

The Last Word

It's been 12 years since I stepped off **MECO Canada's Board** and into the role of "Interim Executive Director." It was supposed to be a one year assignment. God had other plans.

He also had other plans when I returned from a summer holiday in July 2013 and told the Board that I would like to leave my role in July 2015. As it turned out, 2015 was a defining year for MECO Canada. Instead of retiring I found myself committing to another two years of service. If I have learned anything during my time here it is that the obvious is never the obvious with God!

An important key to MECO Canada's work over the last 12 years has been John 15:5- *I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.* The Board and I have learned that apart from Jesus we can do nothing. Our part, as Christian writer Henry Blackaby says, is to watch where God is working and work alongside Him. The importance of this can't be overlooked. Time and again we have seen God enable us to do things that a handful of people on a limited budget should never be able to do.

How do you explain it? Chinese evangelist Watchman Nee wrote: *All service is dependent upon the blessing of God. Consider the miracle of the loaves and fishes. The point was not the*

quantity of material in hand but the blessing that rested upon it. Sooner or later we must recognize that what counts is not the state of our treasury or the number of our gifts. It is from the blessing of the Lord alone that man derives his sustenance.

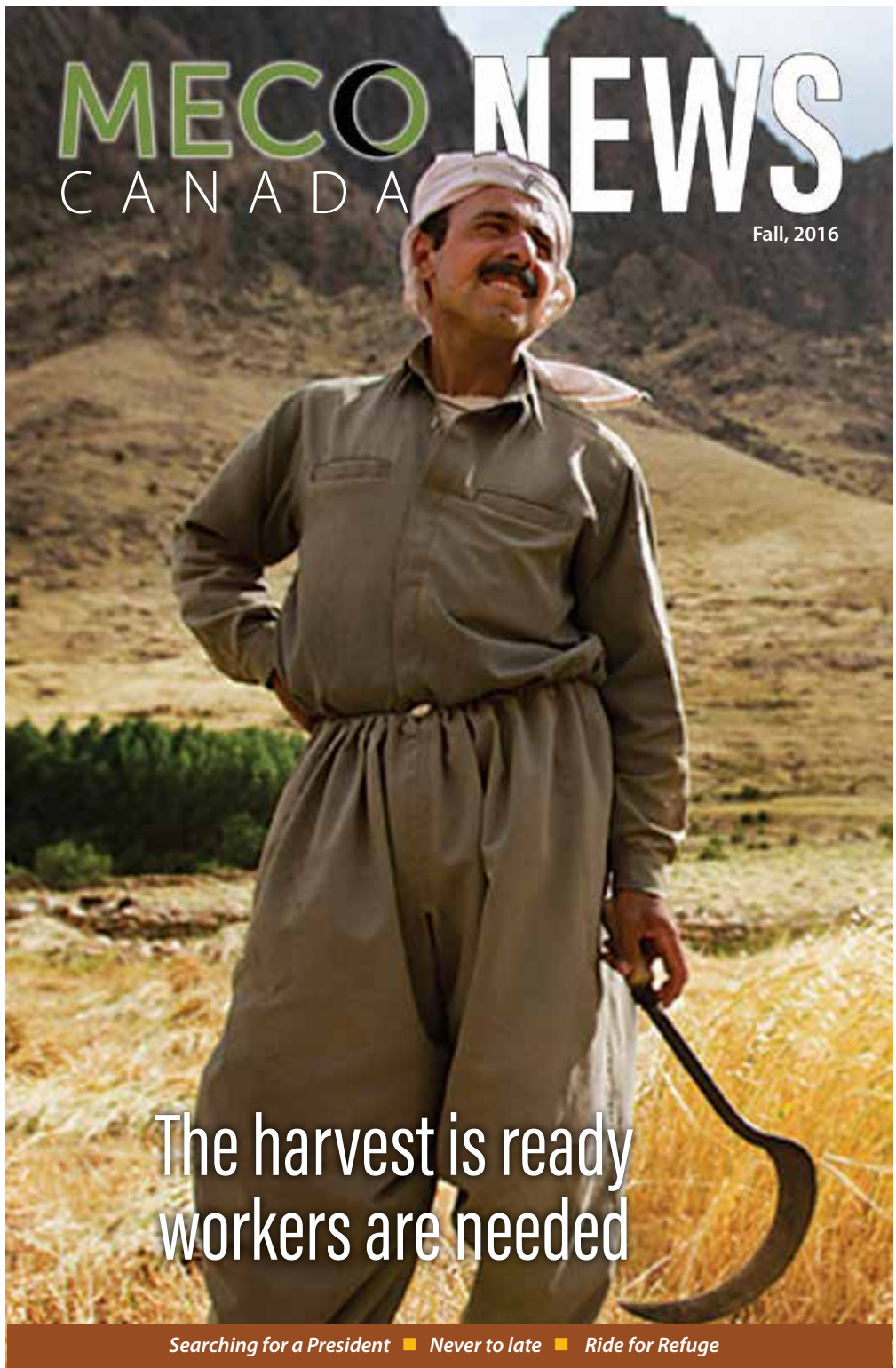
Prayer has also played a significant role in our work. During this past year I have reflected on the story of Nehemiah and how much time he spent in prayer before he set out to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Did you know he spent more time in prayer than it took to rebuild the wall? I've also been struck by how he assigned different families different sections of the wall to rebuild. Although we're not building a wall, based on Nehemiah's example, I was led to ask our Board members to pray for specific aspects of our work. May I ask you to do the same?

