



Menonite Journal

A different church

By Mahlon W. Shantz

"What is going on in this town?" the shop keeper pondered as he watched the man leave the store. "That is the third one this week." Shoplifting and petty stealing was known to happen and was accepted as a normal risk, but when people, who had not been caught, came in to pay for the things they had stolen, plus asking to be forgiven...that was news.

The same kind of unusual behaviour was reported all around town. Employers and overseers in industry were suddenly transformed from cruel slave-drivers into kind and considerate men. Women and children were treated with love and kindness instead of being beaten at the slightest provocation. Workers were co-operating and working productively instead of fighting.

Perhaps the most unusual behaviour was where people shared their possessions. When a man was known to voluntarily give some money to a poor neighbour who had suffered a serious loss...the world of 1525 A.D. was slowly turning upside down.

In the atmosphere of social and political unrest so prevalent in Europe at that time, the ruling class was very suspicious of any unusual patterns of behaviour. Their desperate effort to crush the Anabaptist movement could have been brought on as much by their fear of social revolution as their concern for correct theology.

There was also the factor of a conscience, like an accusing finger being pointed at the injustice and immorality of contemporary society which was unwilling to mend its ways, and had no alternative than to silence the voice.

To do this they had to stop the spread of this new movement, they called Anabaptism and

every legal and illegal means was tried without success.

Legislation was revised and new laws passed. The leaders were imprisoned and executed, properties were confiscated and whole families fled in every direction. Many died before they could escape but those who survived found secret friends in the various countries, east, north and west of Switzerland where many people had similar ideas about the Bible and what it contained.

Several things such as the recent translation of the Bible into the language of the people and the use of the printing press made the Bible available to the common people who were reading it for themselves.

Also some priests were reading the new translations and some were preaching sermons on personal religion that resembled the teachings of the Anabaptists.

Consequently when the persecuted Swiss Brethren refugees arrived in a town they were welcomed by sympathetic people, who were frequently ready to be taught more about the believer's church. In a few known incidents the local priest would lead his whole congregation in the step of faith and would accept adult believer's baptism with his people.

This kind of happening brought about the spread of the Anabaptist movement across Europe like a grass fire on a hot summer day and then in turn brought the pressure of persecution more firmly upon it. In desperation the Swiss authorities appointed a special corps of mounted soldiers, to exterminate them. They were hunted down systematically and executed in many cruel ways without any legal procedure.

The old proverb, "the blood of martyrs is the

seed of the church", proved to be true in the story of the Anabaptists when each new wave of public executions attracted many others to the "New Religion", who were in turn driven yet further into more countries where they laid the foundations for many of the Protestant denominations in Europe and North America today. Some crossed the English Channel to the British Isles and were the roots of Quakers, Baptists, Congregational and Methodists.

In Holland a converted priest named Menno Simons lived for 25 years with a price on his head, but was spared to die a natural death. His leadership was largely the reason that many scattered congregations finally were able to stabilize their system of faith and practice. He also left some written sermons and teaching of the Scriptures which was the main literature for the scattered people.

These churches were named after this leader as Mennonites and others from Switzerland and Alsace who later joined them in America also became identified with them.

In Austria a little band of several families stopped to rest while in flight during persecution. Someone suggested they pool their limited resources and laid a coat on the ground. Everybody responded by putting all their money and valuables on the coat. They were able to survive by the economics of communal living. Their leader's name was Jacob Hutter and their descendants, called "Hutterites", continue to maintain the practice today.

Before the end of the 16th century the surviving little communities of refugees had been driven into remote and barren lands where no

one else wanted to live. They lived in almost total isolation. They all became farmers, getting their living entirely from the land. The agricultural skills that made their descendants wealthy in Pennsylvania and Ontario were developed out of stark necessity in the hinterlands of Switzerland and Germany.

In this total isolation they educated their children, maintained their religious services of group singing and simple preaching from the Bible, but did not evangelistic promotion of their faith outside of their own families. They had become "the quiet of the land".

About 100 years later when Wm. Penn, a Quaker from England was looking for settlers to occupy his land in the American colonies, the word was spread in central Europe and many of these Mennonite families emigrated to America in search of a plot of ground and a country that would permit them to live according to their conscience and faith.

