

In the midst of conflict: Responding in Ukraine | Changing weather, changing lives: A glimpse from around the globe



# A Common Place



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## An invitation to nurture and care

ANN GRABER HERSHBERGER  
MCC U.S. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*“The earth is the LORD’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”*

(Psalm 24:1 NRSV)

As weather patterns change, people around the world are hurting. In this issue, we see how those in Bolivia and Bangladesh, in Kenya and Cambodia, are striving to adapt to climate-related challenges.

As I read their stories, I’m also struck by all the other pain we’re seeing in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world.

But there is hope. MCC supporters like you are offering prayer and financial support; volunteering at MCC Thrift shops and relief sales; advocating to lawmakers; and serving in other ways with MCC.

Mirroring this cloud of witnesses is an equally amazing group of MCC partners and project participants who are addressing the myriad needs in the world.

Images of war in Ukraine take me back to living in war zones in Central America years ago and, more recently, to visiting camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where thousands of families displaced by ongoing violence struggle to live.

In both places were greens and pepper plants, repurposed containers of flowering plants around the doors of rudimentary shelters—evidence of our God-given instinct toward beauty and growth.

Recently I met with women and teenage girls at a nearby church who were assembling dignity kits (see page 3). We wished we could magically hand them directly to those newly displaced in the war in Ukraine. We wondered what the landscape looks like as they flee and how long this suffering of the earth and its people will continue.

Several places in the book of Joshua, we find the phrase, “And the land had rest from war.” We pray fervently that this will soon be reality.

Many of us reading this do not depend on the land we live on for our sustenance. Nor are we in danger of war driving us from our homes. Though we often feel helpless to really make a difference, these stories show us that we can do something.

Let examples shared in these pages spark ideas for how you can celebrate and nurture God’s earth and all who live in it!

ANN GRABER HERSHBERGER’S EMAIL ADDRESS IS  
ANNHERSHBERGER@MCC.ORG

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, shares God’s love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. MCC envisions communities worldwide in right relationship with God, one another and creation. [mcc.org](http://mcc.org)

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Marla Pierson Lester

Designer:  
Abby Dixon

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A Common Place  
21 South 12th Street, PO Box 500  
Akron, PA 17501  
717.859.1151  
Email: [acp@mcc.org](mailto:acp@mcc.org)  
Online: [mcc.org/acommonplace](http://mcc.org/acommonplace)

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MCC offices in the United States

Mennonite Central Committee U.S.  
21 South 12th St., PO Box 500  
Akron, PA 17501  
717.859.1151

MCC Central States  
121 East 30th St., PO Box 235  
North Newton, KS 67117  
316.283.2720

MCC East Coast  
900 E. Howell Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19149  
215.535.3624  
MCC Great Lakes  
1013 Division Street  
Goshen, IN 46528  
574.534.4133  
West Coast MCC  
1010 G Street  
Reedley, CA 93654  
559.638.6911  
Call MCC toll free 888.563.4676.

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## Special feature

### 4 In the midst of conflict

MCC partners in Ukraine work to meet others’ needs, even as their own lives are upended.

## Cover story

### 6 Changing weather, changing lives

Take a journey with us. From Bolivia to Uganda to Cambodia, join us in experiencing the stories of people facing the costs of drought, changes in rainfall and stronger storms. Learn how MCC partners are working to help families adapt to climate change in their communities and see what steps you could take.

### 16 First person

Gabriel Acarapi Chuca, an agricultural technician for an MCC partner in Bolivia, talks about his work in remote farming communities and the effects of changing weather.

## Departments

### 3 MCC news

### 18 On assignment

Serving in Nepal

### 19 Hello Palestine and Israel

(for children)

MCC  
news

Find more news at  
[mcc.org](http://mcc.org)



## Bangladesh Overcoming discrimination

In Bangladesh, members of Indigenous communities often face prejudice and may be excluded even from places like tea shops. Through an MCC-supported project, Maristela Mardy, a member of the marginalized Mahali community, and Tarikul Islam, a professional singer from the majority Muslim community, visit Muslim neighborhoods together, using tea and food to challenge stereotypes and build peace and understanding.

## Nepal New water for families

As water sources dry in mountainous regions, communities struggle, with lines

at wells even at night in Thansingh in Nepal’s Dhading district. But through MCC partner Shanti Nepal, the village was able to work together to build a reservoir and install a water tap in each home. More water means better hygiene for the family and more time to care for children and maintain a kitchen garden, says Beli Chapang, a mother of seven.



