

Women play significant role in developing countries

Akron, Pa. — The woman in the bright orange and yellow striped dress with a long, graceful skirt and an artistically wrapped turban on her head not only held the attention of her audience with her striking African presence but her penetrating voice and precise ideas compelled everyone to listen.

The speaker was Mrs. Kingori, director of the National Christian Council of Kenya's Family Life Education Program and her audience was an orientation group at Mennonite Central Committee headquarters preparing for assignments in various African countries. Her two presentations centered on the role of African women in the church and in development.

Mrs. Kingori pointed out that a country cannot be developed without the development of the people themselves. In the early days of missionary efforts however, expatriates felt that men would respond to new ideas more quickly. Schools and other training opportunities provided by missionaries tended to think first of men.

In traditional African society, women and men shared the work, according to Mrs. Kingori. With the growth of urban areas and

expansion of educational opportunities the men left the rural areas to take salaried jobs in the cities. This left the women with all the tasks of raising and feeding their families.

Women form 67 percent of Kenya's rural population, Mrs. Kingori told the orientees. Although there are very few women agriculturalists, women do nearly all the day-to-day, small-scale farming.

Kenya, one of the few African countries to have a government-sponsored family planning agency, directs its population program entirely to women. The Kenyan government has also set up a special rural development project to promote better standards of living. According to Mrs. Kingori, women are chosen by their own organizations to be trained in this project.

"In Kenya, you can find women's groups building schools and roads, buying cattle, planting and harvesting together, teaching and learning to read," she said.

Mrs. Kingori suggested that the government directs its rural development specifically to women for several reasons. "Women are more receptive," she said. "They will come together



Mrs. Kingori

and listen. Women are also more organized. Since the groups are already there, the work can begin without spending time to form new ones. Finally, women are less affected by the move to urban areas." According to Mrs. Kingori, there are 2,805 women's groups throughout Kenya.

Women play a large role in the welfare services of the churches as well, said Mrs. Kingori. Although very few women have been chosen to serve as deacons or elders, more participate on committees and synod councils. Their

greatest participation, however, is through their own church women's organizations.

Women are mainly responsible for the care of the aged and poor, Mrs. Kingori pointed out. "In the old days, there were traditional ways to celebrate or comfort one another in the event of a wedding or a funeral. Many of these ways are forbidden by the Christian church. So women have tried to find Christian ways to help each other in these important events. They gather together to sing or they

bring food to the family."

In Kenyan churches, mothers' unions take on the responsibility of teaching Christian principles and morals and of preparing young people for marriage. In the congregations on a given Sunday morning, women and children make up 75 percent of the group.

"Perhaps women feel their burdens are heavier. Perhaps they need God more, while men turn to other things," Mrs. Kingori smiled.

Women's involvement in higher professional and church levels is minimal. There are no written barriers to the advancement of women, Mrs. Kingori explained, but many things still stand in the way. For rural women the crushing burden of daily activities monopolizes their time, leaving no room for studies or meetings.

"Many women must walk all day for a bucket of water or a load of firewood," Mrs. Kingori said. "Even if women can go to school, there are fewer women's training institutions and fewer openings for women in coeducational institutions." Women make up one fifth of the work force in the formal sector in Kenya. Most of

these women, however, are in traditionally feminine occupations such as nursing or teaching.

Mrs. Kingori also spoke specifically to the MCC orientees about their roles as they went to Africa. "The Word of God is very powerful," she said, "and it has found its way into many corners. But it has to be carried by people."

Mrs. Kingori encouraged the volunteers to try to learn something. "I know that each of you has a special contribution to make," she said. "But you must not worry if you feel you have nothing to give out or teach. You should not say, 'Come, I will give you something,' but rather, 'Come, let us discuss our problems together.'"

Scarborough — Dorothy Grove, member of Warden Park Mennonite church, has begun a one-year term of voluntary service with Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities as a community outreach worker in Corning, N.Y. She is a registered nurse formerly employed with the Victorian Order of Nurses in Toronto.

Homespun homilies: Back to winter projects

By Leona Dyck

Fret not yourself because of the wicked,
be not envious of wrongdoers!
For they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.
Trust in the Lord, and do good;
so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security.
Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37: 1-4

Henry Gerbrandt tells this story of the Altona Bergthaler church: In 1953 their winter project was a new building. Kerosene heaters were being used to ward off the chill that only a Manitoba winter has to offer. One of these heaters was accidentally dumped over and fire broke out. Sirens were heard throughout the town.

