



**GOD'S
PEOPLE
NOW!**

1 Peter 2:9-10



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Minute Book Edmonton 2006

Mennonite Church Canada Assembly
July 4-7, 2006

Delta Edmonton South, Edmonton, AB

Mennonite Church Canada **Minute Book 2006**

Mennonite Church Canada Minute Book has been published annually since 1996.

Available online at www.mennonitechurch.ca/events/edmonton/

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Abbreviations:

ACOM Area Conference Membership Only
AMBS Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary
AMIGOS Mennonite World Conference Youth Committee
CAMS Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools
CBC Columbia Bible College
CCC Canadian Council of Churches
CCCC Canadian Council of Christian Charities
CFC Christian Formation Council
CGUC Conrad Grebel University College
CMU Canadian Mennonite University
CPT Christian Peacemaker Teams
CWC Christian Witness Council
CWM Canadian Women in Mission
EFC Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
FLC Faith and Life Committee
FPAC Financial Policy and Audit Committee
FYE Fiscal Year End
GAMEO ... Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online
GB General Board
GMF Global Mennonite Fellowship
IMPACT International Mennonite Pastors Coming Together
JEC Joint Executive Council
KPMG Auditors for Mennonite Church Canada
M/S/C/ Moved/Seconded/Carried
MC Mennonite Church
MC SASK Mennonite Church Saskatchewan
MCA Mennonite Church Alberta
MCA Mennonite Camping Association
MCBC Mennonite Church British Columbia
MCC Mennonite Central Committee
MCCC Mennonite Central Committee Canada
MCEC Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
MCM Mennonite Church Manitoba
MDS Mennonite Disaster Service
MEDA Mennonite Economic Development Agency
MFC Mennonite Foundation of Canada
MM Mennonite Men
MOU Memorandum of Understanding
MPN Mennonite Publishing Network
MW Mennonite Women
MWC Mennonite World Conference
P2P Person to Person
RJC Rosthern Junior College
SSC Support Services Council

Slate of Elected Nominations

General Board

Henry Krause from Langley BC
– 3rd term as Moderator

Garth Ewert Fisher from Fiske
SK – 1st term as Assistant
Moderator

Formation

Sue Steiner from Waterloo ON
– 3rd term as Chair of Formation
Council

Lisa Carr Pries from Waterloo
ON – 1st term as member of
Formation Council

Coreen Froese from Didsbury
AB – 1st term as member of
Formation Council

Witness

JD Penner from Ajax ON – 1st
term as member of Witness
Council

Irene Crosland from Tofield
AB – 2nd term as member of
Witness Council

Support Services

Harry J. Wiens from Altona MB
– 1st term as member of Support
Services Council

Faith and Life Committee

Doreen Neufeld – Calgary AB
– 2nd term as member of the
Faith and Life Committee



Mennonite Church Canada Annual Assembly—Meeting History

Year	Place	Moderator	Asst. Moderator	Secretary	General Secretary
2002	Saskatoon SK	Ron Sawatsky	Joy Kroeger	Sam Steiner	Dan Nighswander
2003	St. Catharines ON	Henry Krause	Joy Kroeger	Sam Steiner	Dan Nighswander
2004	Winkler MB	Henry Krause	Joy Kroeger	Marlene Janzen	Dan Nighswander
2005	Charlotte NC	Henry Krause	Esther Peters	Marlene Janzen	Dan Nighswander
2006	Edmonton, AB	Henry Krause	Esther Peters	Marlene Janzen	Robert J. Suderman

Mennonite Church Canada Assembly Officers for 2006

Parliamentarian

John R. Sawatzky from Richmond BC

Resolutions

Andrew Reesor-McDowell from Stouffville ON
Ruth Preston Schilk from Lethbridge AB
Judith Froese Doell

Listening

Erv Wiens from Calgary AB
Sharon Dirks from Niagara-on-the-Lake ON
Ron Braun from Chilliwack BC

Mennonite Church Canada Program Committee Members for 2006

Mildred Roth from New Hamburg ON
Karen Schellenberg Portage La Prairie MB

Local Hosting Co-ordinator

Adela Wedler from Edmonton AB

Worship Co-ordinator

Irene Crosland from Tofield AB



Introduction

—Henry Krause, Moderator

The theme of our assembly “God’s People Now”, drawn from I Peter 2.9-10 set the tone for our gathering as the Mennonite Church Canada delegates in Alberta. A time of being together as God’s people, looking back on what happened in the previous year and envisioning and discerning together the way in the future.

We worshiped and prayed together, fellowshiped and ate together, and celebrated God’s goodness, discerning the Spirit’s direction together. The vision of being God’s people in this time and place, ‘now’, enlivened our gathering.

This was the first assembly for Jack Suderman in his role as General Secretary, and delegates welcomed him to the role, commissioning him and Irene for the task of leading Mennonite Church Canada in this way. Jack shared with delegates his findings from the cross country tour in which every congregation of MC Canada was visited, in order to listen to the hopes and fears of the constituency. We were encouraged as we heard the wisdom from members of our churches across the country. Jack observed that “there is a mountain of hope, because hope is a gift that God gives to the church and the church is incapable of erasing Christian hope.”

Delegates were invited to review the strategic plan for MC Canada as well as reflect on the 3 priority statements of MC Canada: “With God’s help we will: form a People of God, become a Global Church, and grow leaders for the church”. Stories of how these priorities were being addressed were shared through the week.

Delegates spent time in their table groups on a number of discernment issues during the assembly:

- The Faith and Life committee lead the delegates in a biblical and theological reflection on unity and membership in the body of Christ as an introduction to the question of “Area Conference only Membership” by congregations. Delegates agreed to affirm Area churches who had established congregational membership that would not automatically include membership in Mennonite Church Canada. Delegates also spent time in reflection and discussion about the implications of this ‘ACOM’ status for congregations.
- Delegates chose I Corinthians 3.11 as the foundational scriptures for Mennonite Church Canada.
- Formation Council invited table groups to discuss the role of education growing leaders for our churches by way of telling stories of their congregational experiences and also by thinking about what kind of leadership their congregations would need for in the future.
- Witness Council lead a time of table discernment inviting table groups to ‘discern the terrain’ thinking about what it means to be God’s people in Canadian society and in light of our political, socioeconomic and religious context.

A resolution was also passed by the delegates mandating the General Board to make recommendation to the government allowing conscientious objectors to direct the military portion of their taxes to activities of development and peace.

Delegates spent time hearing about finances for the last fiscal year and accepting a budget for the next year’s work as well as hearing from other areas of ministry in the larger church.

The Spirit of God was evident during the assembly and a sense of hope and encouragement filled those present as they recognized that truly they were ‘God’s people now’.

Minutes - Edmonton 2006

ASSEMBLY 2006

Mennonite Church Canada

7th Annual Session

Delta Edmonton South

Edmonton, AB

July 4-7, 2006



Tuesday, July 4, 2006; 7:00pm

1. Opening Worship

Our opening worship focused on the theme “God’s People Now!”. The assembly song leader Bruce Baergen and the worship team involving Heather Bergen, Jennifer Kirkaldy, Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, Matt Pauls, Carrie Friesen, Laura Pauls and Andrew Buhr directed us in much joyous singing, this evening and throughout the assembly using the hymnal supplement “Sing the Journey”. Worship leader Tracy Brown Ewert led the congregation in litany, prayer, and scripture reading. An inspirational message based on Acts 10 by Karen Heidebrecht Thiesen (Pastor of West Abbotsford Mennonite Church, BC) challenged us to leave our comfort zones and respond to God’s call to be in the world serving those on the margins and fringes of society.