## South Sudan Keeping girls in school

Without menstrual supplies, young women around the world often regularly miss classes during their periods. MCC dignity kits provide reusable menstrual hygiene products for students like Martha Akol, 17. “Now I can study in

peace,” says Akol, a student in South Sudan. Akol wants to study medicine and women’s health after graduation, and the dignity kit makes it easier to attend school, she says.



## Thrifty 50 Challenge Small steps, big change

Interested in exploring new ways to care for our planet? Be part of MCC’s Thrifty 50 Challenge. You’ll get one practical challenge sent to your inbox every week as part of the 50th anniversary celebration for MCC Thrift shops. With each challenge, you’ll be more equipped to care for our planet and will feel better about your eco-footprint. Sign up at [thrifty50challenge.org](http://thrifty50challenge.org).

## Lend a hand – Dignity kits

Dignity kits provide sustainable support for vulnerable women and girls. The kits contain eco-friendly, washable menstrual pads; fill an urgent need for hygiene supplies; and help keep disposable pads out of landfills.

### Contents (NEW items only)

1 reusable pad system packed into 1 MCC kit bag, includes:

- 3 waterproof base units
- 8 absorbent fleece pad inserts (4 large/4 small)
- 1 small transport bag
- 3 pair of briefs (cotton; women’s sizes small, medium or large – one size per kit; no red)

For sewing instructions, please contact your local MCC office or visit [mcc.org/dignity-kits](http://mcc.org/dignity-kits).

1 hand towel (medium weight, dark or bright colors; approx. 16 in x 26 in)

1 washcloth (medium weight, dark or bright colors)

2 large bars bath soap (leave in wrapper)

1 large bar laundry soap (such as Fels Naptha®, Sunlight® or Zote® brands)

1 wide-toothed comb (6-8 in)

1 nail clipper (good quality)

4 plastic or wood clothespins (4 in)

4 heavy-duty safety pins (measuring 1 in and 2 in, 2 of each size)

Instructions: Place contents in a box or bag. The kit will be re-packed at MCC in a new 2-gallon pail with a lid.

Go to [mcc.org/dignity-kits](http://mcc.org/dignity-kits) to find drop-off locations, or contact your nearest MCC office (see page 2).





Special feature

# In the midst of conflict

Their own lives in Ukraine upended, MCC staff and partners continue to reach out to others.

BY JASON DUECK  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF MCC STAFF AND PARTNERS



MCC formed in 1920 to respond to hunger in what is now Ukraine. Relief worker A.J. Miller recorded how in 1922 weakened crowds echoed a cry resounding through the region. “Bread,” they called. “In God’s name, bread.” In March 2022, in the midst of conflict, MCC and its partners continue providing emergency relief, including this fresh-baked bread.



On March 6, this woman and others in Odessa receive food supplies distributed by an MCC partner who normally offers peace education and provides training for teachers and schoolchildren.



On March 9, residents are evacuated from Kharkiv, which has experienced heavy fighting. They are moved to a Christian school and senior’s residence outside the city by MCC’s partner, an organization of local Evangelical Baptist churches.



On March 15 in Nikopol, an MCC partner provides food packages and meals to local families and newcomers who have fled fighting in their towns. Many people are out of work and struggle to have the food and supplies they need, the partner reports.

In the silence between the deadly warnings of air raid sirens in early March, the sound of a small choir, singing a song of praise, echoed out of a church sanctuary in western Ukraine.

Just the night before, Anna\*, administrative coordinator for MCC Ukraine, had absent-mindedly hummed a few bars of the song during an evening tea break at the church.

Uplifted by that quiet moment of inspiration, the church’s pastor suggested some of the young people in the church record a performance of the song, hoping the lyrics speaking of God’s power and protection might offer spiritual comfort in a dangerous time.

But this hymn about God’s love and power isn’t the only thing the church and volunteers like Anna are offering to their neighbors.

In late February, Anna and her family fled Zaporizhzhia, their home in southeastern Ukraine, as the conflict edged dangerously close.

They were taken in by the church’s pastor and his family near Lviv and immediately joined the efforts of the church to house, feed and care for as many of the masses of displaced people moving to or through western Ukraine as they could manage.