Will you pray:

- For the development of MECO Canada's ministry overseas and in Canada
- That the Lord of the Harvest would lead people to serve with us in Canada and the Middle East
- For our colleagues serving in the Middle East; that God would bless the work of their hands and grant them wisdom in all they do and say
- For financial resources so we can carry out our work

Last but not least will you pray for our Board as they seek my replacement? Somewhere, God is preparing someone to step into my role. It is my prayer, that like Samuel, the Board will clearly hear the Lord say: *This is the one.*

Linda Haist
President



MECO NEWS
CANADA
Fall, 2016

The harvest is ready
workers are needed

Searching for a President ■ Never to late ■ Ride for Refuge



News in Brief

Important Conference

The Canadian Network of Ministries to Muslims will hold its National Conference in Toronto, November 3-5. This conference has been organized to help equip churches and individuals who are reaching out to Muslims in their communities, or want to learn how to reach out. Guest speakers will include Dr. David Garrison, author of *A Wind in the House of Islam*. For details go to: conference@cnmm.ca.

Recommended Reading

Sarah Lanier's book *Foreign to Familiar* is a must read for anyone interested in bridging the divide between cultures. With the world now coming to Canada's doorstep this book will help you relate to people from other countries.

Special Prayer Requests

Middle East Concern (MEC), an advocacy organization for persecuted Christians, reports that four Sudanese church leaders have been detained by Sudanese authorities. The four have been charged with several serious offences, including waging war against the state, espionage activities, conspiracy to carry out criminal acts, and undermining the authority of the state through violence. Some of the charges are punishable with the death penalty. Sudanese Christians are asking people to pray:

- that the four detained leaders will know the Lord's strength and comfort

- for a fair judicial process, and that the four will be acquitted of all charges

- that Christians in Sudan will know the Lord's peace in the face of the increasing pressure against churches

MEC is also reporting that five Iranian Christians have recently been arrested in Iran. Family members see no reason for the arrests, apart from a connection to a pastor who was arrested last year during a Christmas celebration in his home. It is feared that those recently arrested may be forced into confessions that can be used against the pastor and another man who was arrested with him.

Family and friends are asking people to pray that those detained will:

- know the presence, peace and provision of Jesus and will be able to answer interrogators with wisdom

- remain strong in their faith and clear in their witness

- be released, including Pastor Victor Bet Tamraz and Amin Nader Afshar, who were arrested in December

Family and friends in both cases also ask for prayer for the officials in Sudan and Iran; that they will love mercy, act justly, learn about Jesus and choose to follow Him.



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Please note that in some cases stock photos, pseudonyms* or initials* have been used for security reasons.

OUR PRIORITY:

To mobilize and equip people and prayer for God's work among Middle Eastern people in the Middle East and in Canada.

For more information go to: www.mecocanada.ca



Ride for Refuge

On Oct. 1, MECO Canada will be participating in Ride for Refuge, an annual event to help mission organizations raise funds to assist refugees or those in need of refuge.

Each organization recruits volunteers to cycle, walk or run in the event, following designated routes in cities across Canada. In turn, the volunteers ask friends and family to sponsor them. Since 2004, Ride for Refuge has enable 350 charities raise more than \$10 million. Last year charities with two or more teams raised an average of \$10,329.

"This is the first year that MECO Canada has participated in the event and we are hoping that we will be able to raise a minimum of \$5,000 in support of three of our projects," says MECO Board member, Joe Choueiri. "To date we have two teams and their supporters have donated \$1,000."

The MECO Canada projects are:

→ **The African Hope Learning Centre**, a Christian school in Cairo for poor African refugee children who are not able to attend Egyptian schools.

