



600 Shaftesbury Blvd
Winnipeg MB R3P 0M4
Toll free: 1-866-888-6785
T: 204-888-6781
F: 204-831-5675
E: office@mennonitechurch.ca
W: www.mennonitechurch.ca

Minute Book

Abbotsford 2007

Mennonite Church Canada

8th Annual Delegate Assembly

July 3-6, 2007

Mennonite Educational Institute, Abbotsford, BC

Mennonite Church Canada **Minute Book 2007**
 Mennonite Church Canada Minute Book has been published
 annually since 1996.

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Editors: Pam Peters-Pries, Lois Bergen
 Logo design: Lynette Wiebe
 Layout: Katharina Nuss

Mennonite Church Canada Assembly Officers for 2007

Parliamentarian

- John R. Sawatzky, BC

Resolutions

- Ed Janzen, BC
- Lucille Marr, QC
- Ted Janzen, SK

Listening

- Kelvin Dyck, MB
- Nicole Cober Bauman, ON
- Artur Bergen, BC

Mennonite Church Canada Program Committee Members for 2007

- Mildred Roth, ON
- Karen Schellenberg, MB

Local Hosting Co-ordinator

- Marijke Olson, BC

Worship Co-ordinator

- Heidi Epp, BC

Abbreviations:

| | |
|---------|---|
| ACOM | Area Church Membership Only |
| AMBS | Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary |
| AMIGOS | Mennonite World Conference Youth Committee |
| CAMS | Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools |
| CBC | Columbia Bible College |
| CCC | Canadian Council of Churches |
| CCCC | Canadian Council of Christian Charities |
| CFC | Christian Formation Council |
| CGUC | Conrad Grebel University College |
| CMU | Canadian Mennonite University |
| CPT | Christian Peacemaker Teams |
| CWC | Christian Witness Council |
| CWM | Canadian Women in Mission |
| EFC | Evangelical Fellowship of Canada |
| FLC | Faith and Life Committee |
| FPAC | Financial Policy and Audit Committee |
| FYE | Fiscal Year End |
| GAMEO | Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online |
| GB | General Board |
| GMF | Global Mennonite Fellowship |
| IMPACT | International Mennonite Pastors Coming Together |
| JEC | Joint Executive Council |
| KPMG | Auditors for Mennonite Church Canada |
| M/S/C/ | Moved/Secoded/Carried |
| MC | Mennonite Church |
| MC SASK | Mennonite Church Saskatchewan |
| MCA | Mennonite Church Alberta |
| MCA | Mennonite Camping Association |
| MCBC | Mennonite Church British Columbia |
| MCC | Mennonite Central Committee |
| MCCC | Mennonite Central Committee Canada |
| MCEC | Mennonite Church Eastern Canada |
| MCM | Mennonite Church Manitoba |
| MDS | Mennonite Disaster Service |
| MEDA | Mennonite Economic Development Agency |
| MEI | Mennonite Educational Institute |
| MFC | Mennonite Foundation of Canada |
| MM | Mennonite Men |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MPN | Mennonite Publishing Network |
| MW | Mennonite Women |
| MWC | Mennonite World Conference |
| P2P | Person to Person |
| RJC | Rosthern Junior College |
| SSC | Support Services Council |
| TWU | Trinity Western University |

Slate of Elected Nominations

General Board

Don Friesen, ON—Secretary
Gordon Peters, SK—Treasurer

Formation

Erwin Tiessen, SK
Pauline Steinmann, SK
Tom Yoder Neufeld, ON

Witness

Lynell Bergen, MB
Noe Gonzalia, ON
Rudy Dirks, ON
Willard Metzger, ON

Support Services

Dianne Hildebrand Schlegel, MB
Bill Janzen, AB

Faith and Life Committee

Karl Koop, MB

The slate of nominees was approved
 as presented.

Mennonite Church Canada Annual Delegate Assembly Meeting History

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Place</u> | <u>Moderator</u> | <u>Assistant Moderator</u> | <u>Secretary</u> | <u>General Secretary</u> |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| 2000 | Abbotsford, BC | Ron Sawatsky | Jake F. Pauls | Joy Kroeger | Dan Nighswander |
| 2001 | Lethbridge, AB | Ron Sawatsky | Joy Kroeger | Sam Steiner | Dan Nighswander |
| 2002 | Saskatoon SK | Ron Sawatsky | Joy Kroeger | Sam Steiner | Dan Nighswander |
| 2003 | St. Catharines ON | Henry Krause | Joy Kroeger | Sam Steiner | Dan Nighswander |
| 2004 | Winkler MB | Henry Krause | Joy Kroeger | Marlene Janzen | Dan Nighswander |
| 2005 | Charlotte NC | Henry Krause | Esther Peters | Marlene Janzen | Dan Nighswander |
| 2006 | Edmonton, AB | Henry Krause | Esther Peters | Marlene Janzen | Robert J. Suderman |
| 2007 | Abbotsford, BC | Henry Krause | Garth Ewert Fisher | Marlene Janzen | Robert J. Suderman |

Tuesday, July 3, 2007

1. Opening Worship: Built on Christ

The opening worship service was a joyful celebration as youth, adults and children of all ages gathered at Mennonite Educational Institute in Abbotsford, BC for Assembly 2007. The singing, Scripture reading, prayer and visual arts focused on the theme “Built on Christ”. Jorge Hoajaca, Pastor of First United Spanish Mennonite Church in Vancouver brought the message, preaching on the text from Matthew 7:24-27. Noting that Christ had an in depth knowledge of the scriptures as the foundation for his life and ministry, Pastor Hoajaca encouraged us to study the scriptures so that we also have a solid foundation for a life of obedience.

Wednesday, July 4, 2007

2. Morning Worship: Built with Grace

Children, youth and adults gathered for joint worship each morning. Using the balloon as a symbol of love, Bubbles the Clown showed children of all ages how to accept and share the grace we have received.

3. Welcome and Introductory Matters

3.1. Opening

Moderator Henry Krause greeted delegates, declared the eight annual session of the Mennonite Church Canada (MC Canada) assembly open and led us in an opening prayer.

3.2. Welcome to Abbotsford

Gerd Bartel, Moderator of Mennonite Church British Columbia (MCBC) welcomed the people of MC Canada to beautiful British Columbia. Gerd shared that MCBC was blessed by the Spirit as they participated in a covenant service May 27th and prayed that the whole body of MC Canada will feel the presence of that same Spirit as we gather this week.

3.3. Quorum

Referencing the requirements outlined in the bylaws (page 96), the Moderator declared quorum was established, with half of eligible voting delegates from area churches; we have 29 delegates out of a possible 43; we also need 200 congregational delegates, we have 269. Please ensure that you are here for each session.

3.4. Floor Privileges

The Moderator extended floor privileges to all guests at the assembly sessions. Delegates and guests were encouraged to join in discussion and participate in the discernment, however only delegates are eligible to vote on matters that require a decision. Attendees were encouraged to stand and greet and introduce themselves to those nearby.

3.5. Introductions

Henry Krause made the following introductions:

- a) Special Guests: Siaka and Claire Traore, Burkina Faso;
- b) Witness workers: Dann and Joji Pantoja, Philippines; Lillian and Norm Nicolson, Burkina Faso; Tim and Cindy Buhler, Macau; and Gerald and Rie Neufeld, Japan
- c) Special welcome to Siegfried Bartel, the oldest attendee and a long time conference supporter
- d) Assistant Moderator: Garth Ewert Fisher, Secretary: Marlene Janzen and Assistant to the Secretary: Don Friesen
- e) Parliamentarian: John Sawatzky
- f) Resolutions Committee: Ed Janzen, Lucille Marr, Ted Janzen
- g) Listening Committee: Kelvin Dyck, Nicole Cober Bauman, Artur Bergen

A PowerPoint presentation introduced the related organizations and their representatives at the assembly, including area churches, schools, peace and relief organizations.

4. Review of Agenda

The reporting and discernment agenda outlined in the *Report Book* was reviewed. The Moderator indicated the basic guidelines in the discernment guide on page 60 of the *Report Book* would provide the basis whereby we hear each other in truth and respect. It was also noted that the affirmation statements on page 68 of the *Report Book* would be discussed during discernment time and then delegates would be asked whether they could affirm the general direction indicated by the statements.

5. Minutes of Assembly 2006

The Moderator noted a summary of the actions taken at last year's assembly were included in the *Report Book* and that the full minutes were

The worship services, with international flavour and variety of music styles, provided energy for the whole assembly. The fellowship, networking and building of relationships are also in line with God's nature.

This assembly was not without concerns, and yet we have received a sense of hope, sense of moving in a good direction, sense of building of trust. The assembly engaged us and God has blessed the people with wisdom, grace and encouragement.

37. Next Meeting: Assembly 2008

Pam Peters-Pries drew attention to the flashy shirt and tie Hans Werner, Moderator of MCM, was wearing. Hans shared that he was trying to draw attention to the theme of the next assembly "The church living faithfully as a contrast community". We will be meeting at CMU on July 7-8 for the MC Canada Assembly followed by joint gathering of worship, study and action known as the People's Summit with MC USA at the same location on July 8-10. Look forward to an inspiring time exploring together what it means to engage the world; create communities of grace, joy and peace that stand in contrast; to stand out because of their demonstration of God's healing and hope.

38. Adjournment

Henry Krause declared the 8th Annual Session of MC Canada assembly closed.

39. Evening Worship: Built to Last

Janet Plenert, Executive Secretary of Christian Witness, brought the message based on Matthew 16:15 and Revelation 21: 1-6. Sharing the story of William Wilberforce, a British MP who boldly campaigned against slavery, she demonstrated that we can bring about change by daring to imagine a new heaven and a new earth, a world that is more like God wanted it to be. Plenert challenged the congregation to move forward boldly with God, to see God's kingdom come, and God's will done here on earth. Denominational Minister, Sven Eriksson led, the communion service.

- What has been the response to our letter to the government (page 70 of Report Book)? We've had four in total, two from the Communications Office of the Prime Minister that both say he will take the letter very seriously, a letter from Jim Flaherty and another from Vic Toews. Generating some internal discussions, and one thing to point out is this is a private members bill (not a party bill) and the parties do not take position on a private members bill so encouraged the PM to encourage others. Know this will not be a party vote.

35. Resolutions Committee

The Resolutions Committee presented a resolution expressing gratitude to the staff of MC Canada, MEI, TWU, and all the churches and volunteers. It was affirmed by a round of applause.

36. Listening Committee

Artur Bergen reminded the gathering that it was the listening committee's job to listen with ears and eyes to what was taking place at assembly. As they did this, one thing that stood out is that all participants in assembly are good listeners. We have been blessed and guided by the gracious and loving presence of the Spirit of God. This spirit was felt by many in the joyful, creative and inspiring worship and also in the discernment and discussion of challenging issues.

Heard that Jesus Christ is our foundation, from the opening worship and in all of our sessions we were reminded that Christ is our rock. This focus on Christ has created an atmosphere of faith, hope, joy and celebration. It created an atmosphere of freedom, which enabled us to express ourselves in our diversity and so experience unity.

In the worship services, reports, and over all setup of the assembly, some theological convictions were spoken and others were modeled: Priesthood of all believers, action oriented faith, love and respect within the body. Many people with many different gifts, in all different places, events and processes made the event interesting, inspiring and meaningful.

When we address issues we draw on many sources of knowledge, wisdom and inspiration including scripture, theology, history, science, personal experience, political systems, emotions and logic. We are concerned about young adults in the church, and learned that focusing on only one age group actually increased tension, sense of us and them instead of we together. When we talked about peace issue, the tendency is to focus on global events, and learned that we need also to live lifestyle of peace at home, in our churches, towns and even the way we handle assemblies.

published in *Minute Book 2006* and distributed to the congregations.

Motion 1: The delegate assembly adopts the minutes of the 7th Annual Session of Mennonite Church Canada as recorded and published in *Minute Book 2006* issued by Mennonite Church Canada.

Marlene Janzen/Victor Dyck—Motion carried.

6. Actions of General Board

Marlene Janzen referred to the summary of General Board actions in the past year in the *Report Book*, and noted the assembly theme “Built to Last” is based on 1 Corinthians 3:11 which was selected by the delegates at Assembly 2006 as the foundational scripture for MC Canada.

Motion 2: The delegate assembly approves the actions taken by the General Board of Mennonite Church Canada in the past year.

Marlene Janzen/Ken Bechtel—Motion carried.

7. Business Arising

Henry Krause noted the proposed bylaw revisions are required to align the governance documents with the decision made last year to area church only membership. He also noted that significant progress had been made with regard to drafting legislation that would allow conscientious objectors to direct their taxes to activities of peace and development, and a copy of the letter sent to the Prime Minister can be found on the MC Canada website.

8. Book Launch: God's People Now!

Henry Krause introduced the book written by Jack Suderman based on the insights he gathered from the significant engagement with all the churches in MC Canada on the *God's People Now* tour. The book is dedicated to all those who made the conversation possible. Jack shared that it is not always easy for us to hear each other, and this was one way for us to speak to each other, hopefully in a way that helps the church to understand itself. The books are available for sale in the bookstore.

9. Discernment: Painting a Picture of our Ecclesial System

The General Secretary, Jack Suderman, indicated this picture is an attempt to better understand the church as a whole system. The details have not been captured exactly, so the output is not like a photo or x-ray; rather it is an impression that is painted with very broad strokes. Paintings are a beautiful tool that can tell a story, inspire, motivate and challenge us. The Bible is filled with imagery and pictures of the church. It is good to step back and take a look at who we are and what we are doing. An amazing, encouraging and complex picture is emerging. We want to celebrate and marvel at the way the church functions, and we want to invite your counsel in this regard.

Jack encouraged delegates to reflect on the church as they listened to Arlyn Friesen Epp read 1 Corinthians 12 with a song by Brian Moyer Suderman playing in the background. Renate Klaassen and Lois Bergen led us in singing "One is the body" to close this time of reflection.

Hilda Hildebrand and Jack Suderman went on to paint the picture of our ecclesial system with a PowerPoint presentation, beginning with the narrow perspective of staff and programs made possible via the offices in Winnipeg, and including things like the councils, board and committees. The perspective was then broadened to include all the members in the congregations that are organized into five area churches. Stepping back, we began to see that this system we call MC Canada is reaching, shaping and influencing many persons far beyond the central office. There are related organizations and the complex networks that span the globe. We celebrate and thank God for each part that is so much a part of who we are. When we consider the whole system, it becomes apparent that we realize exponential benefits by nurturing a generous heart at the center. The gifts of many people are being used in amazing ways. It is a beautiful painting!

