



REMEMBERING Peter Bartel

November 7, 1937 - June 9, 2024



This is written by Peter in 2003 so he speaks in the first person.

Obituary: Aug. 2003.

I was born in Elbing, West Prussia, now Poland on Nov. 7, 1937, as the first-born son of John H. and Anna (Kroeker) Bartel. I experienced life on a beautiful estate near the Baltic Sea till the war moved ever closer to our back door and dad wrote a note to mother that she should get out before the Russians came.

We left in the fall of 1944. Berlin was being bombed and my uncle, Hans Kroeker, came to our rescue and took us to another station in Berlin to continue our journey to South Germany (Austria). That is where dad found us after the war was over. After about a year living with mom's sister, we moved to a farm near Stuttgart where we grew up among 25 children from 6 refugee families, mostly Mennonites who were distantly related or known to us.

C.F. Klassen was a regular guest at our place, so it was not surprising that, with his encouragement, we emigrated to the Fraser Valley with the kind help of David Rempel and his family, who had an estate east of Abbotsford, in April of 1951. They welcomed us at Mission and bought a farm for us near Rosedale, B.C.. Here, at 13 years old, I learned the fine art of milking and other aromatic work that had so far been the responsibility of hired farm workers. I learned fast and furiously because it was a new beginning. No milking machine or bulk tank.

I started my education in Canada in grade 2, as a teacher's helper at age 13. The bus came too early for a farm boy, so I often rode the milk truck to school with 120 milk cans creating accompaniment. We first attended the East Chilliwack M.B Church because of the kindness of our neighbors, the Thiessens, who took us along. In those days, it was a vain hope to be accepted there as a member. When this became clear, another neighbor and his family, the Abe Peters', took us along

to the Prest Road Mennonite Church. In 1957, Aeltester A.A. Harder baptized me on the confession of my faith and I became a member of what is now the Eden Mennonite Church. Both of these churches made a deep impression on my faith and future. Maybe that is why I married an M.B.

After a semester at Bethel Bible School and a year at CMBC in Winnipeg it was off to UBC where I got my B. Sc. and my Permanent Basic teacher's certificate for Secondary Schools. My practicum was done in Prince George at the Sr. H. School. I taught here for 3 years in the areas of Math, Chem. and general Sciences. During this time, attendance at summer school was expected and that is where, one evening, a group of students gathered in front of my window on the lawn for a sing-along. One of the guitarists was Alma Bauman, who was also there for studies. We got to know each other and in 1965, got married in the South Abbotsford M.B. Church. We taught together in Prince George, B.C.

In 1967 we decided to move to Elkhart, IN, for a year at Seminary. One year turned into 3 and I received my M.Div. and a beautiful baby daughter on the same day. While there, we worked at Partly Dave's, a coffeehouse, as our practical assignment for 2 years. What a blessing it was for us. We eventually moved back to BC that summer and accepted a teaching position at the MEI in Clearbrook. Our second daughter was born here in 1972.

In 1973 we accepted a call to the ministry from the Chilliwack Mennonite Church, where we worked for 3.5 years. Here we were also introduced to the work of M-2 at the Mountain Prison. Since my work at the Church was not full time, I did some co-ordination of volunteers for M-2 for those years. This type of work was close to our hearts for many years to come. This was followed by 7 years of pastoring in Brandon, a year of carpenter work and teaching for the University of Brandon in the Education Department, 6 years at the First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and 6 years at Bethel Mennonite Church in Aldergrove, BC., our last pastoral assignment. In 1991 I had the honor to marry our oldest daughter and her fiancé and in 1992 we became proud grandparents for the first time.

Both of my grandparents and my parents were part of the renewal movements of their time, and all were in the ministry, lay and ordained. I believe that this shaped and influenced my love for the ministry and the need to call people to "Know Christ and to make Him known." Reading my grandfather J. Kroeker's books on the O.T. helped me to distinguish between faith and religion. It shaped my preaching for years to come.

God was faithful to us and gave us the energy to rise to the work that HE had entrusted to us. We were never totally convinced that we were the right people to be chosen for such work, but God thought otherwise. HE picks on the most unlikely people to step into the gap and fill it. THE BIBLE stories TELL US SO!!!! Often one felt like Jonah, ready to run 1000 miles rather than face up to the call of God. Yet, HE taught us keep our eyes on Jesus and learn to trust HIM to take us through. HE was and is faithful.

Moving has its costs, not only materially, but also socially and emotionally. We decided that we had been released to pursue other things. I enrolled and did 2 units of CAPPE training at the hospital in Langley. What a gift to us. It was so close.

During this time, very generous friends employed me as a carpenter. I also substituted as chaplain in the prisons of the Lower Mainland. I accepted a half-time position as a Chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital in New Westminster in 1998 and enjoyed 5 years of chaplaincy in the best setting one could wish for. I worked with palliative care patients and did the weekly worship for the hospital. I also began to teach at the prisons, first as a substitute and then as a permanent half-time teacher at Ferndale and at Matsqui.

In 1999, our second daughter asked me to do the honors at her wedding in Boissevain, Manitoba. What a privilege that was for both of us.

In Dec. of 2002, shortly after my 65th birthday, I retired as a chaplain, but I continued to teach part-time for Newcastle College at Matsqui CSC for the next 10 years, retiring from teaching in 2012. I was still called in to sub for other teachers over the next 6 years, as was needed. This was a gradual phasing into retirement.

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He enjoyed filling his free time volunteering at the local MCC in Abbotsford, leading Bible study groups with Alma, sightseeing around the province, celebrating birthdays with family and friends, MDS work trips, welcoming great-grandchildren into the world and more. Life was always busy and full. Praise the Lord!

He leaves behind his wife Alma Bauman Bartel, daughter Cheryl and Paul Heinrichs, daughter Heather and Matt Heide, grandchildren James and Kimmie Heinrichs, Mikaela and Andrew Schmittling, Natasha Heide and Andrew Heide, and great-grandchildren Liam, Anna and Theo Heinrichs. He also leaves behind 5 sisters and 1 brother and their families.

