

Resolutions - St. Catharines Assembly 2003

Motion 1:

The delegate assembly adopts the minutes of the 3rd annual session of Mennonite Church Canada as recorded and published in Minute Book 2002 issued by Mennonite Church Canada.

Carried.

Motion 2:

The delegate assembly approves the audited financial statements for Mennonite Church Canada for the year ended January 31, 2003.

Carried.

Motion 3:

That nominations cease and the slate be accepted as presented.

Carried.

Slate of nominees (Report Book pages 15-17) was elected as reported in the report book. No nominee was identified for the position of chair of SS council – procedure is that GB will seek someone for affirmation at next year's assembly.

Serving us at this year's assembly (St. Catharines 2003)

Assistant Secretary

- Marlene Janzen (Foothills Mennonite Church, Alberta)
- Parliamentarian
- John Sawatsky (Peace Mennonite Church, BC)
- Resolutions Committee
- Ray Friesen (chair—Zion Mennonite Church, Saskatchewan)
- Barb Draper (Floradale Mennonite Church, Ontario)
- Amy Peters (Bethel Mennonite Church, Manitoba)
- Garry Janzen (Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, BC)
- Listening Committee
- Henry Paetkau (Conrad Grebel University College, Ontario, Chair)
- Pam Driedger (Altona Mennonite Church, Manitoba)
- Roy Hewko (Rosemary Mennonite Church, Alberta)

Motion 4:

The delegate assembly approves the budget presented for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2004, as well as the projected budgets presented for fiscal year ending January 31, 2005 and fiscal year ending January 31, 2006.

Carried by secret ballot, 220 in favour, 50 opposed, 3 spoiled ballots.

Motion 5:

The delegate assembly appoints KPMG as the auditor for Mennonite Church Canada for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2004.

Carried.

Resolution 1:

Whereas a number of factors have contributed to the severe financial crisis which Mennonite Church Canada has been experiencing this past year; and

Whereas hard decisions needed to be made within a short period of time to prevent the accumulation of further debt, and

Whereas many worthwhile ministries were lost and many gifted and committed people were let go as the result of programs being cut and/or reduced,

Be it resolved: that we acknowledge that mistakes were made in this financial crisis, and we confess that we all contributed to the crisis;

that we grieve the loss of staff persons and programs, and that we care for those who have lost jobs as well as those who continue,

that we apologize to the staff who were dismissed and the communities who have been hurt.

Carried.

Resolution 2:

Whereas MC Canada staff and General Board members have demonstrated honesty and transparency in keeping us informed throughout the crisis, acknowledging the mistakes that have been made,

Be it resolved that we thank the General Board and the MC Canada staff for their courage, hard work, and transparency during this crisis, and

Be it further resolved that we assure them of our ongoing

commitment to working together as move forward.

Carried.

Resolution 3:

Be it resolved that the General Board develop a plan for responding to crises like the 2003 budget crisis that will include consultation with Area Conferences and congregations so as to ensure as broad-based input as possible before decisions are made.

Carried.

Resolution 4:

Whereas we are full partners in the operations of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary; and

Whereas the training of leaders for our congregations and ministries is crucial for the well-being of the Church; and

Whereas we have a long history of supporting training at AMBS; and

Whereas AMBS was part of the GC and MC annual budgets,

Be it resolved that the General Board present to the 2004 Assembly a plan outlining the inclusion of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in the Mennonite Church Canada Budget, achieving levels by 2006 that clearly demonstrate Mennonite Church Canada's denominational support of seminary education, in addition to designated donations.

Defeated.

Resolution 5:

Be it resolved that Mennonite Church Canada reaffirm its commitment to an ethic of service and its continued participation in "across the street" ministry in Canada and to explore and implement ways of maintaining Christian service opportunities for congregationally based Christian service ministry in Canada.

Be it further resolved that each Mennonite Church Canada congregation be encouraged to pray for and support the well-being of service units in Canada, identify and respond to local

community needs, and encourage congregants of all ages to a lifestyle of service and discipleship.