→ The Syrian Refugee

Project, which provides assistance to churches and ministries as they work with Syrian refugees who have come to Canada.

→ Saturday Childrens

Project, which provides a weekly program for 60-80 Syrian refugee children living in Lebanon.

Participants in Ride for Refuge can choose to either cycle 10, 25 or 50 km for the charity of their choice or walk 5 km. There is no registration fee for the event but participants are required to raise or self-support a minimum of \$50. Children under the age of 10 do not have to raise a minimum amount.

Locations for this year's event are:

Eastern Canada:

Halifax, Moncton, Montreal

Ontario:

Belleville, Brampton, Hamilton, Kingston, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Markham, Muskoka, Newmarket, Niagara Region, Orillia, Oshawa, Ottawa, Peterborough, Thunder Bay, Toronto Downtown, Windsor.

Prairies:

Regina, Calgary, Red Deer, Saskatoon, Winnipeg

British Columbia:

Fort Langley, Vancouver, Victoria

Cyclists hit the road at 9 am. Walkers start at 9:30 am. Routes close at 2:30 pm.

Most sites offer child-friendly routes that are staffed with volunteers. Riders and walkers will encounter rest stops, support vehicles and route marshals to support them. After the event a lunch will be served.

People who don't live in a Ride community can still participate in the event.

Registration for those wanting to walk or cycle can be done online at: www.rideforrefuge.org

MECO Canada's team name is: MECO Canada Flyers. Team Captain is Linda Haist.

People wishing to sponsor riders and walkers can also donate online at the same website, or send donations directly to MECO Canada, with cheques made out to Ride for Refuge.

For more information contact: jo.choueiri@mecocanada.org

Never too late to serve overseas

God calls people of all ages to serve Him overseas and Jack* and Sue* are a good example of this.

The Canadian couple were in their early 50s when they gave up their careers and left Canada for the Middle East. That was seven years ago and they have never looked back.

"We had taken the Perspectives Course and it taught us the importance of mission. God was speaking to us about serving overseas and we began thinking about taking early retirement but we knew we would require financial provision to do that because we wanted to go out self-supported, rather than raise support to go. We prayed about it and realized the answer was to downsize," they explain, adding, "It wasn't difficult to do. The one thing that stayed with us from the Perspectives Course was something Dr. TV Thomas said during one of the first sessions: 'Live simply so others can simply live.'"

For the couple, downsizing meant moving from a 3,000 square foot house to a house half that size. The next hurdle they had to clear was figuring out where God wanted them to go. Although they had gone on mission trips to South America, the Caribbean and Africa, the need for people to serve in the Middle East touched their hearts.

"People think the Middle East is dangerous and it is, if you are in the wrong place at the wrong time," says Jack. "But you can also be in the wrong place in Canada. The truth is we have never felt unsafe there."

Once they knew God was calling them to the Middle East, the couple prayed through where they were to go and when to go. "We prayed a lot," recalls Sue.

Eventually they were asked to serve as short-term workers with MECO Canada at an orphanage for street children. Almost as quickly as that door opened it closed. Undaunted the couple continued in prayer.

"We ended up serving at a Christian school in a small village. But two weeks after we arrived at the school, Jack's father died suddenly and we had to return to Canada," says Sue. "When we arrived home for the funeral we discovered my mother was very ill. She wasn't well when we left but we thought she had a virus. She was eventually diagnosed with Multiple System Atrophy."

By then the couple was back in the Middle East.

While it would have been understandable if they had decided to remain in Canada, Jack and Sue say it wasn't necessary for them to stay. Jack's mother was very independent and all of Sue's mother's needs were being met. "Our parents would have liked us to stay but they didn't need us to stay," says Sue. "And our plan was always to spend six months at home and six months in the Middle East."

For the last seven years the couple has served as teaching assistants in elementary schools. They describe themselves as behind the scenes workers. "We come alongside to do the things that help others to do their work; to help lighten their burden. If something needs to be done we are there to do it. We also go overseas with the idea of encouraging those who are there long-term."

In return, the couple say they have learned a lot about the Lord and their relationship with Him has grown. "For us, serving really has been a time of drawing nearer to God. When you are away from home you are more dependent on Him and it changes you. Our Bible study and prayer life has grown."

They also feel blessed to be part of God's work in schools where the majority of children are not from Christian homes. They enjoy leading chapels, telling the children Bible stories, watching them perform for their parents in Christmas and Easter pageants, hearing them sing Christian songs in chapel and hearing them sing those songs spontaneously on the playground at recess. "Some parents have told us their children sing songs at home and share what they've learned in school. The children are witnessing to their parents and that is so special," says Sue.

