

MENNO HOME: A PAROCHIAL HOUSING
PROJECT FOR THE AGED

A Comparative Assessment; Vancouver 1961

by

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ABSTRACT

The main task of any group attempting to provide proper housing for the aged is that of making it more than simply "a place to stay." The Mennonite community, too, is faced with this task as it looks for an answer to the housing dilemma of its older members. This study undertakes to survey one kind of answer - that of Menno Home.

This survey of a Mennonite Home located in Clearbrook, B.C., indicates that this type of housing tends to cut its residents off from the stream of life. The participation of these elderly people in community affairs becomes very limited.

The study begins with a discussion of the aging process in general. It describes some types of housing projects which have been undertaken on behalf of the aged.

In the second chapter the development of Menno Home is reviewed, and a description of the housing unit is undertaken. In the following chapter the services that are offered are traced against the background of a strong and devoted church-oriented administration. A comparison is drawn with other homes for the aged. This is done through the use of several studies undertaken by Master of Social Work students in previous years.

In the final chapter the needs of the residents of Menno Home are considered. This is followed by a discussion of what social workers would be able to do to make a beneficial contribution to Menno Home.

Menno Home is found to be quite similar to other institutions dedicated to the same purposes. The variations that are evident consist in different policies of admission, different types of administration and some differences in the physical plant itself. However, the distinguishing feature of Menno Home lies in its strong kinship to the Mennonite church, and in the fact that it serves almost exclusively a rural, Mennonite, German or Low German speaking group. Menno Home would lend itself well to the influence of a capable social worker, as that worker cooperates with the Christian ministers now engaged in serving the residents of Menno Home.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1. <u>Housing for the Aged</u>	Page
The aging process. The place of the aged today. Types of housing for older people. Development of services for the aged. Scope of present study	1
Chapter 2. <u>Menno Home: Facilities and Residents</u>	
Developments of Mennonite Benevolent Society. Menno Invalid Home. The buildings. Administration. Admissions procedure and policy. Comparison with other homes. Residents of Menno Home.	17
Chapter 3. <u>Menno Home: Welfare Services in Housing</u>	
The types of services rendered. What other institutions offer. Counseling services. The minister and the social worker.	35
Chapter 4. <u>Menno Home: New Potentials</u>	
Needs of residents of Menno Home. Is social work relevant for Menno Home? A counseling service. Admission and eligibility. Recreational activities. Conclusions.	50
Appendices:	
A. Sample Application Form	
B. Bibliography	

TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

(a) Tables

Table 1. Age distribution of Menno Home residents	29
Table 2. Source of income, Menno Home residents	33

(b) Illustrations

Fig. 1. Menno Home (1954)	19(b)
Fig. 2. Cottage (1954)	19(b)
Fig. 3. Menno Invalid Home (1960)	19(b)

MENNO HOME: A PAROCHIAL HOUSING PROJECT

FOR THE AGED

CHAPTER 1

HOUSING FOR THE AGED

In a typical Mennonite community, in a farming area, old people are increasingly left to themselves and so must depend on their own resources for happiness. It is true that there are rest homes, which provide care for the aged and furnish facilities in an effort to keep them contented. However, true happiness must depend on the personal resources of the individual as they are given an opportunity for expression within a setting that is ready to offer more than mere accomodation. The crucial problem for the Mennonite community at the moment arises out of the urgent need to reconcile the needs and potential of its senior citizens with the present tendency to place all pertinent values on the energy and boldness of youth.

The Mennonite denominations are urgently looking for a solution to these problems. Being, traditionally, an agrarian people, the problem for the Mennonites in Canada has never before assumed such gigantic proportions. From the community originally self-contained, self-maintained and rooted to the soil, has sprouted and grown to full bloom a migratory people

losing basic ties with its own agrarian orientation. Mennonites, in common with others, tend to move too often and too fast to build the strong home life and cultivate life-long friendships as was done in former years. The result is a feeling of loneliness and isolation even when mixed in with the general populace. Having lost their roots, older Mennonite people feel that their worth to others is meager, and soon detect within themselves a nagging loss of self-respect. The solution to the problem is slow in coming about for various reasons: one being that not enough effort has been put into seeking the guidance of the professions that have concerned themselves with the aged. An effort will be made to discover what social work thinking is as it relates to the aged, and then to find avenues in which this thinking can be made useful for Mennonites who are operating and contemplating homes for the aged.

One of the basic assumptions of sociological and anthropological approaches to the study of old age is that the categorization of particular stages in life is valid not only on chronological and physiological bases, but also on the basis of social and cultural patterns. Pollak has noted that social science has increasingly singled out various population groups as subjects for study, such as minority groups, economic groups and various deviant groups which have been considered to be a social problem.¹ In keeping with this trend to single out for

1. Pollak, Otto, Social Adjustment in Old Age, Social Science Research Council; New York; 1948, pp.2-3.

study certain age groups the aged, too, have come under closer scrutiny. Thus, we may conclude that age grades are not merely arbitrary categorizations for the sake of scientific study, but they are recognized as having various common denominator social connotations.

The Aging Process

Aging is a complex process related to the passage of time. Pollak refers to aging as "a process of change and, as such, a phenomenon of variation correlated with the dimension of time."¹ He thus accounts theoretically for the interdependence of the chronological and the functional factors in aging, admitting, though, that the way in which these factors affect people varies with the individual. In other words, aging proceeds at differing rates for different people.

Every human organism undergoes certain progressive changes with age which are not necessarily the result of disease. These changes involve physical deterioration of body systems, which results in decreasing efficiency of performance, particularly of the manual type. Charles S. Becker says,

Aging consists of two simultaneous components; Anabolic, building up and catabolic, breaking down. It is well recognized that the first two decades of life are essentially anabolic... while the last two or three are predominantly catabolic. 2

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1. Pollak, Otto, op. cit., p.10.
 2. Becker, Charles S., "Physical Functioning of Older People" Towards Better Understanding of the Aged, New York; 1956 . p.254.

Selye attributes physical deterioration to what he calls "stress." He describes stress as essentially "the wear and tear in the body caused by life at any one time."¹ He contends that true age depends largely upon the extent of this wear and tear.

Psychological research bears out the tendency for intelligence test scores to reach their peak in the late teens or early twenties and thereafter decline gradually. It is known, however, that the ability to learn continues for much longer than the age stage these scores would suggest. A recent study on the learning ability of older persons suggests that, although older people may have some initial resistance to learning, and also somewhat slower comprehension and more limited speed, as compared with younger people, these difficulties may be overcome by persuasion and suitable adjustments in teaching procedures and training techniques.²

Donahue writes that,

It is possible, however, for mental function to be maintained at maximum performance or even to be increased for many years. Cerebral capacity begins to weaken only in later years and then relatively slowly. At the age of seventy, a person is still as capable as at fifty. At eighty, the intellect is equivalent of that of the twenties. At ninety, the return is back to the teens, a period often considered the best of life.³

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1. Selye, Hans, The Stress of Life, New York; 1956. p.254.
 2. Gruenberg, E.M., and Kaufman, K., "Mental Health," Charter For Aging, p.373.
 3. Donahue, Wilma, "The Human Machine at Middle Life," Aging in Today's Society. p.112.

It is a known fact that offices of vital and urgent responsibility are entrusted to the care of older people to a large degree. The ability to be involved in abstract thinking, while slower, is still acute. Older people are still able to learn from new experiences and novel situations. Taking part in a Symposium on Health, Dr. D. L. Sampson said, in referring to psychological research on aging, that,

Learning ability was another faculty which waned with the years, but again at very variable rates. There was nothing actually to prevent the elderly from learning new material, but they took longer at it, and they generally succeeded best with material which had some familiarity. In general, attitudes and interests were of pivotal importance, and the decline which took place could well be offset through experience and the right kind of motivation. 1

Various and obvious social changes come with aging. Some of the more obvious ones include retirement from full time employment by men and the relinquishment of household duties by women. The results are, of course, lowered income, loss of vocational associates and an excess of free time. Changes in family relationships occur through loss of spouse or when children leave home, these changes frequently necessitating changes in living arrangements also. One other team of research associates, in a definition study of old age, points out that,

The problems associated with old age are often a consequence of the breakdown of the old person's familiar patterns of living which usually involves relinquishment of social relationships and roles typical of old age. 2

1. Sampson, Dr. D. L., "Psychological Changes," The Needs and Problems of the Aging. A report of Proceedings of the First B.C. Conference on the Needs and Problems of the Aging. Vancouver, 1957. p.12.

2. Cavan, Ruth S., et al, Personal Adjustment in Old Age; Chicago; 1949. p.6.

Old age is not to be determined solely on the basis of the number of years lived, nor solely on the person's adequacy of functioning, but rather must take into account a third dimension - that of the immediate setting within which the aged person finds himself, and its impact upon him. The Mennonite faith holds that people who live according to the teachings of the New Testament are prepared to meet old age, for it is considered a time when, as the more strenuous activities slow down more attention can be given to the deeper values in life. It holds, too, that a person does not become "old" when he reaches a certain age, but when he ceases to grow mentally and spiritually.

