

Support Services Council

Support Services Council Members 2007-08:

Dianne Hildebrand Schlegel, Morden MB; Ed Janzen (Chair), Abbotsford BC; Bill Janzen, Calgary AB; Rita Strickland, St. Catharines ON; Harry Wiens, Altona MB; Mark Wurtz, Rosthern SK

Support Services' mandate is to support Formation and Witness with administrative services to enable these programs of the church to do their work efficiently and effectively. We also provide services such as pension plan administration and assembly planning directly to our member congregations and area churches. We are pleased to share with you highlights of the past year in Support Services' seven primary areas of ministry.

Communications

Communications oversees most communication pieces that leave MC Canada, helping to bring consistent messaging to the work and ministries of Formation and Witness.

In addition, we have been working to reach out to a younger, media-savvy segment of our members by launching a YouTube channel in late 2007. More than twenty videos, including an annual report, an invitation to this year's Assembly and Summit, and profiles of many Witness international ministry sites, can be viewed and downloaded for projection in your congregation at www.youtube.com/mennonitechurchca. We are very grateful to Hyo Sook Yun, a South Korean volunteer via MCC's International Visitor Exchange Program. Hyo Sook has given a year of her time to MC Canada to produce many of these videos for us.

The Communications department also leads the production of Church Matters, our monthly radio program focused on the life and significance of the church. It is now in its second year of production. Themes in the past year have included global gift sharing, kids and communion, and aboriginal Christianity. You can listen to any episode in podcast format at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/158 or on iTunes (search for "Mennonite Church Canada"). The program can also be heard on the third Sunday of each month on CFAM 950 (Altona), AM 1250 (Steinbach) and CJRB 1220 (Boissevain).

Our communications staff team recently enjoyed a slight increase.

Deborah Froese, who had been working as our news writer on a contract basis, was hired to the new half-time position of Director of News Services in early 2008. Dan Dyck, Director of Communications, was managing our news service. He has now been able to shift more of his focus to communications planning and strategy as we continually strive to connect meaningfully with all members of our diverse constituency.

Resource Development

Resource Development coordinates and leads activities that inspire the generosity of so many of you. Thank you for your support! We are so grateful to report that total individual, corporate, and congregational donations for the 2007-08 fiscal year exceeded our budget by more than \$100,000! Your generosity allowed us to meet all of our commitments for 2007-08 and even to project small increases in ministry expenditures for 2008-09.

So many of you are willing to share your many gifts and are eager to hear stories about how those gifts are making a difference. The Christmas and Spring Gift Samplers you have become accustomed to seeing in the *Canadian Mennonite* are an important tool for us to share with you the impact of the gifts that you give, as are the "Celebration Stories" included in each issue of Equipping (sent 10 times per year to your church) and the many giving opportunities highlighted at www.healingandhope.ca. We joyfully offer these



Tim Miller Dyck (Editor/Publisher, *Canadian Mennonite*) at the 2008 Spring Leadership Assembly.

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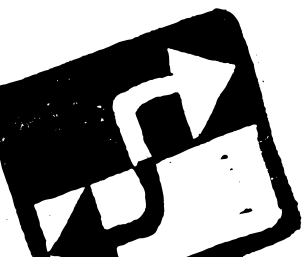
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stories and invitations back to you with our gratitude and with the gratitude of so many in whose lives your generosity makes a difference. If you would like to know more about any ministry that you have supported or would like to support, please contact our office at 1-866-888-6785 or office@mennonitechurch.ca and we will do our best to get you the information you need.

Assembly planning

At Abbotsford 2007, delegates passed a resolution asking MC Canada to develop guidelines to reduce the consumption of energy and other resources when planning future assemblies. We are very thankful for the leadership of Mennonite Creation Care Network (MCCN) who responded to this resolution by developing "Guidelines for Greening Church-Wide Assemblies and Regional Conferences". A copy of these guidelines is included in the discernment section of this report book. We have used these guidelines to plan this year's assembly, and we will provide a full report on what we have been able to achieve at the delegate assembly itself.

We are also aware that much assembly "greening" depends on the choices of assembly delegates. Car pooling, choosing bus or train travel, and remembering to bring a reusable mug and the report book that was sent to your congregation or area church are all things that delegates can do to reduce the environmental impact of our gathering. We look forward to hearing from you as well about the choices you have made in support of last year's resolution.

Plans are already underway for the 2009 MC Canada annual delegate assembly. We will meet in beautiful Saskatoon, SK. under the theme "Living Inside Out" based on Colossians 3:12-17. As we anticipate a high degree of participation from MC Canada constituents at Mennonite World Conference's global assembly in Asuncion, Paraguay (July 14-19, 2009), we have decided to reduce the competition between the two events by moving our assembly to a weekend in late May or early June. The final date will be announced at the delegate assembly in Winnipeg.

