



## MENNONITE WOMEN USA

### Celebrating 100 Years

## Where we have come from and where we are going

by Marlene Swartzendruber

Mennonite Women has been organized for 100 years. At my congregation, Salem Mennonite Church in Shickley, Nebraska, the first “sewing circle” was held in July 1918. The ladies gathered together, setting aside a day each month to sew for the needy, fellowship with each other and glorify God with the work of their hands. The ladies brought their machines from home and sewed in the hallway of the church. In 1927, a quilt batting cost 75 cents and 15 yards of material was \$1.50.

In 1953, 28 young women at Salem organized “Willing Workers.” Some of their activities were cleaning and hanging wallpaper for those in need in the community, butchering 200 chickens for Grace Children’s home in Henderson, Nebraska, organizing a church library and creating an extension committee to serve meals at funerals and lunch stands for sales. (Information taken from Salem Mennonite Church 1891-1991.)

Over the years we have had very well-attended sewing days. Many items were made for relief, and in the last 38 years items were also made for the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Relief Sale. At one time we also had evening meetings for the ladies.

In the past 20 years at Salem, we have seen our once-a-month sewing day change. More ladies went to work outside of the home and our elderly ladies went to their reward. Our group is smaller but we still have the same joy in getting together.

No doubt you have seen some of the same changes in your church groups. In asking the churches or conference what their group looks like, I have found some with up to 40 members and one with just two faithful ladies. I think we have all found our place and mission in our churches and communities.

I have been a part of the Central Plains Mennonite Women (MW) board for seven years now. We have seen changes at this level as well. I began on a committee of seven and now we are struggling to find replacements and are continuing with five persons. If you would be interested in serving on this committee please contact me at [tomrars@windstream.net](mailto:tomrars@windstream.net)

*Marlene Swartzendruber is a member of Salem Mennonite Church in Shickley, Nebraska and the president of Central Plains Mennonite Women.*