The Place of the Aged in Today's Society

In Canada, immigration has been a strong influence on upper levels of the age distribution of the population. The proportion of the Canadian population at what is generally regarded as "retirement age," that is, 65 years and over, has almost doubled since 1881, rising from 4.1 percent in that year to 7.8 percent in 1951.¹ The heavy immigration, particularly during the years prior to 1914 is beginning to show up in the number of people who have reached the higher age range and have thus increased the proportion of older people constituting the population.

1. The Canada Year Book. Ottawa; Table 10; p.162.

For Mennonite people, immigration has had its special effect. The first major migration from Europe to Canada occurred in 1870, when a large group settled in the Waterloo - Kitchener district in Ontario. Almost simultaneously, another sizeable group settled in Manitoba in what is now the Steinbach area, east of the Red River.

Up until recent times these people were still productive members of the household, contributing to the labour force on the farm, in the shops, and in the home. Now, because of their age, they are not producers and, therefore, not contributing materially to the upbuilding of a community. Historically, this situation would not have presented too great a problem since, although finding it necessary to give up many of the former activities, the elderly person was still presumed to embody pertinent wisdom and advice which he was able to dispense as a result of life-long observation and application. Even if the older people were immobilized, or bed-ridden, they did not constitute too great a burden for the family, since the practice of living in closely-knit colonies provided for ease in communication with relatives and neighbors, thus removing the fear of loneliness or being left alone to struggle with their difficulties. Presently, however, with the trend towards higher education, with better communication and better transportation, and because of greater social mobility, the younger generation can obtain sufficient knowledge to get along without the salient advice of

older relative. This has all but robbed the older person of the role or status he knew people his age enjoyed when he was young.

In complex industrial societies the roles of the older person are not at all clearly defined. Many of the former family functions have been abandoned, or have been taken over by institutions other than the home. Mennonite families moving into industrialized areas have not remained immune to these trends. Some of the moral and religious sanctions which formerly reinforced family ties and filial obligations towards elderly parents have, to a large degree, been relaxed, or else have disappeared altogether.

Associated with the changes in family life are changes in the elderly person's position in the community. Financial need exists, yet employment is not readily available for older people, with the result that they must frequently look to either the church, the family or the community for assistance. Although older people within the Mennonite community do carry responsible positions in many cases, the tendency seems to be that they are considered incapable of serving adequately on Committees or Boards since their education and overall experience has been too limited to provide the technical and communicating skills necessary to fulfill these functions. In degrees varying with the person, the role of the older person in the community has shifted from one of independence and helpfulness to one of

dependence and ineffectiveness. This is more true of those who have moved into urban or industrial areas. This is because of the fact that many living in rural areas still own quite valuable property, and have a voice in public affairs by virtue of this equity and their ability to manage it.

Types of Housing for Older People

Housing designed to accommodate elderly people has generally included two major types. The first is the type designed to keep the elderly person within the main stream of the community, accomplished through the provision of smaller, cottage-style unit clusters. The second, is designed to give such people more privacy and, while not segregating them, make it possible for them to have enough common space where they can meet among themselves. Some institutions have made a deliberate attempt to provide housing which would reflect both trends. A possible third type of housing would be nursing or convalescent homes, where medical care could be dispensed to those requiring it. However, for the purpose of this study, discussion will be limited to the first two general types noted above.

With respect to the first type, it is thought that segregation of the aged into housing units is apt to give rise to restlessness and discontent. Old people as a rule like to maintain contact with the rest of the community. There was a time when the ideal site for a home for the aged was considered to

be in the deep country away from noise and distraction, and some of the older housing projects still give evidence of this way of thinking. An objective look at the lives of most older people, however, seems to indicate the problem to be too much silence and too little distraction. At the first B.C. Conference on aging in 1957, Dr. L. C. Marsh, in stressing the importance of suitable housing as one aspect "of the general problem of the Welfare of the aged," said,

I think we are all agreed that the practice of segregating the aging members of our communities in neat and hygienic but socially impoverished projects off by themselves is cruel and unnecessary. We need some sort of viable alternative. As I see it, the key word here is neighborhood. Now this is an elusive idea to lay hold of, and definition is not easy. But if we think of those particular physical living arrangements which lead to the maximum of meaningful human intercourse, which conduce to a satisfying sense of geographically-focused collective identity, which tend to ensure that the pleasures of fellowship are a normal expectation of one's daily routine, then I think we shall have embraced the essential elements of the idea.¹

The second type comprises central housing in which the elderly people make up their own community. Here people may have their own rooms and apartments, live independently, manage their own lives, and know that there will be a superintendent who would look after their needs should an unexpected need occur. The alternative to this, still under this general type, is to have people assigned to rooms, but eating in common dining halls. Under these conditions, the residents would not be able

1. Marsh, L. C., "Good Housing and the Good Life," The Needs and Problems of the Aging. Vancouver; 1957. p.16.

to manage their lives independently in certain important areas of life.

The way in which older people are housed has a direct bearing on family relationships. The trend to independence in living arrangements for the older person stimulated by the change in income status of the past decade, may have been started because of the pressure created by a lack of housing adequate for everyone in the family. A change in living arrangements in later years comes about not only because family and economic circumstances are different but also because individual needs have changed. Many older people need housing that affords companionship, personal attention, recreation and medical care. Housing for the aged, whether Government sponsored or privately financed, must cater to some, and maybe to all of the above needs. Hertha Kraus offers a sensible approach in suggesting that companion apartments be made available for elderly people "whose idea of fun is doing something with others" and "for people who like to be good neighbors." She says that,

Aging people of such background and long-established habits of cooperation may be suited by a dwelling which allows for both privacy and group experience in the same unit.¹

After listing some of the features that such a unit might have, the author points out some of the advantages that would arise from it. She says,

1. Kraus, Hertha, Housing Our Older Citizens. Reprinted from The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. Philadelphia, 1952.

It is likely to meet such personal needs as the desire for sheltered independence, for belonging, for recognition, for sociability and friendly relations... It lends the support of neighborly help and, incidentally, provides a new outlet for resourcefulness, initiative, and skills, as applied to daily and familiar problems.¹

Menno Home is representative of the type of housing Mennonites seek to provide for their aged population. In Canada there are approximately 15 such institutions distributed across the five western provinces. In the succeeding chapters, several of the different types of housing projects in the general Vancouver area will be discussed and the similarities and differences of Menno Home will be more apparent.

Development of Services for the Aged

Social work is slowly being accepted by the Mennonites. The apparent apprehension has been nurtured by the strong cultural orientation to religious institutions which is characteristic of Mennonites. They are people strongly rooted in religious beliefs originating with Christ, and furthered, in turn, by the Apostles, the early church fathers, by Reformers such as Luther, Zwingli, Knox, and by Anabaptists such as Blaurock, Grebel, Manz, and, finally, pinpointed by Menno Simons, under whose credentials as a religious leader the Mennonite church took form. With such a strong emphasis on religious tradition they hold that their

1. Kraus, Hertha, op. cit., p.135.

beliefs are sufficient to solve a person's private problems as well as his publicly known ones.

Characteristically, the Mennonites have maintained that to be an "overcomer" it is necessary to follow Christ's entreaty to all to enter the "new birth in Christ." If this is done unreservedly, difficulties of an emotional and social nature will gradually be solved as Christ-like mannerisms, and Christian concepts of life and of service, are put into practice.

However, Mennonites are also accepting the idea that in order to be of service to others, it is necessary to utilize a more studied approach to the problem that may be presented. Mennonites are increasingly accepting the profession of social work as one discipline that offers a scientific enquiry into the etiology of the ills of man. In part this increasing acceptance is no doubt due to what Sue Spencer terms a willingness on the part of social work practitioners to admit that they must operate within the limits of competence, and admit their own reliance on other disciplines. Sue Spencer says,

...the social work profession is increasingly affirming its inability to solve the world's problems alone, and is seeking to share appropriately with other groups responsibilities it had considered its own.

These aspects of the Social Work profession's maturation process have set the stage for: (1) a willingness to admit failure or uncertainty, (2) a readiness to seek help from other community groups, and (3) a determination to broaden the base of knowledge provided in the professional Schools of Social Work. ¹

1. Spencer, Sue W., "Religious and Spiritual Values in Social Casework Practice," Social Casework, Vol. 38, No. 10, December, 1957. p.522.

Although social work has made its more significant contributions in fields other than services for the aged, it is now making significant contributions here also. Social work teachers recognize that the aging person brings to his situation his former patterns of behavior, his experience in solving other life problems and making the necessary adjustments, and he brings his emotional needs. Social workers have sought to help the aged person assess his particular situation and to acquire whatever insight is feasible in moving to change his life situation or to make an acceptable adjustment to it. They have served as coordinators in utilizing available resources to meet the person's needs. As a constituent part of an interdisciplinary team, social workers have pointed to the meaning of family relationships, cultural influences, the many aspects of social and economic problems, the specialized services needed and the kinds of resources available.

