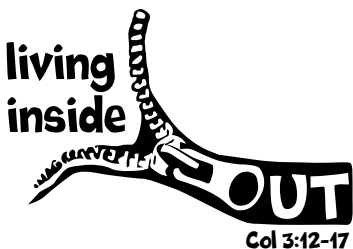


ANNUAL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2009

June 5-7, 2009

University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK

Minute Book



Mennonite Church Canada **Minute Book 2009**

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

Minute recorders were:

Steve Plenert & Lynell Bergen

Available on-line at

www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1268

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/Seconded/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

Andrew Reesor-McDowell, ON – Moderator

Formation

Veronica Dyck, BC

Earl Reimer, MB

Van Hoa Chau, MB

Witness

Emily Dueck, ON

Hun Lee, ON

Waldo Neufeld, BC

Support Services

Ed Janzen, BC

Kaye Rempel, ON

Mark Wurtz, SK

Faith and Life Committee

Rudy Baergen, MB

The slate of nominees was approved as presented.

1. Opening Worship

Greetings were brought by Harry Lafond, Executive Director of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in Saskatchewan and a Cree leader who welcomed the delegate assembly to Saskatoon. Moderator Andrew Reesor-McDowell responded by presenting a peace lamp and committing MC Canada to ongoing peace, justice and facing violent structures of oppression. Songs, silence and prayers followed. Allen Rudy-Froese and Jerry Buhler presented the scripture: Colossians 3:12-17.

2. Preliminaries

- a. **Welcome.** Andrew Reesor-McDowell welcomed everyone, declared the tenth annual delegate sessions of the 2009 Mennonite Church Canada (MC Canada) Assembly in session, and prayed. He invited Renata Klassen, Local Hosting Committee Chair for MC Sask., to welcome to the delegates which she did with warmth and energy. Andrew asked delegates from each Area Church, as well as first-timers and visitors from other countries, to stand.
- b. **Quorum.** Andrew Reesor-McDowell declared a quorum, with 30 delegates from Area Churches and 235 congregational delegates. He requested delegates sit at the tables assigned to them, announced the floor open to everyone, and requested those at the microphones identify themselves. Delegates will vote using bright yellow voting cards.
- c. **Thank yous.** Andrew Reesor-McDowell thanked retired workers and pastors with various church and service organizations and Garth Ewert Fisher offered a prayer of thanksgiving for their lives of ministry and service.
- d. **Introductions and Information**
 - i. **Related Agencies.** A video presentation introduced related ministry partners and agencies.
 - ii. **Ecumenical and International Guests.** Sharon Waltner, Moderator of MC USA expressed appreciation for the relationship between MC Canada and MC USA. "We have a border between us but yet we need each other." John Klassen of the Conference of Mennonites of Mexico brought warm greetings to cool Canada.

- iii. **Assembly Appointees.** Andrew Reesor-McDowell introduced Garth Ewert Fisher, Assistant Moderator, Jack Suderman, General Secretary, Parliamentarian, Ed Janzen; the Assistant Secretaries: Lynell Bergen and Steve Plenert; the Resolutions Committee: Hilda Hildebrand (chair) Don Rempel Boschman and Al Rempel; the Listening Committee: Melissa Miller (chair), Jerry Buhler and Doug Klassen; the Prayer team: Jerry Buhler, Sharon Shultz, Lois Siemens and Henry Block.
- iv. **Discernment Times.** Andrew Reesor-McDowell announced that there would be discussion of these topics around tables as well as other opportunities to share comments, questions and concerns. Instructions on p. 64 of report book.

3. Minutes of the 2008 Assembly

- a. **Minutes.** Garth Ewert Fisher indicated that the minutes of the 2008 Assembly were sent to all congregations, reviewed the actions and follow-up (Report Book, page 14), and moved the adoption of the minutes.
- b. **General Board (GB) Actions.** Garth reviewed the actions of the GB on behalf of the Assembly (Report Book, pages 15-17), and moved their acceptance.
- c. **Nominations Slate.** Dave Feick presented the slate of nominations from page 10 in the report book or pages 82-86 of the report book. Further nominations can be presented until 7:00 pm. Friday evening.

Motion #1 (Garth Ewert-Fisher/Gord Peters)

The delegate assembly adopts the minutes of the 9th Annual Session of Mennonite Church Canada as recorded and published in Minute Book 2008 issued by Mennonite Church Canada.

Motion carried

Motion #2 (Garth Ewert Fisher/Allan Klassen)

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

Motion carried

4. Narrative reporting of Program and Priorities

- a. Jack Suderman noted that we are God's people and this under girds all of what we do and who we are. Whatever you do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have three priorities:
 - i. Form a people of God,
 - ii. Grow leaders for the church, and
 - iii. Become a global church.

- b. MC Canada wants to engage the world with the reconciling gospel of Jesus Christ and the GB has defined three priorities:
 - i. Forming a people of God;
 - ii. Growing leaders for the church; and
 - iii. Becoming a global church.

Janet Plenert (Executive Secretary of Witness) began by introducing Radical Journey, a program of discipleship and service for young adults in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network. Scott Bergen is one of the participants. He is currently in Paraguay. Special Assignments for pastors include Pieter Niemayer and family in Philipstown, South Africa; and Karen Heidebrecht-Thiessen and family are doing a sabbatical in Ethiopia.

Karen Martens Zimmerly, Denominational Minister, reported on ways leaders and pastors are thriving and growing through programs of the Area Churches and AMBS.

