

Mennonite Church Canada Ministry Highlights for 2009

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Mahatma Gandhi said; “there are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.”

As long as there are those in the world who hunger in any way – for spiritual or physical food, for economic, social or political justice – God’s all-encompassing peace, *shalom*, will elude us. Mennonite Church Canada is working to meet the fundamental needs of those within its ever-widening circle of influence, constructing a foundation for true and lasting peace through a variety of ministries at home and abroad.

Each issue of *Equipping* includes Ministry Notes and Prayer Requests about the ministries that congregations are invited to support. Many congregations print these bite sized messages regularly in their Sunday bulletins. For that we are very grateful. By sharing your precious bulletin space with us, you are helping us to prayer and find finances for building God’s church. In fact, you may wish to use this document as a handy way of reporting on the work of Mennonite Church Canada at your annual congregational meetings in 2010.

Below is a summary of some of the ways your prayers and awareness-building have been at work. Thank you for your invaluable contributions to Mennonite Church Canada’s ministries of transformation in 2009!

1. In 2009, Mennonite Church Canada is working to form a people of God by finding several ways to share the message that God’s all-encompassing *shalom* is attainable without violence:
 - At Assembly 2009, delegates affirmed a proposal for *Peace in the Public Square* that would see concepts of non-violent peace building promoted across the country on bus boards, transit shelters and billboards.
 - Mennonite Church Alberta responded to this proposal with a campaign of roadside billboards and posters that ran from Nov. 23 to Dec 23. Pray that this campaign will have positive residual effects throughout Calgary, and that other MC Canada congregations will actively engage in similar projects.
 - The K-9 students of Menno Simons Christian School in Calgary are taking part in “1,000 Acts of Peace,” one aspect of Mennonite Church Canada’s *Peace in the Public Square* initiative. From sharing ideas for peace in chapel time to participating a variety of service projects and recording three acts of peace each day in their journals, these students have made the exploration of peace a school mission.
 - On September 30th, a Private Members Bill proposing a federal Department of Peace was tabled in Parliament. Mennonite Church Canada has had a strong influence in shaping this bill together with the Canadian Department of Peace Initiative. Please pray that public resolve to support this idea will gather momentum throughout the long process ahead. For more information, see www.departmentofpeace.ca.
 - The October 2009 episode of *Church Matters*, Mennonite Church Canada’s monthly pod cast, features Pastor Gordon Allaby sharing the story of how his congregation creatively incarnates Jesus’ peace in the public square in Osler, Sask. Tune in via www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1178 or iTunes.
 - On Oct. 17, Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada with Bruce Adema, Director of Canadian Ministries for the bi-national Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and current president of the Canadian Council of

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- Churches (CCC), hosted a Symposium on War and Peace together with the CRC of Canada at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.
- In November, Mennonite Church Canada launched the website www.liveforpeace.org; a forum for sharing and discussing peace initiatives. Thank you for the prayers and encouragement that have made this development possible.
 - With your support, MC Canada Witness workers Daniel and Joji Pantoja continue to share concepts of non-violent peace building through Peacebuilders Community Inc. (PBCI). Using various education programs and by responding to the needs they see around them – such as helping those who were displaced by typhoon related flooding in late September 2009 – the Pantojas are sowing seeds of shalom.
 - Through its membership in the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), Mennonite Church Canada has added its voice to approximately 100 other religious groups who are holding G8 leaders to their 9 year old pledges to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The goals – to be achieved by 2015 – seek to enhance conditions for peace by addressing the root causes of conflict such as poverty, illiteracy, disease, gender inequality, child mortality, and unsustainable environmental practices.
2. Your support of Mennonite Church Canada ministries is helping to grow leaders for the church by encouraging youth and young adults:
- Caronport Sask. hosted Mennonite Church Canada's Youth Assembly from July 6-10, 2009. More than 200 youth and youth sponsors engaged in faith and relationship-building worship, prayer, workshops and service projects and responded to their experiences with enthusiasm in a report on the event. You can find the report at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1221>
 - Radical Journey, a young adult service program of Mennonite Church Canada Witness with Mennonite Mission Network, gave seven Canadian young adults the opportunity to serve in 2009. Scott Bergen, Dorothea Toews, and Rebecca Willms were in South America to help with preparations for the Mennonite World Conference Assembly which took place in July. Kyle Berg, Tim Wenger and Gabriella Wiebe are currently in South Africa, while Ruth Weber is serving in Paraguay. Thank you for helping these young people gain cross-cultural experiences that will help to shape them for a lifetime of service to God's church.
3. Mennonite Church Canada Witness is helping us become a more global church by sending several people abroad on special, short-term assignments that allowed us to share Anabaptist perspectives with others in 2009.
- Palmer and Ardys served at Bethlehem Bible College in Palestine/Israel. Bethlehem is fifty miles from war-torn Gaza.
 - Pieter and Susie Niemeyer and their family (Markham, Ont.) spent over three months in Philipstown, South Africa. During their stay, Pieter taught basic theology from an Anabaptist perspective at Grace Community Churches, while Susie worked with those churches on women's issues.
 - During a period of sabbatical from their employment positions, Richard Thiessen and Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen (Abbotsford, B.C.), served as a Librarian Consultant at Meserete Kristos College library and at a local orphanage, respectively. The Thiessens were accompanied by their three sons.
 - Titus Guenther, Associate Professor, Theology and Missions at Canadian Mennonite University, interacted with the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Chile and our other Anabaptist partners.

