Before Eden: The Evangelical Mennonite Conference and the Founding of a Mental Health Facility

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Within a few years of the end of the Second World War, Mennonites in the United States had laid the groundwork for three mental health centers in their home territories from East to West.[1] Their own impetus came from observing the Bethesda mental health institute in Vineland, Ontario and from the experience of Mennonite conscientious objectors who served in Civilian Public Service during the war. The mental health centres in the United States were sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) through its Mennonite Mental Health Services (MMHS) agency. Ten years after these events, a similar initiative was taken in western Canada which culminated in the establishment of Eden Mental Health Centre (EMHC), in Winkler, Manitoba. This centre then evolved into the present-day Eden Health Care Services (EHCS), the only Mennonite mental health organization of its kind in Canada.[2]

Although there are many parallels between the American and Canadian mental health stories, several characteristics of the latter

are distinctive. Eden did not arise directly from the vision of Canadian conscientious objectors: there was a ten-year time gap from the time of demobilization to the inception of the pre-Eden planning and, and fewer COs served in mental hospitals in Canada than in the United States. Another major difference was that in Canada leadership did not come from a single national Mennonite institution such as MCC; the beginning steps were taken by a small, relatively inexperienced and regionally-specific group, the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC). Eden then grew into reality through the cooperative work of a diverse spectrum of larger and smaller Mennonite groups, with none of them gaining exclusive control of the institution.

Gerhard John Ens completed an excellent history of Eden in 1983 but he did not focus on early beginnings and did not mention earlier Canadian initiatives and how they may have affected the beginnings of Eden.[3] This paper is an attempt to fill in these gaps to some extent and builds on research commenced by Charles Loewen.[4] Our aim is to understand the birth of Eden in the context of mid-twentieth century Mennonite society in Manitoba. The EMC was and is a relatively small fraction of that society, but for some reason it took on leadership in the early genesis of Eden. We will show how the other parts of the Mennonite family came together around this initiative to develop a unique institution that was to fulfill a long-held vision for the treatment of mental illness within the community.

The EMC in Canada was known as the Kleine Gemeinde until 1952, when it was incorporated with its new name.[5] It originated in the Molotschna Colony in Southern Russia (today Ukraine) in 1812, when minister Klaas Reimer (1770-1837) led a small group of reformers out of the main-line Mennonite Church in order to forge a separate spiritual identity. The group remained a small minority (hence its mildly pejorative nick-name), emphasizing spiritual renewal, non-violence, separation from the 'world', simplicity of life, and firm church discipline.[6] The Kleine Gemeinde emigrated *en masse* in 1874 when they settled in both Manitoba and Nebraska; the group choosing Manitoba settled in farming villages in southeastern Manitoba near Steinbach, and south-central Manitoba, at Rosenort, a few miles north-west of Morris.[7]

On a number of occasions the early Kleine Gemeinde in Russia became an advocate for those who were mistreated in the course of colony life as power structures arose in civil administration and in the church.[8] They stood up for servants who were beaten and for mentally challenged heirs who were cheated of their inheritance by their own siblings. They disciplined fathers with errant sons and daughters and were quite capable of disciplining even the ministers in their business dealings with others. Their eschewal of all physical violence

meant that all church discipline stopped with the usual temporary excommunication and shunning. Little is known about how the Kleine Gemeinde treated those with mental illness, but diaries indicate they cared for those suffering from mental illness within their families. No institutions for the mentally ill existed in the Mennonite colonies in Russia until 1911, when Bethania Mental Hospital was established in the Chortitza colony.[9]

In Manitoba most of the mentally ill were kept within the home, but occasionally acute cases were dealt with by reluctant committal to government institutions. These were drastic measures as Brandon was geographically far from the Mennonite settlements and spiritually even farther from the Gemeinde. From 1871 to 1877, mentally ill patients in Manitoba were housed together with prisoners at Lower Fort Garry, a military outpost,[10] after which they were transferred to the new federal penitentiary at Stony Mountain. While no extant record suggests Mennonites used these early facilities, records do indicate the use of the Manitoba Asylum built in Selkirk in 1886 and another such facility that was opened in Brandon in 1891. These two sites were used for all mental patients from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta until about 1914, and remained the only treatment centers for Manitobans until recent times. It is small wonder that Mennonites dreaded these overcrowded and highly institutionalized places. Nevertheless, the occasional Kleine Gemeinde patient was to be found there. Abram, the son of Minister Henry R. Reimer, died in Brandon in 1942 after seventeen years of residence there.[11] One nephew of Kleine Gemeinde *Ältester* David P. Reimer spent many years in Selkirk but was transferred to Eden when it opened in 1967.[12]