Pandemic Preparedness: Janet Plenert said she felt like Noah building the ark when she started working on Pandemic Preparedness issue and web site (www.churchpandemicresources.ca). The H1N1 flu virus validated this preparation as it caused hits on the website to rise dramatically. Two related books have been produced by Mennonite Publishing Network and are available for sale, including a children's book and a study guide.

Louie Sawatzky (Interim Executive Secretary of Support Services) asked if we should use more social networking technology (like Facebook) and how much to invest in this and how much to emphasize face to face communication. MC Canada Communications had a role in "Going Barefoot 2009," a conference that presented results of a survey of youth and young adult media consumption habits. He also reported that June 21 – 23, 2010 will be the G8 summit and the Canadian Council of Churches will have events in conjunction in Winnipeg. MC Canada also has a role in this event.

Dave Bergen (Executive Secretary, Formation) reported on Arlyn Friesen Epp's Easter presentation and connection to local congregations. He also talked about the Conscientious Objectors website headed up by Conrad Stoesz. Elsie Rempel visited a small rural congregation to talk about Christian Education for children and the pastor and the whole congregation participated.

Janet Plenert talked about the Trinity Mennonite Church in Calgary where resources in the Korean language were presented. Trinity has a five year covenant with the Korean Anabaptist Center to produce resources like the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective.

Louie Sawatzky reported on the recession and how it has negatively affected the MC Canada pension plan. Included in the plan is a socially responsible fund. In times of financial insecurity we recommit to our trust in God.

The Mennonite Church in Macau has decided to ordain Treasure Chow, a new, local leader. She is the first Chinese leader to be ordained by the church. In South Africa Dan Nighswander & Yvonne Snider Nighswander have served for the past three years. They have initiated an Anabaptist network in the region. Karen and Andrew Suderman have been assigned to work with this ongoing project starting this summer.

Jack closed this session by talking about the establishment of a Mennonite Church in Cuba and quoted a Cuban leader, Alexander, who thanks the church in Canada and says that "the Anabaptist vision is not just a way of thinking, but how we live our life."

Andrew Reesor-Mcdowell invited questions or comments.

5. Announcements by Elsie Rempel

- a. We are trying to continue to "green" our assembly.
- b. The evening offering will go towards multi-lingual resources.
- c. "Post-card project" representatives invite you to see their location in Room 2007.
- d. CPT wants us to know that there is a free trade agreement with Colombia on the table with the Canadian government that should not be approved. See their display.

6. Opening singing and prayer – Karl Koop and Doreen Neufeld

Andrew introduced the members of the General Board sitting on the platform: Lisa Carr-Pries and Rudy Baergen.

Discernment: Being a Faithful Church

– Testing the Spirits in the midst of Hermeneutical Ferment

- a. **Introduction.** Andrew Reesor-McDowell introduced us to the topic by reminding us that it is the task of the church to discern God's purposes in all matters of faith and practice. Though we are part of the same church, among us we may read and interpret the Bible differently.

We also fail to spend enough time together with Scripture.

It is the desire of the General Board to strengthen the church's capacity to "test the spirits". They are suggesting that we do this by encouraging the church at various levels to work at a system wide process, as opposed to offering specific options at various levels; and by focussing on a particular issue vs. general discernment on how to interpret Scripture. The General Board presents a position based on general process, with a few specific issues mentioned, as above.

The delegate body was asked to respond to the following statement of affirmation: *We affirm the direction of this paper and encourage the Boards, Committees, and Councils of MC Canada to use it as a tool to assist the church addressing themes such as unity and diversity in the life of the church; being a peace church; confessing and witnessing to Jesus Christ as Lord in a religiously pluralistic context; human sexuality in the life of the church; ecological concerns from a perspective of faith.*

- b. **Presentation.** Rudy Baergen, chair of the Faith and Life Committee delivered a presentation to supplement what was already in the paper. He reminded us that discernment is at the heart of what it means to be the church. He provided us with some examples from Scripture to show how discernment has been the ongoing task of God's people. In Matt 18:15-20, we read about ways to deal with conflict, and in our time we most often understand this in the context of conflict in the church. In the time and culture in which Jesus spoke these words, it was common for a Rabbi to work at discernment, to see if and how a commandment applied to a particular situation. The Rabbi "bound" the law if he decided a commandment did hold in a particular situation, "loosed" it if it did not hold. Jesus also took authority to loose and bind, as we see in the Sermon on the Mount.

As we think about how to deal with conflict within the congregation, it seems there are three options:

- i. The church can repeat again what was said before;
- ii. The church can modify what it has said before, given some new spiritual understandings.
- iii. The church can change what it has said before because new perspectives have become apparent and compelling, and shifting the relative authority of canonical voices has been discerned to be necessary.

Jesus gave the disciples the authority to separate good from evil. However, we may be reluctant to put our faith in the spirit into practice because we hear division among us. The reality is that we won't always agree, but the spirit can also disagree well. The work of discernment requires a covenant of trust, which is a spiritual, and ecclesial exercise.

God's spirit will be with us. We need not fear the outcome.
Thanks be to God.

- c. **Scripture presentation.** Arlyn Friesen Epp and Emily Toews presented a dialogue on the experience of Jesus in the wilderness, as Jesus and Satan "faced off", with both using Scripture to uphold their points of view. How does the whole canon of scripture come to bear on the life and trajectory of the church? How do we interpret the voices calling to us in scripture?

- d. **Discernment in table groups.**

The Questions

- i. Betty Pries invited us to respond in table groups, with a focus on two questions:
 - How does Jesus' use of Scripture model a way for us as the church?
 - What principles of interpretation can we learn from Jesus' use of Scripture?

ii. **Table Discussion**

This is a new question for us. We look for the content of discernment from Jesus, not the method. Rabbinic tradition allowed for a lot of debate. Some are black and white, but those have changed over history. There is not only one voice coming out of scripture. In disagreement, relationship is very possible.

