



THE  
**HISTORY**  
ENDOWMENT PROJECT

Square One World Media presents this book in honour of

**DANIEL & ELSIE KLASSEN**

in appreciation for growing the HIStory Endowment Project,  
so that “by telling their story, we can tell HIS.”

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*We, Daniel and Elsie Klassen, believe that we were created to be in relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and that sharing the hope of the Gospel is the most meaningful work God gives us to do.*

*We appreciate the mission of Square One World Media to share the Gospel through creative, quality and accessible media resources.*

*We want to leave a lasting legacy by ensuring that Square One World Media has consistent funding to share the Gospel for years to come.*

*We choose to support the ministry of Square One World Media through a legacy gift to the HIStory Endowment Project by bequest from our estate.*



August 2023

## Square One World Media: Carrying the Legacy of the Past into the Future

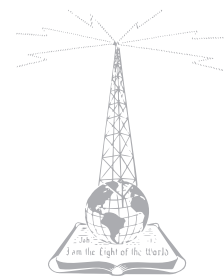
*“Your faithfulness endures to all generations,  
You have established the earth, and it stands fast.”  
Psalm 119:90*

Gospel Light Hour began in 1947 when a group of Bible College students in Winnipeg obeyed the call to use radio to advance the Kingdom of God. Throughout the decades, programs, and name changes—from Gospel Light Hour to Mennonite Brethren Communications to Family Life Network to Square One World Media—the goal has remained the same: to produce Christ-centred media that proclaims the light of the Gospel to all generations.

For over 75 years, God has led godly men and women to pray for, support, and work at the ministry.

And God’s faithfulness has been evident! Millions of people around the world have heard the Gospel message, and thousands have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Only God knows the full impact!

Square One continues to have a great team of men and women—board members, staff, and partners around the world—with a heart to serve God. They are committed to carrying the legacy of the past into the future: that of spreading the light of the Gospel into the world through media.



## DANIEL & ELSIE KLASSEN

### Living to bring Glory to God

*Daniel and Elsie Klassen celebrated 60 years of marriage in 2023. 60 years of doing life together, developing shared values, growing a family, and choosing in all ways to put God first. But before they became ‘Daniel and Elsie’, they were two children living parallel yet separate lives in a close-knit Mennonite community in Southern Ontario.*



Daniel is the 9th of 11 children born to Frank H. and Katharina Klassen. The oldest daughter, Susanna, died as a child. Shown here on the front steps of their home: Daniel (3rd row, far right), with parents Frank and Katharina, and siblings (in order of age) Tina, Pete, Harry, Mary, Frank, Jacob, Henry, John, and Abe.

Daniel (Danny) was born in Steinbach, Manitoba on July 21, 1940, to Frank H. and Katharina Klassen. Soon after, the Klassen family moved to southern Ontario where Frank found work at Foster Wheeler Canada in St. Catharines. It was 1941, and the factory was making armaments. But the Klassens were part of a peace church, and Frank didn't want to make the weapons that killed. He quit the factory job, even though the income was steady. Daniel was very young, but he was influenced by his father's choice to be true to his beliefs, and to trust that God would provide.

Soon after, the family joined the newly-formed St. Catharines Mennonite Brethren Church. Daniel remembers the many preachers and Sunday School teachers who were great story tellers. Even as a teenager, Daniel realized the significant power of story to change lives. "The laws of the Old Testament are all about right and wrong," he explains. "But Jesus came along and told stories that were connecting with the people and changing them."

Eden, a local Christian high school, held evangelistic services every year. The Klassen family attended regularly and on February 11, 1951, 11-year-old Danny went forward and prayed with a counsellor. "No one was preaching hellfire and destruction, but I had a fear of dying and going to hell," he recalls. He was baptized several years later in Lake Ontario.



Meanwhile, Elsie's parents, Abram A. and Aganetha Dyck, had also left Russia to start their married life in Canada, first in Winkler, Manitoba and then in Mullingar, Saskatchewan. By the time Elsie was born on October 24, 1939, the family had settled in the town of Campden, Ontario.