They have filled the upper level of the church with foam mattresses and blankets to offer rest to the weary. They’re finding temporary homes for as many

uprooted people as they can, often dozens each day. They pray with people, prepare hot meals and offer clean water.

All the work Anna is doing with the church and alongside other local organizations is supported by generous donations to MCC’s Ukraine emergency response.

For years, Anna’s work has involved supporting people fleeing from conflict in other parts of Ukraine. Now, she’s having that experience from the other side. She says that even as prepared as her family was physically to flee their home, it’s essentially impossible to be prepared emotionally for what it is like.

“When I came to the church for the first time, I entered the building and I started to cry. I started to cry a lot, I could not stop. Because I was feeling that I lost something, or I was leaving something in the past.

“I understood that we are refugees now. We are far away from our home. It was only a few years ago we were serving refugees from the east of Ukraine. We had refugees in our church. And now I understand that in this time, we are refugees somewhere.”

While her experience has been emotionally and spiritually taxing, she says she’s found a great deal of meaning and hope by choosing to help others experiencing the same challenges.

“I cannot imagine that a week ago I was as a refugee, like, I just came here,”

“And I tell them that now they’re in a safe place—praise the Lord—and that we have friends around the world.”



Anna, holding flowers her youngest daughter made for her in honor of International Women’s Day, prepares a pot of borscht at a church in western Ukraine.

says Anna. “But in the last few days, I was able to welcome these people who just came from these hard places. And I can see how much fear and worry they have in their eyes. But I can understand what they’re feeling.

“And now I can invite them to the table to sit and to be there and to eat this warm meal. And I tell them that now they’re in a safe place—praise the Lord—and that we have friends around the world. So I try to be useful. I try to be helpful for people who just arrived here.”

Jason Dueck is a writer for MCC Canada.

Please pray for MCC staff and partners and those they are helping. Go to [mcc.org](http://mcc.org) for the latest updates on this response.

Cover  
story

# Changing weather, changing lives

COMPILED BY MARLA PIERSON LESTER



From Bolivia to Cambodia, the story is the same: Weather patterns are changing.

In these pages, journey with us to see how people, with bravery and determination, are facing profound shifts in their lands and livelihoods.

We care about climate change because we care about neighbors, here and across the world, all made in God's image.

**May we open  
our hearts to  
their stories.**



MCC photo/Mwangi Kirubi

**“Before we didn’t have hail. We’re struggling with hail, it’s costly for our people and our crops.”**

In remote, mountainous communities in Bolivia, farmers like Teofilo Colque feel the effects of climate change most keenly in how unpredictable and extreme the weather has become.

High-altitude areas that were too cold to grow a variety of crops have warmed, expanding what people can harvest. But the threat of killing frosts and devastating hail has grown as well.

In response, MCC partners are working with Colque and others to help them find new ways to use irrigation and soil conservation techniques to grow more diverse crops, even in difficult land. “This used to be only rocks, but with the knowledge I’ve acquired, I’ve turned it into a garden,” Colque says. “Before this, nothing grew, but we’ve turned rocky land into cultivable land.”



Photo courtesy of MSD

## What you can do: Talk about climate change

Talking about climate change with friends and family is one of the most effective ways to change social norms and influence public attitudes. By including climate change in everyday conversations, you’ll start to see changes in all areas of life, including the political realm. There is hope!

And you’ll be following the lead of students like Nour Mohamad in Jordan. In a land where water is scarce, she and other students in an environmental club, established as part of an MCC-supported project, talk to friends, classmates and family about the need to conserve.

## “Rain is everything.”

At home in Makueni County, Kenya, 56-year-old Francisca Mbai recalls when rain could be counted on to come in March, April and May, and again in October, November and December. Droughts were not unheard of, but were much less common. Harvests were more assured, and rainfed lands provided enough fodder for livestock. Now more often than before, “Rain fails, and we harvest nothing,” she says.

Often then, men migrate to urban areas for work. Women, she says, are most affected by climate change because they bear the burden of figuring out how to meet the family’s basic needs and pay costs like school fees.

Through MCC partner Utooni Development Organisation, Mbai was trained in conservation agriculture and joined a savings group where she and others pool their money. Participants can take out loans, a source of capital that helps Mbai and others raise animals or start businesses, providing families with a safety net if rains don’t come.