Participants were invited to form small groups to discuss two questions:

- How is the body doing?
- What are the opportunities and challenges that we all need to pay attention to that you see from your place in this Body?

Individuals were encouraged to submit written responses.

- Meeting in general seems to be energized by association with the youth. Would like to see youth more involved with adults, so discouraged that the two will be separate in 2009.
- Noted most of the voices heard at the microphone were men. New eyes observing this.
- Wonder how the decision made a few years ago to relate within the ecumenical world, CCC and EFC, has translated back to the GB and what kind of discussions has this generated. Are those organizations also struggling with these issues that we have considered? MC Canada is represented on the General Council of the CCC (21 denominational groups). Discussions and decisions are made at that council. At the most recent meetings in April, the CCC struggled to write a letter regarding Canadian participation in Afghanistan. To write any letter at all on militarization or military involvement is very difficult. The affirmation statement from this assembly will be very valuable in that circle because it clearly states what we want to say. Surprising how much shape and influence we have in that circle. The EFC is organized differently, so shaping is more limited, but still helpful discussion tool.
- At a CMU gathering for young adults considering the ministry, some of them were having second thoughts after hearing stories of pain and broken relationships between pastors and congregation. Encourage holding conversations about changes we can make so that fewer pastor-congregation relationships are source of pain and more healing and wholeness.
- Heard about us wanting to actively involve youth and young adults, we should meet together every year and not separate assemblies in 2009. The decision to hold youth assemblies every second year goes back quite some time, and through extensive conversations with youth and youth leaders the sense has been that youth pastors would prefer not to have a youth assembly every year because they also want to do other projects with their youth groups and each case involves fundraising. Leadership heard quite strongly that meeting every other year is their preference so that young people have equal opportunity to attend assembly and do other service projects.
- One of the things we do when we get together is share our faith, telling the stories of why we are Christian and Mennonite. Appreciate what we have heard at this assembly and encourage using tables with assigned seating for future gatherings so that the same people gather and a level of trust develops and makes the conversation richer.

will be separate, with adult assembly being an abbreviated meeting over a weekend in June 2009 so as not to overlap with MWC. Youth will meet in early July 2009, which is the usual time frame.

34. Comments from the Floor

Henry Krause opened the floor for further comments or discussion.

- Want to affirm and express gratitude for FLC. This is a fairly recent addition, but the committee adds an important dimension of theological reflection to assemblies. Important to think of our place in the world, and they help us do that. Affirmation statements connected theologically.
- Creation care recently planned a Non-ference. Understand that human interaction cannot be replicated with technology, but wonder if more local regional gatherings and networking might be considered for 2009 so as to reduce overall travel.
- Thank you to those who have refrained from using scent. Would like to raise awareness for future assemblies so those with sensitivities are not excluded.
- Appreciated being part of the *God's People Now* Tour as driver in SK. It was a wonderful opportunity to get to know the people a little bit better, to hear their struggles and be excited about the spirit that is present in the congregations. Encourage everyone to take the opportunity to visit your brothers and sisters whenever you can. It helps us work together.
- As an international worker, want delegates to raise awareness in their congregations that only 5% of the total charitable giving is sent overseas [within the MC Canada budget this percentage is much higher]. Encourage increased giving for international ministries.
- Responding to the young adult discernment time, wanted to share that MCA is looking for a leader to start an intentional Christian community for young adults, 18-30 year olds who have grown up in the church. Ask for prayers for this work. If you know of people who should be involved get in touch with MCA.
- Want to remember the many people that cannot be here today, because they have work to do or cannot take time off during the week. Encourage planning committee to have part or all of the assembly on weekends so we get better representation.

Plenary discussion:

- Good picture. Wonder if the PowerPoint could be made available to congregations to help delegates reporting back to the congregations. Comprehensive picture that demonstrates health. Wonder about the connections between generations. Have we become more selfish (e.g. local giving)? We have a comfortable lifestyle that is both an opportunity and a challenge. Allows us to give, but also constrains us.
- Picture shows a diverse and different ethnicity that is beautiful and enriching. Our foundation is that of Jesus Christ, but the different languages make it a challenge to provide resources and may be limiting the ability to create a strong sense of connection. Also concerned that much of the focus is local. Welcome and are thankful for the global connection and would like to make it stronger. 5% giving does reflect.
- Are we MC Canada or the Mennonite Church in Canada? A subtle difference with interesting connotations for newcomers who are not yet citizens of Canada. Struggle with the small portion of our giving (5%) that goes outside of North America.
- Picture is good news, and encouraging. Have a greater sense of optimism than 4-5 years ago. Hope the enthusiasm trickles down through area churches and into congregations. Difficult to know how a body is doing without frame of reference, so it is helpful to know how the stats have changed to indicate direction. Noted there are different phases of life, and wonder what our corporate age might be? Where will we be in 20 years? Helpful to have demographic information.
- Concern about disparity between spending overseas and at home. Wonder how we might get the membership more interested in coming to assembly. Youth representation is much better than adult.
- Small group talked about how we're doing. Often define ourselves by the frayed or crumbling edges. At core, there is a reason to feel really good about the church. Love to be the church and need to celebrate that. Claim who we are, instead of spending too much time on the solar issues.

Jack Suderman responded, noting that his book answers some of the questions and concerns (e.g., more information about demographics and youth). He noted there is another companion book also available in the bookstore that paints a picture of MC USA. The American picture is more statistical because it used actual survey data whereas the Canadian picture was based on conversations. Jack was pleased to hear that this painting was received as an encouraging and an optimistic

picture, because that reflects his personal experience of the tour. It is amazing what happens when a little boy puts a loaf and couple of fish into the hands of Jesus. Incredible! Why wouldn't everybody want to do that? Put the penny and dime together and see it multiply.

Jack went on to clarify how the 5% number was calculated. According to information filed with Revenue Canada, the total money forwarded overseas by congregations and MC Canada is only 5% of the total monies receipted by these organizations. Need to understand that any individual donations made directly to overseas organizations and projects are not captured in this data and even though the exact amount is not known, the actual ratio of international vs. local funding will be much greater than 5%.

Jack offered the following summary comments about the challenges:

- To see the whole: It is good to be active at home in the community, but also keep in mind the whole.
- To be involved: Most can handle being involved in more than one place, little pieces here and there are very important.
- To support and trust and celebrate all parts even when we can't be closely involved in each part: Cannot be everywhere, so key is to trust those who are there on our behalf, and celebrate and support it.
- To continue healthy dialogue on how each part is implementing the same mission and vision.
- To embrace the responsibility for and accountability to the body that we are a part of.

10. Greetings from Mennonite Church USA

Henry Krause reported that MC USA is meeting in San Jose, CA this week, at the same time we are. It is not possible for either group to send greetings in person, so a video clip from Jack Suderman will be played at their assembly and we have a message from Jim Schrag, Executive Director of MC USA. Jim noted their assembly theme is Living Faithfully as Contrast Community and went on to highlight the priorities of MC USA are Witness, Anti-Racism, Leadership Development, and Global Connections. Agenda includes items such as health care access and joining Christian Churches Together. Jack Suderman led us in prayer for our brothers and sisters in MC USA.