Please note that for 2009 only this will mean that the delegate assembly and the youth assembly will meet at different times and places. The 2009 youth assembly will take place July 6-10 at Briercreech Bible College in Caronport, SK. We are planning for the youth and delegate assemblies to again take place jointly in 2011, the next year in which a youth assembly is scheduled.

Information technology

Since MC Canada's official inception on February 1, 2002 we have increasingly used the internet to deliver news and information about MC Canada. With virtually everything we produce being posted to our web site, traffic to our web site continues to grow dramatically each year. PrayerNet, the prayer newsletter created by Witness' Congregational Partnerships department, has wide email circulation allowing subscribers to receive immediate notice of urgent prayer requests. Equipping, our congregational resource package, is delivered electronically 6 out of 10 times annually, making it easy for church administrators to forward information to the right person in each congregation.

Although distributing material electronically does not reduce the staff time required for preparation, design, and editing, it does save paper and money spent on postage. It is also convenient for constituents who can access the resources they need when they need them from the comfort of their homes or offices, and who can easily forward items to interested colleagues or church members.

Rest assured that we have not forgotten about those who do not have internet access! Everything we mass distribute electronically is also distributed in hard copy to those congregations who do not have internet access at their church offices. This is currently about 10% of our member congregations.

Pension Advisory Committee Members 2007-08

Includes all Support Services Council members listed above, plus:
Glen Siemens, Plum Coulee MB; Loren Brown, Winnipeg MB; Pam Peters-Pries, Executive Secretary, Support Services (Chair); Kirsten Schroeder, Director of Human Resources

Support Services Council also appoints representatives to Mennonite Foundation of Canada and Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service, which publishes Canadian Mennonite.

MC Canada members of Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service 2007-08

Aiden Enns, Winnipeg MB; John Goossen, Vancouver BC; Ed Janzen, Abbotsford BC; Paul Krahn, Altona MB

MC Canada members of Mennonite Foundation of Canada 2007-08

Rudy Friesen, Winnipeg MB; Nick Heide, Winkler MB; Tony Huynh, Winnipeg MB; Clayton Loewen, Fort Langley BC; Karen Martens Zimmerly, Regina SK; Anita Tiessen, Mississauga ON

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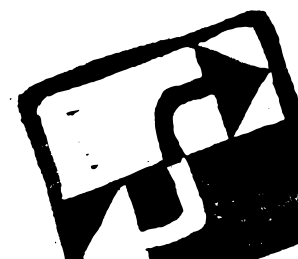
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The following staff contributed significantly to our work in 2007:

Gerd Bartel, Western Director of Resource Development; **Lois Bergen**, Receptionist/Administrative Assistant; **Dan Dyck**, Director of Communications; **Deborah Froese**, Director of News Services; **Grant Klassen**, Web Servant; **Karen Peters**, Executive Assistant; **Katharina Nuss**, Communications Coordinator/Graphic Designer; **Lynette Wiebe**, Communications Coordinator (away on leave); **Pam Peters-Pries**, Executive Secretary; **Alice Pound**, Receptionist/Administrative Assistant; **Al Rempel**, Director of Resource Development; **Kirsten Schroeder**, Director of Human Resources; **Miriam Tshimanga**, Receptionist/Administrative Assistant (away on leave)

Volunteers:

Irmgard Reimer (Reception); **Hyo Sook Yun** (Media Producer)

Pension Plan

Since our re-vamped pension plan launched in May 2003, plan members have slowly but steadily taken advantage of the plan's 28 different investment options and enhanced retirement and financial planning services. As of December 31, 2007, 670 of the plan's 743 active members were invested in the Socially Responsible Asset Allocation Fund (SRAAF). This is the "core option" fund in which members' contributions are invested if they do not select one of the 27 other options. The SRAAF holds 78% of the assets in the plan and generated a net return of 2.83% in 2007 compared to a return of 1.5% for Canadian pension plans on average.

While a high level of participation in the pension plan's core option symbolizes a high degree of trust in the Pension Advisory Committee (PAC) which is responsible for the plan, the PAC is always encouraging greater ownership and engagement in retirement planning by plan members themselves. Thus, the PAC was very pleased when Great West Life, our pension plan administrator, introduced an "engaged member" feature on their statements and web site in early 2008. This feature allows plan members to enter information such as their desired retirement income and projections about investment performance and inflation. Using this customized information, members' semi-annual statements and the Great West Life web site will provide feedback about whether current contribution levels and investment choices will allow members to achieve their goals. To become engaged members, plan members may log on to www.grsaccess.com, choose "Plan Your Retirement", and follow the instructions that pop up.