Jesus knew his bible, and how it had been applied. He looked beyond present, to the past and the future – to look to the big picture. Interpretation and understanding is dynamic rather than static. Important to understand principles – what is foundational?

Jesus and Satan both following particular biblical strands of who the Messiah is. Jesus said, in response to Satan, “have you considered this...” Things are not always black and white – nuances to much of life.

iii. Jesus knew Scripture, and used it to say, “you have said..., but I say...” Jesus takes a word from the past and brings it into the present situation. It only becomes God’s word as we engage and respond to it.

- e. **Presentation of “Church Matters”** – Dan Dyck and Janet Plenert interviewed Jack Suderman about his paper for the radio program, “Church Matters”. Check out the podcast to hear the interview!
- f. **Questions and comments in answer to the question,**
What strengths do you draw from this paper? How does this paper challenge you? What is your perspective regarding the affirmation statement?
- i. Great affirmation for the historical perspective in the paper. This gives us a way to deal with tough issues. Disagreement with the statement that process is more important than result.
- ii. The paper suggests a confidence that discerning is okay, and that there are shades of grey. We affirm this. Wondering about role of repentance and a concern that we spend too much time discerning, not enough time coming up with the answer. Concern for new members, new Christians not knowing what we are trying to discern – more clarity is called for.

- iii. There is a high view of scripture and a spirit of opening our eyes that seems hopeful. Interpretive process includes text, spirit and the Christian community. God's spirit speaks beyond the church. Challenges: who is the hermeneutic community? Does it include the local congregation? African Indigenous Churches? The Orthodox Church? Are there things that are non-negotiable? Discernment requires us to have a relationship with God and sensitivity to the Spirit. A lot of optimism, need to recognize that the church has, and will, make mistakes.
- iv. Affirm Scriptural content and high view. Need to break through hard soil of our culture, and to discern in community. The paper does not presuppose change, and it calls each believer to become a deeper biblical person. It is the intent that our Bible studies and depth of knowledge of Scripture be increased.
- v. Affirmation for the high view of Scripture, and for the body of Christ coming together for building up of body of Christ. Challenged by question of how we deal with the reality of conflict. Were not sure there were resources in this document that gave us handles on that process. Need a similar document on how we address each other.
We will need patience and grace to work together. It is significant but not easy.
- g. Andrew summarized what he had been hearing from the table responses:
 - i. High degree of affirmation
 - ii. Ability to look beyond and within church
 - iii. There is a significant amount of responsibility given to the church to discern together.
 - iv. Question of when does church move into repentance? Are there non-negotiables?
- h. Andrew invited us to move toward a decision point on affirmation statement. Individual responses were invited.
 - i. Affirm motion, like direction, want to test an amendment (no amendment formally made).
 - ii. Place priority on being the living church, responsive in truth to situations as they arrive.
 - iii. ISn favour. Challenge: in a healthy relationship, conflict can be addressed with vigour if we can agree that we will love each other before, and we will love each other after – but we do not always feel this love and trust in the church, so we cannot easily discern.

- iv. In favour. This is a good time to take a look at how we understand scripture and how we apply our understanding of scripture. Important to give the principles a good look. Response to amendment – “assist the church” MC Canada is a resource to the congregations, does this not already address the concerns of the amendment?
- v. Affirm. Ask the document be written so that it is accessible to people in our congregations.
- vi. Affirm direction of paper. Will paper be rewritten to address challenges raised in this session?
- vii. Waffling – concern about this being nothing new. Yes, we need to reaffirm and think about this, but hesitations raised by other speakers, raised question about talking about it, let us apply it. A motherhood statement.
- viii. Favour – value encouragement to be the church, and holding in tension sufficient wisdom and surprise.
- ix. Very affirmative, there should be dissemination to our churches – just one concern: strength of the church can be a weakness – this is the voice of privilege speaking; emphasis on the importance of the church naming what is right and what is wrong.
- x. Affirm motion. Being the church and doing the will of God a false dichotomy. Be the church that seeks to do the will of God. We are more than propositions, but they are part of our fabric.
- xi. Affirm statement – see hope in the statement, to move beyond “liberal, Bible is irrelevant” and “biblical literalism.” Scriptures give us identity, we can reclaim them.
- xii. Discernment and action – may not be able to wait until we have discernment to act, we may just have to act. What are the actions that are happening while we are discerning. Commit to loving each other while these actions are happening.
- xiii. Andrew – the General Board recommendation is a place to start – does not stop the church from moving beyond this.
- xiv. There is excitement at our table, and we are wanting to see this in action.
- xv. Affirm – important for this agenda to get to grassroots – resolution strengthens the paper.

Motion 3: (Garth Ewert Fisher/Rudy Baergen)

Thank you to Jack Suderman.

Passed by show of hands

7. Announcements: Sound issues – if you need headphones, ask at the back.

- a. Closing song, adjournment for supper.
- b. Opening song

Andrew Reesor-McDowell introduced General Board members on the stage
– Gordon Peters, Hans Werner, Lisa Carr-Pries.

c. **Financial report** from Randy Wiebe

KPMG said that the financial statements fairly represent the financial position of MC Canada. FPAC has determined that 25% of our annual budget should be held in reserve. This year’s results have taken us further from this target. However, existing reserves have allowed us to weather the current downturn with less immediate impact. The current ratio of current assets to current liabilities has worsened from 3.04% to 2.9621%, but this is still well above an acceptable level. Debt to equity ratio worsened from 1.12:1 to 1.03:1. MC Canada endowments and bequests held with Mennonite Foundation went down. Donation revenues apart from programs went down also. Corporate and individual giving fluctuated with them going down in 2009, but the giving from congregations has been steady. All possible expenses were deferred or delayed after October.

