

Inspired by the Word: Gathering

Part II of V

The Bible inspires us to connect with other believers. In fact, the Hebrew and Greek words that are most often translated for “church” also mean “assembly.” In this second of five articles, we look through the eyes of those who attend Assemblies at the importance of gathering together to engage in our calling.

—Deborah Froese

Each year, delegates from Mennonite Church Canada congregations gather for Assembly to worship, pray, learn, discuss and discern, and break bread together. Long-time Assembly-goers have discovered that participation in the broader church is an important part of being the church.

Helen Kruger has attended at least 30 assemblies since 1961, primarily as a delegate. She and her husband William, who are currently Interim pastors at Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, Sask., remember one couple who were so energized by their first Assembly experience that they gained confidence to speak out about their beliefs. “It gave them the courage to be leaders,” Kruger says.

For Kruger, coming together in dialogue and decision-making strengthens our effectiveness as a church. It enables us to witness more effectively to a world that needs healing and direction. “For me, Assembly is a time of inspiration and nurture. It is a time to renew vision, gain incentive and feel fed by the combined strength of fellow believers.”

Marie Rehler can’t count the number of assemblies she has attended over her lifetime. A member of Yarrow United Mennonite Church in Chilliwack, B.C., Rehler has always taken an active role in the event, whether in her previous position as President of B.C. Women in Mission in the late 1990s, or as a volunteer. In Abbotsford in 2007, she was in charge of parking, ushering and signage.

“It’s important to have the exchange of ideas and also to help each other. The other thing is the social aspect, that you get to know the people who are in charge and you feel free to contact them... you are aware of what is happening in our churches and communities.”



With an infant and two young children in tow, Monica Bock of First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Man. attended her first Assembly in 2008. “Curiosity drove me there,” she says. “My mom had often gone growing up, and she loved them.”

Bock took her two older children, ages 3 and 5, to the coinciding Children’s Assembly. “They would come home every day with these little faith nuggets,” she says. “They still talk about it.”

She also appreciated the passionate open-mike discussions about topics that were important to her – “greening” and non-violent peacemaking. “There was a buzz and excitement about being together with like-minded people.”

“How do we get a sense of being the church in Canada if we don’t see each other?” asks Albert Durksen. As the leading pastor of North Kildonan Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Man., Durksen has been an avid assembly attendee since 1982.

“The most meaningful times for me are when we are working at things through the work we do,” Durksen reflects. “What is our identity? How are we the church in the most faithful way?” Although discussions about tough issues can be tense at times, he is convinced that “[that’s] where we really make a difference.”