

Christian Formation Council Report 2009 Assembly

Good evening. I'm Sue Steiner, Chair of Christian Formation Council
I'm Dave Bergen; Executive Secretary of Christian Formation

Dave: This afternoon in the integrated reporting time, we shared snapshots of the overall ministry of our national church with you, and how the work of Mennonite Church Canada is helping to meet our priorities of forming a people of God, growing leaders for the church, and becoming a global church.

Tonight we'll focus on a few additional exciting aspects of Formation ministry.

Resources

Sue: First, we'd like to draw your attention to one of the biggest things going on in Formation Ministry—namely, we're committed to help you, our churches, have ready access to quality Anabaptist resources that will enrich your worship, support your outreach, and strengthen your ability as congregations to be faithful to the mission to which God has called us.

There is a veritable gold mine of these resources available at your fingertips—I mean that literally. They are as close as the click of your computer mouse. All of our print resources, dvds, cds, and downloadables are available through our online catalog. And, we have active partnerships with numerous other Anabaptist partners in Canada, and a few in the U.S. and Korea, thereby increasing our scope and reach.

Dave: I want to share a few facts with you:

- We add about 3 new resources to our catalog every day!
- And recent download traffic is about 200 hits per day. --about double the number of one a year ago.
- Our multi-language resource shelf is growing monthly.
- And we are ever mindful of new language groups that are becoming part of Mennonite Church Canada—groups with languages like Amharic, Karen, Chin, Thai, Tamil and others.

Sue: We're committed to offering materials that nurture our core Anabaptist identity. For example, just last fall we renewed the English brochure entitled "What Makes a Mennonite" and at the same time, we completed two Chinese translations. This year we expect to make this brochure available in Korean and Vietnamese.

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In addition to that, the Mennonite Heritage Center & Gallery completed a related Mennonite brochure which they now use with visitors to those facilities. Many visitors to the Archives and Gallery have no real knowledge of the Mennonite faith story.

Simple, solid tools like “What Makes a Mennonite” help churches start faith conversations with their neighbours, and begin a journey of inquiry and encounter with Jesus Christ.

Youth Assembly

Dave: If you have children or grandchildren attending the Youth Assembly, you will already know that this is a unique year; our adult delegate session and the Youth session are meeting on different dates, at different locations, but under same theme—Living Inside Out. We are thrilled with the energy and creativity surrounding this year’s Youth Assembly. They will be meeting in Caronport July 6-10 where our youth will be treated to a rich menu of speakers, activities, worship and service.

They will also be trying to set a Guinness World Record. Our youth have challenged each other, and our congregations to collect materials and financial gifts so they can assemble a record-setting number of School Kits. These will be distributed in Cuba with the assistance of our partners—MCC and the Cuban Council of Churches. If you haven’t already lent your support to this, there’s still time.

Sue: In a recent survey of Mennonite youth, 60% said they would give to their congregation. 44% said they would give to MCC. Clearly our youth are compassionate. However, in a comparison of more general categories, 33% said they would give to international aid organizations, while only 2% said they would give to their denomination. Clearly we have work to do with our youth in helping them understand their own denomination.

We believe the Youth Assembly is a wonderful place for our youth to develop a sense of the larger church they are part of. It’s a place to plant seeds of faith and service that will grow throughout their lives and strengthen the mission of the church. If these are your goals too, we encourage you to support our youth. Expect them to attend Youth Assembly. And afterwards, ask them what they did and what they learned.

Education and Church Schools

Dave: Finally a few words about Mennonite Church Canada’s commitment to education. As our written report indicates, there is a positive atmosphere surrounding the ministry of our colleges, university, seminary and elementary and secondary schools.

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At the post secondary level we are encouraged by the serious exploration of ways to develop closer cooperation between our different schools, so as to better serve the church, and maximize the resources of people and finances that you, the church, invest in our schools.

Sue: As a church we devote a great deal of energy, time and money to the training of pastoral and other leaders for our churches. We are grateful to the leaders of all our schools – whether elementary, secondary, colleges, university or seminary - for their commitment to the church's mission. All our schools are leaders in the unique ministry of discipleship training and leadership formation. We are thankful for their responsiveness to the voice of the national church which is calling for close partnership in ministry, leadership training and Christian nurture.

We are pleased that our schools are represented at this delegate gathering and look forward to hearing from them now.....

CAMS (Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools)

CBC (Columbia Bible College)

CMU (Canadian Mennonite University)

CGUC (Conrad Grebel University College)

AMBS (Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary)