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Mennonite Church Canada Update Video Available

In mid-December, Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, recorded a brief greeting and financial update video. It will be posted to MC Canada's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/mennonitechurchca. Many congregations hold their annual business meetings early in the New Year, and may wish to use the video and/or script as a way to keep congregants informed. The message he delivered appears below.



Hello. My name is Jack Suderman, and I am the General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada.

I greet you on behalf of the staff and leadership of Mennonite Church Canada, and in the name of the Prince of Peace who was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, and killed and resurrected in Jerusalem. In announcing his birth the angels instructed us not to fear, because his coming would be very good news for the world.

In spite of the fact that the financial foundations are trembling beneath us as I speak, the message of the angels is still very relevant: fear not; there is good news; the Savior of the world has been born. We celebrate that the Prince of Peace is alive and well among us.

We live in uncertain times, at least as far as the viability of our economic foundations are concerned. We live with the pain that such changes generate for us: the anxieties of loss; the threat to our economic futures; the uncertainties of fiscal health; the difficulty of meeting our commitments to others. And we know that the pain is real and not imagined. The anxieties have faces and names; they point to programs and potential; they have implications for the survival of ministries and partnerships.

But we also live in very certain times. We are certain that God is with us; certain that God loves us; that God wants to save and not destroy the world. We live with certainty that faithfulness to God is good and that discipleship to Jesus is important. We are certain that it is better to be hospitable than to withdraw; that it is good to be generous in spite of risks. We are certain that the joy proclaimed by the angels is not subsumed by the gloom of financial uncertainties.

There are those among us who are feeling the pain of economic strife, and those beyond us for whom economic strife is an ongoing, life-long reality. We commit our compassion and prayers to the pastors, congregations, area churches as you work to offer comfort and hope to others during uncertain times.

At Mennonite Church Canada, we are concerned for the health of the many ministries and partnerships we engage. We work with partners and minister with a broad spectrum of our brothers and sisters around the world – from the poorest and most vulnerable in places like Congo and Burkina Faso, to those who seek redemption and wholeness in places like England and Ukraine. Lives are transformed; communities are engaging the justice of the Gospel; churches are growing; families are nurtured. There are thousands of persons at home and around the world who are grateful for your generosity that allows critical ministries to continue

“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 3:11

and flourish: in the vastness of Asia, the complexities of the Middle East, the significant challenges of Africa, the hope in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the hard soil of North America. They say thank-you to you. God is generous to us.

In the past you have asked us to alert you to shifting financial situations that could impact our ministries. I'm happy to share now what we know, in December 2008. As we come to our fiscal year end, on January 31, the support from you, the congregations, is strong and solid. We are grateful for that. But we do know that the financial crises around us are taking their toll on congregational members, businesses, and corporations. It seems apparent that our income projections from those sectors will not be met. We are working at contingency plans to address what continues to be a cloudy financial horizon. Experience teaches us that even in tough economic times, charitable giving remains relatively strong and we trust that this will be so again at the end of this fiscal year and as we plan for the next year.

We share this with you to encourage you to continue to share generously so that our partnerships in ministry can remain strong.

We believe that the work and ministry through the Denomination, Congregations and Area Churches of Mennonite Church Canada is in good hands. We are also grateful for your prayers, and for the many volunteers who continue to serve Mennonite Church Canada and the Area Churches at so many levels.

May the peace and joy of Advent continue with us throughout the year, and may we face the New Year together, with all the uncertainties it will put before us. Let us encourage one another in a conspiracy of love and generosity for all humanity as we celebrate the presence of Jesus, our Master and our Lord, in our lives and in our world. May God bless you all.

—Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary, Mennonite Church Canada