Wednesday, July 5, 2006; 8:30am

2. Welcome and Introductory Matters

2.1. Opening

Moderator Henry Krause greeted delegates, declared the seventh annual session of the Mennonite Church Canada (MC Canada) assembly open and led us in an opening prayer.

2.2. Welcome to Edmonton

Mennonite Church Alberta Moderator Marguerite Jack and Conference Minister Jim Shantz welcomed the people of MC Canada to Edmonton, Alberta.

2.3. Quorum

Referencing the requirements outlined in the bylaws, the Moderator

them into the cup. Doug ended the worship service with a blessing to “Go now, as a sent people, a people of healing.”

42. Sunday Morning Worship

The churches of Mennonite Church Alberta invited participants to join them for Sunday morning worship.



Mennonites in Canada patterns. Encourage the inclusion of the history of the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference and the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec in future assemblies.

The Listening Committee affirms the dialogue opportunities in the discernment process. Table discussions were brisk and allowed everyone to contribute. Noted some of the same people from the same table spoke repeatedly, so encourage assembly participants to respect the discernment guidelines. Also encourage all participants to use the microphones, as we really do want to hear each other.

The blend of worship, discernment, and relaxation and recreation seemed seamless and most appropriate in this assembly. A special word of thanks for the inspiring preaching in our evening worship services and for the frequent times of prayer interwoven through the week. Agree whole heartedly with the resolution of thanks.

39. Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication

Denominational Minister Sven Eriksson led us in a litany of thanks and commissioning for those who have served and those who are continuing or beginning their service.

40. Adjournment

Henry Krause declared the 7th Annual Session of MC Canada assembly closed.

41. Evening Worship

The evening worship service on the theme “God’s People Now! Sent” was led by Doug Klassen and the worship team. The message by Jerry Buhler (Conference Pastor, MC Saskatchewan) was based on Acts 8:26-39. Jerry noted that as Philip and the Ethiopian conversed in the chariot, these strangers began to break down the barriers that separated them and they became God’s people. The challenge for us as God’s people now, is to always be ready to be sent. As sent people, we are not only sent to the communion table, but also sent from the communion table. Sent to absorb the nearest cry, sent to respond to the nearest of the least of these.

Elsie Rempel shared how the children’s assembly had learned about hospitality, and following a blessing by Denominational Minister Sven Eriksson, the children delighted in carefully distributing baskets overflowing with a variety of breads and grapes to the tables. Sven invited children to share the grapes and instructed the adult participants to partake in communion by breaking off pieces of bread and dipping

declared quorum was established, with 33 area conference and 281 congregational delegates registered at the assembly.

2.4. Floor Privileges

Floor privileges were extended to all guests at the assembly sessions. Delegates and guests were encouraged to join a table and participate in the discernment around the table, but it was noted that only delegates were eligible to vote on matters that required a decision. The framework of looking for consensus outlined in the Report Book will guide our participation and work together.

2.5. Greeting Each Other

Attendees were encouraged to make introductions around their tables and greet those nearby.

2.6. Introductions

The following introductions were made:

- a. Witness workers: Tim and Cindy Buhler, Marlow and Vicki Ramsey;
- b. Parliamentarian: John Sawatsky;
- c. Resolutions Committee: Andrew Reesor-McDowell, Judith Froese Doell, and Ruth Preston Schilke;
- d. Listening Committee: Ron Braun, Ervin Wiens, Sharon Dirks

3. Review of Agenda

The reporting and discernment agenda outlined in the Report Book was reviewed.

4. Minutes of Assembly 2005

Henry Krause reported that the *Minute Book 2005* was distributed to the congregations and noted a summary of the Assembly 2005 Actions is printed in the Report Book. Marlene Janzen briefly reported on the work completed by staff and the General Board to follow up to these actions in the past year.

MOTION 1: The delegate assembly adopts the minutes of the 6th Annual Session of Mennonite Church Canada as recorded and published in *Minute Book 2005* issued by Mennonite Church Canada.

M. Janzen/C. Neufeld - Motion carried.

5. Actions of General Board

Marlene Janzen directed attention to the summary of General Board Actions printed in the Report Book and provided a brief update on actions taken by the General Board in the current year.

MOTION 2: The delegate assembly approves the actions taken by the General Board of Mennonite Church Canada in the past year.

M. Janzen/P. Wiebe - Motion carried.

6. Introduction of General Secretary

Henry Krause reported that this past year a new General Secretary was appointed to lead MC Canada for a 3-year term. He described Jack Suderman as a leader and diligent worker with diverse gifts and abilities. An inspiring motivator and sensitive thinker, Suderman has been a mission worker in Latin America, grade school teacher, and Spanish language author. The Search Committee's recommendation to the General Board affirmed Suderman's strong record of leadership and commended his deep love for God, the church and God's people.

Henry welcomed Jack to this role as General Secretary, and led the assembly in a litany of commissioning for Jack and Irene Suderman.

7. MC Canada Priority Statements

Delegates were invited to review the strategic plan for MC Canada presented on page 23 of the Report Book. Jack Suderman noted the plan is important for defining who we are, what we hope to be, and what we are hoping to do. This plan is not complete, but the General Board wanted to share what has been developed to-date with delegates. The priority statements were read by Sven Eriksson, Denominational Minister.

Reflecting on the priority of "Forming a People of God", Pam Peters-Pries, Executive Secretary of Support Services noted that forming involves calling forth gifts and equipping people to strengthen the body of Christ. This forming enables us to bring reconciliation and restoration to God's world as we engage the world in the centre and at the margins, developing deep understanding and love for our world and all its brokenness. As people of God, we invite others to faith, to experience the healing and hope that we experience.

Janet Plenert, Executive Secretary of Christian Witness observed that the priority "Becoming a Global Church" is not limited to international

- Thank you to all the members of the boards and councils and especially the Moderator and the General Secretary.
- Thank you to the leaders of worship and those who spoke words of exhortation and inspiration to us.
- Thank you to the seminar leaders who educated and informed us.
- Thank you to the staff of the Delta Hotel and Coast Terrace Inn for their consideration of our needs.

All have contributed tirelessly to the ongoing work of being God's People Now!

Resolution carried with round of applause.

37.1. Destroying Ballots.

MOTION 10: The delegate assembly directs that all ballots be destroyed.

Resolutions Committee/A. Doerksen – Motion carried.

38. Listening Committee

The Listening Committee observed that although MC Canada congregations worship in 13 different languages, the majority of these language groups, as well as youth and young adults are seriously under-represented. In light of MC Canada's priorities, it appears that our assemblies do well at forming a people of God but more needs to be done in terms of becoming a global church and growing leaders. Encourage the nominating committee, the assembly planning committee, and area conferences to find ways to significantly increase attendance and participation of minority groups and youth and young adults in future assemblies.

Affirm the process used for the ACOM resolution. The debate was healthy. Although the resolution was passed, need to recognize that there is considerable confusion and pain with the implications of the ACOM resolution.

As mention in previous report, MC Canada consists of constituencies with diverse histories, and yet it was observed that often the protocol for how things are done often reverts to Conference of

make representation in consultation with our partners (for example: Mennonite Central Committee, Project Ploughshares) to the Government of Canada, urging the government to enact legislation which would allow conscientious objectors to direct the military portion of their taxes to activities of development and peace.

m/s H. Peters- Franson / W. Friesen

Discussion:

- In favour of the resolution. On numerous occasions, friends from US have asked why Canadians don't work for this, and in the past the response has been that the Canadian military participates in peace-keeping and rescue work. Today we are in a different situation. Major changes are taking place, and it is time to speak out.
- What effect this will have? There will be just as much money going to military spending as before, just will come from other people's taxes. Would like to pursue a reduction of military spending.