The inception of the pre-Eden project in 1955 has been inadequately documented. Most Mennonites in southern Manitoba believe that it was started by *Ältester* Jacob M. Pauls (1903-1961) in Winkler in the late 1950s, just before he died.[13] Pauls, one of the *Ältesten* of the Bergthaler Gemeinde in Manitoba from 1950 until his death, certainly played a crucial initiating role as the chair of the first study committee established at an inter-Mennonite meeting in Morris on May 11, 1957. But he had been recruited to the cause by a delegation of EMC ministers and deacons.[14]

The EMC Ministerial had been working on the project for more than a year by that time.[15] They chose to visit Pauls in their attempt to broaden their scope because he was well known in EMC circles,[16] and because he was one of the leaders of the Bergthaler Gemeinde, a large and predominantly Kanadier[17] group associated with the General Conference of Mennonites. Because the EMC was based only in southeastern Manitoba and near Morris, it was necessary to make overtures to the much larger so-called "West Reserve" in south-central

Manitoba around Winkler. Pauls' involvement could bring much of the West Reserve into the project, especially because he was the chair of the newly-built Salem Home in Winkler, an inter-Mennonite effort representing the near-complete spectrum of West Reserve Mennonite congregations. The choice of J.M. Pauls was an inspired move by the EMC, although it did relegate the EMC pioneers to less visible roles. The EMC did, however, retain positions within most subsequent Eden committees and boards well into the modern era.[18]

According to Archie Penner (1917-2007), a Steinbach EMC pastor, it all began with a discussion at a meeting of the EMC Executive sometime early in 1955.[19] When the full ministerial met at Rosenhof near Morris on April 2, 1955, *Ältester* David P. Reimer (1894-1963) introduced the topic with the words: "ob es an der Zeit sei daran zu denken eine Anstalt zu bauen wo wir unsere Geistes Kranken unterbringen duerften…" ("whether it is time to think of building an institution where we can take care of our mentally ill.").[20] The assembly agreed and forthwith a committee of three was elected to carry this project forward: John P. Loewen (1921-2006), the grade-school educated pastor of the large rural Blumenort EMC congregation and Peter J. B. Reimer (1902-1988), minister and public school teacher, and Archie Penner, theologically educated pastor, both of the large Steinbach congregation. Loewen was prominent in the EMC and himself struggled with severe depression from time to time; Reimer was an activist and a prolific writer who immediately went to work to spread the word to the Manitoba Mennonite community. Penner was the theorist who was invited to present the theological basis for the project to the annual meeting of the Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee (CMRC) in 1956. EMC deacons George S. Fast (1901-1993) and Bernhard (Ben) L. Kroeker (b. 1926) led EMC involvement in the project after the departure of Archie Penner in 1960 and P.J.B. Reimer in 1961.[21]

Thus began the first stage of pre-Eden history in April 1955 to May 1957, during which the EMC carried the initiative alone. The committee that had been elected went to work with a will, and within a few months it had gained support within the EMC itself and had made overtures to MCC (Akron, Pennsylvania) which resulted in a promise of moral support; it had also consulted with the Bethesda Home in Vineland, approached the CMRC and had gained access to the agenda of their annual meeting in 1956. So it had spread the word widely. A number of other congregations and conferences were contacted and much interest in the project was expressed by them. All of this was very encouraging, but strangely it was followed by a lull in 1956 during which little was done.[22] Most notably, no effort was made to contact government. The EMC was probably too reticent to approach

the government on its own and realized that much more Mennonite support would be needed. For a time they considered proceeding independently with a very modest project, but the great need encouraged them to be bolder. It was this that prompted the trip to Winkler to see Bishop Pauls in 1956, and the will to call an inter-Mennonite meeting in the Rosenhof EMC Church on May 11, 1957. By May 23, 1957, the Executive of the new inter-Mennonite study committee had had its first meetings with government officials. They met with Robert Bend, Minister of Health in Manitoba's Liberal government, on May 23, 1957, who showed interest but requested more information about other Mennonite mental institutions.[23] In the fall of 1957, shortly after the July visits to Prairie View in Kansas and Bethesda in Ontario, the committee reported back to Minister Bend, who received them in the presence of Manitoba's Chief Psychiatrist Dr. Pincock. The officials showed great familiarity with the issues and even disclosed that there were 111 Mennonite patients in mental hospitals across Canada at that time, but no commitments were made.[24] P.J.B. Reimer, secretary of the inter-Mennonite study committee, submitted report after report to all the Mennonite periodicals and the community papers read in southern Manitoba, particularly after each of the three crucial delegate meetings in 1957.[25] Archie Penner was the main speaker at the Oct. 12th delegate meeting and cited the example of the early Anabaptists, who emphasized repentance and conversion but also thought it very important to meet social needs (sociale Verflichtung) as a sign of true faith.[26]

What influenced the EMC Ministerial and it leader, David Reimer, to take up this cause? One answer is given in the minutes of the April 2nd meeting: "the treatment of patients in the government institutions is often un-Christian and even brutal."[27] The motivation was, above all, compassion. This had also been the main motivating factor in the activities of the MMHS in the US.

