



# Central District churches "Return to the Earth"



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In preparation for the Central District Conference's (CDC) annual meeting in June, participants were invited to study the *Return to the Earth* curriculum.

The mission of this MCC project is to support Native Americans in burying unidentifiable ancestral remains now scattered across the United States and to enable a process of education and reconciliation between Native and non-Native peoples.

Congregations were encouraged to complete the curriculum, which culminated in building cedar boxes needed to bury the repatriated remains of more than 100,000 Native peoples. Delegates from the participating congregations then brought the burial boxes to the annual meeting. In all, 40 boxes were donated from CDC congregations and dedicated during the Friday morning service.

The meeting was held in Sugarcreek, Ohio, which has a deep Native American history. "This project was a way to highlight the area in which we were holding our meeting," said Emma Hartman, CDC Administrator. "We had a very posi-



This wall hanging, made by Dorothy Schrock of First Mennonite Church in Sugarcreek, Ohio, showcases the *Return to the Earth* logo. The hanging was sold in a silent auction at the CDC annual meeting, raising an additional \$150 for the project. *Photo by Fred Steiner*

tive response to this project."

To learn more about the *Return to the Earth* project, visit [www.return2theearth.org](http://www.return2theearth.org)

## Lend a Hand: Material Resources

School kits are one of MCC's most requested items. While you're buying back-to-school supplies for your children, pick up some extras to share with children around the world. Visit [mcc.org/kits](http://mcc.org/kits)



Over 50 people from area congregations gathered at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana, for a "Comforter Blitz" for MCC. During the two days in May, the group knotted approximately 30 comforters that will be distributed around the world through MCC.

# A lasting legacy: the Shelley family

Giving was always a central part of life for the Shelley siblings of Arcanum, Ohio. And their generosity has continued, even years after their deaths.

Deo, Lloyd and Kathryn Shelley worked together for many years to farm the land they owned. From early on, their mother taught them the importance of tithing 10 percent and giving offerings on top of that.

This spirit of generosity permeated each of their lives. The Shelleys, none of whom married or had children, had a substantial amount of farmland, and made it a priority to donate a large portion of their earnings to their church, local organizations and mission work.

Lloyd, the oldest sibling, was the animal scientist and agronomist of the group. Deo, the middle child, was the farm machinery mechanic and operator, as well as the accountant for their farming business. And Kathryn, the youngest, took care of the cooking and keeping the house in order after she retired from teaching.

The Shelleys were always very private about their giving; believing in the rule that your right hand should never tell the left hand what it is giving. In fact, they each wrote their own donation checks and didn't discuss their giving amounts between one another.

"They use to say, 'we may not be able to leave the farm and go to the mission field, but we can help others who love the Lord,'" said Dale McNelly, who with his wife Joy was a friend of the Shelley family and helped farm their land.

The Shelleys lived simply. "If you went into their house, there would be no fancy things," said Dale. "The only picture on the wall in their kitchen was the portrait of a man praying."

In fact, the McNellys said, in their later years, the Shelleys were liv-

ing off only 20 percent of their income while donating 80 percent.

In 1983, the Shelley siblings sat down with Dale in a lawyer's office to lay out the arrangements for their estate. They wanted to be sure that their legacy of giving would continue even after their deaths.

Lloyd passed away in 1993, then Kathryn in early 1997 and Deo in August 1997. But their generosity continues to bear fruit today – benefitting the worldwide work of organizations, including MCC.


Although not Mennonites themselves, the Shelleys got connected to MCC through Lloyd's time of voluntary service during World War II, where he worked alongside conscientious objectors who were supported by MCC. Through his service time, he formed lifelong friendships with Mennonites and developed a passion for the work of MCC.

The Shelleys bequeathed all of their farmland estate and remaining cash assets to MCC and the Brethren in Christ Church, with instructions that the McNellys could rent the farmland for as long as they chose.

The McNellys, acting as local representatives for MCC and the Brethren in Christ Church, have sold off portions of the estate over the past six years. Last fall marked the fifth and final sale of the acreage the Shelleys left behind.

"It's been a blessing to us to see them spread their generosity," said Joy.

In all, 50 percent of the family's estate provided more than \$1 million for MCC's work around the

globe – a continuation of the giving that marked the family's life. 

**For more information about planned giving or giving to MCC through estate planning, go to [mcc.org/plannedgiving](http://mcc.org/plannedgiving) or request the MCC brochure, "Planned Giving and MCC: Envisioning a better world," from [mcstore.org](http://mcstore.org) or from the Great Lakes office.**



Deo (back), Lloyd (right) and Kathryn (front) Shelley modeled generosity throughout their lives and even after their deaths. The sale of their farm estate has provided more than \$1 million to MCC.

*Photo provided by Dale and Joy McNelly*



## MCC Bike Michiana: September 18-20, 2009

Join other bicycle enthusiasts of all skill levels for an enjoyable experience of pedaling the beautiful lake and farmland region of southern Michigan and northern Indiana. All proceeds will benefit MCC's Generations at Risk (HIV/AIDS) programs.

For more information, visit [mcc.org/greatlakes/events](http://mcc.org/greatlakes/events) or contact Claude Schrock at [ceschrock@mchsi.com](mailto:ceschrock@mchsi.com) or (260) 627-6342.