Resolution carried with some opposition.

37.2. Resolution of Thanks

Resolution 2:

We recognize the significant amount of organization and work necessary for a successful assembly. This week we have been inspired and challenged. We have worked together and played together. We have listened to stories, sung of our faith and made progress in being God's People Now!

- **Thank you to the staff of MC Canada and to every person on each committee that planned this assembly.**
- **Thank you to the local congregations who have welcomed and embraced us with open arms, and for their many hours of careful planning and implementation.**
- **Thank you to those who planned and resourced the Ministers' Conference and those who assisted in providing transportation, child care and food for the body.**
- **Thank you to the many volunteers who always greeted us cheerfully and provided information and direction as needed.**
- **Thank you to the DVBS Troup and child care workers who eased our minds and provided learning and entertainment for our children.**

ministries. God gifted the church with unity and within that made us a diverse and wonderfully created people. Becoming a global church is a commitment to walk within that diversity, and to strengthen our ability to respond to the diversity we experience. The congregations of MC Canada worship in thirteen different languages. Becoming a global church is telling stories that respect and strengthen this people hood. Becoming a global church means reconciling people to each other, to God and to the earth. Looking for common ground, we can graft all our histories together and become a people that are unified because we are God's people. Our faith has common grounding in Jesus Christ.

David Bergen, Executive Secretary of Christian Formation reported that the priority "Growing leaders for the church" acknowledges that many dimensions, influences and contexts shape those who grow to be leaders. The initial context for growth is in the home and family, where the early seeds of awareness are nurtured. Church and school involvement facilitates opportunities to further test and hone leadership abilities. Leadership rarely springs up on its own. Leadership development requires investment of time, talents and money. The church needs to be intentional about broad based leadership training, encouraging leaders to keep growing and learning. Growing leaders requires us to focus our best resources on our highest priorities. Leaders need tools to be flexible, radical and adaptable.

Discussion:

- Affirm the excellent work done on priorities and core processes. MCEC is working at strategic planning as well and wonder if there is some way to show that working in partnership is also a priority.
- Appreciate the work that goes into setting priorities. They seem heavily weighted to inward stuff. Real mission is out there, and our job is welcoming and proclaiming. Would like to see us more actively engaging the world. If we really have something to share, then document should reflect that.
- What is the primary context as we develop and focus our energy? Our primary location is congregations. Not exclusively (also regional, national and global) but key context is local. Also wondering about our colleges and seminary – have to dig to see where they are part of the picture.
- Curious about the next level of detail. Working at becoming global church in different parts of the world, hope we can work harder at that here as well.
- Has this been vetted through the local churches and the Mennonite

- World Conference (MWC)? Would have had area church input via the General Board, but what about international input? Response: There is no particular venue in the MWC system where they could provide specific input into a national church process. MC Canada is continually in conversation with the MWC and churches that are a part of that. This prompts intense reflections on what it means to be the church in the world, and the church in Canada in the perspective of the world. A number of the comments referenced what is not in the document yet, and will continue to be developed. The next level of the plan gets at the strategies and specific outcomes, and will address those questions.

8. MC Canada Presentations

8.1. Focus on MC Canada Vision and Purpose

A multimedia presentation was used to show how MC Canada is a part of God's People Now! and Jack Suderman emphasized that we as a church need to be who, what and where God calls us to be. We together, as MC Canada have a vision and we have a purpose and identity. God has extended an awesome invitation to the church, inviting us to participate in the restoration and the reconciliation of the world to what it was meant to be.

Discussion:

- *Why does the statement say we are a part of the body of Christ covenanted together as congregations, conferences and national church? Have a problem if these are sequential, but if each stands on its own then it seems to contradict with page 96 of the Report Book, which says congregations are members by virtue of belonging to an area conference. Not aligned.* Response: This identity statement is for the national church, and as such we are made up of area conferences and congregations. Does not say or imply that congregations are not part of the body of Christ.
- *See a lot of wonderful words, but don't see the word love in these documents.*

8.2. Related Organizations

MC Canada is blessed to be part of a wider ministry that draws on the gifts of persons from many backgrounds, with many skills, and from many congregations. A multi-media presentation was used to introduce the many partners and representatives attending assembly.

- *When does this come into affect – when bylaws passed or now?* Response: The most we can do now is send a signal to area conferences that they can begin planning accordingly. The official bylaw change would happen in 2008.
- *Will churches that are ACOM be able to find pastors? What if an MC Canada pastor answers the call?*
- Gerd Bartel, Moderator of MCBC responded to this discussion and the action taken earlier with regard to ACOM, and thanked MC Canada for being hospitable and extending grace in this decision.

Henry Krause wrapped up the discussion on ACOM and opened the floor for delegates to respond to other reports or the overall assembly:

- Referring to the Listening Tour, it was significant that Jack came to each church rather than asking them to meet in a central location.
- Visit changed the spirit of understanding in the church. The bar has been set high, expect more now.
- Thank you for coming to our place, it felt encouraging and supportive. Often hear despair and so want to feel the hope that Jack expressed, that together we are doing well. Thank you for the specific reports to area conferences.
- Questions asked by the tour caused reflection and thinking. The feedback is insightful and words of affirmation were encouraging. Showed great vision to visit each church.

37. Resolutions Committee

The Resolutions Committee had one resolution from floor to present, as well as a resolution of thanks and motion to destroy the ballots.

37.1. Conscientious Objector Status

Resolution 1: Whereas the government of Canada:

- **Is moving Canada's military from peacekeeping duties to direct military interventions,**
- **Is significantly increasing spending for the military,**
- **And whereas current legislation forces conscientious objectors to contribute to the military budget through taxation**

Be it resolved that this assembly mandate the General Board to

Pam Peters-Pries encouraged delegates to plan on attending the next assembly hosted by MCBC in Vancouver in 2007. Gerd Bartel, Moderator of MCBC highlighted the multicultural identity of Vancouver, and invited MC Canada to come to BC. Anna Rehan, Youth Ministries Facilitator reported that the youth assembly is being planned to align with adult assembly. Anna drew attention to a post card in the registration packet, and encouraged delegates to send it to a youth in the church and encourage them to attend assembly.

36. Discernment – Reflecting on ACOM

Table groups were invited to reflect on Statement 2 and 3 in the Report Book. Jack Suderman noted Statement 2 highlights that the area conference's commitment to MC Canada shall not be jeopardized by ACOM congregations and seeks to facilitate clear guidelines to ensure that it would happen that way. Statement 3 considers things MC Canada might do, an important guiding principle would be to nurture as much engaging as each congregation is comfortable with.

A number of tables were invited to report following the round table discernment time:

- *Like statement 2. Suggest it be reviewed in several years to see how it is working, and make sure we don't institutionalize it.*
- *Statement 3 might be deterrent to joining a church. Wonder how to share with them the value of joining the national body, and the sense of joining something bigger.*
- *Caution that churches take all the benefits without financial contributions, concerned about perception of exploitation*
- *Could area conferences invite church to join again after some time?*
- *Need to be generous on the relationship level, find other ways of working together towards renewed covenanting*
- *Need to be flexible and expand the understanding of identity*
- *Uncomfortable with "as each congregation is comfortable", MC Canada needs to challenge them and be challenged by them.*
- *Affirm the ACOM mechanism is flexible for departure and entry, affirm emerging congregations*
- *Leadership positions should not be given to persons from ACOM congregations*

8.3. Greetings from Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches

Henry Krause read a letter of greeting from David Wiebe, Executive Director of the Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

9. Morning Worship

Bob Crosland and the worship team led our morning worship service. A drama "Called to Call, Again and Again" based on John 1: 29-51 and Matthew 28: 19-20 reinforced the point that we are called to be God's People Now! The worship service concluded with more singing and prayer.

