

July-August, 2004, *Equipping*

## Being a World of Witness



I hope all of you are familiar with MC Canada's prayer directory, *World of Witness, 2002-2003*. It lists many of the ministries in which we are engaged together, especially those that are part of our Witness work. But as the dates suggest, that directory is

now outdated and a new one has been produced. It will be officially introduced and made available at Winkler 2004.

The new book is more than a directory of international ministries or "witness" work – it is missional in its approach that says, "All of what we do is part of the mission of the church, and all our ministries depend on prayer."

I have reviewed the proofs of the new book, and it is striking to see presented in one place the range of ministry and activity in which our congregations, area conferences, and national church are involved. One piece that brings this together is an article entitled "Strong Congregations," a testimony/reflection by Jim Brown that highlights how strong congregations build and are built up by strong schools, conferences, relief agencies, mission work, etc. There is also a wonderful illustration of the range of activities that go on in a congregation on Sunday morning (or, in some places, on Saturday evening).

How much stronger can we be when we expand this vision beyond Mennonite congregations working together to include a vision for working together with other churches, other denominations? In fact, we already do this. Many congregations pool resources and work cooperatively with their neighbour churches on local ministries. As a national church body we work with other Mennonite churches internationally through the auspices of Mennonite World Conference.

On national (and some international) issues we work together with the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). Recently, Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, General Secretary of the CCC, was invited to be part of a delegation that met with Kofi Annan, General Secretary of the United Nations, to bear witness to Christian concern and conviction about some of the troubled places in the world. In her report she noted that "Canadians and Canadian churches...can work with our politicians to further the understanding that the world is at a cross roads and that there are a number of bases to conflict in the world, including poverty, environmental degradation etc. We can also continue to remind ourselves, our churches and the world that serious as the Iraq situation is, there are also numerous other global issues including HIV/AIDS which require of us a multi-lateral response. And knowing that the United Nations has designated September 21<sup>st</sup> as an International Day of Peace, member churches could be encouraged to hold special prayer services on that day, to ring their church bells etc."

God gave us resources (the Holy Spirit, wisdom and opportunity) and a mandate to facilitate God's reign. As a relatively small denomination, our impact is multiplied when we join with other churches to speak to the great issues that the world faces. Is it likely that Kofi Annan would have agreed to meet with a single congregation, an area conference, or even Mennonite Church Canada? Probably not. But when churches work together, truly great things become possible.

When you get your new MC Canada Prayer Directory, use it to celebrate all that we are able to do together as Mennonites in Canada. And think also of the great impact that we, together with God's people in other denominations, have and can have on our local communities, our country and the world. And let us pray together "your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Sincerely,

  
Dan Nighswander