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4. Throughout 2009, Mennonite Church Canada Witness found a number of ways to become a more global church at home and around the world by building relationships between congregations:
 - Now in its fourth year, Mennonite Church Canada's program, International Pastors Coming Together (IMPACT) brought five international pastors from Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Philippines together in Saskatchewan with an equal number of local pastors for a time of engagement, prayer, and worship. Praise God for this significant opportunity and the relationships that were sparked!
 - With your support, MC Canada Witness has a presence in Israel/Palestine. Hinke Loewen-Rudgers, a long-term Witness worker, is exploring ways to build relationships with churches in Galilee and the West Bank.
 - Jim Loepp Thiessen from the Gathering Church (Kitchener, Ont.) and Barb and Wilmer Froese, co-pastors of Rosthern MC (Sask.) explored the work of Mennonite Church Canada Witness in urban and rural areas of China with Witness worker Jeanette Hanson as their guide.
 - Following the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in July, Mennonite Church Canada Witness helped to organize an Indigenous Learning Tour that brought together aboriginal peoples from across North and South America. Thank you for supporting the development of these important connections!
 - During their fall meetings in Abbotsford B.C., members of MC Canada's Witness Council had the opportunity to hear the stories of various First Nations people, council members and learn about the lingering effects of Residential School on individuals, families and communities. We are grateful for opportunities to share stories that break down stereotypes and invite healing through understanding.
 - On March 29, 2009, Trinity Mennonite Church in Calgary signed a five-year covenant to partner with the Korea Anabaptist Center in Seoul, South Korea.
 - A new Mennonite Church has been born in Cuba! MC Canada has been walking with the church in Cuba for about 20 years, sharing Anabaptist theology through existing churches in a country already rich with denominational diversity. Recently, Iglesia Menonita en Cuba grew out of the desire of local leaders to adopt a theology which offers a radical Anabaptist alternative in their society.
5. Praise God for the new and growing church leaders whom Mennonite Church Canada has celebrated in 2009!
 - Aboriginal elder, Barb Daniels, was commissioned as a leader in the Riverton Fellowship Circle (Manitoba). This Aboriginal congregation is partnered with four Winnipeg Mennonite churches, Bethel, Douglas, Home Street, and Sargent Avenue, through MC Canada Native Ministry's Partnership Circles.
 - Treasure Chow, a local Chinese leader was ordained at Macau Mennonite Church as the lead pastor. Treasure and her husband, Bailey, are part of a ministry team in Macau that includes Witness workers Tim and Cindy Buhler, and George and Tobia Veith.
 - Hun and Sunny Lee, formerly members of and leaders in Trinity Mennonite Church of Calgary, have been commissioned for service as Mennonite Church Canada Mission Associates to South Korea.
6. Your gifts enable Mennonite Church Canada Formation to form a people of God by developing resources that meet the needs of individuals and congregations across Canada:

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- A number of Mennonite Church Canada pastors and lay people have willingly shared their congregational resources with the MC Canada Community through the Resource Centre. To peruse these resources, see www.Mennonitechurch.ca/Tiny/479
- Currently, 45 of MC Canada's some 225 congregations are from backgrounds other than Russian or Swiss Mennonite traditions and worship services are offered in more than a dozen languages. Your support of MC Canada Multi-cultural Ministries facilitates the translation of resources to meet the needs of our growing, multi-cultural church.
- As the official repository of archival records for many Mennonite organizations, the Mennonite Heritage Centre is able to provide genealogical evidence that help Mennonites from Mexico legally enter Canada. Thank you for supporting this important ministry!
- In the next 5-15 years almost 1/3 of Canadians will retire. Thanks to the generous giving of our congregations, leaders like Elsie Rempel, Jack Suderman and Dave Bergen are offering time and resources to a church population looking for ways to enrich their retirement years with spiritual growth that strengthens the ministry of the whole church.
- Church Matters, Mennonite Church Canada's monthly podcast, produced 12 new episodes in 2009. Among them is an interview with Robert (Jack) Suderman, General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, on the topic of being a faithful church in times of challenge and tumult. Tune in via www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/206 or iTunes.
- Mennonite Church Canada created a website of resources designed to help churches around the world respond faithfully to a pandemic or other wide-spread emergency. Help your congregation prepare for emergencies by visiting www.churchpandemicresources.ca
- 7. Janet Plenert, executive secretary of Mennonite Church Canada Witness, was elected to a six-year term as vice-president of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) at its assembly in Asunción, Paraguay, in July, enhancing Mennonite Church Canada's pursuit of a global church by playing a significant role in MWC's global ministry.
- 8. Mennonite Church Canada General Secretary, Robert J. Suderman, announced his intention to retire no later than August 31, 2010. During his term, Suderman has been deeply involved in the international church, and has been an important voice in ecumenical circles through MC Canada's membership in the Canadian Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Your support has enabled the nurture of these important relationships.