10. Discernment Time: Scripture Foundation

Delegates, guests and visitors were all encouraged to fully participate in the discernment and reminded to follow the principles outlined in the discernment guide for productive discussion.

David Bergen reported on the background and rationale for the recommendations. Scripture has held a central place in our understanding and practice of being God's people. A resolution was brought forward 2 years ago in Winkler to suggest we identify a scripture motto. The request for suggestions went out, and the 16 responses were reviewed by representatives at Leadership Assembly. Through a discernment process these leaders arrived at the recommendation brought here to the delegates. The process has strongly reconfirmed the need to be scripturally founded. Rather than limiting that foundation to one particular text, the recommendation from the General Board is that we commit ourselves to engage with many chosen texts. Look to scripture for teaching and authority in life and faith.

Henry Krause invited the table groups to consider the recommendation, noting that it is suggesting a different approach than the resolution had indicated. All tables were asked to record the key discussion points, and some of tables were randomly selected for plenary reporting. Responses varied, however a number of tables shared the desire for one text as a motto and additional chosen texts for study.

MOTION 2a: The delegate assembly approves that scriptural texts be chosen for our nurture as a church, with a focused 2-year time-horizon.

E. Peters/V. Dyck

Discussion:

- Not sure if for or against. Don't like this being a substitute motion, have problem with the General Board not following the direction given in the Winkler resolution [to chose a text].
- *Discussion suggested doing both, so want to know if we are also looking for a foundational text?* Response: There is only one motion on the table, if it is passed then there will not be a single motto.
- *Like the idea of doing both, so against the motion unless it can be amended to include both a single permanent motto and the other 2-year focus texts.*
- *Concerned that the motion does not clearly state whether it overrides or is in addition to the direction given in the Winkler resolution.* Response: The motion is the recommendation of people who worked to follow up on the action taken in Winkler.

MOTION 2b: Move to table Motion 2 to allow the resolutions committee to find a way to amend it per the discussion.

C. Neufeld/R. Klassen - Motion carried with opposition.

Sessions resumed after a break for lunch and seminars.

11. Discernment Time: Scripture Foundation Cont'd

Additional time was given to this discernment item to inform delegates the process used to arrive at the recommendation for adopting 2-year focus texts. Following the assembly in Winkler, the constituency was invited to submit recommendations for a scripture slogan. In March 2006 the 16 suggestions were reviewed by the plenary group at Leadership Assembly. It was noted that this group includes all elected council members, board members, area conference moderators, executive staff and conference ministers. This group of leaders gave careful consideration to the strengths and weakness of each suggestion before parsing the list down. The short list included 1 Cor 3:11, II Cor 5:19, a paraphrase of Ephesians 2:13-14 / Ephesians 4:7, and Micah 6:8. As this group continued to work at narrowing this list down to a single preferred text, it became apparent that a significant majority really preferred multiple texts. When forced to pick one passage, 1 Cor 3:11 was the one that received the most support.

34. Ministry Report

Neill and Edit von Gunten reported how they consulted with congregations about engaging with aboriginal people. Learned there is a lot happening in variety of ways. Found an eagerness to receive help and learn how to relate and help. It takes a lot of time to develop trusting relationships, and what stands out is the need to stand with and inspire them. Encouraged, challenged and excited to adapt to new ministry opportunities around us.

Vicki and Marlow Ramsey serve as Witness workers in Mongolia. They reported that the church is growing, but offering hope in a society with widespread alcoholism and poverty is a heavy load. Pray for the leaders in these new churches.

Sometimes it is tempting to move ahead faster than God is moving, but patience does bring rewards. The Siamou people of Burkino Faso were planning a celebration. An elder spoke in the mosque to call off the celebration, warning the people that attending meant they were no longer Moslem, but that did not deter their desire to celebrate their identity and culture. It was the celebration of 3 years work by Lillian Haas at developing a written word for the people. They are establishing literacy centers so the Siamou can learn to read and write in their language. Work is now proceeding with biblical translation, focusing on passages that intersect with the Koran. Literacy is a door to education and jobs, but the key reason for this work is to enable God's word to be accessible.

35. Planning for Summit 2008

Conversations between MC USA and MC Canada about future gatherings have continued. The boards have agreed that there is no need for joint delegate sessions, however continuing to meet together for worship and fellowship is appealing. MC Canada has proposed a joint gathering in Winnipeg in 2008, likely in conjunction with annual assembly. Envision a time for adults and young adults to reflect on the responsibility we have to other parts of the church, citizens outside the church, and our environment. "Today's church caring for tomorrow's world." A gathering of grass roots people in the church could inspire leadership to respond with action to proposals and challenges.

Plans for Assembly 2007 are also underway. Theme text for the youth and adult assembly will be 1 Cor 3:11. Evaluations from current assembly will be reviewed so feedback can be incorporated into planning. Thank you for the gratitude and appreciation shown to volunteers at this assembly.

MOTION 8: The delegate assembly approves the budget presented for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2007, as well as the projected budgets presented for fiscal year ending January 31, 2008 and fiscal year ending January 31, 2009.

E. Peters/S. Plenert

Discussion:

- *Referencing the earlier discussion about vision and priorities, wonder if this budget has been adjusted to align with the priorities? Response: Timing has not allowed for the preparing the current budget based on new priorities. Expect real adjustments to occur the following fiscal year.*
- *Delighted that the budget amount for CMU is remaining the same. From a student perspective, the decentralized budget approach that other partners have switched to using makes the school more vulnerable. Encourage delegates to go home and report to their congregations about value of CMU and the need to support it.*
- *Individual and corporate donations are up, have we been able to find out why congregational giving is down? Are there other factors to consider for future giving, such as ACOM? Response: The projections on the report are based on best information congregations have supplied. Tried to anticipate the impact of ACOM. Projecting flat donation revenue picture for this year and next year.*
- *With regard to budgeting for assembly, wonder if there might be a way to facilitate cost sharing for congregations that cannot afford to send delegates? Response: The suggestion has been noted and will be taken back for consideration.*

Motion carried.

33. Appointment of Auditor

MOTION 9: The delegate assembly appoints KPMG as the auditor for Mennonite Church Canada for fiscal year ending January 31, 2007.

E. Peters/K. Remple-Boschman. Motion carried.

MOTION 2c: Move to take Motion 2 off the table.

Resolutions Committee/C. Neufeld - Motion carried.

Motion 2d: Move to withdraw Motion 2.

Resolutions Committee/A. Doerksen - Motion carried.

