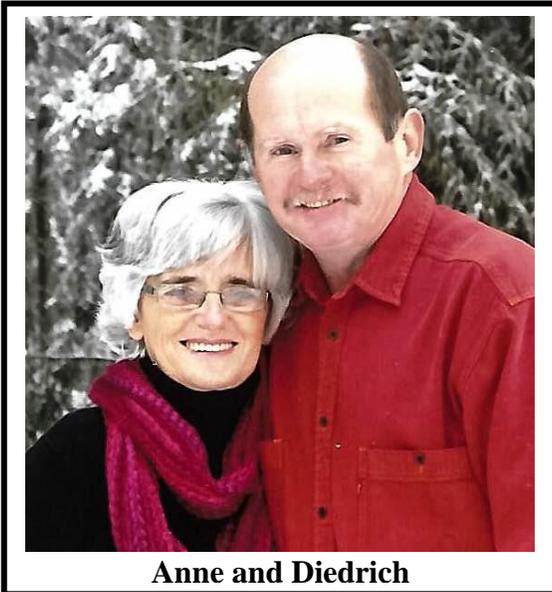


# MISSION OF HOPE, BOLIVIA NEWSLETTER

Volume 17, Issue 3

December, 2016



**Anne and Diedrich**

## A VERY SPECIAL MINISTRY

**What is it like to grow up in a Mennonite colony in Bolivia? Through the ministry of Anne & Diedrich Groening, we have been given an inside look into the lives of the very special Mennonite patients who come to the Mission of Hope clinic in Santa Cruz.**

Anne and Diedrich met, dated, and married in a Mennonite colony in Bolivia. There were **no cell phones**, no cameras, **no TV**, no music, no sports, **no cars**, no cafés or restaurants, and **no electricity!** All of these “modern” conveniences and social pastimes were strictly forbidden! They were not allowed to leave the colony to visit other places, except when they occasionally went into town with their parents to shop, and **it is still like that in most of the colonies today!**

Today there are more than 70,000 Mennonites living in about 70 different colonies in Bolivia. They live in **isolated farming communities**, where they live off the land and grow their own food. **Horse drawn buggies and wagons** are used on the dirt roads in and around the colonies. It is not unusual for a Mennonite family to have **10 or more children**, and the girls are usually **uneducated**. All of the women dress the same in long dresses and hats, and all of the men dress the same in overalls and hats. The language they speak is “low German.” Good medical care is not available in the colonies as most practitioners are self-taught.

After they were married, Anne and Diedrich spent a few years living in Canada. After experiencing the freedom of living in Canada, they returned to Santa Cruz and made the difficult decision to leave the colony. Anne writes, “Leaving the colony was not an easy thing to do. That meant leaving all behind, family and friends. That also meant facing rejection, being shunned, and not allowed to come to any family gatherings. It has been 18 years since we left the colony and we have never been able to be part of any family gatherings, not even my own parents’ funerals.” Anne and Diedrich believe that God has used all of this to prepare them for the **very special ministry** that they now have to the Mennonite people.

Anne and Diedrich have been **invaluable as translators for the Mennonite patients** who come to our clinic. During the weeks of surgery, Anne and Diedrich stay with the Mennonite patients day and night translating for them, and **close bonds are formed**. At night, they spend time with them reading the Bible. Anne writes, “This clinic has been an open door to us to reach out to the Mennonites. We try to make home visits after their surgeries, and we are so welcomed into their homes, which would never be possible if it weren’t for the relationship that we make at the clinic with each patient.”

The women usually come to the clinic totally terrified, not knowing what to expect and not able to communicate in Spanish. But after spending a short time with Anne, their fears are relieved and they really begin to enjoy their stay. It is so **wonderful to watch the transformation** as they experience the love of Christ. Many of these women leave saying they feel they have had a “vacation!”

Mennonite men do not normally show any emotion, but when Anne and Diedrich visit the families in their homes, it is not uncommon for the men to be fighting tears as they express their gratitude for the care their family received. Many say that **their lives will never be the same!**

One of our Mennonite surgery patients named Sara, who lives outside of the colonies, allowed us to take her photo, and she wrote out her story for us to share. Anne has translated it for you, our readers.



**Sara after her surgery**

## Sara's Story

Hi, my name is Sara Wall Banman. I want to tell you how thankful I am for all that you have done for me...First, for taking care of my son Cornelius, then taking care of my daughter Sara, and now for myself. I want to thank you from the depths of my heart for your loving and servant hearts and for how well you have taken care of us during our stay at the clinic.

**I had pain every day for the last 14 years** and went to see **many different doctors**. They all told me that they couldn't find anything to explain where the pain was coming from. I heard about Mission of Hope through my friend Annie. I asked if she would take me there, and she was willing to do that for me. The general medicine doctor checked me and sent me for a

CT-scan. That's how he found out that I had a lipoma and that I needed surgery. I felt so relieved to finally know where my pain was coming from. That same day I was put on the list for surgery.

I am a **mother of 9 children**. Since my **husband is an alcoholic**, my children and I have had to work hard to make a living. For many years I have baked cookies and cakes and my children would go from house to house in the town where we live or go to the nearest toll gate and sell my baked goods. It provided us with many a meal but there have also been times where I could only give the children small portions at meal time so that we all at least got a little something to eat. There were many days with no meat on the table. I have cleaned the school for a few years to pay for the tuition so that my children were able to attend school. The last few years I have been able to work at a Rehab Center for the Mennonites that are alcoholics. My husband has gone through the Rehab center 5 times with no change. Now that my children are grown up, it's much easier for me as they can now help to provide for the family.

I came to know Jesus a few years ago and that has helped me to know that I can bring all my burdens to Him and that He cares for me and my children. The Bible verse that has helped through my hard times is Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Also, Philippians 4:11, "I have learned to be happy with whatever I have." Thanks so much for everything. God has already rewarded you and a greater reward is still waiting for you in Heaven. Love, Sara

## THE \$100,000 MATCHING GIFT CHALLENGE

**The \$100,000 matching gift challenge continues until December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016.** Every dollar that we receive between now and the end of the year up to \$100,000 will be doubled by an anonymous donor. This money will be used to provide free medical care to the poor in Bolivia during the year 2017.

Mission of Hope, Bolivia takes its financial stewardship very seriously. **We are a debt-free mission and more than 97% of all donations go directly into our Bolivia program!** Here in the US, we have an all-volunteer staff, which allows us to keep our overhead costs at a minimum.

If you are an Amazon.com shopper, please consider using Smile.Amazon.com and designating **Mission of Hope, Bolivia** as your charity of choice. The products are the same, and they will donate a percentage of your purchase price to Mission of Hope. Please understand that this is not an endorsement of Amazon or their products.

As we close out the year 2016, **we want to thank you, our faithful supporters**, for giving so generously throughout the year to support our work. **Together, we are making a difference as our Mennonite patients experience the love of Christ and go back to their colonies forever changed, sharing their stories with friends and family. To God be the glory for this very special ministry!**

**Mission of Hope, Bolivia**  
**P.O. Box 103**  
**Charlottesville, VA 22902**  
Tel. & Fax 434-977-4748

[cindy@missionofhopebolivia.org](mailto:cindy@missionofhopebolivia.org)  
[www.missionofhopebolivia.org](http://www.missionofhopebolivia.org)

**Mission of Hope, Bolivia is a  
501c3 tax-exempt organization.**