With a loan from the savings group, Francisca Mbai bought chickens to raise as an extra source of income if her crops perish.



Money from raising chickens paid for the 5,000-liter water tank (above). She used other loans for solar lights, higher-quality seeds and more.



## Helping families adapt

- 💧 climate-resilient agriculture
- 💧 diversifying livelihoods
- 💧 improving soil and reducing erosion
- 💧 restoring watersheds, capturing scarce rainfall

MCC photo/Annalee Giesbrecht



MCC photo/Meynard Krepp

## “Sometimes once, sometimes twice, depending on the availability of food.”

In late January, the rains and winds of Tropical Cyclone Ana swept through Chikwawa, Malawi—taking with them Ndiuzani Butao’s plans for a better harvest.

As a lead farmer in an MCC-supported project, 22-year-old Butao was embracing new lessons in conservation agriculture, hoping they would provide more food for her elderly grandmother, her 1-year-old daughter Hanna Danela and her teenage brother.

### What you can do: Get involved

Support the climate issues you care about. You can donate funds to MCC’s food and agricultural projects, shop sustainably at an MCC Thrift shop or organize public awareness events in your church or community.

When you give, you join donors like Lewis and Carrie Unruh, a Kansas farming family. The Unruhs, who have worked for years to reduce soil erosion on their own land, support MCC through their church, Tabor Mennonite in Goessel, Kansas, and through the Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale.

“I never had an opportunity because of the farm to go and do service anywhere, but there are things I can do locally,” Lewis says. “Giving to MCC is one of those things I can do.”



MCC photo/Amanda Talstra



MCC relief kits offer needed supplies for families in Guatemala after Hurricanes Eta and Iota.

Children in Honduras attend an MCC-supported trauma healing workshop after the hurricanes.



It was one way that she and her family could work to withstand the more erratic rainfall and frequent flooding that climate change has brought to this region of Malawi.

Instead of harvesting, though, she’s grappling with the aftermath of a cyclone that took all but one dwelling on her homestead, forcing her brother to move in with a friend. It destroyed clothes, bedding, schoolbooks and kitchen utensils—as well as stored food and chickens.

A field where the family had planted cotton, maize, sorghum, millet and cowpeas was washed away. Pests came to the region, nibbling what crops remained.

Her family was worried that if flooding continues, they may have to move to another area.

Butao’s challenge was more immediate.

How could she, as the breadwinner, earn enough to feed her daughter and her grandmother?

In the weeks after the storm, she worked for others and was paid mostly in flour. Asked how many times the family had meals per day, she answered: “Sometimes once, sometimes twice, depending on the availability of food.”

MCC is providing food assistance to 500 of the most-affected families in the region for two months, helping to nourish families for today—but unable to control what the weather may bring later this year or next.



CASM photo/Absalón Calix

## “The roof, the walls, the floor, furniture were all ruined. ... We had to throw everything away.”

After Hurricanes Eta and Iota stormed through Central America within two weeks in November 2020, Amadeo Castillo and his family returned to their home in Choloma, Honduras, to find a half meter (1 1/2 feet) of mud inside.

That year was one of the most active hurricane seasons on record, with Iota being the strongest hurricane so late in the season, says Bruce Guenther, MCC’s director of disaster response. “As in other regions of the world, we are seeing the impacts of climate change play out, impacting millions of vulnerable people.”

By November 2021, thanks to materials from MCC and the Comisión de Acción Social Menonita, a development organization born out of the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Honduras, Castillo and his family stand outside their repaired home, complete with a new zinc roof that keeps them dry.

“That is a gift sent by God,” says Castillo, shown with his wife Suyapa Arely Rivera Villanueva and their three children Maria, 8, Fernanda, 4, and Ana, 1. “We feel really happy because we are living more calmly, with more confidence and asking God that there not be another disaster right now.”



**“There is hunger. There are diseases. Cattle rustling increases. When there is rain, all these things reduce.”**

In a remote community in Karenga District, Uganda, Samson Dekeney points out the remains of his sweet potato plants, their leaves yellow from drought, the insides eaten by pests. “This is mainly a crop we use to sell. We use the money for school fees, medical bills and emergencies at home.”

If rains do come, but weeks later than expected, “People suffer because the yields they get during that time do not support them up to the next growing season,” he says.