The PAC continues to promote the Group RRSP option in the MC Canada Pension Plan, which was launched in September 2006. The Group RRSP offers flexibility, low management fees, and spousal accounts. It is open to all employees of MC Canada congregations and their spouses. To learn more, call Kirsten Schroeder at 1-866-888-6785, ext. 110.

Human Resources

After several months of discussion and planning, administration of the MC Canada pension plan and group life/Accident, Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) insurance plans for participating MCEC congregations moved from the MCEC office to the MC Canada office on February 1, 2008. This shift has left a more manageable workload for MCEC staff and allowed for some streamlining of administrative procedures for MC Canada staff, who also administer these benefit programs for participating congregations in our four other area churches. Congregational treasurers and plan members in MCEC are getting used to directing their premium payments and questions to MC Canada's Winnipeg office rather than the MCEC office.

Revisions to Manitoba employment standards legislation in April 2007 triggered a review of many of MC Canada's personnel policies to ensure that they were in keeping with the new standards. We are pleased to report that in almost all cases our existing policies already met or exceeded the new standards, and revisions to ensure compliance were made where needed. Changes to overtime work and compensation legislation initiated healthy discussions among staff, board and council members regarding appropriate work hours and work-life balance, and resulted in a new overtime and flex-time policy that carefully balances the needs of both employer and employee.



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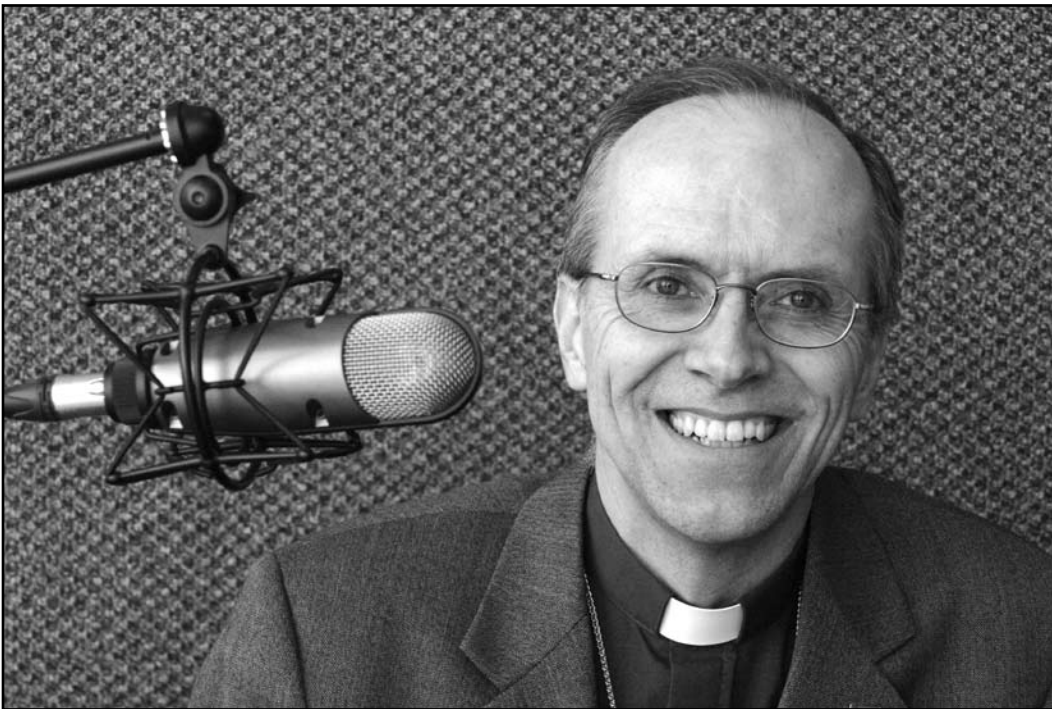


Property Management

In response to the statement on creation care affirmed by our delegates at Abbotsford 2007, MC Canada is working on a process to “green” our main office at 600 Shaftesbury Boulevard. Using material provided by Greening Sacred Spaces (www.faith-commongood.net/gss), staff is working on an audit of the energy and resource consumption of our offices. This audit will help us plan to reduce our environmental impact through changes in work patterns and possible building and equipment upgrades.

Funding for equipment or fixture replacements and building improvements in our annual budget is very limited. Major improvements or retrofits to reduce our environmental impact will require above-budget funding. As with greening our assembly, our efforts to green our office space will depend not only on the commitment and creativity of MC Canada staff to make appropriate choices, but also on the commitment of our Canada-wide church family to support those choices with donations to make them possible.

*–Submitted by Pam Peters-Pries, Executive Secretary, Support Services;
Ed Janzen, Chair, Support Services Council*



Donald Phillips, Diocesan Bishop for the Anglican Diocese of Rupertsland, was interviewed for Church Matters, MC Canada's radio program, at the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Mennonite Church Canada hosted that event this Spring.

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