroom routines in the Hagadera camp in the Dadaab refugee complex in northeast Kenya. Educational support is a

major need in a camp that includes some 45,000 school-age children, about 20,000 of whom attend school. The camp has 350 teachers but only 70 have completed secondary education. MCC is responding in partnership with Lutheran World Federation to improve the quality of education and access to education in the Hagadera refugee camp.

A simple meal for East Africa

In honor of those suffering from drought and hunger, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, a partnership of 15 Canadian church agencies including MCC, invites you to consider a simple meal.

It could be bread and toast — or a helping of rice and beans that reflects the rations that often would be the only nourishment for families in refugee camps.



Photo provided by Canadian Foodgrains Bank

This picture shows a typical daily ration, which would equal 450 grams or 15.75 oz. of cereal such as rice or wheat; 50 grams or 1.75 oz. of pulses such as beans or peas; 50 grams or 1.75 oz. of oil and 5 grams or .175 oz. of iodized salt per person.

More information, including ration meal recipes and worship resources, can be found at www.foodgrainsbank.ca/ration_meal.aspx.

*For food in a world where many walk in hunger;
for faith in a world where many walk in fear;
for friends in a world where many walk alone;
we give you humble thanks, O Lord.*

Table grace, Canadian Foodgrains Bank

GIVE A GIFT — FOOD

Your gift of food helps MCC address the causes of hunger and provide farmers with tools and training to better sustain their families and communities.

\$30 helps families have food for today and tomorrow.

Send contributions in the enclosed envelope, give online at donate.mcc.org or contact your nearest MCC office. (See page 2.)



Photo by Jack and Ely Dalmajter/CRWRC

In crises such as this, emergency food assistance is a critical component of a larger response. In the Oromia region of Ethiopia, MCC supports efforts to provide tens of thousands of people with food assistance, including emergency rations and Famix, a nutritional supplement for pregnant women, nursing mothers and children.

Emergency rations keep children and adults healthy and save lives. But for Medina, left, the rations she received through an MCC-supported project led by Christian Reformed World Relief Committee also allowed her to keep her land. Recently widowed and mother to a 4-month-old and a toddler, Medina did not have sufficient food for herself to make enough milk for her baby. Someone in her

village offered to take over her land in return for some food. But without land, how would her family eat in the future? Rations made it possible for her to keep her land and have a food supply for the next five months.

In Ethiopia, MCC currently supports \$1.4 million in ongoing food assistance and food-for-work efforts. In partnership with Lutheran World Federation, MCC is providing more than \$800,000 of support to Somali refugees in Ethiopia's Dollo Ado refugee camp through projects in clean water and sanitation, youth vocational training and agriculture. For the latest on MCC's response, see mcc.org/eastafricadrought.

Interview with Medina provided by CRWRC.



Photo by Melany Markham/LWF

Two years after a devastating earthquake, MCC continues partnering alongside Haitian organizations to restore buildings and lives.

Haiti's long road to recovery

Photos by Ben Depp

MCC is supporting the building of three classrooms at Institution Chretienne de la Grâce, a school of Assemblée de la Grâce, a network of 23 Anabaptist congregations. The school, in Croix-des-Bouquets, collapsed in the earthquake. Although three classrooms have been rebuilt, some students continue to have class under tarps until the MCC-supported classrooms are complete. Since the earthquake, school space, equipment and teaching materials are in short supply in Haiti. Once rooms are finished, the school can admit more students, says Yvon Georges, an Assemblée de la Grâce pastor who helps run the school. In addition to helping meet families' needs to educate their children, Georges says, "the school is a means to do evangelizing with the students as well as their parents to bring true change to the community."