# Living the “slow life” in Bolivia

*Elisabeth and Ramont Harder Schrock are currently serving with MCC as Low German Mennonite Field Workers in southern Bolivia. Elisabeth is a member of First Mennonite Church in her hometown of Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Ramont grew up near Exeland, Wisconsin, and is a member of Exeland Mennonite Church. They attended Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana, while studying and working at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary from 2006 to 2008.*

Last year when I started a blog in anticipation of heading to Bolivia with MCC, I rather smugly described ourselves as “living a slow life.” We were trying to do so in our AMBS life—cooking food from scratch, keeping many evenings free to read magazines together on the couch, doing errands by bike or walking. We hoped this life could be continued and enriched in the Bolivian Chaco.

Well, ten months into our assignment, we find ourselves exceedingly impatient with our very slow life. As it turns out, we want it on our terms only: A flexible schedule to make colony and community visits, connect with local organizations, write reports and take breaks to drink terere. Tomatoes and herbs from our garden to cook meals with. Papayas, avocados and figs from our trees to eat fresh. Time and other resources to bake our own bread. Long evenings to read or just sit outside while the hot day cools off. All this we have, and give hearty thanks for daily.

But in our rural Bolivian reality, the slow life also brings with it some not-so-idyllic realities. We arrived at our assignment location a full six months after landing in the country. By that time we felt irritable, unmotivated and altogether quite useless. Our yard has remained a construction zone for the entire four months we’ve lived in Charagua—complete with a crew of workers seven days a week. We are now waiting for them to finish a resource center, which is to be a foundation for our extension work.

But worse than impatience from a work standpoint, the slow pace of construction seriously taxes our North American need for privacy. The other evening I came out of our shower room and straight into a group of colony Mennonite men hanging out with the workers. Then past our landlord’s daughter hanging out in front of our bedroom, trying her best to get a good glimpse of how these strange gringos live. Meanwhile Ramont talked at the gate with a friend passing by, and our visiting coworkers fielded a request from church ladies to donate money for an upcoming event. The slow life here,



Members of the Fehr family in Durango Colony, Bolivia, stand in front of their MCC-funded well pump and cistern. The children are holding *Das Blatt*, a popular children’s magazine also supported by MCC funds.

*Photo courtesy of Elisabeth and Ramont Harder Schrock*



Elisabeth and Ramont Harder Schrock, in Charagua, Bolivia, are learning many lessons in their MCC assignment.

*Photo courtesy of Elisabeth and Ramont Harder Schrock*

in our current state of mind, brings all together too much time for “fellowship.”

A major piece of our work is promoting water projects among Old Colony Mennonites. Colony life is, almost by definition, slow. Horse and buggies are for traveling, steel-wheel tractors for farming. Evening brings rest from the day’s work. Even for farm kids like us, it has been a wondrous experience to eat supper by kerosene lamp with a colony family, and then go outside to see the largest, starriest night I have ever seen—all before 7:00pm. But here, too, the slow life means a fair share of undesirable waiting around—waiting (and hoping) for a taxi from town to come out and bring a sick child to the clinic, waiting for news from distant relatives, waiting for rain.

Which brings me to a final reality of the slow life in Bolivia. Working with communities on development projects takes lots of time. We have begun conversations with a nearby Guaraní community about putting in a windmill pump and water tank that would link an existing well to an existing network of taps to each yard in the community. On one hand, we find it a bit odd that they seem content to wait indefinitely for water. They could, after all, have finished this crucial project earlier with biannual grant money from the local government. But on the other hand, they must also find it odd that we take so much time to consult with our directors, write a project plan, shuttle back and forth to have community meetings with them, check in with other stake holders, write numerous reports and so on.

Living the slow life means different things to different people. In the end, we’re learning that it also means waiting. Not just for the things we want to wait for, but for other people and realities as well. To live a rich slow life, with grace and hope, is our constant prayer. ☺

*- Elisabeth Harder Schrock*

Follow Elisabeth and Ramont throughout their MCC service assignment on their blog: [harderschrock.blogspot.com](http://harderschrock.blogspot.com)



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### Service Opportunities with MCC

Water Resources Worker - Brazil

Financial Administrator - Sudan

Peace Program Facilitator - Bangladesh

Teacher - Egypt

Home Ownership Facilitator - Florida

Contact *Mary Ann Weber*  
574-534-4133 or [mweber@mcc.org](mailto:mweber@mcc.org)

**[mcc.org/serve](http://mcc.org/serve)**



After reading online about MCC's work with material resources, Eleni Alevizos, a high school student in Morton Grove, Illinois, felt compelled to act.

Alevizos, who will be entering her senior year this fall, organized an event for her family and friends to gather as many newborns kits as possible.

From the materials collected, Alevizos has put together over 40 newborn kits, in addition to other clothing and monetary gifts.

*Photo by Roy Jiménez*

### Are you on Facebook?

Check out the Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes page for photos, events and more!

Don't miss new photos from the MCC booth at Mennonite Church USA convention in Columbus.

### Damascus Road Anti-Racism Analysis Training September 11-13, 2009, at Goshen College

The Damascus Road Anti-Racism Process is designed to equip participants with the theological, analytical, organizing and communication skills they will need to begin the process of antiracist transformation in their own institutions. This training helps articulate the Biblical call to anti-racist action and presents a common language for talking about racism.

Visit [greatlakes.mcc.org](http://greatlakes.mcc.org) or call the office at (574) 534-4133 for more information and to register for this event.

*New resource available from the Great Lakes library*

### From Harm to Hope: Standing with Cluster Bomb Survivors

Told in three parts, this remarkable story documents the movement to ban cluster bombs through the eyes of survivors, activists, MCC partners and staff. The DVD also contains other special features including a study guide, personal stories and short film clips.

*To borrow, contact the office at (574) 534-4133 or [jsteiner@mcc.org](mailto:jsteiner@mcc.org)*