Although the leaders of the EMC showed a tender heart for those struggling with mental illness, it might be argued nevertheless that the rigorous application of the ban consisting of excommunication and punitive shunning that occurred regularly in the Kleine Gemeinde from its inception in 1812 into the 1960s in Canada, was particularly harmful to the mental health of the community. Accordingly, the Kleine Gemeinde could be accused of causing much mental anguish. The ministerial diary of Rev. Johann Dueck (1801-1866)[28] is chilling as it recounts the almost mechanical expulsions from the fellowship from week to week (although the tone may be merely an artefact reflecting the exigencies of diary writing). Most of those banned were re-accepted by the congregation a short time later. Some wrote letters of resignation and presumably joined other churches in the Mennonite

commonwealth. The "revolving door" of church discipline may thus reflect either that excommunication was relatively painless or else that it was so painful that most "victims" were brought to real repentance and humility in short order, with the more mentally resolute going their own way. The general mental health of the Kleine Gemeinde in Russia and Canada is in need of more study, particularly with regard to the severity of church discipline.

How had the EMC conscience been touched by the plight of the mentally ill in the two government institutions, Selkirk and Brandon? EMC perception of the level of care in the state hospitals was accurate. Jac. K. Schroeder's account of his time as a CO at Selkirk certainly supports this, with his vivid descriptions of the force-feeding of patients in straight jackets.[29] Abe Loewen has also told of how he had to feed such patients the same porridge again and again in spite of it being vomited back again and again.[30] COs also report that they observed much compassionate care, and that their participation in forceful restraint was necessary in the absence of methods and drugs that would be used today.

But was the war-time experience of COs in mental hospitals a precipitating cause for mental health institution-building, as it was in the United States? There are many reasons for thinking that it was much less important in Canada than it was in the States. In the case of the Kanadier Mennonites, such as the Kleine Gemeinde, the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman) and the Bergthaler, relatively few of their "boys" had to serve in work camps or in hospitals; most were home on the farm, paying a large fraction of their "wages" to the Red Cross. Only 14 or 15 COs served at Selkirk, and somewhat more in Brandon.[31] None of those serving in Selkirk belonged to the Kleine Gemeinde or the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite. A number of them, however, were Bergthaler. Jac. K. Schroeder writes of how he vowed to do something for the Mennonite mentally ill after the war, but for at least ten years after the war nothing was done, although the experience of many of the demobilized COs served to raise the consciousness of the Mennonite community toward the treatment of the mentally ill in a general way.

David P. Reimer, in spite of being the secretary of the *Ältestenrat*[32] during the war and being constantly preoccupied with the administration of the CO situation as well as being a CO camp chaplain, never seems to have visited the COs in Selkirk, according to the recollections of three surviving COs who were there for the whole 2.5 years.[33] Rev. Peter D. Friesen, the Steinbach EMC pastor, did visit the unit in Selkirk, probably to see some of his Evangelical Mennonite Brethren (EMB) or Emmanuel Mennonite Mission Church relatives. Rev. Peter Loewen, Bergthaler pastor in Steinbach, visited more than once to see

the unit and to visit his son Abe; and David Schultz, the senior *Ältester* of the Bergthaler, also visited. It is, however, very likely that David P. Reimer visited his nephew, who was a patient in Selkirk at that time, and thus Reimer must have seen the conditions there. This nephew was transferred to Eden when it opened and recovered to the extent that he was able to spend his last few years at home. Unfortunately, Reimer did not live long enough to see the benefits of his early initiative for his own relative.

Assignment to a mental hospital was considered an undesirable and perhaps dangerous placement and ministerial visits seem to have been rare and not always appreciated. None of the Selkirk COs are listed in A.J. Klassen's long list of COs.[34] In the United States, men such as Henry Fast and Elmer Ediger went directly from CPS into the mental health initiative. This did not happen in Canada. In David P. Reimer's collection of *Ältestenrat* minutes, published after the war, there is only one general reference to service in mental hospitals.[35] Thus, it seems that the war-time experience of Mennonites in mental hospitals played only a minor and indirect role in fathering the EMC initiative in 1955.