The Resolutions Committee having reviewed the table group feedback brought forward two resolutions:

MOTION 3: The delegates of Mennonite Church Canada resolve that we help to build a strong scripture foundation for our church by:

- **Choosing a single foundational scripture**
- **Choosing key biblical texts to nourish our church life:**
- **Using these texts for two consecutive assemblies**
- **Developing resources to help congregations deepen their understandings and application of these texts to the life of the Church over a 2 year period.**

Resolutions Committee/R. Klassen

Discussion:

- *In favour of the resolution. Wondering why it is 2 years, especially when assemblies are annual*
- *Against the motion because it mixes the 2 different items together. Would like to see this broken into 2 parts for decision.*
- *Would need an additional motion to incorporate the foundational scripture in the bylaws. Would 1 Cor 3:11 be the single foundation and the first key text?*
- *Is this motion suggesting that we abolish a 500 year practice? Response: MC Canada does not have a scriptural foundation at this time, the former General Conference had 1 Cor 3:11 however the Mennonite Church did not so this is moving in the direction of having one.*

- *Noted that 1 Cor 3:11 is not included in the resolution? Response: Resolutions Committee indicated that their second resolution dealt with selecting the foundational text.*
- *What inadequacy was the General Board trying to address with this recommendation? Response: The report book pg 73 outlines a number of reasons why the GB chose the alternate path.*
- *Like the discussion, and would like to focus on the first part of the resolution, which is to build a strong scripture foundation. In favour.*
- *Strongly in favour of the second part. The bible shakes us up, and sometimes we are not ready to keep moving. Let us keep it as foundation and keep it moving us ahead.*
- *Concerned about the political dynamics/power issues earlier, but now excited about the motion. Amazed at the gifts and talents and by saying yes to this, we are developing resources to deepen our understandings. To know that several hundred congregations are working and sharing is a good idea. Looking forward to having access to that material. Collaborating on stuff that gives vision and shape is inspiring.*
- *First part is redundant [repeating Winkler resolution] and second part does not have to be a motion. Against the motion.*
- *In favour of the motion. The second part contextualizes the first. We have a complex history and revolving issues. There is a foundation that has deep roots, but we put that in context.*

Motion carried with some opposition.

MOTION 4: The delegates of Mennonite Church Canada resolve that the foundational scripture for Mennonite Church Canada be 1 Corinthians 3:11.

“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.” (NRSV translation)

Resolutions Committee /R. Braun

Discussion:

- *Against the motion, it only represents one part of our history.*
- *Good text, but want to be sensitive to the Mennonite Church part of our merged history.*

Table groups considered the question and a number were invited to provide Plenary Reporting:

- *Awareness of the multicultural aspects of our communities, a constant dynamic is the change within our context, need more conversation and dialogue to break down the barriers*
- *City congregations are scattered and not closely knit community (Sunday morning church)*
- *Declining rural congregations*
- *Losing young people, encourage churches to get young people involved*
- *Work with congregations to be more missional by clarifying partnerships*
- *Support for keeping young families that don't share the Anabaptist history*
- *Dealing with family dynamics (single parent, blended family)*
- *Compartmentalized lifestyle (work, school, home, church).*
- *Subjectivity and relative truth, unwavering scripture and grace*
- *Seniors feeling left behind as church moves into new way of being*

Sessions recessed for lunch and seminars.

32. Budget for Fiscal Year End January 31, 2007

Lloyd Plett presented the budget, using a multimedia presentation to explain the various components of the revenue and expense budgets and the logic used to develop them. MC Canada's financial policies do not permit deficit budgeting, so moving forward cautiously, but more confidently that the revenue budget and projections are in fact achievable. It is tremendously encouraging that these conservative projections point to a stable revenue environment, indicating that current programs should be sustainable into the future.

Pray for security, wisdom and the ministry.

Sue Steiner reported that MC Canada creates and translates Anabaptist materials for other than English speaking congregations. Making core documents of faith available in first language is vital. David Bergen reported of the long term relationship between Cuba and Canada, where Jack Suderman has led training on the Confession of Faith, it was translated into Spanish, and is used to grow leaders in the Evangelical Missionary Church in Cuba.

Samson Lo, Director of Multicultural Ministry, stressed the importance of having materials available in the language of the people. The process can take significant time, as was the case with the Chinese translation of the Confession of Faith which was more than ten years in the making. Soon after the English version first came out, Winford Soong (pastor and editor) noted how valuable it would be for teaching in his church. With the assistance of CMC they located two people to work at the translation, and it took two years to receive the first draft. There were some discouraging setbacks along the way, but Winford shared that testing the translation in a bible study helped sort out a number of problems. In meantime, one of the translators passed away, and various staff people at MC Canada were involved but finally in May 2006 the project was completed. Winford shared that as a pastor, it has been important to teach about the love of Jesus and the way of peace. This cannot be taken for granted, since many people come from variety of backgrounds and faiths. Need the Confession of Faith to build a Mennonite identity, unify and nurture the faith of our churches. It feels great to be able to share this resource! Just great!

A remarkable milestone, this is the 11th language in which the Confession of Faith is now available. Hope the number continues to grow. The growth and increase with trading in China will open doors and there is enormous potential for using this resource. We celebrate the translation of the Confession of Faith into Chinese, and along with that celebrate the ministry of all the 11 translations. The resource was celebrated with a round of applause and dedicated with litany and prayer.

31. Discerning our Terrain

Willard Metzger and Janet Plenert introduced the discussion time with a multimedia presentation of current event headlines, suggesting it is time to think together about who we are, where we are, how we are. What is our context in Canadian society and how we are called to be Gods people in that context? Invite delegates to help MC Canada identify the key dynamics of our context. What is it that MC Canada should be aware of, whether political, socioeconomic or religious?

- *Has any thought been given to the role this will play going forward? Should the text align with the logo?*
- *Against motion. The struggle reflects the integrated body. Text should underline the purpose statement.*
- *This text was defeated in 2004. Will it keep coming back?* Response: The Resolutions Committee considered how the process at Leadership Assembly raised this text to the top of the list and that is the reason for bringing it back to the delegates.
- *Against the motion because if we are intending to pursue interfaith conversations, this statement is very exclusive. Not sure that is what we want to bring.*

Motion carried with some opposition.

12. Finance Reporting

Interim financial consultant and Chief Financial Officer, Lloyd Plett presented the financial report on behalf of the Treasurer. Plett reported that his interim position was complete and that Randy Wiebe would be taking over full responsibility. Randy reported that in general terms the Fiscal Year Ended January 31, 2006 seemed very positive. Donation revenue for year over year giving increased for the first time since restructuring. MC Canada appreciates the giving that enabled programs to be delivered. Randy referred to the audit statements in the Report Book and reported that the statements present fairly the financial position of MC Canada.

MOTION 5: The delegate assembly approves the audited financial statements for Mennonite Church Canada for the fiscal year ended January 31, 2006.

E. Peters/V. Neufeld

Discussion:

- *The decline in congregational giving is disturbing. On how solid a footing is the individual/corporate donations?* Response: That topic will be pursued further on Friday when the budget is presented. It should be noted that here is always a level of risk associated with donation funding, regardless of how stable, solid or dependable it seems.

Motion carried.

Henry Krause expressed appreciation for Lloyd Plett's service and his ability to present numbers in a way we can understand.

13. Ministry Report – Christian Formation

Sue Steiner, Chair of Christian Formation Council along with David Bergen, Executive Secretary of Christian Formation, and Arlyn Friesen Epp, Resource Centre Manager, narrated a multimedia presentation that informed the assembly about new developments at the Resource Center. In addition to new materials for the busy loaning library, the center is also increasing electronic resources, like the data base of human resources for a speaker's bureau. There has been tremendous growth in electronic ordering since putting the catalogue online. Congregations were encouraged to share their tried and tested worship resources.

Discussion:

- *Mennonite Publishing has had long-standing connection with Pandora (Canadian publisher) and wonder if there are plans to include these resources in the online catalogue?* Response: Yes, the link with Pandora is being pursued.
- Thank you. The material arrives within a few days. Thank you.

14. Ministry Report – Christian Witness

Willard Metzger, Chair of Christian Witness Council and Janet Plenert, Executive Secretary of Christian Witness invited the assembly to reflect on the unique and special gifts that we, as a church that is both Mennonite and Canadian, are being asked to share and receive in our global family of faith. The gift of friendship is a gift that is both given and received.