The story of hardship and privation, both in Pennsylvania, and a century later in Ontario, are quite well known.



Tribune advertising salesman Art Dixon is showing a tour group from Summitview Public School the modern off-set printing method of producing a newspaper. The 23 students, who visited in two groups, are involved in producing the Summitview Centennial News, a school elective program project. The youngsters spent considerable

time perusing the bound issues of The Tribune, looking for familiar names in last year's book and studying Stouffville's past in some of the old issues dating back to the 1930's and 40's. Students in this picture are, from left: George Preskourkas, Darren Stevens, Chris Garbutt, Brian Brown and Wayne Stevens.

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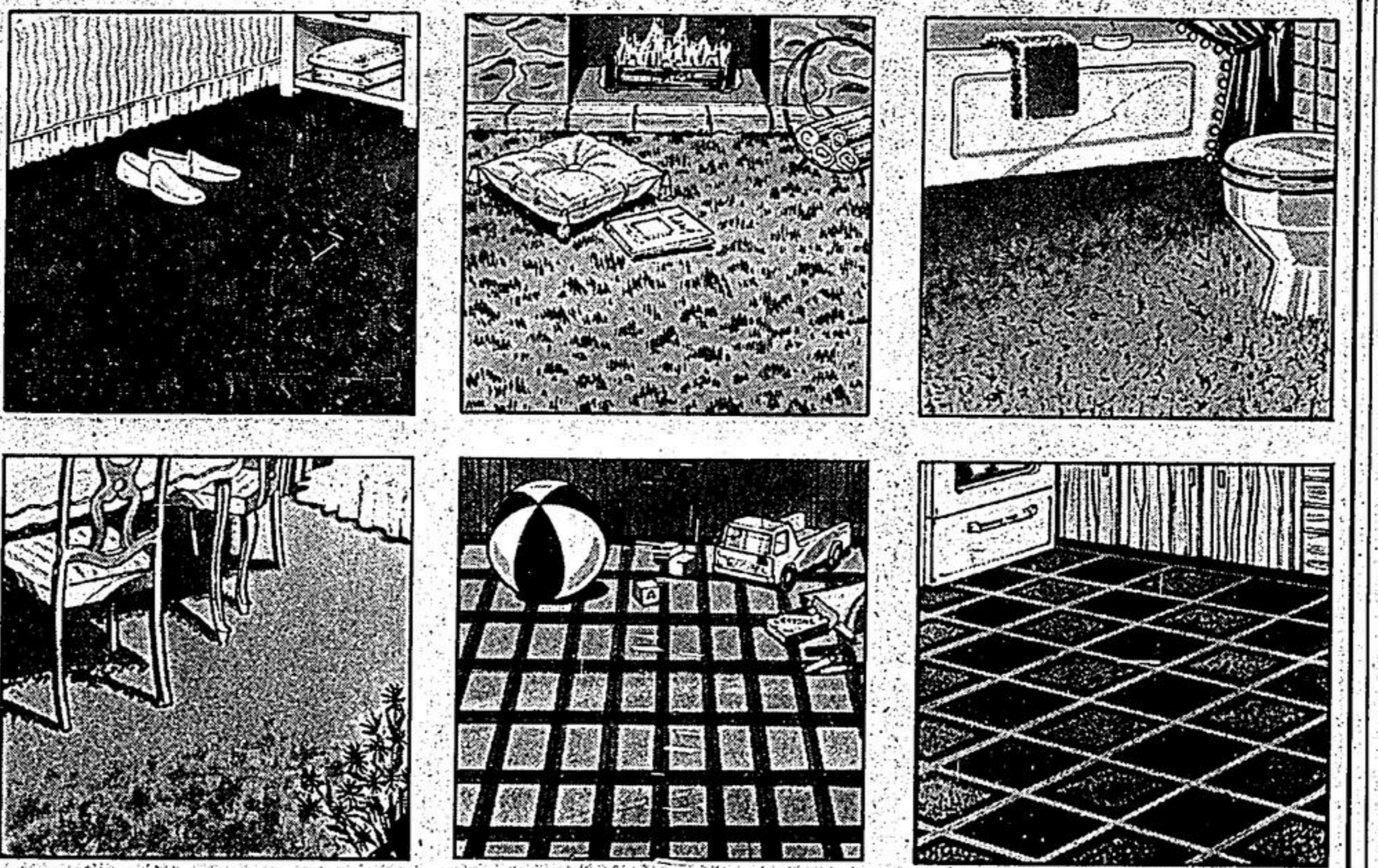
St. Patrick program features Irish singers