Why the EMC, and why 1955? About this time, the EMC was in the throes of what has been called "the Great Disjuncture."[36] The epicentre of this ecclesiastic and economic crisis was the EMC church in Steinbach. Before the crisis it tried to resist the coming of modernity with sanctions consistent with its separatist legacy. Innovations in business, farming, social norms, and religious practice were often discouraged. Radios and musical instruments were not allowed. It was a losing battle for the church as the congregation fractured again and again, with progressives forming their own congregations or joining non-traditional movements, and conservatives choosing to leave. Steinbach businessmen and some farmers, although still faithful EMC members in many cases, enthusiastically entered the modern world of commerce in spite of opposition from Church leadership. Finally, in the 1950s, the Steinbach EMC abandoned much of its anti-modern stance and it was not long before the entire Conference followed suit.

As the EMC emerged from this time of upheaval it had gained a new confidence through its own incorporation, and through some experience of inter-Mennonite cooperation during the war and through participation in the CMRC from its inception in 1940. The leaders who were prominent in the establishment of the pre-Eden initiative were largely the same ones who were active in the establishment of the EMC and its new missions effort: namely, the founding of the Western Gospel Mission (1946), the *Altenheim* (Resthaven) in Steinbach (1946), Eventide Home in Rosenort (1960), the Steinbach Bible Institute (the EMC joined in 1961), the Red Rock Lake Bible Camp (1946), the first urban EMC church in Winnipeg (1951), and *The Messenger*, the

English language Conference periodical (1963). This rush of institution building and expansion was entirely without government support and in that sense it paralleled the entrepreneurial spirit so evident in business and farming at that time. The Eden initiative flowed from this energy and would be the first major initiative that would propel the EMC into the larger Mennonite world and into the possibility of cooperation with government. Eden was to benefit from this coming of age.

But one other thread was of major importance for the EMC initiative, and that was contact with MCC (Akron) and the Canada MCC office in Waterloo, Ontario. MCC's interest in establishing mental hospitals in the United States through its MMHC *was* born of the wartime CO experience of its young men and women. So indirectly, at least, the CO experience did impact the Canadian initiative through MCC.

MCC (Akron) was related to Manitoba Mennonites largely through the CMRC, a Kanadier organization. A hypothesis which needs further study is that MCC (Akron) was more comfortable with Kanadier Mennonites than with the Russländer because there was lingering resentment among Canadian Russländer toward MCC and American Mennonites for their failure to cooperate with the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and with David Toews at the time of immigration; and their further failure, in the eyes of B.B. Janz, to aid the Paraguayan refugees sufficiently.[37] This coolness, however, between MCC (Akron) and the Russländer may have been confined to leadership circles, for certainly the memory of MCC help during the famine in Russia in the early twenties would never be forgotten.

An offshoot of the war-time experience in mental hospitals was the MCC program of summer voluntary service in chronic-care hospitals by students and other young people. This was initiated very shortly after the war and in 1948 David (Doc) Schroeder was put in charge. He had served in the St. Boniface Hospital as a CO during the war. Harvey Toews and Hedy Sawadsky at the MCC office in Waterloo led this program into the 1960s: it involved hundreds of young people, and was especially active in Manitoba. It was a national program involving both Russländer and Kanadier young people. The Kleine Gemeinde reluctantly gave permission for its young people to participate, but very few participated.[38] In 1958, when the pre-Eden initiative was well on its way, twenty-year old Harold Dyck from Winkler, who had been in the Summer Voluntary Service (VS) program, was asked to comment on the initiative; his careful and enthusiastic response was translated into German and published in the *Mennonitische Rundschau*.[39] Waldemar Janzen, a participant and a leader in this ministry, wrote a major series on mental illness in *Der Bote* in 1957.[40] He went on to teach a course on

mental hygiene at Canadian Mennonite Bible College for a number of years. It is hard to assess the importance of this ministry for the 1955 initiative but it involved a number of EMC young people.