Carried.

Resolution 6:

Since we believe that marriage is the joining of one man and one woman in a life-long covenant of love, and

Since the Prime Minister has indicated his intention to have the Federal Government redefine marriage in future legislation,

Be it resolved that the General Board communicate to the Federal Government Mennonite Church Canada's understanding of marriage and our encouragement that, whatever action the Government should take to redefine marriage, all religious groups be guaranteed the freedom to practice and proclaim their understanding of what marriage is.

Carried by secret ballot, 131 in favour, 130 opposed, 16 spoiled ballots.

Resolution 7:

Be it resolved Mennonite Church Canada express its gratitude to John Unger who served as acting president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College during the 2002/2003 academic year. Carried with applause.

Resolution 8:

As representatives of Mennonite churches and conferences across Canada, we have been encouraged by meeting together as Mennonite Church Canada Assembly.

We have experienced fellowship in Christ; we have been challenged and encouraged. We have enjoyed the hospitality extended to us by MCEC, the churches of the St. Catharines area, and their wonderful people. We have been inspired during the times of worship.

Be it resolved that we extend our thanks to everyone who made this event possible. A special thanks to all the volunteers. Carried with applause.

Strong Congregations

The following testimony was presented by Jim Brown (Home Street MC, Winnipeg) during Thursday morning's discernment session. Jim Brown is a stewardship consultant with Mennonite Foundation.

Life in the larger Mennonite church is like a tree with many branches. The tree provides structure, support and foundation. The branches provide opportunities for ministry and fruitfulness. Let me tell you a story about a few of these branches.

Beginning with a tiny twig out here there's a kindergarten Sunday school class. Most of their time is spent listening to Bible stories and doing crafts. It's a simple setting but seeds with great potential are planted.

One branch stretches out to a small Native Reserve called Pauingassi, Manitoba in summer 1978. There a young, long-haired, white teenager gets a chance to teach Summer Bible School while witnessing first-hand some of the struggles of this community.

This teen can't quite imagine how couples like Henry and Elna Neufeld could spend so much of their working life in such a remote community. But it leaves a deep impression.

On another branch there is a student sitting in a small Mennonite college coffee room eagerly debating with other students and their professor on the lecture they've just heard.

That coffee room is like an arena where they meet to wrestle with issues of life and faith.

Day after day, year after year this process goes on. An



observer might think it's just youth engaging in verbal jousting. But years later it will be recognized as the time and place where many a church leader's values and faith were shaped.

On yet another branch we find a young adult interested but hesitant to test his call for ministry. Fortunately there are ministerial internships available for him to test and discern his gifts. He spends a year observing a college chaplain who regularly encourages and guides this novice in ministry.

Another year passes and we find him on another branch. He thinks he might have some skills for ministry. It's been a few years since he left his home church.

Fortunately for him and many others there are people who try to keep track of these scattered would-be-church workers. A few years later this student is licensed for congregational ministry.

Out here we find a youth pastor helping at a conference camp. Whether the youth will remember the content of the sessions is unknown. What we do know is that many youth will point to their camp experience as a place where they encountered God in a more personal way.

There are many, many branches but let's look at two more. There is a family teaching students in a Christian college in Eastern Europe. Through the support

and guidance of one of our mission staff, this family is able to enjoy the rewards and face the challenges of overseas service.

On the last branch we see a minister traveling from church to church preaching and teaching on God's call for us to be faithful stewards of all he has entrusted to us.

It is a meaningful ministry of "making generous people feel great."

This tree feels very familiar to me because the story on each branch I mentioned is my story. It is the wider Mennonite church that has taught and nurtured me, as well as given me so many opportunities to seek faithfulness to Christ.

People are more important than structures and programs. However it is the structures and programs that have helped us to remain connected and to work at faithfulness and fruitfulness together. Not all people who are a part of the tree know each other because some branches are farther away from each other.

But we still are all connected. We still all have a common root and common commitment to serving Christ our Lord.

What if...What if we could harness even half our potential for fruitfulness within Mennonite Church Canada?