Time was spent examining the funds spent on MC Canada programs, partner programs and related organizations. Some particularly noteworthy areas: Youth assemblies mean varied costs in formation year to year. General Board expenses are similar to 2008. Partner programs is an area that continues to grow. MC Canada continues to support varied charitable organization partners. Deficit of \$192,000 was taken out of reserves.

Thank you to congregations and individuals whose donations make the work of MC Canada possible.

Motion #4 (Gordon Peters/Ben Wert)

That the financial statements be accepted as presented **Motion Carried**

Explanation by Gordon Peters that KPMG were retained as auditors because they lowered their price by \$8,500 which brought them into line with other bids which were received. No discussion or questions from the floor.

Motion #4 (Gordon Peters/Peter Peters)

That KPMG be appointed as financial auditors for FYE 2010. **Motion Carried**

8. Delegate Discernment: Frequency of Assemblies at a National Level

- a. Ed Janzen & Louie Sawatzky presented the question of the frequency of assemblies at a national level. It is being brought forward for discussion this year so that a decision can be made next year. This question was debated at the Assembly in Winkler (2004). The pros and cons identified at that time were brought forward.

Advantages of annual assemblies

- Give connections and continuity
- Discernment – annual opportunity for dialogue and discussion
- More connection with the area church
- Fundraising
- Annual assembly helps us define our identity
- Minister's conference should happen every year
- Good for the organization

Disadvantages

- Costly in terms of staff time
- Can become family gatherings

Biennial Conference advantages

- Could strengthen area conferences
- Easier to schedule
- Interest in less frequent meetings
- Internet and websites can take the place of meetings

Disadvantages

- Can lead to a centralized power structure
- May not lead to cost saving
- Slows down broad based decision making
- Lower attendance could be the result

If we went to a biennial assembly

- We could hold faith formation events at area church annual meeting featuring workshops and information sessions.
- A larger worship service could be planned
- Various other creative events could take the place of the annual assembly.

b. Two questions for table discussion

- i. What are the 2 or 3 most compelling reasons to continue with an annual assembly?
- ii. What are the 2 or 3 most compelling reasons for making a change to biennial assemblies?
- iii. Take a straw poll at your table.

c. Table group responses:

- Table 8 In times of waning allegiance to denominations, getting together is important. Advantage of the biennial is that if all the resources spent on getting here every second year would be given to MC Canada that would be great. Tipping toward annual assembly.
- Table 16 Importance of continuity and maintaining continuity. What would happen to terms of board appointments/meetings. Maintaining strong relationships in a church is vital. Annual assemblies keep our area churches stronger. Potential to save money on assembly costs and staff time with biennial.
- Table 24 Continuity important. Changes happen very fast. Cost and ecology are concerns.
- Table 32 Strong unity and grounded in grass roots. Biennial reduces consumption of resources.

Five in favour of annual, one in favour of biennial.

9. Ministry Reports

- a. **Christian Formation Council** – Sue Steiner & Dave Bergen reported that there is easy access to Anabaptist resources for outreach and faithfulness at the Resource Centre through the online catalogue. Three new resources are added every day. Download hits 200 per day. New language groups also using the resource centre. Also available is the brochure “What makes a Mennonite,” and the Heritage Centre and Gallery have a new brochure to distribute to visitors.

Youth Assembly July 6-10 in Caronport, Sask. The youth will attempt to assemble a record number of school kits for MCC. The previously mentioned “Going Barefoot” study revealed the denominational loyalty of our youth, specifically measuring their giving patterns: 66% of our youth said they would give to congregations but only 2% would give to their denomination. We need to strengthen the MC Canada identity of the youth.

Looking to develop closer cooperation between the schools. We are grateful to the leaders of our schools in forming leaders and pastors for our churches. There is a close and good partnership between the church and its schools.

- b. **Gail Schellenberg CAMS**
– **Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools.** The CAMS schools seek to provide mutual support for common ministry of Christian education. There are ten schools with a variety of histories and connections. Value connection to the church. Meet every two years, national music festival every four years. Schools offer academic challenges and other opportunities. They need to be linked with building character and shaping world view. World view needs to encompass head and heart. Our church schools make a difference in the lives of our children and in the life of our church.
- c. **Columbia Bible College - Ron Penner** – Powerpoint with pictures of campus. CBC is three schools in one: School of Discipleship, Ministry Preparation and Continuing Education. Their philosophy includes four “s” terms: study, spiritual formation, service and experience, and social relationships. A school of the church for the church. Have been listening to the area churches in British Columbia carefully in recent years. Working on a collaboration between Colombia, CMU and Conrad Grebel.