In determining the necessity for a housing project, as well as the type of units to be constructed, social workers have been in a position to furnish information regarding the requirements and desires of the people to be housed.

In one local study of housing for old people, MacKinnon and Angel suggest that,

A Social Worker's contribution does not necessarily end when the initial planning of a project is completed, as he can also be of assistance in eligibility policies, and in interpreting these to the

admissions committee. Another area of competence for the social worker would be interpreting the project to applicants; ...¹

It is essential that the various bodies necessary to planning for the housing of the aged be coordinated to make a housing project meaningful, and more than mere shelter. This will mean bringing together town planning officials, welfare representatives, politicians (if involved), medical personnel and programme and activity personnel. Social workers, through skill in the area of relationships, have made important contributions in this area of the coordination of available resources and services.

Scope of Present Study

This study is an enquiry into the manner in which a segment of the Mennonite population, namely that of the Matsqui Municipality in B.C., has sought to provide for the care of the aged people who are members of their Brotherhood. It will also attempt to define what contributions social work theory and practice may make towards a parochial institution dedicated to the cause of looking after its older generation.

The Mennonite Church, both in Canada and in The United States, has long sought to provide services for its aged. Homes of significant size are today located in five provinces: Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. However, most of these

¹ MacKinnon, D.F., and Angel, J.H., Housing Needs and Preferences Among Senior Citizens (West Vancouver). Master of Social Work Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1957. p.10.

homes follow a certain stereotype of construction and service, so that the need for variation is quite evident. This will involve a good deal of study of the needs of senior citizens, and an assessment of the potential within the community to provide the needed services. In their search for an answer the Mennonites are ready to entertain suggestions from all qualified sources and, with the increasing number of Mennonites engaged in social work, this profession should be able to make a significant contribution.

For purposes of this study, Menno Home has been chosen since it represents fairly the general endeavor of the Mennonite church to provide accommodation for its senior citizens. Comparing Menno Home with other Mennonite institutions is not considered essential, since any variation would indicate degree rather than essence. However, an attempt will be made to point out salient features noted in studies of other homes in the general Vancouver area because of the value this might have for the institution under consideration here. This will be done through utilization of several theses concerned with housing for the aged. In pointing out the features of other homes, some comparisons can be drawn between the features of the plants as such, the administration, intake procedure, and the types of services that the institutions offer.

CHAPTER 2

MENNO HOME: FACILITIES AND RESIDENTS

Menno Home is the outgrowth of a conviction on the part of the British Columbia Mennonite Youth Organization that they ought to undertake a project whereby they could help the older generation of people of Mennonite faith to find happiness in their twilight years. When they first explored the region for a suitable location on which a project could be started, the Executive of the Organization discovered that the financial undertaking would be much too great for them. They therefore referred the project to the two major Mennonite Conferences in British Columbia, namely, the General Conference of Mennonites, and the Mennonite Brethren Conference. After some negotiation, these two bodies were not convinced that a profitable working agreement could be forthcoming, so the idea of forming a Mennonite Benevolent Society was conceived. A meeting for purposes of organizing such a Society was called in 1952, but only ten people appeared. However, in March of the following year,

another meeting took place in Abbotsford; this was more successful, and at that time the Mennonite Benevolent Society came into being.

The Society's Constitution states that "the objects for which the Society is formed are to provide a haven and asylum and supervised care for the aged and infirm." It states, further that "the operations of the Society are to be carried on chiefly in the Municipality of Matsqui. One article in the Constitution deals with membership thus, "Any member of good standing of some Mennonite congregation shall be qualified to become a member of the Society. New members to pay an entrance fee of \$50.00." Originally an annual fee of \$3.00 was also projected, but this clause has since been eliminated.

At the present time, the Society is made up of 360 members, approximately eighty percent coming from the General Conference and twenty percent from the Mennonite Brethren Conference. The Board of Directors consists of members elected on the basis of personal qualifications rather than on Conference orientation, although attention is given to maintaining some equity in relation to Conference representation on the Board.

In March, 1953, a lot facing Marshall Road was purchased, nine and a half acres in size. A brief campaign among the membership of the Mennonite churches in the Matsqui area was undertaken, with the result that construction of Menno Home was started in September of the same year. The building was ready

for occupancy in May, 1954, and officially opened on May 30, 1954.

Menno Invalid Home

During the summer of 1960, another building which had been erected on the same premises was officially opened. It became urgent to have this provision because provincial regulations would not permit invalids to be taken care of in Menno Home. This building, licenced under the name Menno Invalid Home, has been designed to accommodate thirty-five persons. However, at the time of this writing there are only twenty four patients being taken care of since the home is not staffed to look after a larger number.

Thus, Menno Invalid Home is a species of housing, but it serves a clientele who have the added problem of chronic illness or physical disability. For this reason, it will not be considered further in this present study.

The Buildings

Structurally, Menno Home is a long, rather narrow building, 223 feet in length and 28 feet wide. It is a one-storey building with two short wings jutting out of the east side of it, one at the centre of the building and the other at the northern end. The Home is of frame construction, painted white with pink trim. The centre wing houses the combined sitting



Fig. 1 MENNO HOME (1954)



Fig. 2 COTTAGE (1954)



Fig. 3 MENNO INVALID HOME (1960)

room and dining room. The northern wing was originally intended, and initially used, as an infirmary, but has now been converted to ordinary rooms since the construction of Menno Invalid Home.

For practical purposes, the building divides into two wings with the central kitchen and the dining room - sitting room separating the two. Each wing has a full length hallway with rooms on both sides. Each wing has its own washroom and two showers. There is a small sunroom running the full width of the building, facing Marshall Road.

The basement serves as a sub-structure for the southern half of the building. It houses the laundry room, fruit storage space, the boiler room, a workshop, storage room with thirty six lockers, and five rooms which are occupied as living quarters by some of the staff.

The building houses thirty five persons, men and women. There are five double rooms and twenty six single rooms. Each room is supplied with the minimum necessary furniture. The rooms are rather small, and seem somewhat crowded when the tenants add a few of their own possessions to those already in the room.

Menno Home has been built on a slight incline just on the eastern foot of a small hill, the buildings facing east. The surrounding district is entirely residential, composed mainly of single dwelling homes with small farms on large lots. The

district is quiet, with no schools, parks or playgrounds in the immediate neighborhood. There is a moderate volume of traffic on Marshall Road. The nearest business section is in Abbotsford, about one mile distant.

In addition to the main building there is one small cottage on the property which was built on a private basis by an older couple. The agreement is that as long as either party lives, the cottage remains their property and is at all times at their disposal. They have willed the cottage, on their death, to the Mennonite Benevolent Society.

The cottage consists of a living room, bedroom, bathroom and small utility room. The residents have their meals provided for them in the main building. The cottage is located just east of the main building and so placed that if other people desire to undertake a similar venture, a cottage village could be started similar to the idea suggested by Helen Kraus.¹ However, being located as it is between Menno Home and Menno Invalid Home, it looks unduly conspicuous, and causes the grounds to appear rather cluttered.

There are several additional buildings on the property. Two small residences facing Marshall Road serve as living quarters for the administrators of the two homes. These two buildings are situated on either side of the driveway. Since

1. Kraus, Helen, op. cit. p.134

the buildings were on the property before it was purchased by the Society, they have merely been taken over by the administrators, and left where they were. These houses, too, tend to detract from the general appearance of the total project.

Near the northern boundary of the property, a fair sized barn houses two cows and some chickens, the property of the Society. The milk supplied by these cows is sufficient for the needs of the Home; and a large garden supplies a portion of the vegetables needed. Much of the property is fenced in to provide pasture for the cattle.

Menno Home is a very modest looking structure, situated in a semi-rural area. The simplicity of structure and decoration is deliberate since it is both economical, and fits in with the Mennonite emphasis on simplicity. It is conveniently located fairly close to various Mennonite churches so that those who so desire may get to their church without unduly inconveniencing anyone.

A unique feature of Menno Home is the fact that it may raise some of its own produce. Since most of the residents were connected with farm life in some form or another, this unique feature is a distinct attraction.

Administration

Menno Home is the responsibility of the Board of Directors of the Mennonite Benevolent Society under the chairmanship of

Rev. Gerhard I. Peters. This Board meets every month to consider problems and to make new plans for further areas of service. To look after the details of running the Home, the Board has employed a manager. The present manager has no particular training in this field. His duties include bookkeeping, purchasing supplies, maintenance of buildings and the performance of innumerable routine tasks.

The management of Menno Home as at present seems to be adequate for immediate needs. The first task of a new institution will be the routinizing of activities and of services. However, as they become more or less automatic management will need to look farther afield, establishing a program of uniqueness for the Home involved. Certainly, when the younger of the old people enter the Home demands for variety of activities will be made. When that time comes, management will need to do more than merely provide custodial care.

