



**LOW GERMAN**  
CONFERENCE



- ✓ Please post your questions in the chat.
- ✓ Feel free to use the chat feature to chat with your peers or us.
- ✓ This presentation is being recorded and we will be sending out a link to the recording following this presentation.





# Frank O'Connor

Program Director,  
Norfolk Community Help Centre

# Glen Klassen

Professor of Microbiology (ret'd)

Steinbach, Manitoba





# James Schellenberg

Teacher, pastor, formerly Low German  
Program Coordinator for Mennonite  
Central Committee

# Low German Mennonites

- Descendants of Canadian Mennonites who left Canada in the 1920s for Mexico and Paraguay
- Now numbering over 300,000 scattered across the Americas



# Disclaimer

- Observations are generalizations
- Do not apply to all Low German Mennonites equally



Respect for authority and a desire to  
live peacefully and quietly  
encourage compliance





Factors in tradition, history and values which should be considered



Factors in tradition, history and values  
which should be considered

- Effects of isolation



# Factors in tradition, history and values which should be considered

- Effects of isolation
- Language



# Factors in tradition, history and values which should be considered

- Effects of isolation
- Language
- Limited education



# Factors in tradition, history and values which should be considered

- Effects of isolation
- Language
- Limited education
- Integration of faith and life



# Factors in tradition, history and values which should be considered

- Effects of isolation
- Language
- Limited education
- Integration of faith and life
- Special significance of Easter and Pentecost



# Factors in tradition, history and values which should be considered

- Effects of isolation
- Language
- Limited education
- Integration of faith and life
- Special significance of Easter and Pentecost
- Value and importance of work



# Factors in tradition, history and values which should be considered

- Effects of isolation
- Language
- Limited education
- Integration of faith and life
- Special significance of Easter and Pentecost
- Value and importance of work
- Family size and structure





# Factors in tradition, history and values which should be considered

- Effects of isolation
- Language
- Limited education
- Integration of faith and life
- Special significance of Easter and Pentecost
- Value and importance of work
- Family size and structure
- Attitude toward illness and death



How do we define progress?



# Helen Bergen

Manager, Settlement Services and

Host, De Brigj CHPD 105.9 FM

Mennonite Community Services, Aylmer

Many families are doing what they can to adhere to the restrictions



# What we are hearing continued

- Higher levels of concern and/or anxiety
- Concern for the emotional and mental well being of loved ones who are isolated
- Concerned for family members in other countries who either live there or are attempting to return to Canada
- Concerned about income, home schooling, accessing resources etc.
- Newcomers are more visible



# Misinformation surrounding COVID-19

- Conspiracy to undermine political leadership (in particular US presidency)
- Conspiracy to enforce mass immunization
  - Pharmaceutical companies profiting through the sale of the medication
- Some one is trying to 'excite' the population unnecessarily
- Government is trying to control us and determine how we live our lives –persecution of faith



# Misinformation surrounding COVID-19

- News media is exaggerating the severity 'It's not as bad as reported'
- Lack of understanding of how diseases are transmitted
- Medical staff are forced to screen people and masks/ventilators are forcing infections into the person so that's why people are dying



# How does faith come into play?

- God is in control/God will protect me if I have faith  
*Some feel churches should continue meeting and that God will protect the faithful*
- What is meant to be, will be! (fatalism)
  - *Some feel that if God means for a person to get COVID then they will*
  - *May or may not adhere to restrictions*
  - *Varying opinions as to the degree a person's behavior impacts outcomes*





# How are LGM informed of COVID-19?

- De Brigj Low German radio
  - Live & pre-recorded updates during our news segments multiple times/day repeating information coming from the various sources and new items
  - Southwestern Public Health announcements –official informational segments
  - Available to listen via livestream <https://www.mcson.org/> (scroll to the bottom for the play button)
- Mennonite Post
  - Print newspaper distributed globally, YouTube, WhatsApp



# How are LGM informed of COVID-19?

- Person to person
  - E-mail/phone/social media
- Note - Need for balance.
  - Hopeful messaging as well as updates or else people will just turn the radio off completely. None of us can continually take in COVID news and remain optimistic.



