

Retired and Happy

Fred Unruh

Student, 1962–1964

Our congregation, Lethbridge Mennonite Church, honoured our moving into retirement with joyful, teasing, affirming retirement party. My retirement was facilitated by signing a Covenant of Separation between myself and our congregation because we wished to stay with the congregation I had served. The Covenant clearly defined I would not be available for pastoral functions like weddings, funerals, or pastoral care. It provided freedom for myself and our new pastor.

At our pastor's request a "preaching team" asks a member to preach once a month, to give our pastor a break. I will be preaching 3-4 times a year, and sometimes serve as worship leader.

A few years after my retirement we were invited to partner with the Springridge Mennonite Church near Pincher Creek, Alberta, while their pastor and family spent a year at AMBS. Our morning drive through beautiful hill country renewed our rural roots. I would teach Sunday School, preach, and then we enjoyed a sumptuous country dinner with friends. Our travel costs were paid for our eleven month voluntary service term as an interim preacher.

We enjoy a variety of activities. I am "Mr. Fix-it" for our Ten Thousand Villages store. Virleen assists at the MCC Thrift Store. I enjoy making things for the Alberta MCC Relief Sale. We look after our neighbours' homes when they are on holidays. On Tuesday mornings "Menno Pause", a group of retired Menno men meet for coffee. We keep in touch with our family.

We are grateful our employers (GCMC and congregations) contributed to our denomination's pension programs. Canadian health care has been wonderful to us. The hobbies and interests we developed earlier offer activities and friendships we continue to enjoy.

Biography Notes prepared for Faith Mennonite Church - Fred Unruh
1/2/2008

Fred and Virleen Unruh were a part of the earliest dreams and formation of Faith Mennonite Church. They became charter members when the congregation was officially formed and remained active members till their move to Canada in 1969.

Fred grew up in the rural Goessel community. Taber Mennonite Church was his home church. Fred is married to Virleen Goering. Virleen's family lived near Pretty Prairie and were members of the Pretty Prairie Mennonite Church.

Fred is a graduate of Bethel College. During the Korean War Fred did alternative peace service with Mennonite Central Committee in Paraguay, South America. In the early 1960s Fred and Virleen were granted a two year study leave at **Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary** in Elkhart, Indiana.

Fred's service to the Mennonite Church included working with the Board of Christian Service in the General Conference Mennonite Church directing Mennonite Voluntary Service and as executive secretary. He also served as an elected member of the Commission on Education.

Fred & Virleen are the parents of four children and grandparents to seven grandchildren. In 1969 Fred and Virleen and four young children, moved to Canada to begin pastoral ministry. Five congregations in Canada have known Fred as their pastor: Grace Mennonite, Regina Saskatchewan; Grace Mennonite in St. Catharines, Ontario; Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Lethbridge Mennonite, Lethbridge; and Springridge Mennonite (interim pastor) in Pincher Creek, Alberta. The Unruhs are actively involved in Lethbridge Mennonite Church in southern Alberta.

Fred has been a veteran-contributing writer for the Adult Teacher and columns on worship in the former Builder magazine.

Unruh is know as "Mr. Fix-it" at the Ten Thousand Villages Store in Lethbridge. Others know him as the artisan of Grandpa's Rocking Horses. His wood working hobby has provided many hours of relaxation and a variety of wood products for MCC Relief Sales, including a customized senior's scooter in 2007.

On visits to Kansas the Unruhs have often come to Faith Mennonite to worship with their old friends here and celebrate God's blessings.