

June 2005, *Equipping*



Assembly Plans

Assembly 2005 is fast approaching. As of May 10, over 800 Canadians are registered to participate in this joint MC USA – MC Canada gathering in Charlotte North Carolina on July 4-9. They include 482 youth and sponsors, 23 children, and 284 adults. Each one of them will have a memorable experience and will deepen their experience of God in those matters about which we “Can’t keep quiet!”

A primary reason for gathering in annual assemblies is for the leadership of the national church to be accountable to the area conferences and their congregations for actions taken in the past year and for direction for the future. The primary tool for accountability is the Report Book. Copies of this will be mailed to each congregation by the end of

May, but it is already available on the internet at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/events/charlotte/>. Here you can also find preliminary excerpts from the program book which highlight seminars, worship activities, concerts and coffee houses, the Thursday Festival, a day-by-day schedule, and more.

To make the decisions we need to make together (see below) we need to have a quorum of “one half the total number of eligible voting delegates from the area conferences plus 200 voting delegates from constituent congregations” (Bylaw 11(1)). The area conferences have met this threshold, registering a total of 26 of the 42 entitled delegates. But only 170 of the other registered attendees have identified themselves as congregational delegates. That means we need 30 more congregational delegates to enable us to take official actions on behalf of the church.

We really hope that congregations will send more delegates. We believe there are 30 more people who want to attend or perhaps are planning to attend but have not been named as delegates. We believe we will reach the “magical number.”

What if we don’t? In that case we will hold our discussions with the people who are present, perhaps even count those in favour of and opposed to decisions that need to be made. But we would not formally take the actions listed below. The elected and staff leaders will proceed on the counsel of the delegates, but any decisions that require delegate action will need to be deferred until Assembly 2006.

A unique feature of this year’s assembly is that we are meeting jointly with MC USA. When the delegates of Conference of Mennonites in Canada, Mennonite Church and General Conference agreed in 1999 to separate into two country churches it was with the understanding that we would continue to have joint assemblies. Many things have changed in the six years since that decision, but to maintain faith with members who voted for this and in response to continuing calls from some parts of the church for such events, we will be meeting together this year.

Those who believe a joint assembly is important usually cite the value of learning from the experiences of our two churches. While delegates from the two bodies won’t be spending much time together in discernment discussion, we can be aware of the issues that the delegates from MC USA are discussing. Whether you are going to Charlotte or not, you would benefit from reviewing the assembly materials for MC USA that will soon be posted on the internet at <http://www.charlotte2005.org/>. You may also use this reminder to check other parts of the web site at <http://mcusa.mennonite.net>.

I do hope to see you in Charlotte. Please pray for wisdom in our decisions and safety for all who will be traveling to attend, including especially the busses of youth and their sponsors.

Sincerely,



Dan Nighswander

General Board Recommendations

The following actions will be moved by the General Board at Charlotte 05:

1. Routine Actions:

- Adoption of Minutes
- Approval of General Board Actions
- Approval of Audited Financial Statements
- Approval of budgets
- Appointment of Auditor

2. Bylaw Changes –a number of bylaw changes are proposed on pages 73-80 of the Report Book, most significant of which are the addition of the following two sections:

XI FAITH AND LIFE COMMITTEE

Composition of the Faith and Life Committee

- 29** The Faith and Life Committee shall consist of 5 people, namely:
- (a) a chairperson, who will be a member of the General Board, elected at a regular delegate assembly;
 - (b) two additional persons elected at a regular delegate assembly;
 - (c) one additional person appointed by the General Board
 - (d) one staff member appointed by the General Secretary

Duties of the Faith and Life Committee

- 30** The Faith and Life Committee shall meet at least three times annually, and one of the meetings will be together with a Reference Council consisting of the Moderators, Secretaries and Conference Ministers and one faculty member appointed by each of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Canadian Mennonite University, Columbia Bible College and Conrad Grebel College, to:
- (a) Attend to the interface between the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and our identity as MC Canada.
 - (b) Give leadership to Mennonite Church Canada in discerning God's will on issues of theology, ethics, polity and practice.
 - (c) Work cooperatively with educational institutions and other church agencies to facilitate, create and distribute resources for study and guidance to the church.