Although the Manitoba initiative started out in a Kanadier setting, it did not long stay that way. Without the support of the Russländer in the General Conference and the Mennonite Brethren Conference the project would have been doomed. J.M. Pauls himself was a Russländer, but according to his son J.F. Pauls he was often taken for a Kanadier.[41] The new Kanadier beginning led to a fortunate opportunity for the two communities to work together.[42] Perhaps this cooperation helped to heal the wounds created by their failure to work together on the CO matter during the war. David P. Reimer and others kept the *Ältestenrat* structure alive after the war and by 1950 it had been expanded to include the Russländer. The initiative that took Reimer and others to Ottawa in 1951with a message for the Prime Minister, Louis St. Laurent, came from all Manitoba Mennonites. Canada was at war again[43] and the Mennonites were worried. The message to the Prime Minister condemned war but stated that "We stand ready to serve our country and fellowmen in relief work at home and abroad or to engage in work of national importance such as service in hospitals, mental institutions, industry and agriculture under civilian administration."[44]

The Russländer relief committees of Western Canada were quick to respond to the EMC initiative and their participation was welcomed. J.J. Thiessen, Chair of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, was the invited speaker at the annual meeting of the CMRC in January of 1957 and spoke about the urgent need for a mental hospital in the West; apparently he knew about the EMC initiative ahead of time.[45] In November of the same year, only six months after the project had became an inter-Mennonite effort, the annual meeting of Hilfswerk der Mennoniten Manitoba, an aggregation of largely Russländer institutions, passed a resolution to support the establishment of a Nervenheilanstalt.[46] They acknowledged that "the Kleinegemeinde (sic) has taken the initiative and has established a society whose job it is to accomplish the project." The Russländer communities felt the urgency of the cause because they were partly financially responsible for the support of their patients in government hospitals, on pain of deportation.[47] In 1955 this amounted to 75% of the total cost. The Colonization Board had set up a fund for such a purpose and levied the churches at the rate of five cents per adult member (16 – 60 years of age) per year. With the arrival of a new group of traumatized refugees after the war, the demands on this fund increased. In 1955 the keeper of the fund in Manitoba, Jacob Wall, Culross, reported that the fund was short by about $1,500 for the year because of a dramatic increase in patients, from 8 to 17 in two years.[48]

Although the pre-Eden initiative was born within Kanadier institutions such as the EMC, the Bergthaler, and the CMRC, it was actually a long-standing dream fulfilled for the Russländer, who were well represented in all the Mennonite communities of Manitoba, and especially in Winnipeg. The Russländer community in Manitoba had mounted several mental health initiatives long before the war, although none of them survived much beyond the war. The oldest thread started in Russia with Bethania at Alt Kronsweide in Chortiza[49] and reemerged in Vineland, Ontario as Bethesda Home, through the work of the Wiebes.[50] This institution became somewhat of an exemplar for the MMHS in the United States[51] and also for Eden in Manitoba. On his way back from the world conference in Karlsruhe in 1957, J. M. Pauls spent a day in Vineland to see what he could learn for the Manitoba initiative. David P. Reimer visited Bethesda in 1958.[52]

The Bethania thread also links to the Vogt hospital in Steinbach, Manitoba in the late 1920s, where Maria Vogt, who had worked at Bethania, re-established herself in her brother Abram's small institution there.[53] At first the hospital was mainly a birthing centre, but when Steinbach built its own Bethesda Hospital in 1937, the Vogts were left with a residue of patients, some of whom were mentally ill. At that point, the primary purpose of the hospital was to serve the "geistig Invaliden" and the "harmlose Geisteskranken", that is, the mentally handicapped and epileptics.[54] According to Margaret Kroeker, daughter of Abram Vogt, whose family lived near the facility, many of the patients were not entirely predictable: at least one was prone to run out of the home without any clothes on.

In 1946 Abram Vogt moved the remaining 14 patients (two of them clearly mentally ill)[55] to the newly created Bethania in Winnipeg and sold his facility on Hanover Street in Steinbach to the Kleine Gemeinde, who used it as an Altenheim or an Invalidenheim. It evolved into the Resthaven senior citizens complex and concerned itself largely with geriatric care, although the mentally ill were sometimes (reluctantly) accommodated.[56] It is possible that the experience gained by the Kleine Gemeinde by its venture into health care work played a role in its concern for mental sufferers and led to the 1955 initiative.

Abram Vogt was a member of the Mennonite Benevolent Society (Wohltätigkeitsverein), a group of Russländer individuals who created Bethania in 1945-46, and who would go on to many other service projects in Winnipeg. It is perhaps unfortunate that Bethania, although founded as a home for the aged and infirm but which was established with the expectation that it would also serve the same kind of people who had been served by Bethania in Russia, very soon lost this vision and became primarily a nursing home. Their first location at Parkdale, north of Winnipeg on the Red River, was found by Gerhard Martens,

who was motivated by the hope of helping his mentally ill sister-in-law.[57] An attempted revival of this role in 1989, when a Special Care Unit was created, was short-lived.