- Grateful for all three affirmation statements. Understand they are not necessarily absolute, but they do clearly convey the direction we want to seek and witness to the larger community. Specifically with regard to creation care and young adults, the latter may have something to teach us if they are staying home to recycle instead of driving to church. Seriously, the scientific community raised it to prominence, and as a result large oil companies are doing their part to reduce. The church should draw on the expertise of scientists and resources from within our midst.
- Wasn't sure what to do with affirmation statements other than to vote in favour. Impressed with how youth have taken charge and taken informed position. Concerned that youth only meet every other year. We need to support them as part of our growing community.
- Sense that the affirmation statements have identified areas that are a priority for the national church at this time, and that we are committing ourselves to be faithful and work in those directions. Suggest we come up with a tool for measuring and reporting our progress on reducing our ecological footprint.
- Pam Peters Pries took the opportunity to encourage delegates to fill out the evaluation form. Feedback is compiled and reviewed prior to planning the next assembly.
- Henry Paetkau, President of CGUC, expressed appreciation for the meaningful engagement with all the schools at this assembly. It is encouraging to have relationships that value and appreciate the role of church schools, particularly as the place where young adults work out their ongoing connection with the church. Encouraged congregations to think about church schools as an integral and important part of the work of the church.

33. Looking Ahead to 2009

Jack Suderman suggested that it is not too early to start thinking about the 2009 Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay. MC Canada has recently taken action to strengthen the connection with MWC with a commitment to give our fair share of funding [MWC has a formula to calculate the fair share of expenses each conference is expected to contribute] and while MC Canada has fallen short in previous years we are committed to meeting our fair share over the next four years. The GB sees participation in MWC as an important part of understanding who we are and want to be, and so also decided to make a number of adjustments to avoid schedule conflicts with the MWC gathering in early July 2009. The MC Canada adult and youth assemblies in 2009

Discussion:

- In conversations with delegates, heard repeatedly that we need to practice what we preach and model creation care in all we do. As a corporate body, how can we make our annual gatherings as green as possible? If living out our mission takes a toll on the planet consider whether there is a way to offset the cost? Seeking some accountability.
- Faith and Life Committee supports the resolution.
- Affirm the work and relationships that are built, and would not want to move to having assemblies every other year, but noted a number of practical things would help, like not using disposable plates and cups, or not putting hard copy of the Report Books in the delegate bag. Stan Olson, who seconded the motion, noted he is familiar with all the work that goes into such an event, and expressed gratitude for the work of the planning committee.

Resolution approved.

32. Response to Discernment

Henry Krause opened the mike for delegates to offer specific response to the discernment that has taken place during this assembly.

- Was moved by the affirmation of staff and councils. This comment is not intending to diminish that, but it sometimes gets confusing when some statements are treated as motions and others are resolutions or simply for affirmation. How are congregations to know which has more authority? The GB and staff wonder about that too, as we don't have any strict rules. Motions and Resolutions are moved and seconded. Know there are certain things we do that must follow parliamentary procedure, such as changing bylaws or approving financial statements, but we also want to have ways of saying, to ourselves and others, that something is important. Affirmations are consensus statements without parliamentary process. Which is more binding? Have observed that congregations determine an item is authoritative when they decide that it should be, not when we decide something at assembly. Chose to introduce Affirmation Statements as a mechanism or tool that help us keep reminding ourselves who we are and telling others who we are.
- Responding to the discernment on increased militarization, want to encourage putting our faith in the right place. Seemed at times like we are putting more faith in our roots than in Jesus. The conscientious objectors were able to stand firm because of their faith, not their heritage.

11. Financial Report

Randy Wiebe, the Director of Finance, reported on the financial year ending January 31, 2007. Using a PowerPoint presentation Randy reported the total revenue decreased by \$84,000, however expenses were also lower than budgeted allowing MC Canada to end the year in a strong financial position. The auditors, KPMG, confirm that these statements fairly represent the financial position of MC Canada. The Balance Sheet reveals some significant changes. Loan to Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) and Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN) were paid out, thus allowing us to repay our loan at Crosstown Credit Union and so MC Canada is now free of bank debt. The property at 600 Shaftesbury was recently transferred to CMU, and although we retain a significant interest in the offices and Heritage Centre with a 99 year lease, the transaction does reduce the capital assets of MC Canada. The reserve fund was topped up with positive balance at the end of the year. The current equity ratio is 1.77 to 1 and the Financial Policy and Audit Committee (FPAC) recommends that an organization of our size should have a ratio greater than 2 to 1. Turning to the Operating Statement, Randy defined the key terms used in the report before reviewing the revenue and expenditures by program area. In conclusion, Randy expressed a heartfelt thank you to the congregations and individuals that helped make the ministry possible in the past year.

Henry Krause thanked Randy for the good work, and highlighted the report from the treasurer, Clare Schlegel in the *Report Book*.

Motion 3: The delegate assembly approves the audited financial statements for Mennonite Church Canada for the fiscal year ended January 31, 2007.

Garth Ewert-Fisher/Florence Driedger

Discussion:

- Noted on page 61 of the Report Book that church donations were slightly higher than budgeted and the individual and corporate donations were lower than budgeted. Is this a one year blip or is something else going on?

Randy noted there was some exceptional congregational giving in the previous year, and some of that repeated in the current year but not as strongly. There is a continuing trend upward from the individual and corporate sector, so last year does appear to be an exception.

- On page 13 of audited financial statements there is note of contingent liability, and wonder if that relates to the GB action with MMA reported on page 19 of the Report Book?

Randy confirmed the two are related, noting the contingent liability is recorded in the financial statements, because although MPN has repaid the MC Canada loan, there is still an amount owing to MC USA and since MC Canada is still responsible for 25% of any debt loaned or guaranteed to MPN, we continue to hold some liability until the final instalment is paid to MC USA. That 1 million dollar debt is expected to be cleared before the end of July, so our contingent liability will also be cleared at that time.

Motion carried.

12. Ministry Update

Willard Metzger, Chair, and Janet Plenert, Executive Secretary of Witness, presented a ministry update that revealed how the work of God is multiplied through the steps of faith taken in our neighbourhoods and around the world. Much of the work depends on facilitating and encouraging life giving relationships, and then working through these relationships to restore the world as God intended. Highlights of a new partnership ministry in the Philippines, a resource center and outreach program to aboriginal groups, young adults teaching English in Korea, learning tours and the International Mennonite Pastors Coming Together (IMPACT) program were shared, and these stories revealed what it means to be the people of God. Whether the stirring of the Spirit begins in the church or at MC Canada, when we obey the call, the Lord blesses the work and workers.

13. Discernment Guidelines

Henry Krause reviewed the discernment guidelines and instructed the delegates regarding how the affirmation statements on creation care, young adults, and militarization would be dealt with. The statements are road signs on our journey as a church, affirming our key values. Affirmation statements do not resolve the issue. The statements indicate our commitment at this time and place, in order to invite further reflection and begin other important processes and action. Affirmation statements should be seen as a point on a journey, not the end.

14. Young Adults in the Church

The topic was introduced by David Bergen, Executive Secretary of Christian Formation, and Lisa Carr-Pries, a member of the Formation Council. Generational groupings are bonded by common life experienc-

Motion carried.