Through MCC partner Dynamic Agro-pastoralists Development Organization (DADO), Dekeney is using conservation agriculture to help his crops withstand drier weather. He also uses intercropping, planting various crops side by side throughout the year, so if one fails to produce, others may succeed.

And he is working to protect the environment. “I planted 50 trees, mostly teak trees. As you can see, I put my mango right here. They are mostly for my family. This is just because I have this in mind, that trees are very OK,” he says. Long-term he hopes that planting trees will create a healthier environment, leading to more rain that will support crops like his sweet potatoes.



As pests proliferate with increases in heat and dryness, MCC partners are helping farmers find ways, including savings groups, to better withstand the losses they sustain.

MCC photo/Matthew Lester



Raising fish provides income for food, household items, planting supplies and clothing for grandchildren.

**“Back then, all of the farmers, and my family too, grew rice irrigated only by the seasonal rains.”**

In Cambodia’s Prey Veng Province, Chhin Ya stands in the rice field that was sufficient to provide food and a livelihood for her and her parents when she was young. But droughts have ruined harvests and reduced yields. As crops failed, the family borrowed money for food. Their debt grew. Her daughter dropped out of school and migrated to work in a garment factory. Her husband also left the district to find work.

Through MCC partner Organization to Develop Our Villages, though, she was able to establish a fishpond and a garden she can water from the pond. Although the region struggles with ponds, lakes and canals that often dry up, her food security and earnings have improved—enough that her husband stopped migrating for work and now helps her raise fish and vegetables.



MCC photo/Brenda Burkholder

**What you can do: Make the change**

Small changes in your personal lifestyle can make a big difference in what’s happening to the environment—things like recycling, riding public transit or cycling. When we see ourselves as part of the solution, we can serve as an example to others.

Need inspiration for steps you can take in your own life? Dig into the stories of people like Jane Hartzler, who volunteers at an MCC Thrift shop in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, work she views as “saving the planet by recycling.”



ODOV photo/Ties Sopheat

**“Because of changing weather, there are more pests, so we farmers are using more insecticides, which is affecting our health.”**

As one part of the climate changes, problems in other, new areas can suddenly loom large. In Panchbibi, Bangladesh, rising temperatures mean more insects are hatching, threatening the harvests of farmers like Buli Murmu.

The usual response is chemicals; often in Bangladesh farmers will use higher doses of commercial pesticides and fertilizers. But Murmu is taking a more natural approach.

Through a project of MCC and a Bangladeshi partner, Peoples Union of the Marginalized Development Organization, she and others in her community are turning to vermicomposting—raising worms that help to break down organic material and provide affordable compost.

“If we use this compost in the fields, we don’t need pesticides. Our crops will be more nutritious,” she says.

MCC photo/Dave Klassen



MCC photo/Laura Parris-Thomas

## What you can do: Take advocacy action

As Christians, we are called to speak with and on behalf of vulnerable people (see, for example, Exodus 1, Exodus 5–12, Esther 4–8).

Being an advocate is an act of hope and love. Writing a letter or signing a petition tells lawmakers that you care about climate change and helps hold governments accountable. Learn more at [washington.mcc.org](http://washington.mcc.org).

In a 2021 cross-country bicycle ride, 18 young adults cycled 3,737 miles, raising awareness about climate change and advocating to government officials.

In countries around the world, MCC partners are helping farmers reduce soil erosion, preventing the formation of gullies like this one in Ethiopia.



Vermicomposting or worm composting (shown here in India in 2017) helps farmers enrich soils without the use or expense of chemical fertilizers.

Peace and Development Network, photo/Brian Nicholas Neza



**“No sooner had I planted than rains disappeared. This season, we hardly produced any crops, and the price of maize has doubled ...”**

When Pascal Nizeyimana was growing up in Rwanda’s Bugesera district, the rains began in September, and farmers immediately planted cassava, sweet potatoes, bananas and other crops. Harvesting was in January.

Farming today is much more challenging, he says. “We have to apply fertilizer and pray that we get rain. For example, the peanuts I planted in October ultimately failed. It’s February, and they didn’t produce anything.” Instead of growing all the food for the family and food to sell, his family now must buy all their food. “In turn, this has led to us reducing the food portions for the household members, and sometimes we adults don’t have lunch so our children can have enough food.”