At present Menno Home also employs a matron, a practical nurse, who manages the household duties of Menno Home. The manager and matron are husband and wife. This arrangement appears to be quite adequate for Menno Home at present. However, as Menno Home grows, and accepts younger adults, and possibly more adults who are not of the Mennonite faith, it will be necessary to develop a program of interests which take into account the habits and attitudes of the various residents. In other words, it will require either an administrator trained in

group work with the older people, or else the employing of a programme director who would arrange for recreation, group discussions and public relations, leaving to a resident caretaker smaller tasks, such as providing taxi service for the residents and procuring drugs as prescribed by the physician. The programme director would regulate the various voluntary services that are being offered by the churches, women's groups and individuals of the community.

Admissions Procedure and Policy

Except for a regular form giving pertinent data of applicants, admissions procedures are not at all formalized. The manager is at liberty to determine whether the applicant next on the waiting list could be accepted by the institution. In cases of doubt, he may take his concerns to the monthly meeting of the Board. The reason why no separate admissions committee has been appointed thus far is because the waiting list at any time has been small, so that the institution has accepted without hesitation whoever was on waiting list and immediately available. Should the waiting list become lengthy, as it likely will in a short while, it will be necessary to devise some method of screening applicants. This point will be discussed in chapter 4.

The admissions policy provides for elderly people of any faith or race to be taken in should the applicant wish to be

admitted. Initially, Menno Home was conceived of as serving the Mennonite people exclusively, but the Board has seen fit to open the doors of the institution to other faiths also. The reason so few of other faiths or cultures have availed themselves of this opportunity is because the general atmosphere of the institution is known to carry distinct Mennonite culture undertones. Much of the conversation takes place either in German or Low-German; the worship services are conducted in German so that people of other nationalities feel left out.

Comparison with Other Homes

A comparative view of Mennonite housing for the aged can be made by reference to a study conducted in 1957 of four selected housing projects for older people in Vancouver and area.¹ The four homes covered in this survey are The Fair Haven, Lions' View, Dana Home and The West Vancouver Housing Project. The Fair Haven is a home sponsored by the United Church. It consists of a large number of buildings, the main building being a large two-storey structure. There are five single cottages where couples reside, twenty duplex cottages and four one-storey multiple dwellings. These smaller buildings are located on both sides and behind the main structure. Lions' View is sponsored by the British Columbia Housing Foundation,

1. Sharp, Patricia Louise, Housing Projects for Old People, Master of Social Work Thesis; Vancouver, 1957.

which is a private corporation. This is a low-rental housing project for people with limited incomes. There are three two-storey apartment buildings. The rest of the buildings are one-storey structures placed around a central lawn area.

Dania Home resulted from efforts of a small group of citizens of Danish origin who wanted to provide housing similar to that prevalent in Denmark. Dania Home is a remodelled farm house which has had wings added on to it. In addition to this central building, there are four small cottages and one duplex. The main building is a two-storey building.

The West Vancouver Housing Project is sponsored by the West Vancouver Kiwanis Club. There are, in all, six buildings; a two storey apartment building, four one-storey duplexes and a "community centre."

After having described the physical details of the various homes, the survey considers the extent to which there are similarities and differences in the four housing projects studied. The similarities lie in the fact that all four projects included in the physical arrangements both main buildings and smaller units. The differences appear in the variations of design and functional set-up of the various homes.

Menno Home, although considerably smaller than the homes mentioned above, also has similarities and certain differences when compared with them. Fair Haven consists of a large number of buildings housing 132 persons. The large main building is

centrally placed, with the smaller units uniformly spaced around it. Menno Home at this time has only one smaller unit, but the idea in both instances is similar.

Lions' View differs from Dania in that Dania has a number of single cottages whereas the smaller units of Lions' View still provide from four to six apartments. The West Vancouver Housing Project differs from the others particularly in including a "community center" for the use of tenants. It differs from Menno Home in having a common room where the residents may gather for their various activities. Menno Home has only one central area which must serve both as common room and dining area.

Administratively there are similarities and differences. Dania Home, for example, has its daily management taken care of by a matron who lives in the Home. She is assisted by a staff of three to help with the cooking and the cleaning. The residents are at liberty to help with the work should they wish to do so. Menno Home also has a matron with three assistants. However, Dania Home is a bigger institution, and should require more help were it not for the fact that the residents themselves do some of the work in contrast with Menno Home where all the work is done by the staff.

The West Vancouver Housing Project is managed by the Secretary-Treasurer of its Board of Directors. One couple occupying a cottage receives a rent reduction in exchange for

some caretaking duties. This type of management differs only slightly from that of Fair Haven where the administration is carried out by the Board of Directors. The work of the Board is conducted by several committees: Finance, Building, Business, Management, Admitting, Publicity, Landscape, Visiting and the Ministerial Advisory Committee. A couple living-in serve as caretaker and matron. This arrangement is somewhat similar to that of Menno Home.

It may be seen, then, that Patricia Sharp's comment that "each (Home) has certain qualities to commend it, none is entirely without drawbacks," does hold true also for Menno Home. The real problem in developing a housing project of any significant size is that the physical structure must be present before any programme can be entered in upon. No organization can possibly anticipate all the innovations that the needs and desires of the future residents may initiate. Even seeking advice from localities where projects have been operating for some time can be of help only to the extent that the local situations and the culture groups served are similar. To admit and allow for variations in the personalities of individual older people precludes the recognition of variations in the personality of communities of older people. Menno Home is no exception in this respect, and so will need to look at possible modifications, some of which will be suggested in Chapter 4.

Residents of Menno Home

The majority of the old people now residing at Menno Home were admitted between the ages of 70 and 80. Average age at admittance was 77.

TABLE I. Age Distribution of Menno Home Residents

Age:	At Time of Entry Into B.C.	At Time of Entry Into B.C.	Present Age
Under 60	9	-	-
60 - 64	6	1	-
65 - 69	8	-	1
70 - 74	6	14	9
75 - 79	5	8	6
80 +	3	14	21
TOTAL	37	37	37

The average age at time of admittance to Menno Home is higher than that of other homes located in urban areas. For instance, the average age at time of admittance to Taylor Manor (an institution in Vancouver) was 66 or 67.¹ Comparing Menno Home and Taylor Manor, it is to be noted that admittance ages for the tenants of Menno Home is higher by about ten years. The difference likely stems from the area of residence prior to

1. Guest, Dennis T., Taylor Manor, A Survey of the Facilities of Vancouver's Home For The Aged. Master of Social Work Thesis, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1952. p.60

attendance. While Taylor Manor draws most of its tenants from the urban areas where retirement age is 65 and Old Age Pension becomes effective for those financially needy, the residents of Menno Home reside on farms where they can be employed to an older age. Then, too, since Menno Home is a relatively new institution, it is understandable that the oldest of the older members would apply for acceptance first.

Of the 37 residents at the time of this survey, by far the larger number were women. There is only one couple in the Home at present. Twenty seven of the residents are either widows or widowers, four are single and six married (including the resident couple). Although there may be numerous reasons for the wide margin of women over men, one is of particular significance for Mennonites. During the 1920's and again after the Second World War, scores of Mennonite women migrated to Canada with their children, not knowing where their husbands might be, or even whether they were alive. Families in Russia were frequently scattered by Revolutionary uprisings when members of a family were sent to Siberia, or else forced to flee because they refused to join the Bolshevik army. These widows, who have now grown old, were not able to save enough money while in Canada to enable them to live independently in old age. Also, their sons and daughters could not be expected to house their parents; indeed, they also usually started out with living quarters barely sufficient to

house their own growing families. In many cases the married partners were presumed to be alive, but were still behind the "Iron Curtain," and agencies such as the Mennonite Central Committee have not been able to locate too many to date.

The majority of the inmates were born outside Canada. Twenty seven entered British Columbia after the close of the Second World War. The remaining residents entered either during or before the War; the first of the group arriving in 1923. All but 4 had by the time of admission obtained Canadian citizenship.

Mennonite migration to British Columbia from the Prairie provinces increased manifold during the late 1940's and early 1950's. This sudden interest in British Columbia was due to at least three factors: a) the building boom, with all the employment opportunities it provided for the tradesmen from the "old country," and for farm labourers from the Prairies; b) the warmer climate; c) the opportunity to buy fruit farms and chicken ranches, two highly prized methods of livelihood.

Approximately half of the occupants of Menno Home gave their "home address" as that of either children or close relatives. One individual came to the Home from a different institution. The rest lived privately, either in small semi-urban residences or on small farms near Yarrow, Sardis, Clearbrook and vicinity. Thirty one of the residents mentioned their next-of-kin residing in the area as either son or

daughter. This gives evidence that the representation at the Home could not be housed by their own children, or else that the residents themselves questioned the advisability of moving in with their own children.