- d. **Canadian Mennonite University - Gerald Gerbrandt** Student numbers remain strong. Finances have been a bit tough this year. Graduation is always a moving time. New vision statement this year, which connects with priorities of MC Canada. Suggestion of a task force for how schools and church can work together at leadership development. New program is the Master's of Christian Ministry. Educating for peace and justice is a priority. International Development Studies and conflict resolution continues to be important emphasis. Practicums remain important – many in congregations. Several faculty just returned from Christian-Muslim dialogue in Iran. Student life department continues to develop community at the school.
- e. **Conrad Grebel UC, Ron Matthies.** Located at U of Waterloo campus. New vision statement crafted this last year. Residence community builds supportive stimulating environment for spiritual growth. Several students went with MDS to Louisiana. International musicians gathering for music conference this summer. Peace and conflict studies "pax" continues to be emphasized. Discussions underway for a graduate studies program in pax. Link with U of T doctoral studies continues. We begin with our faith identity and reach out to the world through our faculty and students.
- f. **AMBS, Nelson Kraybill** – Appreciation for the depth of theological debate at Assemblies. Thanks for continuing support for the seminary in Elkhart and beyond. "Engaging pastors" project has wrapped up after five years. Brought pastors back after 3 – 5 years to see how well seminary prepared pastors for what they would be dealing with. Seeking to keep the academic program well rounded and in touch with the local church. Vision magazine works with essential issues of pastoral ministry. Theological education is more local and regional and is crossing theological lines. Well rounded in Anabaptist theology and peace-making and networking with other church leaders is essential for the future of the church. Immersion in full-fledged studies is very important for ongoing strength of the church
- g. **Ray Friesen – Chair of AMBS board.** Nelson is leaving after 13 years at the seminary. Nelson has strengthened the relationship between the church and the seminary. The church thanked Nelson with a standing ovation. George Brunk III was appointed interim president for up to one year. They hope to announce the new president some time this coming fall. Thank-you to Sue Steiner for her dedication as Chair of the Formation Council. She was thanked with "waving of hands".

h. **Listening Committee Report** – Doug Klassen.

Appreciation for creative scripture reading.

Some think we are a homogeneous subculture of our congregations which doesn't adequately represent the conflicted diversity of our congregations

Lois Siemens lead us in prayer of holding, lifting and releasing our prayers.

i. **Anna Rehan** – Youth ministry coordinator /assembly planner

Youth Assembly July 6-10. Main goal is to invite youth assembly participants to a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. Speakers: Michele Hershberger, Shane Claiborne, Jeanette Hanson, Rachelle Friesen. Seminars, service projects, square dance, hymn sing, bands, prayer room, and the school kit challenge are all part of the event.

j. **Late Night activity:**

GB hosting meeting with LGBT community

Evening Closing Worship 8:45 pm

10. Morning worship

Theme: Thread of forgiveness.

Allen Rudy-Froese presented "ordinary stories of forgiveness."

- a. Andrew Reesor-McDowell welcomed everyone back and introduced the GB members on the platform: Hilda Hildebrand, Dan Rempel, Aldred Neufeldt.
- b. Recognizing congregations who are emerging, newly joined or have closed. MC Canada has an agreement with the area churches that we will involve each other in congregational transitions: leaving, closing, emerging, joining. There will be no report from Alberta, or Saskatchewan.
 - i. **MCEC - David Martin, Executive minister**, updated us regarding congregational transitions: Warden Woods Mennonite has made decision to close after years of ministry in Warden Woods area. This follows a careful process of discernment. We celebrate their years of good ministry, while recognizing the pain of closure. MCEC welcomed four new congregations into "Emerging church status," which is a period of testing the relationship with MCEC and the Mennonite Church: Chin Christian congregation in Waterloo; Church of the Living Word – Ethiopian and Eritrean people. This congregation had some connection with Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) in Ethiopia, which connected them with the Ottawa Mennonite Church. Markham Christian Worship Centre – Tamils from Sri Lanka, most of whom come from a Hindu background. They have a desire to share God's love with Tamil population. Reheboth Evangelical Church – another Ethiopian congregation in Toronto. Also some familiarity with MKC led to connection with MCEC. We thank God for congregations who have been faithful to God in the past, and for new congregations who carry on the work of God in the world.
 - ii. **MCBC – Garry Janzen, Executive minister** spoke of three emerging congregations. Level Ground Mennonite Church, in Abbotsford. West Abbotsford Mennonite Church (had a need for workers for exciting ministries) and Wellspring Christian Fellowship (had a need for ministry) closed to create this new church. Some pain involved in that transition. Bringing strength from previous congregations, and developing their new strengths. A new church is being planted in Surrey. Wally Nickel is exploring ministry possibilities there. Living Hope Christian Fellowship in Surrey is supporting this ministry. Living Hope is also reaching out to the Karin people. Western Hmong Mennonite Church is being established in Maple Ridge. Some Karin people, having moved from Ontario where they connected with the First Hmong Mennonite Church in Waterloo, have also been part of this new congregation.

- iii. **MCM - Edgar Rempel, Executive Director.** Three emerging/renewed congregations. Niverville Community Fellowship grows out of our Niverville Mennonite and Elim Mennonite Church (from EM Conference). They have been led to form a new church together, and are assessing the needs of town/community, to think about how they might do church differently. Niverville Community Fellowship is in process of discernment of membership within MCM and EMC. Niverville Mennonite Church membership ends. Norm Voth reported that in fall 2008, people interested in exploring Mennonite liturgical worship gathered: room for ritual, mystical, contemplative; openness to other traditions; regular celebration of communion. Average of 20+ people are attending. They will be forming as a congregation gradually over the next year. Build stronger connections regionally and nationally. A group connected with YWAM has emerged in the West End of Winnipeg called Little Flowers Community that has become a worshipping body. They are discerning their future.
- iv. Jack Suderman asked area churches to greet these new congregations on behalf of MC Canada, and extend words of gratitude and our support and prayers to Warden Woods. Karen Martens Zimmerly prayed for area churches and congregations.
- v. Andrew invited ministry partners to present reports:
 - **Global Mission Fellowship (GMF).** (soon to be the Mission Commission of Mennonite World Conference). Janet Plenert, chair of the GMF, greeted the Assembly on behalf of the global church. The GMF is a network of 69 members (mission organizations and churches) from 39 countries. This global church invites us to look at faith from a new way. We are a wealthy church from the global north. We have a rich legacy which we offer to the global church. GMF is one way that MC Canada fulfills its mandate to become a global church. It is not an institution, but a networking space. Next major assembly July 11-14 immediately following Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Paraguay. Mission is happening everywhere: East Timor, South Korea, Mozambique. We need to reposition ourselves in the midst of this global mission reality. Want to thank MC Canada for financial support so that church and mission leaders from global south can gather together with others for this network. We look forward to Paraguay – to merge GMF into the mission commission of MWC.