Lessons from MCC partner Peace and Development Network in conservation agriculture have helped him reduce soil erosion, retain moisture and improve soils, and he has received support through Friends Peace House, another MCC partner, to get livestock and irrigation equipment to grow crops in the dry season.

Yet, he says, “With every season getting more unpredictable than the one before, I am worried that we may be more food insecure in the future.”

## Give a gift – Where needed most

As you can see from the stories on these pages, the needs sparked by climate change cross through the breadth of MCC’s work in disaster response, food, water, health and more. Your gift meets urgent needs today and supports efforts to help people adapt to long-term changes and challenges. Donate in the enclosed envelope, give online at [donate.mcc.org](http://donate.mcc.org) or contact your nearest MCC office (see page 2).





Gabriel Acarapi Chuca, far left in red shirt, describes how integrated watershed management systems work as he and others from MCC partner PRODI (Programa de Desarrollo Integral Interdisciplinario; Comprehensive Interdisciplinary Development Program) meet with MCC staff. (MCC photo/Annalee Giesbrecht)

First person

## Gabriel Acarapi Chuca

An agricultural technician for an MCC partner talks about his work in remote farming communities in Bolivia and the effects of changing weather.

AS TOLD TO RACHEL WATSON

I grew up in a community where my grandfather was a farmer and, like most of us here, we belong to an Indigenous community. We've been brought up knowing that we need to wake up early and help on the farm and land to support the family.

Ancestral knowledge was very present in my family and community. For example, let's say there are two mountains over there. My grandfather raised sheep and he would say, "This year, don't take the sheep to these mountains to graze."

We would ask him why, and he said, "Because we need to give space for the grass to grow and to reproduce." And that allowed the grass to rest, and it stopped soil erosion. This was also true for other values, like mutual support and taking care of the environment.

Because of all the technologies that have arrived, that important ancestral knowledge has been lost.

What PRODI (MCC partner Programa de Desarrollo Integral Interdisciplinario; or Comprehensive Interdisciplinary Development Program) is doing is not bringing new knowledge to people. That knowledge was already there. But it got lost at some point, and we're trying to recover it.

I know that the weather used to be better, it used to be good. Rains used to be spread out during the season, maybe from September to January. But now, rains that should be spread across a longer period of time come all at once and damage the crops.

The weather is more extreme. It's warmer than it used to be, and communities can grow more diverse crops. But they are also experiencing more frequent problems, like hail that can come and destroy crops in an instant.

A nearby community has a lot of hail every year and it's very bad for our peo-

ple. Eventually we'll have some measures to address this problem. Sometimes I think we could have a net on top of the crops to catch the hail and turn it into water. But our communities don't have the economic resources to do that.

We are trying to adapt. With MCC, we are addressing issues of agrobiodiversity and how to face climate change.

It's important to adapt with ancestral knowledge but also by using new technologies that are coming up. I think that's the only way that we will be able to learn to live with climate change.

My main concern is water and how to take care of it.

We can't do anything without water.

People need to keep enough water for hygiene, for cooking, for irrigation. I've heard it said that in 50 years people won't work for money but for water. Communities that have access to water will survive, but cities and places that don't have a good water supply will perish.

It's important to keep working on how to maintain our water sources. That's a big part of what we do.

Right now, we're promoting the use of integrated watershed management systems. These systems soak up water from rainfall, from the roots of plants and even from dew.

Sometimes I describe it to people like this: Say we have a towel on our table and we pour water onto it, that's the system. If we pour the water straight onto the table, that water falls right off. The integrated watershed management system is developed to be like a towel, to soak up water.

The idea is to maintain the amount of water in the streams so that it doesn't go down over time, and that can improve the amount of water that people can

have. We're working hard on that in the different communities.

We want these watershed management systems to be examples, demonstrations for other communities.

We have an emphasis on approaches that are sustainable in the long run. Many institutions have come and have brought chemicals for people to use, but that's not sustainable because it damages the soil. And then when institutions leave, people can't continue doing that. We're promoting the use of locally available materials, like compost made out of manure and biodegradable materials.

That's basically what we do, and we do it as a team. Our work is comprehensive. It crosses through other areas like health and education.

Our dream is that we can work with the communities so that when our projects are finished and we leave, people are still using the approaches that they learned from PRODI.

Our goal is to keep growing. We're sure that there will be more challenges in the future, but we're hoping that with the foundations we are setting, we'll find more ways to grow sustainably.