Most of the people in the Home have been able to qualify for the British Columbia supplementary pension. The exception includes four who came to British Columbia recently. Two are being subsidized by the British Columbia Mennonite Relief Organization to the extent of \$10.00 per person per month. Two of these four do not qualify for the Dominion Old Age Pension and so are supported in the entire amount by the Mennonite Relief Organization. This Organization was established for the express purpose of helping people who for various reasons need assistance, but who do not qualify for any of the contributory insurance plans available for the general public. One of the residents is on social assistance, and one pays the balance needed for maintenance in the Home out of private savings.

All the residents of Menno Home who were sick and unable to look after themselves were transferred into Menno Invalid Home when it was opened in 1960. Only those who do not require extra care are accepted in Menno Home.

TABLE II. Source of Income

<u>Source of Income</u>	<u>Number</u>
Dominion Old Age Pension with Bonus	31
Old Age Pension and Mennonite Relief Organization	2
Mennonite Relief Organization only	2
Old Age Pension and Private Funds	1
Social Assistance	1
TOTAL	37

Good housing alone cannot solve all the varied and complex problems that face the older generation. Yet, to deny the importance of good housing is to deny the need for housing altogether. Geneva Mathiesen says that something to do, and a place to live "are the two great needs that time puts upon all those who live into old age." Just to provide shelter for them is not enough.

On the occasion of the Symposium on aging in 1957, Mr. Michael Wheeler (at that time Research Planner with the City of Vancouver) summed up the Vancouver situation as follows:

There were 17 housing projects for senior citizens in British Columbia, yielding a total of around 500 separate units... (but) probably ten times as many as this were required if the housing needs of the elderly of the Province were to be met... He reminded the Conference, however, that it was misleading to hold the problem in categorical isolation and to think of senior citizens projects as the only solution to the problem. He endorsed the view earlier enunciated by Dr. Marsh

that the housing needs of the elderly were in essence the same as those of the rest of the community, and he pointed out that the problem did not spring into existence at the age of 65. If a married couple did not have a house by the time they were in their fifties, they were unlikely to acquire one afterwards, and even if they did, declining income and waning physical powers created difficulties in looking after it.¹

The residents of Menno Home seem to be average older citizens, with problems common to all the aged. Menno Home seeks to help its residents not only with housing but also with the social amenities, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

1. Mathiesen, Geneva, "Better Buildings For The Aging," Buildings For The Aging. The National Committee on the Aging of the National Welfare Assembly; Chicago, 1956.

CHAPTER 3

MENNO HOME: WELFARE SERVICE IN HOUSING

The modern home for the aged increasingly serves men and women of advanced age, and those faced with the fact or fear of frailty, infirmity or illness. To bed-and-board services have now been added many other services to maintain social, physical and spiritual well-being. In many homes not the least of these is social service. The manner in which these services are provided varies somewhat. The Corporation of Burnaby, for instance, has one social worker assigned to Homes where recipients of social assistance are housed. This social worker visits her clients regularly, but serves also as consultant to the regular staff of the various Homes. Other Homes make use of the referral system in guiding an elderly resident to where he can obtain the assistance the Home cannot provide. The Middlechurch Home for the Aged in Manitoba, has employed a social worker as full time administrator. This administrator was trained in Denmark, and has brought to this institution many of the ideas that have been found to be of advantage through research and experimen-

tation done in that country.

Menno Home has not availed itself of any of the social services. One reason for this is the services that are to be offered are laid down by a Board of Directors whose members belong to the various Mennonite churches. It is natural, therefore, that services rendered are aligned to the resources that are available through these churches. Secondly, Menno Home is still a young institution seeking to clear a path towards services that would be meaningful for the residents, and the institution as such. Time is an important commodity as management learns the art of running an institution and developing a programme which could involve all professions known to have made contributions with respect to homes for the aged.

The services rendered by Menno Home may be seen as coming from two sources: a) those offered by the institution as such and, b) those offered by the surrounding community, including the near by churches.

The services offered by Menno Home itself, outside of providing for the basic everyday requirements, have so far been quite limited. This is likely due to the fact that there is no programme director whose time could be spent on programming alone. The management itself is too occupied with routines to be able to even initiate extra services, not to speak of the need for research to determine what in the way of extra services could be offered.

Several doctors within the Clearbrook area have made their services available to the residents of Menno Home. Each occupant of Menno Home is permitted to choose one of these physicians as their doctor. When a patient assigned to a certain doctor is ill, regular visits are made by that physician. Generally, however, he calls only when requested by the management.

Residents who get very ill are transferred to the local hospital for medical attention, retaining their room at the Home, ready for their return. However, when the illness turns out to be chronic or disabling, or both, the person is transferred to Menno Invalid Home. One good feature of this arrangement arises out of the fact that since the two projects are situated on the same grounds, the transfer into the Invalid Home does not bring with it displacement fears it otherwise could well have. The residents of the Home appreciate the medical facilities the Home provides, and rest in the amount of security that it brings with it.

Minor illnesses of the inmates are looked after by the matron; a practical nurse. Drugs and other needed supplies are paid for through the Medical Services Division of the Province for those on Social Assistance. The Home supplies the drugs for those not on Social Assistance, but who cannot pay for them themselves.

In Menno Home, complete room service is provided. The matron and her staff see to it that the beds are made, the

rooms kept tidy, and that the daily routines are on schedule. They also prepare and serve three full meals per day. In addition, for those residents desiring it, two snacks per day are provided; one at about three o'clock in the afternoon and another prior to retiring at night.

Outside of a few opportunities provided for the male residents to work about the yard, there are no outlets whereby the residents may spend their time. Some of the female residents spend a good deal of time knitting, hand sewing and crocheting.

One reason why so little in the way of recreation is available results from the assumption that because of the higher age range, most of the residents would not be too interested in recreation of the general sort. The people therefore spend most of their time either by themselves in their rooms, or else sitting in the central dining-sitting area talking with fellow residents.

Visiting hours are limited to two periods per day, namely, from two to four o'clock and seven to nine p.m. This provides the main contact with the surrounding community that the residents have, for the shopping centre and community stores are too remote for the residents to visit frequently.

A welcome feature of Menno Home lies in its location. Being settled as it is in a semi-rural community, it is possible for the older persons to go for walks, to get acquaint-

ed with at least some of the neighbors and to enjoy the rural setting generally. It also provides for local people to visit their relatives in the Home frequently, for the Home is easily accessible.

A further feature of Menno Home is that it provides a number of religious services. The Chairman of the Board, a member of the Christian Ministry, undertakes what is called "An Hour of Bible Study" every Wednesday afternoon. This period consists of some singing where all take part, a discussion or dissertation on a particular portion from the Scriptures and participation by all so inclined in audible prayer.

In addition to the services rendered by the Home itself there are various functions which the surrounding community, through their Ministers, Ladies' Organizations and Youth Groups, provide by way of religious services. Usually the worship services are arranged for Sunday afternoons when the various organizations taking part serve on a rotation basis. Extra programmes are rendered by Ladies Aids who usually make this an occasion to deliver to the Home some of the products they have gathered for the institution. Ministers of the various churches are also asked to serve the residents on special occasions such as Christmas, Good Friday and Easter.

The worship services are usually conducted in a manner, as nearly akin to the way they are conducted in the churches, as possible. This is intentional, for it is to serve as one

area of life that has continuity regardless of place or location. The Services include hymn singing, special musical selections by outside groups, a sermonette, maybe the recitation of a poem and other smaller variations.

One further activity on the part of the community is to provide taxi service for individuals in the Home who wish to attend worship services in some particular church. Frequently these members will entertain the residents as dinner guests before returning them to the Home.

Different choirs or choral groups visit the Home frequently just to sing for the residents some of the songs and hymns long familiar to them. After the singing service, the members of the visiting group make a point of contacting the residents to exchange friendly greetings. The residents appreciate this informal type of activity on the part of the community.

Personal counseling is also available for the residents, but in Menno Home this is supplied by the pastors. The pastors of the approximately fifteen Mennonite churches are available at any time, should their services be requested. In many instances, the residents are members of a church quite distant. therefore, the pastors are cooperating in serving the people in whatever way they can.

What Other Institutions Offer

An assessment of any one project cannot be made on its

terms alone. For this reason, some other housing projects will be referred to here.

In the study of Taylor Manor,¹ which is an older type institution, the leisure time activities of a number of the residents of Taylor Manor were evaluated. The author notes that in twenty-five cases, the adjustment in the area of leisure and recreation is seen as "average" in five and "poor" in twenty cases. The study revealed that reading was the most popular pasttime. Hobbies rated low. It was found that "solitary pursuits such as writing letters, reading, listening to the radio, were common methods of passing the time." Group activities such as playing golf, participating in community or church work, were not rated as favorite interests. Taylor Manor is geared to complying with these more private pursuits of the residents by providing a library and a large recreation room.