Another major project aimed at establishing a mental home near Winnipeg died when Bethania was founded. In 1933 David Toews, chair of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, drew attention to the urgent need to help those with mental illness.[58] Less than a year later, when the Wohltätigkeitskomitee of the Colonization Board was set up, its main agenda was to establish such an institution.[59] Men such as Franz C. Thiessen, C.A. De Fehr, C.F. Klassen, J. P. Bueckert, and B.B. Janz worked tirelessly for ten years to promote the idea within the General Conference and Mennonite Brethren Conference and had gained much support in terms of Conference backing and some funding by the end of the war.[60] But nothing came of it, likely because the committee thought that the Bethania initiative was pre-empting their plans. Bethesda Home in Vineland also had a presence in the West, and their activities there could be seen as a third initiative in mental health at the time. One writer to *Der Bote* from Gretna complained that the three simultaneous initiatives were confounding the cause.[61]

So, for the Russländer the end of the war coincided with the exhaustion of attempts to establish an institution exclusively for the mentally ill in Manitoba. The CO experience did nothing to revive these hopes. It is to the great credit of the Russländer community that a dozen years later, when the EMC initiative was broadened into an inter-Mennonite effort, they welcomed it and provided the unstinting encouragement, support, and expertise that made Eden possible.

The EMC and other Kanadier groups such as the CMRC had not been party to these pre-war developments. This allowed a fresh beginning based on brash optimism about what could be done by determined but somewhat unknowing leaders. The EMC at the time was casting off its cocoon of separatism and anti-modernity and in the process was emboldened to finally do something concrete for the mentally ill, even if it meant cooperating with government. On the way toward this end, which would have been seen as a dangerous compromise by the traditional Kleine Gemeinde, it was necessary to engage with other Mennonite groups in all their diversity of thought and practice. The recent war had brought the Kanadier groups together but now it was crucial that both Kanadier and Russländer work together in harmony. To attract government funding for the building of EMHC in Winkler, Mennonites were required to raise 25% of the approximately $700,000 capital cost of the building.[62] In the early 1960s this was a large amount, and all of it would have to be raised by per member levies in the churches. Full cooperation by all Manitoba Mennonites was essential, and it was achieved.

Compassion for the mentally ill was the ultimate cause of the creation of Eden. A common expression found in many Mennonite writings is that mental sufferers are the 'poorest of the poor." The move from compassion to active help for recovery, however, is beset by the stigma of mental illness and by the difficulty of getting the resources needed. It is extremely rare that non-governmental mental health projects are properly funded and that they survive and grow. The Mennonite mental health centers in the United States, and Eden and Bethesda in Canada, were rare exceptions.

EHCS in now an organization serving a broad spectrum of mental health needs in Manitoba: acute care, housing, job training, counselling, and education. It is primarily a servant of the Church, but it also serves society in general and works closely with government. The groundwork was laid some fifty years ago "before Eden".

Notes

*We wish to express sincere thanks to EHCS for access to archival materials, and to staff at the EMC Archives, the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, and the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies for research help.

1 Vernon H. Neufeld, "Mennonite Mental Health Services," *If We Can Love: The Mennonite Mental Health Story*, ed. Vernon H. Neufeld (MMHS,1983), 31-54.

2 The name "Eden Mental Health Centre" was made official in the 1964 Manitoba Statute incorporating the Centre. (*An Act to incorporate Eden Mental Health Centre*, Ch. 84, Annual Statutes of Manitoba, 1964, Bill 88, passed April 16, 1964). The name had been settled in 1963 after government negotiators rejected "Mennonite Sanitarium of Manitoba". It seems to have been chosen after Aug, 1963 either by Chairman J.K. Klassen or Executive Secretary J.J. Wall from a list including names such as Good Samaritan, Galilian (sic), Bethany Bethel, Olivet, Philadelphia, Hebron, and Eden. (Aug. 13, 1963 letter from J.K. Klassen to J.J. Wall, referenced in Rudy A. Regehr's compilation of events leading to the founding of EMHC, Eden Archives). When asked to explain the choice of name, Klassen said that "It is to be a place of rest, peace and restoration" (Minutes, Eden General Meeting at the Winkler M.B. Church, July 25, 1964). EHCS was incorporated in 1988.

3 Gerhard John Ens, "Eden," *If We Can Love: The Mennonite Mental Health Story*, ed. Vernon H. Neufeld (MMHS, 1983), 207-225.

4 Charles Loewen, "The Inception of Eden Mental Health Centre in Manitoba," (Term paper in History 3001-002, University of Winnipeg: Unpublished, 2010).

5 David P. Reimer, "Die Enstehung und Geschichte der Evangelischen Mennoniten Gemeinde (Kleine Gemeinde)," *The Sesquicentennial Jubilee Evangelical Mennonite Conference 1812-1962* (EMC, 1962), 89-100. Although the authorship of this article is not given, it is clear from the preface that that Reimer had finished most of it by the time he died in 1962.