Elsie's parents chose her first name, but her siblings added a second name, 'May', after a kindly neighbour woman. Elsie believed this was her legal middle name, even using it on her driver's licence, until she discovered it was not actually on her birth certificate. She stopped using 'May', but still likes to use the nickname her high school friends gave her: Suzie-Q.

As a child, Elsie was puzzled when friends told her they had two birthdays. When she was about 10 years old, her mother spoke to her at bedtime about what it meant to be a Christian. They prayed together. It was May 23. When Elsie woke up the next morning, she knew she was a brand-new person. Now she understood how she could have two birthdays. She was baptized at age 16, also in Lake Ontario.



Elsie is the youngest of Abram A. & Aganetha Dyck's 8 children. Shown in front of their house in Campden, Ontario: 3-year-old Elsie (seated, front center) with parents Abram and Aganetha, and siblings (in order of age) Hertha, Abe, Katherine, Mary, Martha, Henry, and Nettie.



Elsie May, her mother Aganetha Dyck, and her doll Betty Lou. Elsie remembers having to sit very still for a long time so the photo wouldn't be blurred. She has never been good at sitting still. "I still don't like it! Apparently as a young child—of all the children sitting up front in church—I wasn't known as the quietest."



Daniel began attending Eden Christian High School in grade nine. But Elsie's older siblings had attended Eden and made quite a name for themselves. Elsie's father felt it would be best if there was no Dyck family representative there for at least a year. So, Elsie started high school in Beamsville where she particularly enjoyed the music program. But then she switched to Eden for grade 10. Well! It was all about the music there and she loved it!

Elsie lived in the dorm at Eden. She and her friends had a good time, and they especially loved singing and playing piano. They formed a double trio. "I thought there was no better life than doing music!" she recalls. But then, Elsie got sick with tonsillitis. So sick that it impacted her heart, and the doctor severely restricted her activities.

And so it was that Elsie was alone at a desk in the classroom after school, doing nothing much but sitting, when Daniel walked into the room because it was his turn to sweep the classroom floors.

They began talking, and an easy friendship developed.

After grade 12, they went separate ways for grade 13. When they ended up at the same Bible School in Kitchener a year later, they found themselves part of the same choirs and quartets: Daniel singing and Elsie accompanying on the piano. They found that the other was still an easy person to talk with. Daniel recalls, "Before I called her, I would make notes and plan an outline for what we would talk about. Then I discovered that I didn't need notes – we could just talk."

After Bible School, Elsie trained as a bookkeeper and began working in Kitchener. She had hoped to be a teacher like some of her sisters, but she failed to meet the entrance requirements for teachers' college. "And I'm so glad!" says Elsie now. "It turns out, I love numbers. And I love bookkeeping. And I don't even mind filing!"

With no interest in numbers, Daniel studied to become a teacher: first at Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, then at Waterloo Lutheran University (now Wilfred Laurier) before accepting a teaching position in Norwich, Ontario.



The easy friendship of the high school years had developed into something more. On September 14, 1963, Daniel and Elsie were married. Daniel recalls that Elsie still called him Danny. But he felt he had outgrown the nickname and wanted to be called Dan. Says Elsie, "Well, there was no romance in the name 'Dan', so I called him Daniel." And Daniel he has been ever since!



During the 8 years that Daniel taught at the small country school in Norwich, three children were born to the couple. Carmen, their firstborn, on January 26, 1965. A sweet, creative, and artistic girl with a great sense of humour, Carmen helped to welcome identical twins, Matthew and Michael, into the family on August 26, 1969. It didn't take long for Carmen and her parents to notice that Matthew and Michael never stopped talking—but only to each other! Matthew, the outgoing, high energy social child, and Michael the studious, thoughtful deep thinker.

Growing up, Daniel and Elsie had both experienced daily devotional times—in German—with both parents and all the siblings gathered around the table and participating. It was a daily reminder that theirs was a Christian family, and that Christ was the head of the home.