Tim and Cindy Buhler, Witness workers in Macau shared how the church being planted there is extending friendship and hospitality to show the light of Christ in contrast with the tempting and flashing lights of the casinos going up everywhere. Janet noted how the gift of solidarity means that we continue to walk with the church in Colombia as this country attempts - once again - to negotiate and create lasting peace. It also means walking with the church in Vietnam, where several of their leaders were again arrested and the church [rebuilt with funds provided by MC Canada] was damaged again. We are not hopeful because of what we can do, we are faithful because of what God is doing in the midst of these circumstances to bring healing and love to these groups.

Church Canada and our schools best work as partners to provide what will be needed to support the ministry of your congregation across the street and around the world?

A number of tables were invited to report:

- Focus on training lay people to engage the community
- Encourage schools to continue writing curriculum and bringing education to the churches (e.g. Portable CMU).
- Equip leaders with strong foundation to respond to questions of the world (peace and justice)
- Important for MC Canada, area conferences and schools to work in partnership
- Encourage schools to focus on post secondary and really challenge congregations and area conferences as the training ground
- Strengthening ministry for seniors
- Supplement with distance learning for many people who won't be able to relocate
- Seminary quality workshops at assembly
- Church leadership for healthy outreach (ESL and Alpha from Anabaptist perspective)
- Serious crisis in terms of depopulation in rural Canada. Must develop lay resources to support the rural church.

29. Morning Worship

Worship leader Mike Pershon and the worship team led our time of worship on the theme "God's People Now! Sent". The service included litany, songs and reading "Three Stone Meditations" by John Bell.

30. Ministry Report

Janet Plenert and Willard Metzger introduced a new partnership project and showed a video of Dann and Joji Pantoja and the peace building ministry and inter-religious dialogue they have started in the Philippines. Mennonites have been entrusted with the theology of peace, and at this time - in a terrorized world, a world that says only through violence can you achieve peace - we say NO! Only through non-violence can we achieve peace.

appointee to the CMU board reported that it is a pleasure to serve, and that it has increased her awareness of all the ways CMU serves the church. CMU is developing a new Bachelor of Church Ministries, continuing to expand post graduate and seminary options. Ruth noted that First Mennonite in Edmonton has benefited from 30 years of participation in the practicum pastor interim program. CMU is a university of the church for the world. As graduates infiltrate the world they make a difference.

28.3. Columbia Bible College (CBC)

President Ron Penner reported CBC has been preparing people for a life of discipleship, service and ministry ever since the MB and GC conferences in BC joined forces to form the school 35 years ago. Ron noted the transition of leaving home is an important development phase for young adults. Research indicates that Christian higher education serves a valuable role for helping people think through their faith, become grounded in scripture and grow in relationship with God. CBC is working more closely with two provincial partners to help conferences achieve their mission, and looks forward to being part of that process with MC Canada as well.

28.4. Conrad Grebel University College (CGUC)

President Henry Patkaeu noted CGUC is one of four theological colleges located on the campus of the University of Waterloo. The undergrad program is part of the faculty of arts. CGUC recently increased its residence capacity. The U of W department of music is located at CGUC. It is not a performance based program, but explores the intersection of music and culture. Peace and conflict studies give students the practical and theological skills, and CGUC also offers a certificate in conflict management. The theological studies program is being strengthened for pastoral leadership training, and should note the Toronto Mennonite Theological Center as well. CGUC offers innovative education and community building in music, leadership and peace work.

Table groups were invited to discuss the following questions:

1. a) Tell a brief story from your congregational experience that illustrates the impact of our schools' ministry on leadership development for the church.
- b) What was positive/helpful about it? How might it have been strengthened?
2. Thinking about the future and the kind of leadership your congregation will need (both lay and pastoral), how might Mennonite

MC Canada is a beneficiary of many gifts in the partnerships that we have. Through the International Mennonite Pastors Coming Together (IMPACT) exchange, our perceptions are challenged and horizons broadened as pastors learn from and establish friendships with others from around the world.

As we share our gifts, we together grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world. Our vision made real.

15. Reports from Partners

15.1. Mennonite World Conference (MWC)

Andrew Reesor McDowell and Naomi Unger, MC Canada representatives to the General Council of MWC, reported how the ministry of MC Canada is extended as we build relationships with the 96 member churches in MWC. Within this global community of Christians from an Anabaptist world wide perspective, we are called together to intercede in areas of crisis. Partnerships enable us to work at overcoming obstacles so we can unite in serving God and see God at work in other places. All have gifts to give and receive, and global cooperation allows us to speak and act to reduce the gap between rich and poor. Gifts are identified and offered in fellowship, worship, witness and service.

15.2. Canadian Women in Mission (CWM)

Canadian Women in Mission value the connection with MC Canada through Christian Witness, benefiting from the larger body that gives valuable information about mission workers around the world, and provides channels for partnerships. Audrey Mierau Bechtel shared how an old project (members were asked to contribute "2 cents a week and a prayer" for missions) is generating new excitement. This legacy fund is being revitalized by CWM as "Two Pennies and a Prayer" in order to support women doing MC Canada Witness work. They plan to promote the donation of funds in honour/memory of loved ones to replenish the fund. As long-established women's groups are getting older, CWM is encouraging women to create new groups within the church that meet their own needs while not forgetting the women's groups across the country and around the world.

15.3. Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT)

Rebecca Johnson and Doug Pritchard reported that CPT was blessed by a wellspring of goodness during the hostage crisis in Iraq. The prayers and support made a difference.

This year marks a significant junction in the life of CPT and the church. CPT was founded twenty years ago in response to the challenge issued by Ron Sider a few years earlier at MWC in 1984. "If pacifism is not God's will for all Christians, then it is not God's will for any. Unless we are ready to die developing new nonviolent attempts to reduce international conflict, we should confess that we never really meant the cross was an alternative to the sword."

Doug paid tribute to Tom Fox, noting that he went to Iraq to work for justice and dignity for Iraqis, and that Tom's guiding conviction was "in all things we need to keep to Jesus". CPT was inspired and humbled by the support and prayers of the Moslem community. Leaders and members of the Moslem community spoke out against the hostage taking, in the same way Christian leaders also express their concern for the Iraqi people being unjustly detained. There are five Moslem men currently being held under security certificates here in Canada, with no access to a fair open trial. CPT is calling for an end to their captivity, and has organized a petition to call for their release that will be delivered to the office of the local Member of Parliament here in Edmonton tomorrow.

With regards to the status of the project in Iraq, there are plans for a team to return there shortly to consult with partners about whether it is helpful for CPT to be in Iraq. Pray for the teams as they discern the times.

16. Nominating Committee

Tim Wiebe Neufeld introduced the members of the nominating committee and provided background information about the discernment process that is used to find candidates. Tim then presented the slate as printed in the Report Book on page 64, noting the area conference representatives were for information only and not part of the slate. The process to be followed for presenting nominations from the floor was reviewed, with notice given that nominations will close at 11:00am tomorrow. At that time the slate will be approved as presented, or if required elections will follow 24 hours after nominations are closed.

17. Listening Committee Report

Sharon Dirks, reporting for the Listening Committee, affirmed the provision of adequate time for discernment and discussion, noting a good sense of freedom in the discussions at the tables. They found having various elected members present on the stage is helpful to put some faces and names to the leadership. The Listening Committee sensed support for the work on strategic planning, noting the positive process that staff is working through and their openness to input.