29.1. Auditors for FYE 2009

Randy Wiebe noted we are halfway through a three year agreement of working with KPMG. The experience to date has been positive and FPAC is recommending that we continue to use them as auditors for the next fiscal period.

Motion 7: The delegate assembly appoints KPMG as the auditor for Mennonite Church Canada for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2008.

Garth Ewert Fisher / Terry Lesser—Motion carried.

30. Other Business—Call to Prayer and Action

Tim Froese, Mission Partnership Facilitator for Latin America, read a letter written by current president of Mennonite Church in Colombia and director of Justapaz, reporting that computer equipment and sensitive information were stolen from the organization. The break-in follows a pattern of attacks against organizations working for peace in Colombia, and the fear is that this will lead to more attacks. This is the first time the church has been infiltrated in this way, and the Colombian church is asking that we stand with them. To pray for Justapaz and all individuals, churches and organizations that continue in the task of being messengers of peace and reconciliation in the Lord. Rudy Baergen, former mission worker in Colombia, led us in prayer for the brothers and sisters in Colombia.

31. Resolutions Committee

A resolution from the floor was presented by the Resolutions Committee.

Resolution 1: Whereas the earth is an expression of God's love and Christ calls us to be stewards of God's precious handiwork, be it resolved that Mennonite Church Canada develop guidelines to reduce the consumption of energy and other resources when planning future assemblies.

David Neufeld / Stan Olson

29. Finance Matters

29.1. Budget for FYE 2009

Randy Wiebe referred to the budget in the report book, and used a PowerPoint presentation to review the budget in detail, noting that significant effort has gone into providing a better breakdown of the partner programs. The proposed budget is presented with confidence—in response to the generous support from congregations and individuals that made the ministry possible in the past year and with optimism that the desire for the church to be well resourced will continue. Randy also provided a brief update on the current financial position, noting things are generally on track with the budget.

Henry Krause reminded delegates that the General Board uses the Financial Policy and Audit Committee to assist with assessing the financial position of the organization. An email from Clare Schlegel, Chair of FPAC and Treasurer of MC Canada, who was unable to attend the assembly, was read to the delegates. Clare assured the delegates that the proposed budget would serve the organization well as it enables further replenishing of reserves if the revenues are higher than in the previous year.

Motion 6: The delegate assembly approves the budget as presented for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2008.

Garth Ewert Fisher / Victor Dyck

Discussion:

- Affirm the budget and the work and the direction that it facilitates. Call to attention the need to take care of our staff. Have to care for their time and energy. Celebrate the kind of staff that can bring this kind of support and continue doing excellent work for us.
- Noted a cost recovery item of \$17,000 under the GB and wondered if this related to Clare's point about building up reserves? The cost recovery item was the result of renegotiating the terms for working with a partner to recover the cost of receipting donations. With regard to building up reserves, in the past couple of years, donations have been relatively strong and with under expenditures in a number of areas the organization has been able to begin replenishing the reserves with the balance.

es (e.g. depression, world war, baby boom, etc.) The key experiences of each new generation shape their perspective on the church and the world. All people and all generations have something significant to contribute to the kingdom of God. How does this body become an inviting space for engagement?

Young adults on the discussion panel were introduced: Peter Epp, Hinke Loewen-Rudgers, Allisa Bender, Nicole Cober Bauman, and Darren Kropf. The panel was then invited to comment on what makes a relationship authentic; to share what inspires them to invest their energy, gifts and time; and what they need or expect from community.

Panel Discussion:

- A relationship is authentic when both sides are comfortable questioning and sharing. There is space for diversity of experience and perspective and that is honoured. There is a deliberate intent to know the other, to encourage growth, and challenge to do new things. May be conflict, but that is not the end of relationship. It may need hard work, but desire is to maintain relationship. Best experiences can be characterized through exploring who God is calling me to be. Appreciate congregation that stayed in touch even when I was absent, and pastor who made of point of getting to know the kids and youth, not just the parents. Intentional opportunities to hear each others' stories are needed to keep intergenerational opportunities alive, so we are part of each others' lives outside of Sunday worship. Flexibility to allow involvement.
- Best relational experience involved being known and accepted as is, with all the strengths and faults. Was encouraged to look outside the church for growth and also challenged to come back. Go forth and stay in.
- Internship was a safe place to honestly explore faith journey and interact with people of all ages. Held accountable through intergenerational dialogue. Inspired by relationships, imagination, and vision that leads to action and living out our faith, wherever and however. Being part of larger family is very important. Energy from seeing the larger global Anabaptist community—contact with and learning from. Should always be growing as network of relationships, centered on Christ, and daily discipleship.
- Energized and inspired by the stories of Anabaptist ancestors. These people knew change, and were willing to do whatever it took. How can we translate those stories and passion into our context today? See in those people the cost was high, but also know they gained a

lot. See church today looking at environment. Will have a lot of cost, but also opportunities. Who we are in the world and how we relate to God's creation is a spiritual matter.

- The church needs to meet every generation's needs. The way it is articulated changes. Can see that previous needs have generally been addressed. The need for community has not been fully met. Church gives opportunity to flush out who I am. Church should be a place that offers encouragement, support, and guidance.
- Church should be a place of hospitality. Biblical vision involves risk and uncertainty, so we don't know what might happen when we truly experience God's hospitality and offer that to others' understanding.
- The word community is overused. It is however an important piece of what it means to be the church. Need to go beyond coming together Sunday morning, seek intentional relationships and get involved in day to day lives. Life of radical discipleship, transformation and emancipation must be serious and acted on.
- Fear that community is too often a place of comfort rather than a place that comforts. Take Jesus' story as our own. Living that story will cause discomfort and put us in sticky situations. Church should be comforting, but should not stay within our comfortable community.
- North America is particularly affected by individualism, and this makes finding community extra challenging. Learn from those around the world.
- A video clip of young adults in the church echoed the insights of the panel. The church must be a place where we can be vulnerable, to ask the hard questions and receive grace.

Small discussion groups were formed to share thoughts about the dreams and challenges presented by the panel, and a number of groups then had the opportunity to report back to the assembly.

Plenary discussion:

- Enjoyed what the panel shared. Heard a lot that resonates, especially the need for space to ask questions. Wondered how we felt about the young adult population going elsewhere? Should we be trying to bring them back?
- Small group had three distinct generations represented, and there was a strong sense of commonality in this multi-generational discussion. Wonder what is driving this affirmation statement and why it is

the concern that each congregation also finds fitting gardeners. Caring for the health between pastors and congregations led to extensive work on the evaluation packet. Finally, a gardener is always imagining what might come next. We heard earlier about the culture of call, and Sven has spoken with many others and prepared the ground for this leadership development. Thank you for tending the soul of our church in so many ways.

Jack Suderman noted the framework for debate at the recent Anglican Synod in Winnipeg was threefold: Have to take scripture seriously, the basis for argument is tradition, and what is presented must be reasonable. This framework reminded him of Sven. Sven's interpretation of scripture has been sensitive and profound. He is a tremendous source of tradition and history for us in our church, and his is a voice of reason. Sven has an amazing capacity to reconcile and mediate diverse theological discussion, pastoral practice and regional needs. Staff noted Sven's constancy, humour and non-anxious presence as a tremendous gift. Sven has blessed us with wisdom of experience, been our friend, praying with and for the staff, and we have appreciated the ministry immensely. So we now want to bless the ministry being completed and yet to do. Hope that one of the blessings Sven might take from us is memory—memory of positive and fulfilling contributions. Another blessing is learning—together we have learned much. And finally also want to bless Sven with a sense of satisfaction for a job well done. God bless you and make you a blessing.