6 Delbert F. Plett, Saints and Sinners: *The Kleine Gemeinde in Imperial Russia 1812 to 1875*, (Steinbach: Crossway Publications, 1999), 62-88.

7 The Morris River was then known as the Scratching River.

8 Harvey Plett, *Seeking to be Faithful*, (EMC: Steinbach, 1996) 25, 40-2, 53.

9   "Bethania", *The Christian Leader*, Dec. 1, 1948, 1.

10   "Milestones: A History of Selkirk Mental Health Centre." Government of Manitoba, www.gov.mb.ca/health/smhc/history.html.

11   *Home News*, May 1, 1943, 6 (*Home News* compilation, Albert Barkman: 1998, 42).

12   Sara Reimer (daughter of D.P. Reimer), personal communication.

13   This view was reinforced by local media (e.g. *The Pembina Triangle Progress*, June 7, 1967).

14   P.J.B. Reimer, "Eden Mental Health Centre Opens," *The Messenger*, June 23, 1967, 8. The delegation consisted of G.S. Fast, P.J.B.Riemer, David K. Schellenberg, Henry Klassen, and C.P. Unger. Ens maintains that Pauls was contacted after the CMRC Meeting of Jan. 19, 1957, but other sources such as the above say this meeting occurred in 1956. P.J.B. Reimer claims that the five ministers and deacons above were the members of the EMC Nervenheilanstalt study committee at the time. No record of their election to the committee exists in the EMC Ministerial minutes before this time except for Reimer. G.S. Fast was added to the committee in 1961. Reimer does not mention Archie Penner and John P. Loewen, who were clearly still in the committee. Loewen was, in fact, placed on the Finance Committee on July 2, 1957.

15   Dave Schellenberg, "Eden History," *The Messenger*, Aug. 15, 2007, 3.

16   He had been a guest of the EMC ministerial in 1951 when fundraising for Mennonite Collegiate Institute. EMC Ministerial minutes, Apr. 7, 1951.

17   "Kanadier" are Mennonites descended from the immigrants who arrived in Canada in the 1870s while "Russländer" are those who immigrated from Ukraine and Russia in 1923 and later.

18   Most prominent after 1961 were George S. Fast, Ben L. Kroeker, Ed Wiebe, C.P. Unger, and Dr. Gerry Doerksen.

19   Archie Penner, "The Evangelical Mennonite Conference and the beginning of Eden Mental Health Centre." 3-page paper prepared for those planning the 25th anniversary of Eden in 1992 (Eden Archives: unpublished, undated), 1.

20   EMC ministerial minutes. April 2, 1955. (EMC Archives: Steinbach, Manitoba).

21   Penner left to study in the USA and was no longer involved. P.J.B. Reimer stepped back due to ill health but continued to be involved.

22   Based on EMC Ministerial minutes, Apr., 1955 to Oct., 1957.

23   P.J.B. Reimer, "Eine Nervenheilanstalt in Manitoba." *Steinbach Post*, Oct 29, 1957, 1.

24   Ibid.

25   The meetings were held on May 11 in the Rosenhof EMC, June 15 in Morris Bergthaler Church, and Oct 12 in the Altona Bergthaler Church.

26   P.J.B. Reimer, "Eine Nervenheilanstalt in Manitoba," 1.

27   EMC ministerial minutes, Apr. 2, 1955.

28   Delbert Plett, ed., "Ministerial Journal (of Rev. Johann Dueck 1793-1866) 1848-1862" in Delbert Plett, *Leaders of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeimde in Russia, 1812 to 1874* (Steinbach: Crossway Publications, 1993) 449-498.

29   A.J. Klassen, ed., *Alternative service for peace in Canada during World War II, 1941-1946* (Abbotsford: MCC (B.C. Seniors for Peace), 1998), 161-77.

30   Interview meeting with Abe Loewen, Rollin Reimer, and George Neufeld, Aug. 23, 2010.

31   The CO unit in Selkirk included Rollin Reimer, Wilmer Fast, Karl Klassen, Jac. K. Schroeder, Henry Rogalsky, Henry Rieger, Henry L. Braun, Abe Loewen, Bill Regehr, Abe Janzen, Andy Giesbrecht, Peter Klassen, and George Neufeld (according to Loewen, Reimer, and Neufeld).

32   Also referred to as the Ältesten Komitee. It was a council of Kanadier bishops representing the Mennonites to government with respect to participation in the war effort.