The "New Vista" is a low-rental housing project consisting of duplex bungalows and apartment blocks. Selection of residents is based on criterion of the financial situation and health of the applicants. In a study of this housing project by Dorothy Barberie,² several of the activities are noted. One good example is the Bookmobile service which is

1. Guest, Dennis T., op. cit. p.47
2. Barberie, Dorothy Joan, The "New Vista": A Housing Project, Burnaby, B.C. Master of Social Work Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1957.

operated by the Burnaby Public Library. The Library Van drives up to the building so that the residents may select their reading material. Outlining other activities, the author of this study says,

Within the project the tenants have initiated a recreational association to meet some of their needs for social outlets... The tenants have broadened their Constitution to include, as members, any friends of the tenants or people from the neighborhood who wish to join... The present recreation association was helped in formation by a member of the Board of Directors who was also a professional group worker. It has been found that merely helping the tenant association to form, however, is not enough. They appear to need some assistance in maintaining imagination, initiative and visualizing new and broader programmes of activities. There would actually be sufficient work for a part-time group worker if there were financial provision for such a person. ¹

The Middlechurch Home for the Aged, located near Winnipeg, which is a rural and Danish model, offers gardening as a hobby to men so inclined. Small plots are assigned to the enthusiasts, and then become their domains. Other men are assigned to bee-keeping. Several of the women have assumed the responsibility of looking after small flower beds. Another interesting enterprise is a monthly paper edited and published by the residents. The paper describes the events of the Home, provides social information and interprets on behalf of the management any new policies of the Home which might have a bearing on the interests of the tenants.

1. Barberie, Dorothy Joan, op. cit. p.34

Many of the above features could conveniently be incorporated in the programme at Menno Home, because of its rural setting, and because of the willingness on the part of the Board to make Menno Home a pleasant experience.

Counseling Services

Counseling services for residents of Menno Home have been limited to those offered by the Ministers of the various churches (not only Mennonite) and particularly to those offered by the Chairman of the Board. The reason for the emphasis on spiritual counseling rests on the belief of the Mennonite faith that all of life is a struggle to get back into favour with the Creator. Life "in this world" is but a sojourn; man is a stranger here. However, man cannot find this way back to God on his own, and must, therefore accept the offer of the "new life" from Jesus Christ who says, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father buy by me." Spiritual counseling is, therefore, necessary for those who, towards the end of their life, are unable to reconcile the demands of this "new way" with the practical, everyday aspects of living. It is necessary, too, for encouragement to those who may not be plagued by this conflict, but who still long to grow in the faith.

Social workers recognize the value and the power religion

may have within the older person, and realize, also, that this power and influence could well be used for the good of that person. Sue Spencer says,

Physicians, psychiatrists, social scientists and others concerned with illness, economic dependency, family breakdown and delinquency are expressing openly their interest in understanding the place of religious and spiritual values in human life and in assisting people in the appropriate use of religion in their daily lives.¹

Speaking further about ways in which human needs find expression in religious faith, Miss Spencer notes that one such way is, "The belief that there is a purpose behind the Universe in which we live and a power that controls the universe and the destinies of all who live in it (or the doctrine of a deity who loves us and is concerned about our welfare." And a second way is, "The belief that man can reach out and make contact with this higher power, and, in ways that sometimes seem miraculous, but often are natural and unspectacular, can draw from this source the strength to live a better life and to perform at a higher level than would otherwise be possible.

The third way Miss Spencer mentions is particularly applicable to old age, for it entails, "The belief that man's life should be concerned with the welfare of others and that he should subjugate selfish interests and desires to the will of God for his life. ²

1. Spencer, Sue W., "Religious and Spiritual Values in Social Casework Practice," Social Casework; December, 1957. Vol.38, No.10, p.518.

2. Ibid, p.520.

That spiritual counseling is of particular significance for most of the residents of Menno Home arises out of the fact that Menno Home, is, after all, a parochial institution, designed to serve people whose life has been an effort to live in conformity with Christian teachings. Continuing these services represents a real strength to people for whom many other meaningful ties have been disrupted.

The Minister And The Social Worker

Parochial institutions are not peculiar to the Mennonites. The United Church and the Presbyterian Church as well as various other denominations, have established housing projects for the aged in the different provinces. These parochial institutions have been established not only to provide shelter for the aged, but also to provide spiritual care. For this reason, reference to the relationship between the Minister and the Social Worker will be made.

Alan Keith-Lucas says,

For some time the really important question in the rapprochement between religion and social work has not been 'How do social workers and religious workers cooperate?' or even, 'How do we as social workers take into account or make use of our client's religious beliefs?' It has been, 'How does a social worker who professes through his religion a particular view of man reconcile this view with his professional practice, in which he also believes?'

1. Keith Lucas, "Some Notes on Theology and Social Work," Social Casework, February, 1960, Vol. 41. No. 2. p.87.

Leroy Waterman feels that one reason why social workers have not been prone to utilize the Christian Ministry as a resource in many instances is because its highest authorities (of the dominant religions) "cannot agree as to what constitutes the content of religion. However, Waterman does claim that there is a constant aim in all religion. He says,

When man awakened to the abiding values of personality, the revelation, for it was also that, was so arresting, so alluring, that his efforts to preserve those values constitute the most persistent, enduring and consistent endeavor that still characterizes man as man. Therein the aim of religion stands revealed, as constant through the ages as the magnetic needle that always points to the pole.¹

Social workers realize the abiding values of personality. Classical terminology accepts man as having dignity and worth, and as having a right to self respect. Whereas the Mennonite church sees these values as deriving from the fact that they have been vested by the Creator-God, social work principles usually attribute man's higher status to his intelligence and refined modes of response, as well as to the fact that certain natural, irrevocable rights reside with the person as part of a fundamental concept of democratic theory. The difference for practical purposes, relates to the orientation of each, the church stressing that the use of these values must be accounted for as required by the Creator, while social

1. Waterman, Leroy, "Religions and Religious Observances in Old Age." Tibbitts & Donahue (ed.), Aging in Today's Society, Prentice-Hall Inc.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; 1960. p.311.

work stresses that they ought to be regarded as being necessary for present social functioning. However, the method each employs to help the individual could still be used as resources by the two groups.

Henry Morrow, in a study of the community services of an old established church in Vancouver wrote in 1948:

Frequently, Protestant Ministers who intellectually recognize the place of the public and private agencies in the field of social work fail to use the services which are available within the community. Personal problems, minor emotional disturbances and marital problems are discussed with parishioners without any consideration of using social agencies save as resources for relief, to provide care for a neglected child, or to provide medical treatment. The Agency is a resource. The converse is also true. Social Agencies may easily forget to consider the strength of the minister's relationship to the client and do not take him into their confidence as they take school teachers, nurses and doctors. So, frequently, the two professions parallel each other.¹

What Morrow has said is true of the relationship between the Mennonite Ministry and Social Work. The reason behind this strained relationship is well expressed in a very recent local study on interprofessional relationships, undertaken by Alfreda Skenfield in 1960. Miss Skenfield recognizes that, "With its tradition of centuries of welfare work, the church found it difficult to accept the young 'up-start,' social work, with its emphasis on scientific method and often, a seeming disregard of all that the church had

1. Morrow, Henry M., The Community Services of First United Church, Master of Social Work Thesis, University of British Columbia School of Social Work, 1948. p.49

done and was doing... There are problems of semantics; What is meant by 'sin?' 'permissiveness?' - problems of self determination over against theological dogma - problems of points of view between minister and non-religious caseworker.¹"

Essentially, the social worker is trained to look at and diagnose personality difficulties and to help people to make proper adjustment to life. Since the social worker is usually working in a certain agency, he or she offers a specific service to the community. Being dependent on psychiatry and sociology for much of his understanding of the client, and of the techniques to be used in dealing with various problems, the social worker is prepared to work intensively with selected problems, as these are screened by intake processes in the agency where the worker is employed. The Minister, because of the nature of his calling, must serve all types of clientele with every type of problem.

There is a great need for highly trained counselors in modern housing projects for the aged, and Menno Home is no exception. It is true, of course, that any person trained as a counselor would need to recognize that Menno Home is a parochial institution, supported by people who are intent on providing for their aged a Home which will support the beliefs these people have cherished for so long. Menno Home can be-

1. Skenfield, Alfreda, The Social Worker and Minister in Welfare Services, Master of Social Work Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1960. p.7.

come just that through the utilization of the knowledge of various professions. Alfreda Skenfield has put it this way:

The coming together of clergy and social workers, possibly in the company of the doctor and psychiatrist, for the purpose of knowing each other is one of the answers to the many questions posed herein. That there are many settings in which this can be done, and is being done, is apparent. If each group makes the most of these and creates other opportunities wherever possible, the tentative approaches to each other will become continued intermingling with resultant understanding, acceptance and sharing of skills to the ultimate benefit of the individual who is crying for help.¹

It would appear, then, that the minister and the social worker have much to offer to each other. There are special possibilities in a housing situation where inmates and staff may develop their sense of "community" within the Home, to which both have much to contribute.