28. Discernment – Education and the Church

David Bergen introduced the discernment time noting the church has been involved in discipleship and leadership training for a very long time. Church schools have nurtured strong faith, and prepared each generation for ministry and life. In recent years the manner of how the church and schools work as partners has been receiving more attention. Evidence and experience confirms that gifted leaders and pastors have been trained and nurtured by our schools and MC Canada affirms the role of schools in shaping and nurturing leaders. Consultation with the schools suggested there was a desire for a coordinated function at MC Canada and so the role of Executive Secretary for Christian Formation includes developing the relationships and clarifying the way MC Canada relates to the institutions. One priority clearly identified is the need to grow leaders for the church, and specifically pastoral leadership.

28.1. Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS)

Ray Friesen, MC Canada appointee and Chairperson, was pleased to announce that the AMBS board unanimously decided to reappoint Nelson Kreybill for a five year term. The board has also taken steps to appoint a representative from the United Methodist denomination to the board to strengthen interdenominational relationships. Celebrate the opportunity to explore together how to serve the larger church as a Christ centered learning community from an Anabaptist perspective. AMBS is starting a Spanish language institute in Texas this fall, in addition to the extension sites in Winnipeg, Kansas, and Iowa. Recognize that obtaining a degree in ministry is not the end of leadership training, that there is a need for ongoing training and equipping for a lifetime of ministry. The church leadership center is putting feet and hands into the culture of call with the Explore! program. It is a challenge to make it possible and attractive for people from Canada to attend seminary in the USA.

28.2. Canadian Mennonite University (CMU)

President Gerald Gerbrandt reported CMU is making an impact. CMU is committed to developing clear and thought provoking programs that foster communication and relating skills, like the *Out of Town* program that encourages a global mentality. In a context that God created the world, psychology has a different perspective. Secondly CMU is committed to making an impact on the church. As students become active in the church, they play an important role in the direction. Through *Vision*, CMU provides resources for pastors, and implementing a leadership study to assess future needs. Ruth Friesen, MC Canada

Friday, July 7, 2006; 8:30am

27. Ministry Report

David Bergen, Executive Secretary of Christian Formation, Elsie Rempel Director for Christian Education & Nurture, Eleanor Snyder, Director of Faith & Life Resources and Ron Rempel, Executive Director of Mennonite Publishing Network introduced the new Sunday School resource called "Gather 'Round". Several years ago already it was anticipated that the church would need something new to nurture our children in a changing environment. Excited about the way the material connects what we believe with living out that conviction.

Elsie reported that they have identified a resource advocate in each area conference to generate awareness and introduce the new material. People in the congregations are enthusiastic as they walk through a session at different levels. Material is clearly laid out and easy to use, even for those where English is not the first language. Smaller congregations are enthusiastic about intergenerational options, and there is also support material for parents to use at home.

Ron noted that five years ago MPN finances were uncertain, but thanks to strong support from MC Canada and MC USA, things began to improve. The business plan was reorganized and made more stable, and that has enabled MPN to reduce the original debt from 5 million to 3 million dollars. MPN is thankful for the generous donations. Lately MPN has not focused so much on debt reduction, as they have been soliciting support for the resource development fund.

The MPN mission statement: "Our vision is to produce resources to equip the church to experience the gospel from an Anabaptist perspective" motivates them to keep talking and planning together with the church. The vision is expressed in new curriculum, and also the hymnal supplement, devotional books for family, Leader magazine, and many other resources. Plans for the future include a second hymnal supplement called "Sing the Story", and planning for other resources to mark important milestones. Herald Press released 15 new titles this year.

Discussion:

- It is very important for the church to promote and subsidize the publishing of books [from an Anabaptist perspective].

Challenges, comments and suggestions in the plenary sessions were addressed and that builds trust. Affirm how the reports continue to reference the theme of God's People Now!

Appreciate the humility of leadership in accepting all the discussion on the scripture slogan. The Listening Committee urges the delegate assembly to be sensitive to and recognize that we do not all share the same history. Sense some divisiveness or confusion on how we express our unity, so challenge each other to come back to our sense of unity, back to the scripture and Christ centered focus.

Also sensed concern that congregational giving is declining. We are however, excited about worship, and to collaborate and share with each other.

18. God's People Now! Listening Tour

Earlier this year the General Secretary embarked on an ambitious cross-country tour to visit every congregation in MC Canada to listen to the hopes and fears of the constituency. Jack Suderman shared that the hospitality he has received has been outstanding. Using a multimedia presentation, Jack shared some of the highlights and quotes of what he has been hearing. Many people ask "Is there any hope?" and Jack observed that "There is a mountain of hope, because hope is a gift that God gives to the church and the church is incapable of erasing Christian hope. So there is hope." There were also concerns voiced, about engaging youth and young adults in the church, unity, intergenerational dynamics, and learning to apply missional church perspectives more fully to the life and structure of the church. Jack encouraged people to pray for each other, talk with each other, visit each other, and work together to gain strength locally, regionally and nationally.

19. Evening Worship

Donita Wiebe Neufeld led the worship service that focused on the theme "God's People Now! Equipped". The service included stories of God's transforming presence in the work and lives of people in our community. Reading an excerpt from his book "The North End Lives" Hugo Neufeld shared how he was blessed by a cold glass of water as he visited the home of an impoverished family. The assembly was encouraged by the faith story of Todd Munro, founder of Bridging the Gap ministry, to help break down the walls of racism that exist between aboriginal and non-native people. And the stories by Mennonite Centre for Newcomers representatives Ralph Paufler and Wendy Martin demonstrated how the church has been blessed and enriched by refugees.

Renee Sauder, interim pastor at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, ON, began her message with examples of how art opened her eyes to see everyday things in a new way. Using the text from II Timothy 3: 10-17, Renee encouraged the congregation to open up to the scripture and become a part of the stories in new ways. The disciples were equipped for ministry with stories, song and prayer and we are equipped for ministry because they were recorded and passed on.

Thursday, July 6, 2006; 8:30am

20. Discernment – Area Conference Only Membership (ACOM)

Henry Krause introduced the members of the Faith and Life Committee (FLC): Rudy Baergen (Chair), Karl Koop, Betty Pries, Doreen Neufeld and Sven Eriksson and invited the FLC to lead the delegates in discernment and worship.

Referring to the background material in the Report Book Rudy Baergen shared how the FLC organized itself and then proceeded to identify and begin to clarify the issues challenging the church. From a basis of biblical and theological reflection, prayer and consultation the FLC determined that the unity of Christians in the body of Christ is the underlying issue when considering the concept of membership.

What binds us together? According to the apostle Paul, unity is not our doing. We are bound together by something bigger than our own efforts and immeasurably greater than our failures. Unity in Christ is not something we choose to create; rather, it is the blessing of Christ's death on the cross that is granted to us.

The unity we experience in our diversity is not a consequence of our adaptability, our tolerance, our magnanimity, our inclusiveness. It is a miracle of grace.

Is organizational unity and unity in Christ synonymous? Organizational unity and unity in Christ are not the same. Organizational unity is our choice, while unity in Christ is God's doing. We recognize that our unity in Christ must work itself out in different organizational structures. Even so, when we choose not to maintain organizational unity, we need to think carefully about how we continue to nurture what God has established through the death of Christ on the cross.

When does diversity destroy the unity of Christ? Both holiness and hospitality can become a problem if we pay attention to one at the exclusion of the other. We have not known how to hold these two

want to be in fellowship and the door was closed on them, and here it seems we are running after those who don't want to be in fellowship.

- Against resolution as it seems we are planning for disunity. Remove membership and practice issues from the conference floor and work at them in the congregations.

Motion carried in a ballot vote (234 yes; 58 no; 4 abstained).