- **Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN).** Ron Rempel, Executive Director of MPN, together with John Longhurst, introduced the Canadian board members. We are confronted with difficult and complex situations on a daily basis, yet we are called to bring God's witness of grace and peace. MPN educates, informs, inspires and encourages you through resources made available the churches. MPN meeting recession challenges by decreasing overhead. They have dealt with albatross of debt. Mention was made of recent resources available through MPN, including Christian education materials and "Via" materials for those new to the church (written from an Anabaptist perspective). 95% of MPN revenues come from the sale of materials they publish.
- c. Andrew Reesor-McDowell introduced Dick Benner, new editor of *Canadian Mennonite*.
- d. **Announcements.** Break for coffee.

11. Saturday, July 6, 2009

10:30 Session

Andrew Reesor-McDowell welcomed everyone back

and introduced the General Board members on the platform: **Willard Metzger** and **Donita Wiebe-Neufeld**. He then opened the floor for any comments.

- a. the question was asked about what success MC USA has had with biennial sessions. Jack responded giving historical context and that they continue to experience success.
- b. suggestion that we have less frequent and larger gatherings that involve many more people than just delegates, that are in conjunction with the youth assemblies and with more focus on worship.
- c. suggestion that we have one year that focused more on business and another that focused more on worship.
- d. in favour of a biennial session because we are stewards of our environment and we need to reduce our carbon footprint. Request to the board that we have creative options for community building that are electronic and other.

12. Delegate Discernment: Peace in the Public Square

- a. Dan Dyck presented about last year's resolution brought by the Osler Mennonite Church on Peace in the Public Square. He is excited about working with the church on this important question.
- b. Dan Dyck and Janet Plenert recorded a "Church Matters" interview with Gorden Allaby, Pastor of Osler Mennonite Church.
- c. A proposal for promoting the peace message was presented by Dan. Suggestions included:
 - i. Visit your MP once a year and give them a message to encourage them towards peace.
 - ii. Some southern Manitoba church leaders met with their MP who was open to meeting and welcomed them to meet again.
 - iii. Write letters to politicians regularly
 - iv. Look for alternative solutions to Remembrance Day celebrations that don't emphasize the military so much.
 - v. Support conscientious objection through initiatives like the peace tax initiative.
 - vi. Counter military ads on Hockey Night in Canada which peace ads. [Slogans such as "Make a date with peace" "Imagine life without war", or "Give your Conscience a workout"] Possibly on buses, billboards or bus shelters. How would you react? How would a non-Christian or non-pacifist react to that?

Costs of such things vary from place to place so are difficult to compare between communities.

- d. Possibilities were presented for Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Kitchener-Waterloo, Toronto or Vancouver for billboards, bus shelters, buses, electronic screens etc.
- e. The table groups were asked to discuss the following questions:
 - i. Is this the sort of initiative that you can see your congregation grabbing hold? (Yes or no and why?)
 - ii. Are you able to commit, on behalf of your congregation, to support this initiative with action?

f. Reporting back:

- i. Yes we support the initiative and all will take it back to their congregations. Some question whether membership would embrace this. We are responsible to live peace in our homes. Look at games our children play. Work with youth pastors and youth and promote a message of peace.
- ii. Members of congregations are all over the place on peace position. Dream of turning a house on a church property into a peace centre. Identify the need for peace leadership. There are people who are passionate about peace and they would need to give leadership. Good thing to do with other congregations. We will raise the issue in our congregations and it would be supported in some way. Appreciate the many suggestions.
- iii. Our congregations need additional info and education on this. What additional resources might there be. Initiatives are already happening such as a plaque honouring CO's. Some congregations will embrace this and some not yet and some not sure.
- iv. This is the sort of campaign you can't lose with. Individual congregations more variable responses. Divisions from WW 2 remain in some congregations. Some suggest that this could be an area church initiative.
- v. Listening Committee made a request for clarification of p. 73. "each part of the body" should respond. What does this mean? Dan Dyck gave examples of response at various levels (national, local, etc). Jack Suderman added that it could include schools like CMU, congregations, area churches. If "each part" did something each year that would soon add up to hundreds per year and would snowball. Dan Dyck asked, "How will your congregation be prepared to respond to people receiving these messages?"
- vi. Engaged sounds more like a full time thing than "one act per year".
- vii. An example was given of boycotting Hockey Night in Canada because of free advertising for the military. Gave other ideas such as diverting tax to United Nations peace-keeping.
- viii. Affirm the creativity. Concerned with "outing" ourselves as pacifist organization. "The opposite of war is the worship of Christ" (Hauerwas)
- ix. Affirm direction. In conversations with military people they feel that these messages are a put down of "serving their country".

- x. Billboards an intriguing idea. Can we ask our farmers who own land next to busy highways to contribute the use of their property for these signs?
- xi. Banner ads online suggested. Dan Dyck responded that he has looked into banner ads on internet, but studies suggest results are poor: about 80% of people who see banner ads online ignore them.