1. Skenfield, Alfreda, op. cit. p.77.

CHAPTER 4

MENNO HOME: NEW POTENTIALS

Entrance into a home for the aged is an event radiating various degrees of pleasure and pain, satisfaction and deprivation. Contrary to the old concept that held this step to be the "end of the road" for all who entered, it is now being viewed as a potential for a new new of life. But to make this possible requires adequate accommodation with the necessary facilities such as suitable furniture for both the living quarters and the lounge, sufficient kitchen facilities to prepare and serve meals efficiently. The rooms, and interior generally, should be decorated in cheerful, pleasant colors to lend to the institution a home-like, warm atmosphere. It requires a good counseling service for the residents, so that any private concerns they may have can be dealt with. There should be provision for group activities in which all the residents would be welcome to take part.

Furthermore, to make a home more than a "dwelling place" requires a staff capable of viewing keenly the broad drama of life as it takes place in that home, observing the interplay of personalities and the degree of individual and group adjustment

and maladjustment which exists.

The Board of Directors and the Management of Menno Home are certainly intent on making Menno Home more than a shelter for those who enter. They have attempted to make the residents feel welcome, and also vital to the institution. But the methods that have been employed to effect this are mostly those that have traditionally been used. The new occupants have been made as comfortable as possible. Provision has been made for their medical and spiritual needs, and most basic essentials have been furnished. However, inspite of these basic services, man still requires outside institutions such as the schools, churches, hospitals, clubs to give perspective and balance to their life. Since many of the residents are not capable of seeking out these outside services, it is necessary for the service to move into the Home.

The beginning of programs for the aged is in income maintenance and health services. Weaknesses in these two areas will show up in housing projects. However, the projects themselves are best advanced by taking as broad a view of their services as they are able.

Needs of Residents of Menno Home

Most of the needs basic to residents of Menno Home are also basic to all other people. Unfortunately, many of these needs are often not properly recognized until the resources

which ordinarily would provide substitutions or alterations are no longer available.

First, old folks have a need for respect. One real reason for respect is that they are human beings who have through many trials and experiences learned to cope with life's problems. The advice and guidance they are able to dispense as it relates to a specific situation is to be honored since it is based on the results of decisions they have been obliged to make throughout the years.

Additionally, Mennonites, as also members of various other faiths, hold that one of the basic scriptural assumptions is that there will be respect for parents. It was written into the Fifth Commandment, "Honor your father and your mother," and it was part of the cultural teaching of Judaism. Honor, in this context, is not to be merely a sentimental gesture of patronage, but a deep-seated devotion.

The Mennonite faith has inherited this idea of respect for the elderly from Judaism. Not until recent changes in the economic and social structure took place has the Mennonite faith wavered in its attitude toward older people. The residents of Menno Home know of this changing attitude, and may view it as failure on their part to train their younger generation properly.

Secondly, there is the need to feel useful. It involves a feeling that derives from service to others. The older people need to think of themselves as stewards of a life that is ful-

filling the purposes for which it was ordained. Unwittingly, younger generations frequently contribute to the loss of stewardship by failing to provide useful things for the aged to accomplish. "Use us or lose us" is as true of the septuagenarian as of any other age group, but is particularly keen for them.

Third, is the need for security. The yearning for emotional security at all ages, apparently, is a deeprooted urge imbedded in mankind. People do depend on others, be it parents, children, spouse, associates, for the dynamic emotional security that is the bedrock of happiness. Relationships with other people, therefore, is a basic matter in any good housing project. These can be particularly meaningful when they become structured through group worker leadership eliciting full group participation.

Economic security involves the assurance that food, shelter and clothing will, under ordinary circumstances, be granted. It involves also the wish on the part of the aged person that there will be some savings, even if meager, which may be passed on to the children and to worthwhile projects. Mennonite teaching has always been that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Inability to share finances is part of the aged person's feeling that his life and time are essentially useless. Younger generations often falsely believe that older people do not require any funds. It is true, of course, that

they usually do not demand much for themselves, but the ability to share a little of something like money represents the fact that along with the money goes the gift of good-will.

The Old Age Pension, and the supplementary benefits, have greatly contributed to a greater sense of economic security. If nothing else, they at least guarantee that, notwithstanding emergencies of a grave sort, depending on their families will not be too extensive.

A related need experienced by all old people is the possibility for expression of interest. Old people require avenues whereby they may show their interest in life, and in the affairs of the community in general. Previous to entry into the Home, circulation within the community brought issues to their attention which they could express interest in and state opinions about. Being removed from the community to a certain extent, other ways of expressing interests and providing for expression of talents are needed.

The way in which the basic needs of physical, emotional and social security and their fulfillment fit together gives meaning to life. A good housing project will take this into account, and will seek to establish facilities and services which will in themselves be of real value.

Is Social Work Relevant for Menno Home ?

The professional social workers of British Columbia, and indeed generally, have for quite a number of years been vitally interested in housing projects for the aged. This interest arises out of the fact that housing projects as such cannot be divorced from the basic needs of older people. If, however, these basic needs are not understood, it follows that the housing project cannot be planned on the basis of need. Social workers have sought to understand the dynamics of the behavior of the different age groups, and many have made special efforts to understand the fears, longings and ambitions of the aged.

Since Menno Home is a relatively small institution, it would at this stage likely not be profitable to employ a full time group worker or caseworker, or one trained in both fields. However, it would be profitable for both the staff, and the Board of Directors, to consider employing a social work consultant, who: (a) could advise the Board regarding admissions policy and procedure and (b) could develop knowledge on what community resources are available to the aged. This consultant could also (c) advise the Board on recent findings in geriatric research in the fields of vocational rehabilitation, health services, housing, and recreational programmes. Given time and the opportunity to know the residents, this consultant could become increasingly helpful to the administration in (d) assessing

the needs of the residents, discussing various and particular concerns as they arise, and determine with them what could be done under the circumstances. In this way the consultant could assist (e) in developing a program of activities that would be beneficial not only to the resident, but also to the institution.

A Counseling Service

Referring to some areas in which special skills will be required in programmes for aged, Lillian Sibulkin pays particular attention to counseling needs:

Some agencies address themselves solely to the aging person and give little or no attention to family ties or to lack of social and psychological supports within the family. Our (Social Work) practice is to consider the older person within the context of his family, but also when he is living apart from them... The caseworker must always keep in perspective the problems of the older client, the problems of his relative, and nature of family ties in planning service that will improve the social functioning of each.¹

Special skill is needed in dealing with the older person whose capacity to think has deteriorated. Since clients of this type cannot concentrate on the one point under consideration, the counselor must learn to ask questions and re-direct the discussion so as to give the interview the needed focus. Since

1. Sibulkin, Lillian, "Special Skills in Working with the Older Person," Social Casework, April, 1959, Vol.40. p.210.

abstract thinking is not as acute as in previous years, skill will be needed to elicit during the interview clues that might lead to a determination of what the person's real needs and concerns are.

Admission and Eligibility

One particular area in which a social worker could be helpful is in "intake." Entering a home often represents a drastic break with past life. The experiences may be quite traumatic if no interpretation of such a move is given, or else if no support during such a transition is offered. Many persons who apply for admission do so in desperation. In some instances, people could be helped to explore community resources which would permit other plans that might be more suited to the person's needs.

Menno Home has, up to the present, not had long waiting lists. This has meant that the Home has accepted virtually any person who could be admitted within the framework of established health and legal regulations. However, the time will likely come when the waiting list will be longer, and when selection of tenants, who could most beneficially use the Home experience, will need to be made. If a trained social worker could eventually be employed, even if on a part-time basis to start out with, that worker could prepare the applicant for what may well be his first experience in such intimate, corporate living. On a continuing basis, the worker could help the

new resident with problems of adjustment to the home and to the other residents. The worker would be inclined to keep the family of the occupant informed as to the person's progress and adjustment, and helping them to carry a share of responsibility for the older person's well-being.

Further, the worker could help in working out alternative plans of housing for applicants rejected for whatever reason. One such alternative may, for instance, be "homemaker service." Louis Kuplan says,

I think we need to develop a structure of services which will remove the present heavy emphasis on institutional care and place it instead, where it rightly belongs, on the home. We need, for example, a system of visiting housekeeping services which will help old people cope with the physical problems of maintaining a home. We need a system of friendly visitor services to help overcome the loneliness and isolation which are associated with old age. We need, also, a system of visiting nursing services so that we can avoid the all too common expedient of committing the elderly to hospital as soon as they fall ill.¹

One factor which will remove intake pressure off Menno Home is that still another Home is being built in Clearbrook. This new 40 bed home is under the Mennonite Brethren Church, and will cater primarily to its own constituent group. This will mean that at least several of the Mennonite Brethren residents now at Menno Home will likely transfer to their own institution. When this happens, the present waiting list of five

*
1. Kuplan, Louis, "Leisure Time Services for the Aged and Patterns of Organization." Proceedings, the first B.C. Conference on The Needs and Problems of the Aging. The University of British Columbia. p.32.

will be depleted.