The annual St. Patrick's Night program of the Holy Free Methodist church will be held on Sunday evening March 13 at 7:00 p.m. The program this year features an Irish quartette from Guelph, Ontario, an Irish tenor from Thornhill, Ontario, and an Irish soprano from Belfast, now living in Toronto. Also we will have our usual introduction on the bagpipes by an Irish piper. The guest speaker will be the Reverend Frank McClelland from Tandragee, North Ireland, recently came to Canada.

Church Services

- MCCORMACK MEMORIAL CHURCH**
Highway 48 at Vivian
Rev. C.W. Sorley Pastor
9:45 a.m. — Morning Worship
11:00 a.m. — Sunday School
7:30 p.m. — Gospel Service
Tues. 7 p.m. — Pioneer Girls
Wed. 7 p.m. — Boys' Brigade
Thurs. 8 p.m. — New Life Hour
- GORMLEY MISSIONARY CHURCH**
Rev. Cecil Rosenberger
Pastor
Phone 887-5346
Sunday, Mar. 13
9:50 a.m. — Family Sunday School
11 a.m. — Morning Worship
7:30 p.m. — Led by the Youth
Wed. 7:30 p.m. — Family Night
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- CHRIST CHURCH ANGLICAN**
254 Sunset Boulevard
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Third Sunday in Lent
9:30 a.m. — Morning Prayer — Sermon: Rev. Edney — Church School
Wed. March 16th — 7:30 p.m. — Holy Communion
Wed. March 9 — 7:30 p.m. — Holy Communion — Rev. Edney — Film Strips & Discussion
Everyone Welcome
Rev. W.F. Edney
Rector, 297-1634, 640-1461
- SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 1977**
- 9:45 a.m. — Family Sunday School. Bus Service available.
11:00 a.m. — "Growing as a Christian"
7:00 p.m. — The Billy Graham film, "Time to Run" Special music by the Master's Touch Trio.
Wed. 7:00 p.m. — Pioneer Girls
7:30 p.m. — Prayer & Bible Study
Fri. 7:00 p.m. — Jr. High Youth
8:00 p.m. — Sr. Youth
"You're always welcome at the Missionary Church"
- ALTONA MISSIONARY CHURCH**
Pastor — V. Klauke
Sunday, Mar. 13th, 1977
10 a.m. — Sunday School
11 a.m. — Morning Worship
7:30 p.m. — Evening Service
Wed. — Prayer Meeting
8:00 p.m.
You are cordially invited to the Missionary Church
- ST. JAMES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
Rev. Ted Green
640-4195
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11 a.m. — Sunday School
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ST. CATHARINES 258 Ontario St. 515-1500
OTTAWA 1560 Merivale Rd. 515-1500
KITCHENER 1040 King E. 515-1500

THREE LOCATIONS IN MONTREAL

Women's church meeting displays fashion pageant

Around 210 United Church Women attended the Annual Meeting of York Presbyterial Women on Monday, Feb. 21, at Richmond Hill United Church. Jean Morely led the group in the music for the day, assisted by Lorraine Hutchinson at the piano. Marion Starr, retiring President of York Presbyterial, welcomed the assembly, stating the theme, "Challenges Unending".

The worship was led by the Thornhill U.C.W., who presented a meaningful pageant, entitled "A Fashion Show with a Difference." Eight gowns worn by Christian women were shown, depicting patience, kindness, humility, selflessness, joy, trust, and endurance and hope. Greetings were brought by Helen Kingsley, President of Richmond Hill United Church Women; Rev. Robert Shorten, minister of Richmond Hill United Church; Rev. Robert Ball, of Unionville, representing York Presbytery; and Andree Emms, Barrie, President of Toronto Conference Women.

A brief business period followed, after which May Richards introduced the guest speaker of the morning, Patricia Clarke, the associate editor of the United Church Observer.

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