Sven Eriksson responded, thanking Sue and Jack for their kind words, and sharing that he loved being in Winnipeg. It has been a time of stretching and growing, learning and being challenged to be contributing to the future potential of the church, and learning that the church is God's idea long before it is ours. It is God's strategy; God's calling through which we realize God's kingdom. The biggest challenge is to actually live into the unity that Jesus has given to us. Sven felt it was a wonderful privilege to be part of the staff, work together closely with a wonderful group of people. Sven is very thankful for the relationships with the area church ministers and the opportunity to learn, listen and collaborate in this creative matrix. The link with seminary students, the opportunity to offer encouragement and support, is something Sven will always treasure, and savour over the months that remain.

David Bergen presented Sven with the gift of a pair of gloves and garden hoe, encouraging Sven to remember the church and breathe a prayer on our behalf as he works in his garden. David then led us in prayer, asking that God would bless Sven and Laura through this time of opportunity and transition.

27. MC Canada By-Law Update

Pam Peters-Pries, referring to the preamble in the *Report Book*, noted the bylaw updates fall with in four categories: to align with the decision made at assembly last year allowing Area Church Only Membership, to update language to reflect current usage, to clarify responsibility for relating to several institutions (AMBS, CMU, MPN), and to allow flexibility for appointments to Mennonite World Conference.

Motion 5: The delegate assembly approves the changes to the bylaws for Mennonite Church Canada as presented in the Report Book.

Rudy Baergen / Clare Neufeld—Motion carried.

28. Ministry Update: Formation Council

David Bergen, Executive Secretary of Christian Formation, opened the report by noting the Resource Centre is the place to access a myriad of resources on any topic. Drawing particular attention to the role of denominational minister and the leadership development, he noted the vision for the Company of 1000 is to grow leaders for the church through 1000 members who give regular financial gifts. The company has just over 150 members at this time and so there is room for more people to join this vision. David noted that we have a rare opportunity today, to recognize a leader who will be retiring in the coming year. Sven Eriksson has been Denominational Minister since 2003 and as he will be retired before the next assembly, we want to reflect on his role and give thanks for the way God has blessed the church through his service.

Sue Steiner, Chair of Formation Council, shared that she sometimes imagines the church is a garden, where each church is one plot in God's larger garden. And in that context, knowing that Sven is a gardener, she thinks of Sven as a gardener of the soul. Toiling in the garden in the heat of the day and also stepping back from time to time, to sit on the balcony and look over the denominational garden in the evening. From that vantage point, Sven has named what is seen in a way that is valuable, warning of changing weather conditions or sensitively naming plants both sturdy and fragile that need attention. Sven's first concern has been the unity and integrity of the denomination and from the vantage point on the balcony has written columns for the Equipping packet that are challenging and at times provoking in ways that are not always comfortable. Secondly, Sven has been concerned about the health of other gardens, and through the area church ministers, carried

specifically targeted towards young adults? We all seek to gather for genuine spiritual formation, so statement should address all.

- Sense that younger people are moving away from organized church but remaining deeply spiritual. Young adults are using the educational institutions of the church, but not reconnecting with the church when they move on. One-on-one relationships are very important. Most profound development happens outside the church. Want to be challenged, and want to make an impact.
- Comments from the panel about relationships and deep meaningful faith resonated with many. Wonder if we might pursue cultural analysis to make the statement meaningful and know what to do practically. Create unique set of questions spiritually and for the church to help understand the norms that influence our decision making. The analysis could inform our education, programs, relationships and preaching.
- Very pleased that there is an openness to listening to young adults. Wonder why the word "threatening" is used, and what it is the church is worried about?
- Each generation has shared those feelings. Some who left because of frustration have come back later. Talked about how we might get young adults more involved. Need to tell stories and get to know each other, not just pass each other in the foyer. Speaking about we/ them is an unhealthy way to look at the question. Should ask "What is the church?"

Response from Panel:

- All of us are struggling with the way our churches function and community is not always as it should be. It is easy to label the younger ones as those rocking the boat, but it might just be that others are less willing to take that role. Stems from the way we struggle to stand up to bullying in the church (e.g. discussions that allow people to trample on other views or proceed with lack of listening). Need to stop labelling things and stand up to unhealthy ways that we do dialogue.
- Suggest we start thinking of challenging the church in constructive ways rather seeing it as threatening. Ideas about renewal, taking gospel and life of discipleship more seriously are a vision for a transformed church, and that is not something that stops when we are no longer young adults.

- Also sees this as an intergenerational issue. Very important to face the challenges together. Labels are an unhealthy way of approaching the issue of relevance.
- The questions might be worded differently, but they are relevant to all generations. It is an intergenerational issue of how to be the church.
- Suggested we think about who is the church. Young adults are hoping for a church that makes apparent why the call is real. If young adults are elsewhere, engage and dialogue with other denominations to explore how this generation seeks to be faithful.

The Moderator asked for an indication of support for the affirmation statement and the direction it sets for MC Canada in this time and place. A majority of delegates indicated support by raising their hands.

15. Ministry Update

The schools of MC Canada—Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Conrad Grebel University College (CGUC), Columbia Bible College (CBC) and the Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools (CAMS)—presented a joint report showing how they are supporting the three priorities of MC Canada: forming a people of God, growing leaders, and becoming a global church. The joint report is a powerful example of the shared commitment between the church and schools, to the life and health of our faith.

How do schools invite people to faith?

- We invite students into a community, where they can make a commitment to faith and immediately put it into action. Connect their intellectual development and personal faith, so they grow together.
- School tries to build a community where students can explore their faith, take risks and become informed within a context of variety and diversity. It provides a context that allows students to test their beliefs, within and against other communities and belief systems. Our schools are places where the educational mission of the church happens. Need education to be missional.
- Young adults are in transition, and the school strives to help them through the searching phase of faith into owning faith. Create permission for people to ask questions about their faith, theology, and heritage. Realize that this transition time can be a significant exit point, and so require students to do volunteer work as a way to engage them in serving the church and staying connected.

- Really appreciated the depth of the theological reflection. Sense lots of people are on board with the concept, need help thinking through how we do this, perhaps a guide to lifestyle planning. Wondered if the initiatives for carbon footprint offset are worthwhile or just a scam.
- Noted that Mennonites have been recycling for a long time, although it used to be known as thrift. Encouraged to continue even though sometimes reaction from within the church is not too welcome. Is that guilt? Need to move from discussion to application. (E.g. Find out where our clothes are made and source locally grown food.)
- Hear people question the energy we use to gather at assembly. Wonder how to take that into consideration when pursuing a simpler lifestyle. Is it seeing what we have as belonging to God, and making use of what we have been given to build the kingdom?
- Appreciate the justice aspects related to consumer lifestyle and pressure we put on the earth. Easy to fall into dominion language so the model of Jesus' kingship is helpful. When it is all tied together, dominion under Jesus, then it is good (as it was in Genesis).
- Affirm an approach that is based on faith, rather than a fear. Let the positive language come into our material, we are a people of God's peace; peace with God; peace on the earth and with earth.
- This is an issue that has been around for some time, desire to see it more ingrained in who we are as people. Impatient with the discernment statement. Should be able to do something, important to start even if we don't have complete certainty on what will work.
- Instinct is to jump to the practical, and so see opportunity to provide checkbox on the registration form for assembly that indicates a dollar contribution amount to offset the emissions. Or, we have a lot of church buildings that could use energy efficiency improvements.