# Challenges with remote services and LGM

- Have had less exposure to online platforms
  - Employment Services staff are helping by telephone to apply for EI, CERB, etc.
- Have had fewer opportunities to learn to read/write well
  - Audio messages more helpful
  - Simple English better than translating to LG written – many people never learned to read/write Low German
  - Personal connections more important – quality connections and a positive attitude go a long way to bridging gaps



- Limited or no internet access
  - rural areas have spotty coverage
  - Unfamiliarity with e-mail, searching online, etc.
- Limited access to devices
  - One tablet per family –who gets a turn with more than one child?
  - No computer
  - No printer
- Limited print material available



# Low German Resources

- De Brigj – encourage clients to listen. Music and uplifting programs help to make the day go a little faster.
  - 105.9FM locally
  - podcasts online (children’s hour, news, youth matters)  
<https://www.mcson.org/resources/podcasts/>
- Low German/English dictionary/app for phones (*why make up the spelling when someone else has done it for you?*):
  - <http://plautdietsch.22web.org/index-english/index.htm>;
  - [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=at.appscore.wieedabuak&hl=en\\_CA](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=at.appscore.wieedabuak&hl=en_CA)
  - <https://apps.apple.com/ca/app/plautdietsch-wieedabuak/id1399727791>
- You Tube –Eduard Klassen, harp player & story teller
  - <https://youtu.be/BH9Gy-XS2Ec>



# LG resources around COVID-19

- Southwestern Public Health/other health units are actively building resources
- Mennocast op Plaut podcasts
- <http://mennocast.podbean.com/>
- Dealing with anxiety/fear; deciphering between fake and real news
- You Tube videos
  - RCC Tumm Teré-interview style
  - <https://youtu.be/NA5UM5-gG88>
  - SW Radio interview with Dr. H Penner
  - [https://youtu.be/MRbPp\\_zFzoA](https://youtu.be/MRbPp_zFzoA)
  - Kennert Giesbrecht, editor Mennonite Post <http://openingdoors.co/covid-19-resources/>
- [Openingdoors.co/covid-19-resources](http://Openingdoors.co/covid-19-resources)





**LOW GERMAN**  
CONFERENCE



# Bibliography


Klassen, G. (2008). Spanish Flu Epidemic: Not the only calamity for Mennonites in the early 1900's. *The Mennonite Historian*. 34(4). Mennonite Heritage Centre and the Centre for Manitoba Studies in Canada: Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Klassen, G. & Penner, K. (2008). The 1918 Flu Epidemic. *Preservings* 28. Journal of the D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation Inc: Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Longhurst, J. (2020, March 27). Century-old lessons echo for retired scientist. *Winnipeg Free Press*. Retrieved from <https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/life/faith/century-old-lessons-echo-for-retired-scientist-569152512.html>

Peters, W. (2020, March 27). Why Mennonite Death Rate was Double Average During Spanish Flu *Steinbach On-line*. Retrieved from <https://steinbachonline.com/local/why-mennonite-death-rate-was-double-average-during-spanish-flu>





Quiring, V. (2015). *Mennonites, Community, and Disease: Mennonite Diaspora and Responses to the 1918-1920 Influenza Epidemic in Hanover, Manitoba*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Unger, E. (2020, March 15). Local history and the Coronavirus: 5 questions with Dr. Glen Klassen. *Steinbach On-line*. Retrieved from <https://steinbachonline.com/local/local-history-and-the-coronavirus-5-questions-with-dr-glen-klassen>

Unger, E. (2020, March 15). Microbiologist Discusses Pandemic Sunday. *Portage Online*. Retrieved from <https://portageonline.com/local/microbiologist-discusses-pandemic>