**A View from “Down Under”**
by Jim Longley, Sydney, Australia

Menno-Hof Volunteer | October 2018—March 2019

“Hullo, my name is Jim Longley, and I would like to welcome you to Menno-Hof. As your host, I will introduce the first four exhibits, and answer any questions you might have. The other hosts will also be happy to answer any of your questions as you go through the other display areas.”

So I commenced each Monday shift at Menno-Hof, in one of the more unusual internships from my Master of Divinity study at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., where I live on campus with my wife, Sally. Most other students do internships at churches, although some go to other Mennonite agencies or hospitals.

“Is your accent from England?” is often one of the first questions I am asked when I start speaking. I am actually from Sydney, Australia, and have come to the U.S. to learn about Anabaptism. Menno-Hof provides a great introduction to Amish/Mennonite/Hutterite understanding and history, and does so in a really accessible way. The latest of the 25 displays is only a few months old, and is a powerful pointer to the ongoing nature of the Anabaptist story. “Reconciling in Christ” is about the current conversations and reconciliation taking place between Mennonites, Lutherans, and Catholics.

Because of the wide range of exhibits, they hold people’s interest even though many of the subjects, like history, would not normally be considered spell-binding! I am often surprised when a visitor says how interesting they have found a particular display or another, but this represents an increasing desire to rediscover one’s roots or people looking for a bigger story.

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Thank you to the LaGrange County Foundation for the distribution of grant funds to Menno-Hof which greatly assisted in meeting various expenses during 2018 and currently.

“A must-see for everyone visiting or even living in Shipshewana. A top notch museum explaining the Amish/Mennonite lifestyle. Very impressive!” —recent online review

A View from “Down Under” (cont. from front)
picture to make sense of the modern world. The Anabaptist story is thought provoking.

In my study I am also looking especially for Anabaptist distinctives, and have had many amazingly interesting conversations with fellow volunteers and others. From Canada and around the US their stories show a level of commitment and faith which stands out in our increasingly bland and materialistic society. Conscientious objectors who have borne enormous personal cost but which provide reference stories for their families for generations, just as did the first Anabaptists. The search for meaning which has painful detours showing that we are all human and this is part of our story to share in the community of Jesus: far from perfect now but always growing in love.

Amidst the many groups that came through Menno-Hof during my time there—mostly small groups of families and friends—two stand out. First, a group of quilters from Australia! You would never have thought it, would you?! We enjoyed some home-grown banter poking fun at accents and driving on the wrong side of the road (which can still be quite scary for me). And asking, why do the Amish drive buggies? The other, a group of people who had survived and overcome their “life-defining illness.” My conversation with a person with disability in that group was very friendly and also ordinary in a good way, but as we chatted it was that very ordinariness which made it so significant. As a person with a vibrant faith he had found Menno-Hof a place to explore other people’s faith journeys, and do so in a friendly and welcoming environment. The cobblestone path and some tight turns would not stop him! A fitting reminder that the lived Gospel is the heart of Menno-Hof, and is beating strongly!

Jim and his wife, Sally, live in Sydney, Australia, and have two adult children. Jim enjoys violin and astronomy and previously worked in banking, government administration for disability services, and as CEO for Anglican Retirement Villages, Sydney. He has served as lay reader in the Anglican Church, Sydney, and is a member of Anabaptist Network of Australia and New Zealand (AAANZ). Jim graduates from AMBS on May 4.

Looking for a way to serve while sharing your faith?
Menno-Hof needs local individuals in agreement with Anabaptist values and beliefs to serve as volunteer tour guides and cashiers. Responsibilities include welcoming visitors and conducting tours. For more information contact Ruth Miller, daily operations manager: 260-768-4117 or rmiller@mennohof.org.

by the numbers

6,500 —the approximate number of donated volunteer hours in 2018!

23 hosts and hostesses lived at Menno-Hof in 2018, blessing many, many visitors. These volunteers were from...

3 Canadian Provinces: Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan;


Thank You TO OUR DONORS

As we look at facility improvements made in 2018, we are grateful for the support from donors. Your financial support allowed us to make much needed costly repairs and replacements, a few of which included replacement of 30-year-old furnaces and air conditioners, replacement of most deteriorated original windows, computer and software upgrades. We have also identified a number of items to be addressed this year as resources allow. A few of the items on our list include the pond bank and aerator repair, driveway repair, air compressor replacement, and finalize window replacements. Thank you for your continued support!
**11th Annual Menno-Hof Hymnsing**

*Sunday, September 8, 5 p.m.*

**FARMSTEAD INN PAVILION**

(just north of Menno-Hof)

Come and enjoy a cappella singing of familiar hymns at the Farmstead Inn Pavilion in the traditions of the Amish Church, Amish Mennonite Church, Conservative Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church USA. There will be ice cream and pretzels following the hymnsing.