Overcrowding and unsafe housing conditions in the capital city, Port-au-Prince, contributed to the earthquake's high death toll. In rebuilding, Haitian government officials and MCC partners stressed the importance of giving people the opportunity to make a living outside the capital. In rural Desarmes, MCC supported cash-for-work projects to help prevent runoff in mountainous areas and give farmers more land to plant. "This kind of project helps us live better out here," says Vénance Calixte. "Where other people have gone to bigger cities to look for work, we've been able to stay here."



As Haiti rebuilds, the need for young, educated leaders remains strong. MCC is supporting 12 university students through the Haitian Education and Leadership Program. The program provides comprehensive support for bright young people from low-income families, including Ismaëlle Pierre, left, and Exequiel Sene.



In the two years since the earthquake, MCC engineers trained scores of construction workers and masons in techniques to make buildings safer and more earthquake resistant. As workers such as Guy Evans, left, and Gubeau Jean Ederns lay blocks for three new classrooms at Institution Chretienne de la Grâce, they draw on training and planning by these structural engineers. In addition to funding the current construction, MCC contributed to the first phase of the school's rebuilding by providing a structural engineer to draw the site plan and work alongside masons to build an initial three classrooms.

For years, MCC has worked in reforestation in the Artibonite Valley, near the river that was the main channel for Haiti's cholera outbreak. After cholera began spreading, MCC reforestation staff placed more than 20 handwashing stations, including this one used by Luckson Selita, in public spots in and around the town of Desarmes.



This new MCC-funded bus, a creation of MCC partner organization Pax Christi, will transport children in afterschool programs in Cite Soleil, the most impoverished part of Port-au-Prince, to events throughout Haiti's capital city. It also encourages Haitians and sends a positive message for peace as people put their lives back together after the earthquake.

Ben Depp is a freelance photographer in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.



IRAQ Blankets and kits

Along the borders of northern Iraq near Turkey and Iran, cross-border shelling, aerial bombardment and incursions by Turkish and Iranian forces are forcing families from their homes. In response, MCC provided blankets and relief kits for 300 families, including that of Saman Bapier, above. Forced to flee their village of Dola Sebar, Iraq, Bapier, his wife and three children were living in a temporary tent. MCC, through its partner Rehabilitation, Education and Community Health (REACH) also provided additional relief kits and comforters for about 500 more people.

NORTH KOREA Addressing hunger

Last fall, in response to an emergency food appeal from the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), MCC supplied fortified wheat flour to 13 orphanages and three senior centers. The flour, which provides complete caloric needs for children and adults, was a stopgap measure during September and October when the nation's food supply often runs short prior to the fall harvest.

PEACE Meet the peacebuilders

Tap into voices for peace from across the globe. Through MCC's "Meet the Peacebuilders" podcasts, online at peace.mcc.org, listen to MCC partners and staff reflect on peace work in their home communities. Explore how MCC and Ethiopia's Meserete

Kristos Church have promoted reconciliation in an area once known for its violent feuds or learn about efforts to prevent domestic violence in Vietnam and the U.S.

PALESTINE Water for farmers

Palestinians have farmed the land in and around Hebron for generations. But amid water shortfalls due to decreased rainfall, Israeli restrictions on water use and conflict with Israeli settlers, many farmers struggle to sustain vineyards and crops. MCC supports the efforts of a partner organization, The Centre for Agricultural Services, to help farmers build cisterns to harvest rainwater. Learn more about this and other MCC giving projects and see fun ideas for fundraising in MCC's 2012 Giving Catalog. Find giving projects and the Giving Catalog online at donate.mcc.org or by contacting your nearest MCC office (see page 2).

HONDURAS Serving in a school

Through MCC's Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program for young adults, Keila Quenzer of Visalia, Calif., is putting her education degree to work. In her first months as a reading program coordinator for a church-run elementary school in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Quenzer began reorganizing the school library, including color-coding books by reading level, and started an after-school reading program for third, fourth and fifth graders. "I am gradually feeling a little bit more a part of the school, and I am (I hope!) making the library a more fun place to be," she says. Know young adults who want to explore MCC's SALT program? Now is the time. Go to salt.mcc.org or contact your nearest MCC office (see page 2) to learn about assignments and apply for 2012-2013 SALT terms.