However, once it is known that long waiting periods are not necessary, applicants will request immediate entrance once the decision to enter the Home has been made. Accepting all who apply may present the difficulty of having in the Home residents who simply do not fit in. Here, too, a trained social worker aware of community resources could make referrals on behalf of the clients to other services which might more nearly satisfy the needs of the person concerned.

A further area in which a social worker could be helpful is that of providing protective services. These are services which are required where the person's capacity to act prudently in his own behalf are diminished, and which demand varying measures of intervention with the intent of protecting the interests of the aged person. Reviewing a great variety of such services which might be relevant, Mary Hemming and Marcella Farror, writing on this point, suggest that,

The nature of the protective problem is such that resources of many kinds must be readily available, to be used immediately and flexibly, to supplement those of the client, his family, and friends. Among these resources are medical and psychiatric care, legal services, nursing care, hospital and home nursing care, family home care, housekeeper and homemaker services, drugs, ambulance service, and funds for immediate needs such as rent, clothing, and food. The social worker is at the hub in mobilizing each needed resource quickly, both for diagnosis and treatment.

1. Hemming, Mary, L., and Farror, Marcella S., "Protective Services for Older People." Social Casework, January, 1960, Vol. 42. p.19.

Although Menno Home already provides many of the above services, there are some that could more reasonably be handled by utilizing resources, public and private, which are generally available for senior citizens in the community or province.

It would seem profitable for Menno Home to take steps to employ a social work consultant for the Board of Directors and the Administration. Some institutions elect such a person to the Board, and then assign certain duties to this consultant. Eventually, the services would be developed sufficiently, both in quality and quantity, to warrant contemplation of hiring a full-time group worker or caseworker.

An alternative to the above might be to make provision for a social worker - chaplain to be employed full time. There are students in Schools of Social Work who are also graduates of Biblical Seminaries. These could be used to advantage in developing a program for Menno Home that would minister to "the whole man."

Recreational Activities

The residents of housing projects have free time they sometimes just "do not know what to do with." They need an activity program geared to their interests, capacities, and needs. Of course, since the residents of Menno Home at present are on the average between 70 and 80 years of age, there may be the temptation to think that people of this age would not be too interested in

various activities and that, therefore, it would be senseless to even bother planning a program. However, it is likely that, in time, people in the 65 to 75 age range may be the predominant group, especially since Mennonites today are going into various industries where the compulsory retirement age is 65 for men and 60 for women. Being deprived of a regular income, they move into housing projects which they can afford. However, at this age there is still a good deal of energy and ambition available, and it will need to be channeled if the Home is to provide a beneficial "way of life."

Almost everything that older people like to do together can be included in the program. Certain games such as chess, checkers, Chinese checkers are activities that older people enjoy thoroughly in their own homes, and could well invest themselves in while in an institution. There are several areas which can be explored. As suggested in the study by Patricia Sharp, The Fair Haven Home has a Social Committee which was established by the Board of Directors, with one of the Board members acting as chairman. This committee plans programs, including occasional trips which the residents of that home enjoy immensely. The residents of Fair Haven have a lounge which they use for many and varied activities.

Some homes enjoy provisions whereby programs are initiated by outsiders. Dania Home has a number of interested groups which contact the matron to offer their services. Although residents

of Dania do not participate in planning the programs and activities, they do enjoy them and turn out in good numbers for them.

Other activities that could be of benefit to residents of Menno Home would be musical programs, discussion groups around various areas of interest, craftwork, sewing, knitting and making bandages for the Red Cross or some other such organization.

The residents could well be encouraged to participate in activities similar to those they took part in in earlier years, even if on a much smaller scale. Since most of the residents come from a rural, farming background, they could be encouraged to take part in some gardening or general maintenance work around the buildings. Done properly, such activities would help the aged person to realize that there can be continuity in life as life advances from stage to stage; that there need not be an abrupt end to all activities even though circumstances place them in a home for the aged.

To create the most effective activity program, it is necessary to let the residents take part in the planning. The family, or even the referral source, may question the capacity of older people to be useful planning participants, but the responsible program initiator will need to determine to what extent it is fair to call upon the residents to do their own planning.

Many of the ordinary problems the residents of Menno Home

face are looked after by the management, and by the Mennonite ministers in the community. However, some of the problems could be lessened if the residents were given interesting things to do. A trained social worker would be able to assist the residents in developing a program of activities geared to corporate interests of Menno Home occupants. This would mean an assessment of former interests as well as a consideration of what things are still within their capacity.

In the light of the considerations set out here, it is a major recommendation of this study that steps should be taken to provide a lounge about equal in size to the present dining area for recreational and worship purposes. In the opinion of the writer, this could best be done by adding a wing, similar to the one now housing the dining area, off the kitchen on the west side of the building. This new part could then be used as dining area, and the present dining room could serve as a lounge. This would also permit the residents to profer a cup of tea to their occasional guests.

A further recommendation is that garden plots, for the men capable and interested, be developed. Some of the produce thus realized could be utilized by the institution, giving the resident the satisfaction that he was able to contribute to the Home in ways other than cash.

A group worker could be used to help the Home facilitate the above activities by selecting residents who would be interested.

After all, the purpose of a group work program in a home for the aged must be to help people to help themselves, through the development of an interesting and vital group experience. This could take place through discussion groups, panel discussions, short talks or through question and answer periods. It may be difficult, but its possibilities are always worth exploring.

It is too easy in the area of leisure-time activities to "do for" older people rather than "do with" them. What Louis Kuplan says about doing things for older people in the way of planning for their future applies to recreation as much as to any other area:

I believe that we must not remove from people responsibility for themselves and for others purely because of age. But we tend to do just that. In essence, what we do with our old people is to kill them with kindness because we take away from them their sense of responsibility. We think we are being kind to our older people, to our parents, when we tell them not to work on the dishes, not to cook, not to mend, not to keep house or not to do various things they want to do... Let us encourage the retention of a sense of responsibility for the aged and for others. ¹

To fulfill the requirements necessary to start a good activity program, and to involve the residents themselves not only in planning, but in carrying out the plan, demands adequate training. This is where the group worker, grounded in the knowledge of collective human behavior, could make a substantial contribution to the leisure-time activities of Menno Home.

1. Kuplan, Louis, Building a Philosophy Towards Aging, The University of British Columbia, Department of University Extension, January, 1958.

Conclusions

The sponsors of Menno Home are to be commended not only for getting the Home built, and made a reality from its first difficult beginnings, but for their continuing activity on behalf of the old people within the community. The overwhelming majority of the tenants spoken to by the writer expressed satisfaction with their living quarters. The most significant hesitance on the part of some was that they felt so lonely.

Menno Home is another example of the tendency to concentrate only on housing for the older person rather than providing public housing for old persons within the low income bracket. This has served to isolate the older person from the rest of the community, with the result that they cannot benefit from the many services the community ordinarily affords for those able to get around. What is worse, these experienced older people cannot contribute in a significant sense to the welfare of the community at large. Recourse to parks, stores, libraries, churches and civic activities is all too often quite not possible for these residents.

It can be fairly said that simply to provide housing for the aged is not enough to keep them content. They still desire, at least in most instances, to remain a part of the community, sharing in its interests, and in its general endeavors. However, for many of the residents of such homes this is impossible. Therefore, it becomes the duty of the administration to provide a program of activities that is as nearly akin to ordinary, private

living as the resources and circumstances would allow. This means that the residents will need to be advised and guided in providing their own activities and entertainment. To make these activities meaningful requires the insights of a person well versed in both social and community relationships.

Menno Home makes extensive efforts to serve its residents well. The Mennonite Church Ministers, and the Ministers of other faiths whose services may be required, are available at any time to anyone who may request their presence. The services these men render could profitably be coupled with the experience, training and good will of a social worker, resulting in a programme of activities that would minister to "the whole man."

APPENDIX A

Menna Home

Mennonite Benevolent Society

MENNONITE BENEV. SOCIETY
MENNO - HOME
MARSHALL RD., R. R. 5,
ABBOTSFORD, B. C.
UL. 3-9111,

Date Admitted :

1. Name Age
2. Address from which admitted
-
3. Date, month and year of birth
4. Place of birth 5. Came to B.C.
6. Marital Status 7. Nationality
8. Religion 9. What Church
10. Name and Address of Next of Kin :
 A
 Phone
- B
 Phone
11. Old-Age Security (Pension) File No. Amount \$
12. Old-Age Assistance (Bonus) File No. Amount \$
13. Social Welfare Registration File No. Amount \$
14. Social Responsibility of
15. Medical Identity No.
16. Person or Organization responsible for maintenance :

 Amount \$
17. Address of Person or Organization responsible for maintenance :

18. Maintenance charges \$
19. Date of discharge
20. Reason for discharge
21. Address discharged to
-
22. Remarks :

APPENDIX B

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