“We still do that,” says Elsie. “We follow a devotional book every day after supper.” Adds Daniel, “When our children were young, we did it with them. They would do the reading.”



Carmen (center), with Michael (right) and Matthew (left). Elsie recalls, “I wanted twins, so I prayed to have twins. Daniel was scared to death when they took an X-ray and there were two babies.” Replies Daniel, “I wasn’t aware that Elsie was praying for twins....”



Meanwhile, at the Norwich school, Daniel was the school counsellor, but with little formal training. Daniel and Elsie took a sabbatical year so Daniel could get an M.Ed. in Counselling Psychology. The young family moved to Ottawa where one year of study became three as Daniel was encouraged to not only complete his Master's, but to also begin a PhD in Counselling Psychology. He and Elsie discussed it—how would they survive with three children if Daniel was in school? They stepped out in faith, believing that God was leading them to continue graduate school. And God did provide, even more than they hoped for.

With a PhD almost completed, Daniel started applying for jobs. After 30 Christian colleges turned him down, he applied at 2 secular Ontario universities and was offered a position at both. They accepted the offer at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, thinking to stay for a year or two.



Daniel completed his PhD in 1979. By the time he retired in June, 2000 (shown here with Elsie), he had been teaching for 25 years. He continued as a part-time lecturer until 2015 and is Professor Emeritus at Lakehead University. Early in his career, Daniel had opportunities to work in the church. But he felt God's leading to make a mark for Christianity as a psychologist in the secular world rather than as a pastor in a local church.



Throughout the years, Elsie has accompanied many choirs and ensembles: first at school, then in the church and the community. While practicing, she always prays that her music will honour God. "Music is my life," she says. "Without it, I should have died. Whenever I didn't have anything else to do, I could go to the piano." Elsie's piano, shown here in the late 1990s with oldest grandchild, Kiana, at the keys.

The family attended Lakehead Baptist Church in Thunder Bay. When the church elders asked why they wanted to join the church, Daniel and Elsie replied, "We've come here to serve." The pastor was surprised. "People usually come to be served," he said.

Daniel taught adult Sunday School and Bible studies. Elsie became involved with the music of the church. Daniel and two other men formed a trio with Elsie as the accompanist. They practiced several times a week, performed regularly, and eventually recorded a CD under the name, "Re-born".

A men's small ensemble is typically a quartet, not a trio. People would come to them and say, "You're missing a bass." And they'd say, "No. We're like the BeeGees. We don't need a bass!"





Elsie recalls the sabbatical year in Vancouver: “We lived there like tourists for 11 months. It was like a honeymoon.” Highlights were riding their bicycles, even in the rain; the Japanese cherry trees lining the boulevard where they lived, especially when they were in bloom; and enjoying the lunchtime concerts given by the students of the Department of Music. Shown here, standing from left: Matthew, Elsie and Michael. Seated: Carmen and Daniel.

In autumn of 1990, the family again took a sabbatical year. They went to Vancouver where Daniel was a visiting lecturer at UBC while also studying Jungian psychology. Carmen had completed a university degree in journalism and was working in Vancouver. The boys were enrolled at UBC: Matthew studying music and Michael physics.

Back in Thunder Bay, Daniel returned to teaching at Lakehead University. He had started his career, expecting to work in a Christian college because he understood the Biblical ideas behind the psychology he was studying. Ironically, all his teaching happened in secular universities where many of his students didn’t even believe in God!

Daniel prayed that he would be one link in the chain that would bring someone closer to God. “You’re facing a class of 75 students, and you have no idea what their needs are. It takes a miracle to make a meaningful connection between my words and their needs, but God can do it.”

Daniel was teaching Counselling Psychology. Students asked if he really did counselling or if he just talked about it. He began a counselling business—The Listening Centre—that kept him in practice with what he was teaching while providing relevant illustrations for his classes. The Listening Centre also connects well with Elsie’s skillset; for 30 years, she has been the bookkeeper and administrator that keeps the business going.

