

**Executive Summary:**

**Where the Money Goes**

*An Analysis of Congregational  
Giving Distribution in Mennonite  
Church Canada*

*Prepared for Mennonite Church Canada  
General Board*

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## Background

- At the annual Mennonite Church Canada assembly held in St. Catharines in 2003, delegates expressed significant concern about how much money was being spent on International ministries relative to other National ministry. At a time of financial crisis, many voices suggested that denominational dollars directed to international ministry was disproportionately large compared to national ministry.
- The data in this report seeks to bring clarity to the percentage of congregationally based donated dollars being spent on ministries conducted in Canada versus internationally. This effort attempts to understand the choices congregations make when deciding how to distribute their generosity. It is not a judgment of congregational decision making.
- This report uses data from Mennonite Church Canada congregations for the years 2000 to 2002 made available from the Canada Revenue Agency website. Charities are required by law to report annually the income received, and the distribution of that income. These annual reports known commonly as form T3010's are the basis of the results being provided here.

## Summary of Key Findings:

- Money distributed to international activity has diminished over the reporting period (2000 – 2002) by about \$200,000. This finding is consistent with other research findings that indicate congregations have increasingly directed giving to local and national ministry from 55% in 1964 to an average 75.3% in 2000-2003.
- Giving to area conference activity has increased slightly over the reporting period, from 8.35% in 2000 to 9.93% in 2003, while giving to the national church has remained constant over the same time period. Exceptions are Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, where average area conference giving declined over the three year time period, and Mennonite Church Manitoba, where national conference giving jumped significantly in 2002.
- Funds used for congregational expenses remained relatively constant for the reporting period, changing by less than 0.5%.

## Conclusions:

- Congregational giving directed to conferences and international ministry has continued to decline since 1993. A drop of 11.7% in congregational giving to the national church in the last ten years has dramatically impacted the wider church's ability to create and sustain dynamic ministry options on behalf of its members. A 1993 study called *Strengthening the Links* stated, "The result has been mounting pressure on CMC [Conference of Mennonites in Canada] to depart from its traditional fundraising methods and to begin seeking financial gifts from individuals, over and above their donations to their churches." The predictions made in this report have been borne out by experience.
- Although the downward trend of percentages being forwarded to area conferences and the national church has been relatively stable from 2000 - 2003, this time period is a relatively short time to conclude that the longer term downward trend has been arrested. The challenge that remains is to reverse the long term trend and increase congregational support of national church ministry.
- The trend of increased spending on national/home ministry is an opportunity to enter into deeper congregational conversation about how we share our generosity in a balanced way. While the task of developing greater ownership and appreciation for ministry continues, there needs to be a fuller dialogue about how to fund work into our future.