Rudy Baergen responded on behalf of the FLC, noting the statement will be available online once the enrichment feedback has been reviewed and incorporated. There are a lot of resources and much that has already been done, and the opportunity to become very practical is outlined in the "Invitation to Congregations" prepared in cooperation with the Creation Care Network. Encourage delegates to follow up and begin working at this in as many ways as we can.

With a show of hands, delegates approved the affirmation statement, as setting a direction for MC Canada in this time and place.

the committee's list of concerns. The committee presented "Caring for Creation is the will of God", using scripture and worship to lay out the biblical and theological foundation for creation care. Recognizing the work of Mennonite Creation Care Network, the committee noted the focus of this discernment time was on the theological understanding.

Delegates formed small groups to reflect on the theological statements to identify what resonates and, from a biblical and theological perspective, what might be added to the conversation.

Plenary Discussion:

- Appreciate the presentation. Lament that our understanding is limited by translation. Words like subdue have an aggressive tone that is not contained in the Hebrew. Appreciate the idea that we are called to work in harmony in what God is doing and will do. Can't do it on our own, it is not all our responsibility. By our lifestyle, we witness to the future will of God for all created order. Does the concept of stewardship allow for the idea that we are dependent? Add humility to our dependence on the systems of the earth. We are becoming more interconnected in this globalized world which presents an exciting challenge and also opportunity.
- Well reasoned and worshipful, very convicting, hope the script will be available. Noted the absentee landlord comment, and wondered if the parable intended those on the land to be managing it according to the will of the one who is absent. Acknowledge we are very materialistic, large houses and plenty of clothing, even spending more on garbage bags than the entire GDP of some nations. Recognize the need for more information. Encourage listening to what youth and young adults have to say about stewardship—unleash the gifts God has given to us. Lot of our hypersensitivity and allergies are related to the pollution in the atmosphere.
- Appreciated presentation. Also questioned what it means theologically to subdue the earth. Wondered if it meant raping the earth or assaulting it with machines? Noted the temporal attitude, like the song "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through" is not valid. We have a different focus. Want to return to God what is God's. Working with natives, impressed with their oneness with nature, and caretaker approach to creation. How do we get there? By relating and learning from those who have that oneness with the earth. Also wondered if the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit could be expanded into a "Quad-inity" with the addition of Creator.

How do the schools grow leaders?

- Affirm the importance of good leadership. Pay attention to formation through emphasis on studying the Bible.
- Forming a people of God includes pastors, and also teachers and musicians. Help students to think about the world, as part of the gathered and scattered church. Growing leaders and pastoral training are part of the larger forming people of God.
- Schools are part of a leadership development system that begins in the family, and then shifts to include Sunday school, camps and schools. Try to help students understand the church in a larger frame: God's people as they have been, as they are now and the church as they might be.

How do schools prepare people for life in a global world?

- Have a faculty with lots of international experience, offer practical programs that take students to locations around the world, and welcome international students.
- Offer preparation for careers and life, providing tools to put faith in action. For example the peace and conflict resolution program equips people with skills that apply in a variety of settings.
- Bring people from around the world, so the classroom is a laboratory of inter-cultural and inter-denominational learning. Students are intensely interested in the questions and answers.

What challenges do you face?

- Challenges fall into mundane economics and the profoundly tenuous connection to the churches that support the schools. Connection between activities is easy; it is more difficult to connect with organization. Our schools do education well; need more students interested in a good education.
- The incoming students who seem to have lost confidence in the church appear to be on the rise. Struggle to find real, practical and mutually beneficial ways of connecting students with the church.
- Tendency is for church and campus to drift apart. Thank you for keeping communication going. Seeing a shift in values, in church and families. Christian education depends on homes and values that hold up scripture, spirituality and ministry is important.

16. Nominations Committee

Dave Feick introduced the Nominating Committee and referred to the slate of nominees as presented in the *Report Book* and the supplement in the *Program Book*. Dave indicated the cut-off for nominations was 10:30am tomorrow, and went on to summarize the procedure for making nominations from the floor. If there are no other nominations, the slate will be affirmed as presented.

17. Listening Committee

Kelvin Dyck reported for the Listening Committee. The committee has already heard affirmation for many things at this assembly, including: appreciation for the agenda, including the topics for discernment and joint worship with the youth; affirmation for good presenters and topics at the Minister's Conference; positive interest in the seminars; appreciation for repayment of loans and the overall financial health; and appreciation for the hard work and preparation by church volunteers, staff and leadership.

The committee is also picking up on a number of concerns: Disappointment that the venue could not accommodate round tables for discussion groups; discernment on the ecclesial system picture revealed that we are not achieving multicultural or gender balance in the delegate body; there is sorrow over the missing MCBC congregations that chose to separate from the MC Canada; desire for a plan of action to go along with the affirmation statements; and concern about the excessive use of resources—air conditioning, paper, lighting, etc.—hearing we need to connect better with creation care.

18. Evening Worship: Built in Love

Siaka Traore of Burkina Faso brought the message, challenging us to love God with all of our strength, heart and being and then to show that same love to others. The love Jesus had for the Father was given for humanity, and it allowed Jesus to forgive Peter. Claire Traore shared her testimony of how neighbours are brought to Christ when we forgive and show them the same love. Love in action brings life.

The children's hymn "Jesus Loves Me" was played, with different instruments and in a variety of arrangements to show how differences in style or culture fade away when we offer praise and worship God in sincerity and love.

that this conversation did not happen together with the youth. Look to the website for additional resources and links.

Henry Krause noted we do not have time to re-draft the statement but encouraged people to forward suggestions for improving and enriching this statement, and the other affirmation statements, to the respective council. When asked if they supported the statement, the delegates showed approval with a raised hand.

23. Nominations Committee

Dave Feick reported there were no further nominations from the floor.

Motion 4: The delegate assembly moves that nominations cease and the slate of nominees be approved as presented.

Dave Feick/Darrell Jantzi—Motion carried.

24. Report from Listening Committee

Nicole Cober Bauman reported that overall things are going well. Sensing an underlying question, perhaps in response to the discernment on young adults in the church, is how the whole church is doing. Are we too homogeneous of a group, disconnected from intergenerational and minority voices, to discern an appropriate direction? We are discussing complex and important issues, and so would like more time to get into the topics. There is a desire to maintain and invest more in a strong commitment to peace theology, and many were hoping that this would grow into a commitment to action. In summary, we are addressing important issues and things are going well, as indicated the desire to continue the conversation.

Friday, July 6, 2007

25. Morning Worship: Built for Purpose

The singing, liturgy and scripture reading taught us that we are blessed so that we may be a blessing to others. We were cleansed and prepared for service with a hand-washing ceremony.