CANADA/U.S. Meat canning

Each year, MCC sends out a mobile meat canner and a four-person canning crew to work alongside thousands of volunteers to produce more than half a million cans of meat for hungry people around the world. From October to April, the canner visits 32 sites in two Canadian provinces and 13 U.S. states. This year's canners include, from left, Jason Unruh of Peabody, Kan., Ryun Lawrence of Newton, Kan., and David Bricker of Chambersburg, Pa. Not pictured are Josh Voth of Goessel, Kan., and Loren Yoder of Belleville, Pa., who share the duties of a fourth canner position. Learn more at canning.mcc.org.

LEND A HAND

Comforters

Provide a gift of warmth and comfort to people in need.

SPECIFICATIONS

Use new or nearly new material

Single/twin-size preferred (approx. 152 cm x 203 cm / 60 in x 80 in) Double/full-size accepted (approx. 208 cm x 228 cm / 82 in x 90 in)

Winter-weight requested (Please use quilt batting. Knot with crochet cotton not more than 10-15 cm / 4-8 in apart.)

Blankets and sheets Purchased blankets are also accepted in twin or full size. New flat sheets are also welcome.

For drop-off locations, contact your nearest MCC office (page 2) or go to mcc.org/kits.



Photo by Laurie Fuller-Rychener

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The power of spare change

By Marla Pierson Lester

Each Sunday at Beth-El Mennonite Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., children walk the aisles of the congregation, holding out hands or containers to collect spare change for MCC.

"When the pastor or whoever's leading the service says it's time for children's worship, everyone gets their coins ready," says 13-year-old Isaac King, who helps to lead the younger children in walking to the front of the church, collecting money along the way.

And the effort adds up to nearly \$2,000 a year.

It provides \$600 to fund two yearlong MCC Global Family sponsorships for preschools in South Africa. Some Sundays, the collection goes to Penny Power. Each summer, it helps buy supplies for MCC school kits; the church compiled 900 kits last year between the offering and families' donations.

"It's surprised us how these coins come together," says Jeanette Hertzler Martin, a church member and administrative assistant at Beth-El, a congregation of about 175 people. "We feel good about the way we can contribute."

In the process of giving to efforts such as Global Family, members are also learning about and responding to needs around the globe. "I know other kids around the world might not have as good an education as kids in America," says King, who is an eighth grader. "I know the Lord wants to help all his children around the world."

At Beth-El Mennonite Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., Isaac King and Jeanette Hertzler Martin are part of a churchwide effort to collect coins to benefit the work of MCC.

In addition to donating coins through the offering, Martin and her husband Jerry, who served with MCC in Egypt and Jordan, also support a vocational training program in Lebanon through Global Family.

"MCC was so much a part of my family's life," says Martin, who grew up in Mechanicsburg, Pa.

She remembers how her parents drove an hour each Wednesday to volunteer at the MCC East Coast Material Resources Center in Ephrata, Pa. Before her father died, he also cut fabric patches that her mother continues to sew into comforters for MCC.

"It was so ingrained in our family that we were doing what we could to support MCC," she says. "It's something they believed in very much—sharing our resources with those in need. I can do that too. It's continuing their faith."

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

GET INVOLVED

Learn more about the work of Global Family by going to globalfamily.mcc.org or contacting your nearest MCC office (see page 2).



ON ASSIGNMENT

“We have found our students to be really welcoming and full of life.”

Emily Yoder-Horst

FIND YOUR PLACE

MCC English teachers in China serve through Mennonite Partners in China, a joint program of MCC, Eastern Mennonite Missions, Mennonite Church Canada Witness and Mennonite Mission Network.

MCC has workers in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East, as well as in Canada and the United States.

Go to mcc.org/serve for service opportunities.