PART XIII – MODERATORS, SECRETARIES AND CONFERENCE MINISTERS MEETING

Membership

- 36** The members of the Moderators, Secretaries and Conference Ministers meeting shall consist of the moderator or a designate, leading staff member and conference minister of Mennonite Church Canada and each of its member conferences.

Functions

- 37** The Moderators, Secretaries and Conference Ministers will meet annually to:
- (a) Report to each other the ministries and state of health of the national church body and its area conferences.
 - (b) Serve, together with others, as a reference council for the Faith and Life Committee.
 - (c) Discuss issues of common concern in order to provide mutual counsel and support and to seek common approaches where appropriate.
 - (d) Develop relationships of trust, respect and mutual subordination.
 - (e) Other functions that may be helpful to building up the unity and faithfulness of the church.

3. Frequency of Assemblies – At Assembly 2002 (Saskatoon) the delegates approved the following resolution:

The costs of planning, hosting and attending annual assemblies are escalating at the same time that there is increasing pressure on denominational, conference, and congregational budgets. • Moving to a biennial schedule of assemblies, as MC USA does presently, and the youth conference is moving towards, would save considerable money that could be used in other areas of ministry, mission and relief work around the world. Any annual reporting needed might be incorporated into the annual meetings of area conferences since MC Canada people attend these gatherings.

We ask the General Board to review the practice of holding annual assemblies and bring to the 2004 assembly a report and recommendation on the possibility of moving to biennial assemblies.

The General Board presented discussion material for delegate discussion of this issue at Assembly 2004 (Winkler). Reports from the table groups contained approximately twice as many comments in favour of annual than those in favour of biennial assemblies. The Support Services Council, which oversees annual assembly planning, reviewed the table group reports carefully. On the recommendation of the Support Services Council, the General Board recommends the following action to the delegates:

Be it resolved that Mennonite Church Canada delegates continue to meet in an annual assembly and that we ask the General Board to review this decision in five years (i.e., 2010).

4. Statement of Identity and Purpose

Be it resolved that the delegates of Mennonite Church Canada approve the following as our Statement of Identity and Purpose:

God calls, equips, and sends the church
to engage the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
We are a community of disciples of Jesus,
a part of the Body of Christ,
covenanted together as congregations,
area conferences,
and a national church.
Gratefully responding to God's initiatives,
and empowered by the Holy Spirit,
we commit our resources and efforts to
calling, equipping, and sending the church
to engage the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

5. Transfer of Property Title – Last year the assembly approved several actions with respect to the property at 600 Shaftesbury, the location of the south campus of Canadian Mennonite University, the Heritage Centre and the offices of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church Manitoba (motion 4, reported on p. 6). The stated conditions having been met, the General Board now recommends the following action.

Be it resolved that Mennonite Church Canada transfer the title of 600 Shaftesbury Boulevard to Canadian Mennonite University for consideration of one dollar (\$1.00) provided that

1. MC Canada will be able to use the conference offices and Heritage Centre for as long as it wishes, and will have the same responsibility for utilities, maintenance, taxes, etc. that it has now.
2. MC Canada will be able to recover the value of the conference offices and Heritage Centre if it chooses to move its offices elsewhere. MC Canada will share this value with MC Manitoba according to its share of the conference office building.
3. MC Canada will be able to borrow against the value of the conference offices and the Heritage Centre. MC Canada will share this borrowing capacity with MC Manitoba according to its share of the conference office building.
4. MC Manitoba's rights under its current long-term lease are preserved.
5. CMU will own 600 Shaftesbury and will be free to develop the property as needed for its ministry, although it will not be able to borrow against the value of the conference offices and the Heritage Centre.

The conditions and legal agreements are being drafted by legal counsel advising both CMU and MC Canada and are being reviewed by independent legal counsel acting on behalf of MC Canada. The Support Services Council, General Board and staff have closely reviewed the conditions to ensure that MC Canada's best interests are served.