33 Interview meeting with Abe Loewen, Rollin Reimer, and George Neufeld, Aug. 23, 2010.

34 Klassen, *Alternative service for peace in Canada during World War II, 1941-1946*, 161-77.

35 David P. Reimer, *Erfahrungen der Mennoniten in Canada wärend des Zweiten Weltkieges, 1938-1945*. (Steinbach: Derksen Printers, no date), (English translation also available).

36 Royden Loewen, *Diaspora in the Countryside: Two Mennonite Communities and Mid-Twentieth Century Rural Disjuncture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

37 Helmut Harder, *David Toews was Here* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 2002), 121, 127-8; John B. Toews, *With Courage to Spare* (Winnipeg: Board of Christian Literature of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America, 1978), 134-40; J.J. Friesen, *Building Communities* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2007), 69-70.

38 Kleine Gemeinde Ministerial minutes, Apr. 10, 1949. In the roster of 85 workers for 1954, only one is from the EMC (Elma Wiebe, Bagot, Manitoba).

39 P. A. Rempel, "Eine Mennonitische Nervenheilanstalt in Manitoba," *Mennonitische Rundshau*, Oct. 9, 1957, 14.

40 Waldemar Janzen, "Geisteskranke in unseren Gemeinden," *Der Bote*, July 31, 1957, 4, and Aug. 7, 1957, 4.

41 J.F. Pauls, personal communication.

42 In 1961 the Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council, usually referred to at that time as MRIC, made the extraordinary proposal to Mennonite Sanitarium of Manitoba that the executive committees of the two boards be amalgamated. This proposal was accepted (Minutes, MSM, Sept. 2, 1961). MRIC had been formed in 1959 by the union of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and the Mennonite Central Relief Committee of Western Canada.

43 Canada sent a Canadian Army unit to assist the UN forces in Korea on July 27, 1950, two days after the war started.

44 Letter to the Prime Minister, undated. (MHC Archives, copy in Eden Archives).

45 Minutes, CMRC annual meeting, Jan, 19, 1957, MHC Archives.

46 Minutes, Annual meeting of the Hilfswerk der Mennoniten Manitobas, Nov. 14, 1957, in Steinbach, Manitoba, MHC Archives.

47 Helmut Harder, *David Toews Was Here*, 203-4.

48 "Committee needs funds to support patients in provincial hospitals," *Canadian Mennonite*, Feb. 11, 1955, 1.

49 "Bethania".

50 "Bethesda, a Mennonite Psychopathic Institute in Vineland, Ont," *The Christian Leader*, Apr. 1, 1945, 14.

51 Elmer M. Ediger, "Roots of the Mennonite Mental Health Story," *If we can love: The Mennonite Mental Health Story*, ed. Vernon H Neufeld (MMHS: 1983), 20.

52 EMC Ministerial minutes, Aug. 2, 1958.

53 *A Vogt Family History*, Undated and anonymous, Abram Vogt biography, p. 76, Maria Vogt biography, p. 59.

54 *Das Invalidenheim in Steinbach, Man.*, Undated brochure probably published in 1943. (Eden Archives)

55 Margaret Vogt Kroeker, personal communication.

56 When I (GK) was working there in the early 1960s we had one younger patient who had to be tied to his bed and who was eventually taken, in handcuffs, to Selkirk.

57 Anonymous, *50 years of Caring and Sharing 1945-1995: the Story of Bethania*, 5, 21, 33.

58 David Toews, "Aufmunterung zur Mithilfe fuer unsere Nervenkranken", *Der Bote*, Dec. 13, 1933, 2.

59   Letter to the Churches from C.A. De Fehr, chair of the Wohltätigkeitskomitee of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and F.C.Thiessen, secretary, Apr. 6, 1936. This letter refers to an October 1935 meeting of the the Colonization Board at which the committee was mandated to do preparatory work for the establishment of a mental hospital. (J.P. Bueckert papers, MHC, Vol. 4651, folder 50).

60   Franz C. Thiessen, "Bericht ueber Gruendung eines Heims fuer harmlose Geisteskranke," *Der Bote*, Jan. 27, 1943, 7; Benjamin Ewert, "In Angelegenheit der projectierten Nervenheilanstalt," *Der Bote*, Feb. 3, 1943, 4; "Das Heim fuer harmlose Nervenkranke," *Steinbach Post*, Apr. 15, 1942, 3 (Committee report by Peter J. Dyck, Starbuck).

61   J.P. Dyck, "Unsere drei Irrenanstalten", *Der Bote*, Sept. 12, 1945, 4.

62   Minutes, Eden Mental Health Centre Delegate Meeting, April 16, 1966, in Winkler.