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Dear Colleagues,

Here in Saskatchewan we have spoken often of the challenges of small rural churches and we have even begun to dream of the possibility of planting a church that would cross denominational lines. Perhaps you have done the same in your area. I am writing to alert you to what I believe will be an exciting and uplifting national conference for Mennonite folk who are interested in Ecumenical Shared Ministries, and other forms of congregational cooperation:

Collaborative Ministries

April 18-21, 2005 - Saskatoon, Saskatchewan - Sheraton Cavalier Hotel

The Prairie Centre for Ecumenism in Saskatoon is planning the conference, with a team consisting of Mennonite, United Church, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic members. We are building on the strength of two highly successful national shared ministry events (Winnipeg 1993 and Edmonton 2002) and also on annual "ecumenical institutes", the most recent one held in May 2004 in Winnipeg, which have been held across the prairies for the past several years, attracting participants from a wider number of denominations who are interested in learning about and promoting ecumenical sharing in their congregations and regions.

Our theme speakers are **Phyllis Anderson** and **Herbert Anderson**, both ordained American Lutherans with much ecumenical experience. Phyllis is the dean of ecumenical studies at the Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry, a Jesuit theological school that trains parish leaders for eleven different denominations. Herbert is a recently retired professor of pastoral theology, currently a visiting professor at Yale Divinity School. He specializes in pastoral care, grief and loss, and the power of ritual. Phyllis and Herbert will speak about faithful "collaboration" from ecumenical, spiritual, and practical perspectives.

The worship leader will be **John Bell**, of the Iona Community in Scotland, who needs little introduction to many Mennonite folk. He will both model and workshop worship as a profoundly ecumenical, justice-making and grace-filled endeavour.

Planned workshops include "*How to Get Started in Shared Ministry*," "*Conflict in Ecumenical Settings*," "*Multi-faith Dialogue*," "*Ecumenism in First Nations Ministries*," "*Collaboration in Rural Communities*," and many more.

Thanks to some seed money, and with the promise (and hope) of some denominational support for participants, we plan to keep the Conference costs quite low. Accommodation will be available at a special rate at the Sheraton Hotel, but other economical lodgings are also available nearby.

If you have further questions, you can contact me at pauline@wildwoodmennonite.org or 306-373-2126. I hope you will be able to attend, and that you will help us to promote this stimulating and encouraging event in your constituency by forwarding this information on to churches within your area conference.

Sincerely,

Pauline Steinmann

*Pastor, Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon
and Planning Team Member*