Meanwhile, Elsie also had the opportunity to further her education. In 1997, along with Matthew, she graduated from Lakehead University. Both had majored in music.

At the same time, Daniel noticed that there was a distinct lack of conversation about the topic of forgiveness at professional conferences. Counselling and treatment for mental illness often focus on broken relationships, so he found it amazing that forgiveness would not be front and center. In about 1990, it became more acceptable in secular circles to talk about the role of forgiveness in restoring relationships.



Elsie taught Carmen, Matthew, and Michael to play piano, and she is thrilled that they each passed the love for music on to their own children. “Each one of the grandchildren can sing beautifully, and many of them play instruments as well,” she says. Daniel and Elsie shown here at their 50th anniversary in 2013 with all eight grandchildren (in order of age): Kiana, Matéa, Gabriel, Annaliese, Malcolm, Everett, Mackenzie, and Dominique.





The Klassen Family celebrated Annaliese's 12th birthday (January 2, 2016) with a cold, wintry trail ride at Fallbrook Trail, near Erin, ON. Shown on horseback, from left: Carmen, Michael, Daniel, Elsie, Matéa, Kajsa, Mackenzie, Malcolm, Kiana, Annaliese, Matthew, Everett, Paul, Tetyana, Dominique, and Gabriel.

Daniel began speaking professionally about forgiveness. Without labelling the principles of forgiveness as Christian, Daniel teaches what he has learned from the Bible about grace, mercy, and freedom. He says, "There are themes that everyone follows if they want to successfully forgive." He published *The Forgiveness Workbook* in 2003, a resource that is still used by Christian and secular therapists today. Daniel is a life-long learner and his understanding about forgiveness continues to expand and evolve. He is thankful that opportunities to speak on the topic continue to come his way.

Today, Carmen, Matthew, and Michael are all married, living in different provinces, and with teenage and young adult children of their own. But 48 years after taking a short-term position at Lakehead University, Daniel and Elsie still live in Thunder Bay where they continue to serve their church and their community.

A ministry they are committed to supporting is Square One World Media in Winnipeg. Elsie is inspired by the many language groups they work with, and that the focus is always the Gospel. She also appreciates that the ministry has Mennonite Brethren roots, just like she and Daniel do. She enjoys reading all the mail that comes from Square One and keeps Daniel updated on all that is happening there.





Daniel and Elsie believe their purpose in life is to honour the Lord in everything they do. Their 12 points of advice for a 60-year marriage reflect shared values of honesty, commitment, humour, and intentionally putting God first. Shown here, Daniel and Elsie in 2023.

## DANIEL & ELSIE'S ADVICE FOR A 60-YEAR MARRIAGE

1. Be thankful; intentionally choose to be grateful for at least one thing each day.
2. Exercise your sense of humour. Life can be funny; you can't make some things up!
3. Pick your battles; not every molehill is a mountain to die on.
4. The first rule of communication: Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
5. Begin with the end in mind; every trip deserves a destination!
6. "Forgive your enemies but remember their names." (John F. Kennedy)
7. Forgive: "To forgive is to set the prisoner free and discover the prisoner is me." (Lewis Smedes)
8. You've made your vows; failure is not an option.
9. Be honest; tell the truth!
10. Build trust; guard trust. Solomon said, "Guard your heart: for out of it are the issues of life."
11. Remember God; put God first.
12. "If you can't 'forgive and forget'- then at least pick one." (Anon)

In response to Square One World Media's 75th anniversary mailer in February 2022, Elsie writes:

*I don't recall when I first heard of "Family Life Network", but I was blown away with the number of languages with which you worked. It was exciting to follow you in your work. To this day I tell friends about your many programs. I pray for you daily. Thank you, each one of you, for the fabulous work you do. May our Lord continue to bless you and the 'telling the story of Jesus' in the many ways you do!" - Elsie Klassen*