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

English teachers

Name: Andy and Emily Yoder-Horst

Hometown: Denver, Colo. (Glennon Heights Mennonite Church)

Assignment: We teach English classes at Sichuan University of Science and Engineering in Zigong, China, and help plan activities for students to practice their English skills. In addition to helping with English skills, which often allow students from remote areas to advance, this also is an opportunity to build bridges of understanding between the West and China.

Typical day: We each teach two to four class hours each day and have office hours twice a week for informal conversation with students. We also organize activities where students can practice their English and learn about U.S. culture. These include American holiday celebrations, where we share traditions and crafts and play games. Outside of work, we study Chinese, visit a local outdoor market for fresh fruits and veggies and often eat with friends at one of the many small restaurants surrounding our campus.

Joys: The time we spend with our students, learning about their lives and dreams. We have also had a chance to do some traveling, both sightseeing on our own and visiting students’ hometowns. Chinese culture and history is so rich and diverse—there is a lot to experience.

Challenge: Other than a recent water shortage in our city, our number one challenge is the language. Like many cities and provinces in China, Zigong has its own dialect, and the standard Mandarin we are learning isn’t always sufficient. It is always a crowd pleaser though if we can pull out a local phrase.

for children

hello

CHINA



How do you greet someone in Mandarin?

ni hao

(Say “knee how”)

My name is Shijie.

Age: 10 Hometown: Wusheng, China

I live with my mother and my older sister. My father died last year. (After his father died and the family’s poverty increased, Shijie became one of the students who receives assistance through MCC’s Global Family program.)

I’m in the fourth grade and walk to school each day. School starts at 8 in the morning. I go home for lunch, then back to school from 2 to 5:30 p.m.

My class has 92 students. The teacher wears a microphone so we can hear her. Last year, we began studying English. I can say “noodles” and “thank you.” I was chosen to be class representative for Chinese because I am the best in that subject, but I like math better.

Sometimes I help my mother with housework, but mainly it is my responsibility to study. In my spare time, I enjoy reading. I also work to improve my writing because I want to grow up to be a detective.

My favorite food: pork ribs (chopped up with peppers)

My favorite subject: mathematics

What I want to be: detective

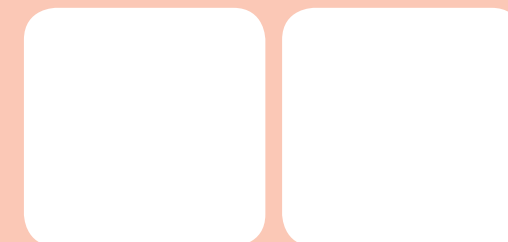


Mandarin Chinese is the language spoken by the most people around the world.

Create a character

In China, as children learn writing, they must do more than make the characters look right. Writing a word correctly means making each mark on the paper in a certain order. Try writing the characters for ni hao.

ni 你好 hao



ni has seven strokes written in this order:



hao has six strokes written in this order:



In China, most children wear uniforms to school. Do you have a uniform at your school? Does it look like this?



Shijie stands with his mother, grandmother and baby cousin.





Mennonite Central Committee
 21 South 12th Street, PO Box 500
 Akron, PA 17501

Mennonite Central Committee



**This
 winter**

be
 more
 than a
 spectator



■ **Be the tie that binds.**

MCC comforters bring warmth and hope to people in need around the world. Make or buy a comforter or blanket that MCC can send to families in Iraq, Kenya or other countries around the globe.
mcc.org/kits

■ **Pick a project.**

MCC's 2012 Giving Catalog is available from your nearest MCC office and online. Peruse giving projects, pick an effort to support and find fun fundraising ideas.
donate.mcc.org

■ **Think thrift.**

Celebrate the new year by cleaning out your closets and taking items to an MCC thrift shop, or holding a garage sale, donating proceeds to MCC. Find a shop near you.
thrift.mcc.org