Although the couple is nearing real retirement age, Jack and Sue aren't looking to retire. "The Lord is speaking to us about going while we still can. We feel there is more for us to do. It's a little weird but as soon as we got home this year, we knew we had to go back. We trust the Lord has given us this desire."

**Names have been changed for security reasons.*



Wanted – Director of Education

A Christian school, committed to providing education for poor refugee children, needs a Director of Education, who can serve a minimum of three years.

It is important to note that the school, which is located in Egypt, is a charity and dependent on donations to carry out its mandate. Therefore this is not a paid position but will suit someone who is self-supported or who is willing to serve with MECO Canada.

The ideal candidate for this position will be a qualified teacher who has experience not only as a teacher but as a school administrator, preferably at the elementary level. He or she should be competent in understanding; developmental and learning stages, assessment practices and effective instructional approaches for students who are English language learners and have gaps in their education because they are refugees.

The candidate will need to lead from a humble approach, employing an open mindset to understand the existing school culture and processes. He or she will also model Christian values while gently developing staff and building positive relationships with all members of the school community.

For more information contact: info@mecocanada.org

More workers needed to serve in Canada

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the world.” Acts 1:8

Since January, MECO Canada’s Jerusalem has been the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) where we have been working in co-operation with those carrying out ministry among Syrian refugees. Much of our work has involved connecting people to people and to resources they need but recently we have had the privilege of participating in events for refugees, including a welcoming dinner at The Peoples Church in Toronto, a women’s day held in Mississauga and a baby shower held in Burlington.

With one exception, all of the events were organized by Middle Eastern Christians, who express genuine love and concern for the refugees and through that, effective witness for Jesus.

“They are involved in a unique ministry opportunity,” says MECO Canada President, Linda Haist. “Missional thinkers recognize that Christians immigrating to Canada are the most effective in reaching new Canadians. Certainly that is true in what I have seen.”

It’s for that reason that MECO Canada sees one of its roles as providing assistance to Middle Eastern people who are carrying out ministry in Canada. One of the greatest needs they have at the moment is for more people to help them.

“In the coming year, one of our goals is to recruit people from across Canada to serve in Canadian communities – beginning with our ‘Jerusalem’ the GTA,” says Linda.

However, there is a problem – a problem Jesus pointed out to His disciples. The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

According to Jesus, the key to recruitment is to: *Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.*

Will you please join us in that prayer?

Pray that God will lead people to serve with us. We need people who will be committed to collaborating with congregations, mission agencies and ministry organizations to see the gospel advance. People with willing hearts and hands to:

- Visit with and help families and individuals
- Teach English
- Assist with programs for adults and children
- Equip Canadian churches in outreach to their Middle Eastern neighbours

These are not paid positions but require people to be either self-supported or willing to raise support through donors. In some cases people will need to be willing to learn Arabic.

If you, or anyone you know, would be interested in serving with us, please go to our website for more information: www.mecocanada.org

Report from the Board

On behalf of the Board of Middle East Christian Outreach (Canada) I would like to thank you for your continued prayers and support for MECO Canada.

The Board of Directors humbly asks that you continue to uphold us in prayer as we continue our work to equip, encourage, protect and provide assistance for our people in their God appointed ministry. We also continue to wait upon the Lord to meet our financial needs. We trust that He will provide. Our need for the year is \$64,000.

I now write to you to update you on the impending retirement of Linda Haist, President of MECO Canada. Linda has faithfully served the mission, initially as a board member and then as President for the past 12 years. The Lord has allowed her to be sacrificial in the giving of her time and money. By His grace, she has been a phenomenal leader and the face of the mission

for the past decade. Linda has indicated that she would like to be relieved of her duties by July 2017. We seek the Lord in raising up a successor who would transition into Linda’s role.

To this end, the Board has appointed a Search Committee, under the leadership of past Chair, Bonnie Pioveson. The Search Committee, has developed a Position Description and an advertisement for this position. A copy of this advertisement appears below. Would you please keep this search in prayer? We seek a visionary leader who has a passion for the Lord and desire to serve the Middle Eastern people, whether here in Canada or in the Middle East. Should a person come to mind, would you please point this person to our advertisement and write to: presidentsearch@mecocanada.org

Jeremy Thommy
Chair

ADVERTISEMENT

MECO
CANADA

Middle East Christian Outreach Canada, a well established mission agency, is currently seeking a President with visionary leadership and a passion for the Lord and His mission to Middle Eastern people

- To inquire about this opportunity write to: presidentsearch@mecocanada.org
- For information about MECO Canada go to: www.mecocanada.org

