

Membership as Making a Home

By Patty Friesen (Oct. 16/16)

I'm always so touched by people's faith journey and I'd like to reflect on membership as making a home. Diane courageously moved into our community ten years ago and made a home with Doug and with Matthew and Michelle and the whole Regier clan. She's made Osler town and our church her home as well. No small feat to leave one home and family and join another in our tight little community.

Maya Angelou says the ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned. Diane, Charlie and Terri Lynn all come to us from the United Church tradition and they are the best examples of what it means to expand our church community and be helped and influenced by the best of what other faith communities can bring to us. They come to us not through birth but through marriage or conviction or because we hire them. They bring a fresh perspective and ask the important questions – why do Mennonites believe these certain ways or do these certain things?

If we can answer those questions with confidence, then the questions help clarify what we believe, if we can't answer those questions well, then we may need to change some things to be more consistent with what we believe and how we behave. We have many examples of this in our history. When the German Lutheran family called Lobe joined Osler Mennonite Church, they had been baptized as babies and didn't want to be baptized again and the church changed membership by-laws to include those baptized as babies without re-baptism. New members are good for us and help us enlarge our definition of church home.

From our family homes where our faith is nurtured and shaped and where we first know we belong and are accepted as we are to our church homes, where our faith connects with those we are not related to and where we know we also belong and can share our gifts for the common good. Family homes and church homes are where we learn to fight and forgive, where we learn to be ourselves and serve others. Our family homes and our church homes are a spiritual training ground for how we behave in the world – at school and work.

And ultimately, God is our home. God dwells with us and we in God. And the spirit of God extends shelter and blessing to us. As in the words of the hymn: O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home.