"Where's the fire?" was the question on everyone's lips. "The Bergthaler church," came the reply. Said one man, "Good, there's never been a fire there before."

The children are now back in school and the winter projects are slowly being hauled out of storage to be continued and, we hope, finished. What are you tackling this year? Is it wallpapering? Or perhaps some that you did previously doesn't look as good as it once did? If you decide it's not bad enough to re-paper, here's a hint. To repair wallpaper, tear a matching piece to the approximate size of the patch, obtaining tapered edges. Cover to match your paper and you're on your way.

It was bound to happen sometime and it did! I met up with editor Dave Kroeker this summer. Anyone who knows both of us, will realize that there is a slight variation in size, and I have the upward edge there. After many months of imagining Dave to be at least six feet tall and sturdily-built, I was shocked upon being introduced to find that I, being not quite a 6-footer, stood at least a head above him. But, Dave, stature (physical) isn't everything. Big surprises often come in small packages. Nice to meet you in person!

Mennonite Brethren churches in Vancouver (4): Culloden, Pacific Grace, Kennedy Heights

By Selma Hooge

Vancouver — The largest Mennonite Brethren church in Vancouver is Culloden MB. It has 540 members and is located in straight line north of Fraserview, due east of the Vancouver MB church and sort of west of Killarney.

D.B. Wiens was the pastor here till last summer when he resigned to go into full-time radio broadcasting in the Russian language. He is still on the church board, however, and also speaks occasionally. He holds the record for being pastor of one church — 18 years — although the church is only nine years old. This is the same congregation which moved from the Vancouver MB church in 1967.

Wiens estimates that 75 percent of this congregation is also from South America and many of the others are immigrants who came from Germany between 1948 - 52. As you might have guessed, much German is still used here too. There's a German school held on Saturdays run jointly with the Vancouver MB church.

Most Sunday school classes for youngsters are taught in English and Culloden does have Pioneer Girls and Christian Service Brigade programs.

This church has a "semi-

voluntary" giving system. They have several categories of church fees. Members place themselves into whichever category they can afford to be.

John C. Dyck is the full-time associate pastor at Culloden but they are still in search of another pastor.

Pacific Grace
From the largest church we go to the smallest — Pacific Grace Chapel. This little church is much farther north than the other four in the city. It is in the residential part of Chinatown near downtown Vancouver.

The Henry Classens have worked as 'missionaries' in this inner city for 26 years. At first it was only a Sunday school but then grew into a church. The work was financially supported by the B.C. Conference till last June when the congregation decided to become self-supporting.

Meanwhile, however, another church using the same facilities is being supported by the B.C. Conference. A separate Chinese church was started four years ago by Paul Li, who died of cancer last year. His assistant Eddie Chu was appointed to continue the work with the Chinese. The children all attend the Pacific Grace Sunday school but as with the East In-

dians at Fraserview, the adult Chinese have a language problem. Eddie, an immigrant himself, knows their language as well as English.

Mr. Classen has an interesting explanation why their evening services are not well attended. For one thing he says, the people who joined the church prefer to come back to it even though some of them have moved out as far as Langley and Haney. But two trips a day is too much.

Furthermore, he says Chinese people are not used to going out at night because where most of them come from, Hong Kong, it isn't safe to be out at night.

Mr. Classen was given recognition at last year's B.C. convention for 25 years of service. Sue Neufeld has been a co-worker with the Classens for many years.

Kennedy Heights
About half an hour's drive southeast of Vancouver in Delta, B.C. is the Kennedy Heights MB church. This was once the Strawberry Hill church. It is nearly as old as the first Vancouver church but had a separate beginning back in 1944.

The first group met in a little Japanese school house surrounded by tall

evergreens. That has given way to a large church building with an attached gym and a parsonage nearby surrounded by apartments, houses and a shopping center.

The gym serves many purposes — banquets, Christian Service Brigades, young people's activities and once a month it is used by the community for a baby clinic.

The pastor, Calvin Buehler, has been at Kennedy Heights for five years. He gives a good report about his (close to) 170 members. He says most of them are willing to reach out to meet the needs of those around them.

This is the fourth in a series. Next: Conclusion with descriptions of Richmond Bethel and Burke Mountain Bible Fellowship.