**CHAIRS & HYMNBOOKS** will be provided.

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**In our bookstore | Hutterite Diaries**

What would it be like to share your possessions and live in Christian community? In *Hutterite Diaries*, Linda Maendel offers a rare glimpse into the daily routines and relational faith of her people, the Hutterian Brethren. With stories ranging from accounts of Hutterite weddings to a hilarious tale of an accidental baptism by salad dressing, Maendel invites readers into her colony. Here, nestled on the prairie of western Canada, children and adults work, play, eat, and worship together, crafting a community of goods and living out an alternative to the individualism and consumerism of mainstream society.

Few outsiders know anything about the Hutterites, a plain Christian group related to the Amish and Mennonites. Maendel’s story invites readers into deeper understanding of this community of faith, calling us to take seriously the example of Jesus and the early church in our daily living.

*Hutterite Diaries: Wisdom from my Prairie Community* is part of the Plainspoken book series and is available for purchase in the Menno-Hof gift shop.

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**Menno-Hof on the Road** (cont. from front)

approximately 200 people fill that place - among them about 20 of the Amish that had moved into the area. I have to admit I was a bit intimidated to be speaking to a crowd of people about Amish beliefs and culture with a group of Amish in the audience. I was also aware that this was a group from a more conservative culture than in LaGrange and Elkhart counties. In spite of all that, it seemed to come across well because I focused on Anabaptist history and the basic fundamental belief in God and the literal translation of the Bible as God’s inspired Word. I added that different groups live out their faith in different lifestyles. I had connected with one of the Amish couples before the presentation and then with the whole group afterwards. They were very warm, friendly and affirmed what I had shared.

This presentation was just the beginning. I ended up giving seven more presentations in Michigan about Anabaptists, and Amish in particular, from the end of March through November 2018. Most of these were arranged through the local libraries. What impressed me repeatedly is how positive the local people were about meeting the Amish and many of them were excited to have them as neighbors. In Matawan, Michigan, two young girls told me they think they will have Amish neighbors moving in and they could hardly wait to get to know them!

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**Beginnings & Endings**

*host & hostess*

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**THANK YOU!**

Fred Tillery | June—August

Rob & Rosie Claassen, Lawrence, Ks. | June 1-15

Rod & Roberta Hofer, Lawrence, Ks. | June 16-30

Dorcas Sommers, Hartville, Ohio | July

Larry & Maxine Miller, Macon, Miss. | August

“Grace, mercy and peace be to you from Jesus Christ our Lord.”

—II Timothy 1:2

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“In an attempt to save postage and paper, we invite you to consider receiving your Reunion newsletter via e-mail. Send your change request to info@mennohof.org
Here at Menno-Hof we have many treasures that have contributed to the effectiveness of our witness to those visiting our facility. Dedicated board members, staff, financial supporters and volunteers are some of these treasures. I want to say a few words about the volunteers.

Over the years I have had the pleasure and opportunity to work with volunteers in a variety of settings. None of my experiences have been more meaningful than here at Menno-Hof. As most of you know, we could not operate Menno-Hof without our volunteers. We understand that each of these individuals could choose any number of other locations to volunteer their time and it is difficult to fully express our appreciation and gratitude that they choose Menno-Hof. I am convinced that there is something very special about individuals who are willing to share their time and talents and then discipline themselves to follow through.

Menno-Hof tour volunteers are effective and reliable and make it possible for us to share the Anabaptist story with visitors six days per week. Others that volunteer assistance with facilities and grounds have taken their tasks serious and have significantly assisted in providing pleasant, safe, and interesting surroundings for our visitors. Our live-in volunteers participate in a variety of tasks that include tours, facilities and grounds. We are truly thankful and routinely thank God for them. (cont. below)

Menno-Hof cannot operate without volunteers! If you are willing to consider a role here, please contact us at 260-768-4117. Ruth Miller, daily operations manager, or myself will be glad to work with you to find a schedule that fits your availability and we will provide training to make you comfortable in the role. You do not need to be a historian!

We have presented the Anabaptist story to over one million visitors from all walks of life and from all over the world. Volunteering at Menno-Hof is one way to participate in the “Great Commission.” We continue praying for past, current and future Menno-Hof volunteers. Thank you to all of you!