Motion #5 (Jake Buhler/Garth Ewert Fisher)

Given what is (and is not) viable, what is already being done, and what is needed, we make a simple proposal. We propose:

- that each part of the Body within Mennonite Church Canada commit to publicly engage one local (regional, national, international) issue per year for the next 4 years;
- that each part of the Body commit to provide the education and resourcing needed (within and beyond the Body) to articulate and explain the public engagement from a Peace Church perspective;
- that each part of the Body commit to provide a written report to Mennonite Church Canada, outlining its engagement and reflecting on the impact of its work;
- that Mennonite Church Canada staff commit to resource the educational needs of these initiatives;
- that Mennonite Church Canada commit to compile these engagements into an annual summary report, providing perspective and analysis as needed and helpful;

Framework:

Being a witness for peace in the public square is the vocation of the entire Body of Christ, that includes the congregations and its members, Area Churches, related institutions and denominational ministries. Each part of Mennonite Church Canada is strongly urged to seek out and act on opportunities to be a peace witness in the public square on an ongoing basis.

These opportunities include but are not limited to: an ongoing commitment to educating, nurturing, and living a spirit of non-violent peacemaking, and public peace advocacy in our own congregations.

Motion carried

13. Narrative Reporting by Christian Witness Council

– Tim Froese, Samson Lo, Willard Metzger, Janet Plenert and Edith Von Gunten

In an effort to build bridges between people, following this year's assembly a small group of Mennonites will go on a learning tour to connect with aboriginal people and locations here in Saskatchewan. Bridges will also be built internationally through an Aboriginal visiting and learning tour to the Chaco of Paraguay and Argentina in conjunction with MWC in July.

At a recent gathering of Native Ministry alumni, letters were written to Aboriginal congregations offering apologies for things not done well, offering encouragement and asking for the privilege to continue to walk alongside. The letter also encouraged our churches to develop face to face relationships between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal groups and congregations to seek transformation.

This year, Witness asked for 1000 acts of peace from people to submit peace declaration when they submit income taxes. Bill C390 before govt of Canada would allow us to be fiscal conscientious objectors. Get on board and pester your MP's.

There is another group in Chile that is interested in peace – The Evangelical Mennonite Church. They hope to join Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay next month. They also have member congregations in Uruguay and Argentina. Some of their congregations are indigenous groups. They seek to educate their congregations for peace. Titus Guenther is currently there resourcing them as a gift from Charleswood Mennonite Church, MC USA and MC Canada Witness. At MWC, we also hope to have representatives from Cuba. The new Mennonite Church in Cuba developed this vision statement: to develop communities of faith by means of peace which makes real the values of the kingdom of heaven.

We heard the story of woman who found a church in her own language (Vietnamese) and now loves going to church. Emmanuel Mennonite, MCBC and Witness have launched a new Vietnamese congregation in Abbotsford.

- a. **Announcements:** Displays will be taken down between 4 and 7.
- b. **Break for lunch.** Time for people to check out displays, meet with councils, meditate and rest.

14. Opening singing led by Ben Pauls

- a. Andrew Reesor-McDowell opened the session, and introduced the General Board members at the table: Sue Steiner, Walter Wiebe.
- b. **Canadian Women in Mission (CWM)** Executive introduced themselves. CWM has been working to embrace change, and among other things have changed their name to "Mennonite Women Canada" (MW). MW could stand for More Work or Much Wisdom. A survey from MW will be coming to your congregation. Please give it serious attention – we need feedback in order to develop in ways that meet the needs of today's women. MW expressed appreciation to the staff at MC Canada for their support and encouragement.
- c. **Financial report** – Randy Wiebe, Director of Finance, and Gordon Peters, treasurer, presented the Budget plan for FYE 2010. See pp 61-63 of the report book. The version on page 62 reports net program expenditures. Year end results forced us to make adjustments before the budget has been approved. 2010 includes CPI adjustment for salaries of 3.2%.
- d. Gratitude was expressed for the generosity of our congregations and members who support the work we are able to do together. Church giving slightly exceeded projections, but individual and corporate giving has decreased. Have presented a flat budget, but are also presenting options for cutting back if donations continue to drop. Staff is obligated to under spend their budgets, but if revenue increases, staff will be able to spend that budget. If revenue continues to fall, contingency plans go into place. We are confident that the right adjustments will be made to deal with the economic realities.
- e. Details of the budget were presented. Many of the assumptions we had made when we wrote our budget were not being met. Since then we have had to make adjustments. Note deferred expenses and other contingency plans.
- f. A three year budget project will be based on revenue projections. Will present annual budget plans that are realistic, manageable, and that represent the priorities of Mennonite Church Canada.
- g. Revenues and expenses are both behind budget.
"We have chosen not to participate in the recession."
- h. Gordon Peters moved that we accept the budget as presented. Garth Ewert Fisher seconded.

Motion #6 (Gordon Peters/Garth Ewert Fisher)

Move that we accept the budget as presented.

Motion carried

15. Delegate Discernment: Church growth and health for our denomination.

Janet Plenert – We are on a journey, begun centuries ago, which will stretch on. We are part of God’s marvellous story in this world. God is shaping this world. God has chosen to work through the reconciling ministry of Jesus, and now through the church. God is forming a people that will be faithful, prophetic, rooted in their own context. This people of God, the church of God, has been entrusted with the task of aligning ourselves to the work of God. Church growth is nothing less than God’s intent that the world be healed. God desires a better world, and we as the church are the key that God has chosen to form and task a people with the power of the Holy Spirit.