23. Greetings from Northwest Conference (NWC)

Mel Braun, Moderator of NWC, was pleased to attend the morning session and extend greetings on behalf of the NWC. Mel shared from Ephesians noting how the Holy Spirit inspired the early church, and ended with the benediction from II Corinthians.

24. Greetings from MC USA

Jorge Vellojous, Director of Convention Planning for MC USA brought greetings on behalf of the congregations, conferences and committees of MC USA. The church is very important to us, and it was very important to Jesus, so Jorge encouraged us to take the time to understand each other. Noted the next MC USA assembly will be in San Jose, CA in July 2007. The theme "Live the Call" is based on Ephesians 4: 1-6.

25. Nominations Closed

Tim Wiebe Neufeld reported that there were no nominations from the floor.

MOTION 7: The delegate assembly moves that nominations cease and the slate of nominees be approved as presented.

Nominations Committee/K. Fast - Motion carried.

26. Listening Committee

Ron Braun reported that the Listening Committee appreciated the thorough preparation by FLC, and affirmed the connection between worship and discernment. Delegates are enjoying the discussion time around the issues we are facing. There is a deep sense of unity among us. Hope we truly embrace the decisions and make them a reality as we go back to our churches.

Sessions recessed for service projects, tours and Celebrating God's People Now! at Fort Edmonton Park

- came to support something like this because it is the pastoral thing to do for congregations who are struggling with MC Canada. Continue to work on the theme of unity in Christ.
- *Acknowledge that this is in the spirit of our vision statement. We are attempting to extend grace here, believing that the power of the spirit is free to move in ways to bring healing and hope.*
- *Rather than seeing this as a way out, hope that congregations see it as a possible way in. Hope that along with affirmation for the motion, we work diligently at all levels on partnership principles so we can come to a point where this is not necessary.*
- *MCBC congregations have decided this is something they need. Want to work together at things that we do so well and effectively, like the resource center. Stronger together. Have to vote in favour because the alternative is even less favourable. What if a church feels they can no longer be part of their area conference but still wants to be part of the national program and structure?*

Amendment to Motion 6: Be it further resolved that Mennonite Church Canada establish categories for congregational membership that do not automatically include membership in area conferences.

F. Wiebe/ JD Penner - Amendment defeated.

Jack Suderman noted the intent is to begin by clarifying and addressing what the national church has jurisdiction over. Then we can work at common understandings or state our preference in matters outside our jurisdiction (e.g. Statement 3, baptismal instruction is a decision the local congregation and pastor have to make; and Statement 2, how an area conference makes sure that there isn't undue influence, is not something the national church can dictate, but we can suggest and encourage). Statement 1 is what is clearly under the jurisdiction of the national church. Most of the discussion has been from the perspective of churches wishing to distance themselves, also should consider the other end of the spectrum to begin engaging emerging congregations.

Discussion of original motion cont'd:

- Affirm the previous comments that it is the pastoral thing to do at this point. Want to find ways to make membership as open and inviting as possible, but would vote against this motion unless something changes. There are congregations, like Calgary Inter-Mennonite who

values together very well. We have not seen that holiness and unity are as necessary to one another as exhaling and inhaling are.

How are we mutually accountable in the body of Christ? Paul's use of the metaphor of the body for the Church encourages an appreciation of diverse gifts, but also speaks to the matter of mutual accountability. Our conference organizations should be seen as forums for congregations to be accountable to each other. Given the importance of the biblical admonition on mutual accountability, we must open ourselves to be accountable also to those with whom we do not covenant in formal membership, and perhaps even disagree with in profound ways.

After a time of prayer, the delegates were encouraged to consider the following questions at their tables:

1. What comes to mind when you think about the value of holiness as it is expressed in the bible?
2. What comes to mind when you think about hospitality as it is expressed in the Bible.
3. Is your congregation more oriented to hospitality or holiness? What is the gift of your congregation's style?
4. What can your congregation learn from its opposite pole?

A number of tables were invited to report:

- Holiness is a goal we strive for, demanded by God
- Hospitality grows out of holiness, not in opposition too
- Holiness was stronger theme of Old Testament, challenge for people of Israel
- Jesus was a light to the nations – hospitality
- Too much emphasis on holiness leads to church splits
- Obeying the law of love is essential for holiness
- It is easier to be nice than to be holy or willing to be led in holiness
- Hospitality is challenged when we are called to welcome those who are not like us

21. Morning Worship

Assisted by the worship team, the Faith and Life Committee led our morning worship service. The focal point of the service was confession

for where we have failed to offer hospitality, and words of assurance offered the miracle of grace.

22. Discernment – ACOM Cont'd

Delegates were encouraged to consider the guiding principles used to discern the understanding of membership in the Report Book, and it was noted that delegates at Assembly 2005 had indicated a preference for making membership open and flexible.

Questions of clarification for Statement 1:

- *How do we define area conference?* Response: The bylaws define what is meant by area conference.
- *If we go in this direction, is there anything that stipulates the moderator of an area conference needs to be a member of a constituent congregation?* Response: Trying to separate the principles from the accountability. Want to test the implications with the delegates, but first establish the guiding principles. Ask if possible to focus discussion on the membership of area conferences in MC Canada. Would the membership of the area conference be jeopardized if congregations were ACOM?
- *Why do some congregations feel it necessary to seek this option?* Gerd Bartel, Moderator of MCBC shared that MCBC has had Provincially Active Only congregations for the past 5 years under an interim agreement between MC Canada and MCBC. That agreement has now expired, and so the ACOM provision would give congregations a chance to decide what kind of status they want.
- *What are the issues?* Response: Congregations are concerned that they are being asked to join a body for which they have little ability to shape the membership criteria. The shaping that happens at area conference level seems to happen in isolation. Their desire would be to have principles of trust to bridge the conferences. The more we think together, to create spirit of trust and unity, build relationships, the more willingness and desire there is to work through differences. Working at ways we could do that that would impact relationship with MC Canada.
- *It would be advantageous to discuss the other two statements before taking action on statement 1.*
- *This position feels similar to the situation where a pastor is asked to baptize people that do not want church membership. We are committed to one another once we are baptized. Are we saying it is okay to separate ourselves from the body in order to serve certain principles?*

MOTION 6: Be it resolved that Mennonite Church Canada delegates affirm that Area Conferences who establish categories for congregational membership that do not automatically include membership in Mennonite Church Canada, do not affect or jeopardize their own membership status nor the membership of its “constituent congregations” in Mennonite Church Canada.

E. Peters/R. Baergen

Discussion:

- *Is there a difference between delegates and MC Canada?* Response: The delegates speak for MC Canada.
- *Like Statement 1, but it is contingent on Statements 2 and 3 being there. Uncomfortable separating the principles.*
- *If we don't support this, will it lead to the break up of MC Canada?*
- *MC Canada would be clearer to state on what basis they will accept area conferences, rather than working on the exceptions.* Response: The bylaws outline the eligibility for membership and expectations of members.
- *Concerned about the role, value or benefit of MC Canada if we can take individualistic paths as area conferences. How do we share experiences and discernment? See MC Canada as the place where we come together, and would rather not have area conferences go separate paths. Let us walk together, willing to work with those who are at different places in their pilgrimage.*
- *Affirm the resolution, feeling this is the best way to work at the unity of Christ when organizational unity is not possible in every way. Not ideal, there will be organizational issues, but best solution for the time we are in.*
- *May not speak to all of our wishes for covenant. The GC side of our history has shown there are periods when congregations struggle with one level of conference or another and this provision allows congregations to engage at reestablishing meaningful connection.*
- *Our commitment to hospitality has brought us to this point. Need to reach out and say that these other churches and area conferences are welcome where they are at.* Response: The FLC