26. Creation Care

Rudy Baergen, chair of the Faith and Life Committee (FLC), introduced the other committee members—Betty Pries, Karl Koop, Doreen Neufeld and Sven Eriksson—and shared that the environment has been high on

- Cannot assume that all in our congregations would support this position, many may be conflicted. Education about our peace position needs to be from the basis that this is our calling through Jesus Christ who brings us peace from God. Need to learn how to talk to one another, so it is possible to approach and talk with people who live on nearby army base.
- Can affirm the statement, but it is too soft and missing action. Need to state clearly the gospel is a gospel of peace.
- Suggest we dialogue with our members of parliament to let them know we are concerned about the increased militarization. The culture of peace resources put out by Mennonite World Conference is a good tool for peace education.
- There is a movement working for the creation of a Department of Peace in the Canadian government. Supporting this initiative is a positive action the church could take to counter the militarism, and could encompass all kinds of peace initiatives and education.
- The work of CPT was not mentioned in the introduction. The kind of action that CPT takes is aligned with our peace theology and these courageous people need to be part of our story and response.
- We have been encouraged in this peace witness by friends in other denominations, who look to the Mennonite Church to keep this witness strong. We are a small denomination, but we have an unbelievable witness to the world, through CPT and MCC. We must assimilate and use the direct feedback we have from these people on the ground in trouble spots around the world, and harness that to increasing our commitment and work for peace.
- Concerned about all the violent games and videos, and how they are affecting our children.
- The church should not and cannot remain silent when the drums of war are building, because silence allows people to justify acting in anger and legitimizes the use of violence. It is more difficult for a government to go to war when the church speaks out against violence.
- Our message needs to be consistent. Noted with concern that children are playing strategy game called “Battleships”.

Janet Plenert wrapped up the discussion noting that we have much wisdom and passion. Peace is not a peripheral topic, it is core theology and we must live out the gospel of peace. We consider CPT to be a part of our church, and acknowledge the work they are doing. Regret

19. Morning Worship: Built through Community

Our understanding of the openness and diversity of God’s family was expanded through singing, liturgy and scripture reading. Dann Pantoja, peace worker with MC Canada Witness in the Philippines shared how he came to believe in the Mennonite theology of peace.

20. Reports from Partners

20.1. Mennonite Disaster Service

MDS shared a video of the work done to cleanup and rebuild homes following hurricane Rita, and thanked delegates for their willingness to offer volunteer and financial support to MDS. The work continues and ongoing support is appreciated.

20.2. Mennonite Foundation of Canada

Gary Sawatsky and Sherri Grosz reported on staffing changes at MFC, and highlighted the new resource for congregations called “First things First”. The guide provides instruction on how to manage finances and is recommended for membership classes and marriage counselling. MFC continues to grow, because people and congregations are investing in this partnership.

21. Ministry Update: Support Services

Ed Janzen, Chair of the Council, and Pam Peters Pries, Executive Secretary of Support Services, shared a brief glimpse into the varied ministries of Support Services that energize and impact the church and world. What does it mean to put your money where your faith is? As stewards of over 34 million dollars invested in the pension plan, that is a question the pension plan advisory committee and Support Services take seriously. Socially responsible investing involves clearly articulating our criteria to inform decision making and filter out direct and indirect involvement in activities we don’t want to support. By providing pastor salary scales and screening policies Support Services enables congregations to treat employees with care and respect. Planning assembly with a local hosting committee allows the community to practice hospitality. It is a privilege to serve the church and to offer resources through Equipping and through *Canadian Mennonite* to keep in touch, to encourage, bear with and pray for each other.

Discussion:

- Could you provide an example of a company that would be excluded by the screens used for socially responsible investing? MC Canada excludes companies that are in any way connected with the military, alcohol or tobacco industries.

22. Militarization of the Canadian Soul

Janet Plenert and Willard Metzger outlined statistics and trends about the military missions, spending, and recruiting that illustrated how Canada is shifting away from United Nations peace keeping toward using military force to try and solve world problems. What is our role as Mennonite Church in this place and this time? Drawing on scripture that grounds us as a people of peace, and remembering the early Anabaptists who rejected the use of violence and were martyred for their beliefs, we seek to respond to the political and cultural dynamics that shape our nation today.

The resolution passed by delegates at assembly last year urged the church to support the private member bill for conscientious objector status with regard to taxes. MC Canada sent a letter urging support for Bill C-348 to the Prime Minister, and it is available as a template on the website for churches and individuals to also petition their members of parliament. MC Canada also pressed for strengthening of the bill, and the resulting Bill C-460 that would fully honour the conscientious objector status was read in the House of Commons for the first time on June 13. This effort also resulted in the compilation of significant resources and information that are available to help congregations to study and learn more about conscientious objection. A recent Church Matters radio episode also dealt with the topic of increasing militarization.

Dann Pantoja shared how growing up in the shadows of a large military base in the Philippines and witnessing the exploitation of people associated with it, led to youthful anger and rebellion that found an outlet through joining the communist party to advance the Philippine revolution and resist the American military. Throughout that time he listened to the voices saying force was needed to bring about change, but some years later when a comrade was killed Dann started to seriously question the kind of change this achieved. After coming to Canada, he was sent for anger management counselling, and the pastor shared how he could implement radical change through faithful obedience to Christ instead of with violence. Change did not come easy, but eventually Dann went on to pursue theological study and found he was drawn to Mennonite writers and theologians. He graduated from seminary with a firm belief in peace theology and with a Google search for “peace church”

he connected with the Mennonite church. Dann thanked the Mennonite church for embracing and sending him, believing the theology of peace is entrusted to this church so that we can offer the terrorized world an alternative.

Delegates formed small groups to consider the affirmation statement and the church’s role in responding to the increasing militarization.

Plenary Discussion:

- Affirm the statement. Need to re-educate people about our history of non-violent peacemaking, and share that theology with other faith groups. Lobbying members of parliament is most effective if the letter can be delivered in person with a brief meeting.
- Need to humble ourselves on bended knee. Most in group able to say the statement sums up in positive way what we believe, especially the last line. Some of us are quite militant in our peace stance, and need tools to teach peace or engage people if they have in the past been forced to follow or chosen a path of violence. Wonder if advocating for UN peacekeeping a good alternative? We are not called to discuss, we are called to obey the commandments and given the ability to be peaceable servants.
- Understand the statement was framed in response to the increasing militarization, but wish it could focus more on the direction we want to pursue. All appear to be trying to find peaceful life, so how can we be more proactive to recruit for peace in society? Peace theology has been taken for granted and we need to raise the profile and educate, especially if recruiters are targeting youth.
- Affirm the church making a strong statement, and working together to promote this position. Recognize our churches include individuals who have been liberated by armies so it is important to hear each other, and find ways to inform people through sermons, Sunday school and Bible study material. Many CO’s are getting older and we need to listen to their stories so learn from their experience while we still can. Are we informing and giving young people the opportunity to also discuss this?
- Support the statement, and take motivation from CO’s. Shared story of an uncle who refused to serve in Stalin’s army and lost his life, and of Elizabeth Unger who picked up her guitar and started to sing when the marauding army invaded her village in 1919 and how that simple action triggered memories of family and caused the militant group to withdraw. Amazing story of someone who stood in the way of violence. Elizabeth is still alive today, and at the age of 108 could be the oldest peacemaker.