I think of one woman who's been with PRODI since the beginning.

She's applied every single thing that she has learned from us. In her land she has some terraces where she's producing a wide variety of crops.

She's an entrepreneur and leader in her community. I always feel very proud when I go to visit her because she's really an example of everything that we have done. ■

*Gabriel Acarapi Chuca is a technician with MCC partner PRODI, working in remote Bolivian communities. Rachel Watson of Kitchener, Ontario, is an MCC communications and program support worker in Bolivia.*

**It's important to keep working on how to maintain our water sources. That's a big part of what we do."**

Photo courtesy of Luke Jantzi



“Nepal is rich in culture and beauty, and we share awe and wonder as a family, which brings us closer.”

For Kaitlyn and Luke Jantzi and their children, Mirabel, 5, and Leo, 7, the rooftop of their home in Nepal is a space for play and relaxation.

## Serving in Nepal

**Names:** Luke and Kaitlyn Jantzi

**Hometown:** Kitchener, Ontario (Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church)

**Assignment:** From our base in Kathmandu, Luke oversees MCC’s work in Nepal, serving as MCC representative for Nepal and reviewing projects and plans. Kaitlyn provides mental health resources and counseling across the MCC system.

**Typical day:** Starts when our children (Leo, 7, and Mirabel, 5) wake us up. We take them to the bus stop on our electric scooter (doing our best to reduce our contribution to pollution here). Then Luke heads to the office. After a staff devotion, everyone gets tea and heads off to work. Kaitlyn works from home, seeing clients online, planning webinars and providing

mental health resources as requested. The children get home around 4 p.m., and we spend the evenings much like we did in Canada—supper, LEGO® play, stories and then bedtime. After that, we sometimes have meetings with staff in Canada or the U.S. (time zone changes make this work best), but we also are able to kick back and relax in our cozy apartment.

**Joys:** Being a part of such an excellent team. The Nepal staff have a wealth of knowledge and wisdom, and grace for our learning curve, which has been a gift. Further joys have been watching our kids flourish in this new environment. Nepal is rich in culture and beauty, and we share awe and wonder as a family, which brings us closer. We have had opportunities to travel around the country, including into the mountains and throughout the Kathmandu Valley.

**Challenges:** Arriving in Nepal during a major spike of COVID-19 in 2020. With no access to vaccines and a precarious health care system, it was a strange and challenging time to adjust.

**On climate change:** Shorter monsoon rains mean a shorter growing season and greater food insecurity. Our children have indoor recess not because of rain or cold like in Ontario but because of pollution. These are reminders of the ways in which we humans are having a direct impact on the climate and our own health.

### FIND YOUR PLACE

Go to [mcc.org/serve](https://mcc.org/serve) or [linkedin.com/company/mccpeace](https://linkedin.com/company/mccpeace) or contact your nearest MCC office to learn about current MCC service opportunities.

for children

# hello

## PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

How can you greet someone in Arabic, one of the languages of Palestine and Israel?



### marhaba

 (Say “MAR-ha-bah”)

My name is Rand Ajarma.

Age: 14

Lives in: Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine

I live with my mom, my two sisters and my brother in Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem; my father passed away last year. After school, I usually have classes in *dabka* (traditional Palestinian folk dancing) or music practice, and I like to play soccer, draw and read. Also, I’m always interested in learning more and more about Palestine because there is so much to learn and so much that is hidden or untold. I think all people should take more interest in Palestine and learn about the peoples’ roots and culture to keep it alive.

I started attending an MCC-supported summer camp when I was 5 years old, and I’ve participated in it every year since then. Sometimes we get to go on field trips to different areas in Palestine that we’ve never seen before or go swimming on a hot day. I also really enjoy our water balloon fights.

My favorite food: lasagna

My favorite subject: social studies

What I want to be: psychologist, journalist or interior designer

### Olive, I love you

The olive tree, perhaps the most common tree here, is deeply valued for its ability to thrive and send down deep roots in a land where water is hard to come by. You’ll find olive trees everywhere – in gardens, parks, roadsides and the yards of churches, synagogues, mosques and schools.





Mennonite Central Committee U.S.  
21 South 12th Street, PO Box 500  
Akron, PA 17501 U.S.A.

ReUzit on State, Ephrata, Pennsylvania



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