A task force composed of Norm Voth, Lee Dyck, Walter Wiebe, Jim Shantz, Gordon Nesdoly and Brian Bauman has been called together to look at questions of health and growth. They have looked at the demographic information to examine the trends in church participation and identification among Canadians. Many churches and denominations are in decline, but some are growing. The Mennonite Brethren church has grown rapidly, and is now the largest Mennonite group in Canada.

The task force shared some stories of emerging churches. Zurich Mennonite Church recently spent a whole year taking a sabbatical from the busyness of being church, in order to spend a year striving to hear the word of God. They began to believe that God was calling them to plant a church, that to be the church is to be a multiplying organism. They planted a church in Clinton in 2007, and are exploring three other sites for three other churches.

Norm Voth from MC Manitoba spoke about the Little Flowers Community (LFC) in West End Winnipeg. Some members choose to live together through shared housing, shared meals. LFC bases their beliefs and lifestyle in the Mennonite tradition but are also influenced by St. Francis of Assisi (“franabaptist”). This is a joint project with YWAM. Began a variety of outreach ministries in the West End. LFC is a community of worship and service, who want to be a transformative presence in Winnipeg’s West End.

Janet shared the story of Lucy Roca, a worker from the Colombian church working in Sherbrooke area of Quebec. She is working with the model of house churches, and working to develop leaders. The mother church is a centre to help immigrants with different needs. These new people will be integrated into the Mennonite church, want to teach Anabaptist values to all of them. They now have 4 house churches in Montreal. They give thanks to God, and send special greeting to all the churches of MC Canada.

Lee Dyck tells a story from the Living Hope Church of Surrey. Mr. Tin was a Karin refugee who arrived in the Yarrow, BC area, struggling with significant health issues. He received support from the Yarrow Mennonite Church, and when he moved to Surrey, he connected with Living Hope. Soon he brought friends to church, and since then, this group has grown to 100 with the possibility of many more. Living Hope is getting calls from Canadian government to see if the church can help with new Karin refugees. In addition, the Karin people reaching out to others, including Sudanese immigrants – God has blessed them, so they can now bless others. They want to share Jesus with the whole community.

Jim Loepp Thiessen spoke about starting The Gathering Church. When we talk about church planting, we are talking about God's initiative. The clear promise of Jesus that he would build his church was fulfilled. People contributed. Businesses contributed. Jim never had to ask anyone for money. When we think about dreaming or doing new initiatives, we say we can't afford it. Where would the resources come from? But this is not the first question to ask – the first question is, What is God calling us to do? Money follows the vision. When God wants us to do something, if we are open to follow, God provides the resources, and God builds the kingdom.

16. Table Discussion

A question was presented for discussion:

- a. **What is it in the stories you have just heard that could serve to inspire and motivate your congregation?**

Responses:

- i. Stories are inspiring, could we put them on DVD for congregations. Story tellers also inspiring
- ii. Sense of vision, strong sense of call, did not try to think of all contingencies. We also noticed Sabbath year. Trust what God brings to you.
- iii. Excited that God is the one who initiates, we are following a great God who can work in ways that are beyond what we can envision. Each meeting of the people of God is a miracle.
- iv. God uses ordinary people, who are open to a vision, to what God wants to do, and God will provide.

A panel discussion followed, moderated by Brian Bauman and Janet Plenert.

- b. **Question:** Does God call us to plant churches?
Where in the Bible does it tell me that I should go and plant a church?

Responses:

- i. Jesus tells us to make disciples, Matt: 28. This is one of the places where we take our mandate.
 - ii. Paul himself went through very difficult experiences to plant churches because he listened to God
 - iii. It goes back to the creation story – in the beginning, God created. Church planting is a continuation of the creation story.
- c. **Question:** How do we work so that we can open our minds, our paradigms to new models, to embrace variety and types of congregations that look and feel very different?
- i. It calls us to risk something. Begin with what God sends. Don't predetermine what it will look like.

- d. **Question:** How can we speak about church growth in a rural context where there is depopulation is happening?
 - i. For a rural church, church growth in terms of increasing in numbers is not an option. The key focus is renewal, getting to spiritual roots. “we are the little church that cares”
- e. **Question:** Our emphasis on community is a strength of the Mennonite church – how does this augment or get in the way of church growth?
 - i. We can connect our peoplehood with that of other groups.
 - ii. What is the identity we have as a denomination – we can be very exclusive, because we are too closed/too close as a ‘family’ if we don’t share the story, have a common history.
 - iii. I have a passion for young, urban adults who need to hear the Anabaptist story. Church seems like a strange language, not one which people who have not grown up in the church can understand. We need resources – such as the new Via resource – that can help us communicate our faith and story.
- f. **Question:** Many newer congregations are non-English speaking. We are a very multi-cultural country. How do we get past the Mennonite name game that makes people feel excluded?
 - i. We need to keep Jesus Christ, not Menno Simons, at the centre. When we put Menno in the middle, we decide who is in the family based on ethnic identity or family history.
- g. **Question:** There are a variety of church planting models. The model the Mennonite Brethren Church is currently using costs about \$300,000 for a successful church plant. What is a good model to use?
 - i. People who don’t receive money cost less and do better.
 - ii. We are committed to trying a model like (the MB one). We have committed funds to plant a church among young adults (20s and 30s) and want to start something. We will make several attempts and all may not succeed, but how much is a new Christian worth?
 - iii. Our motto is “Churches planting churches”. Don’t try to plant a church unless people are praying for a church to be planted there.

- h. **Table discussion:** What are the challenges you experience in church growth? What support or encouragement does your congregation hope for from the Area church, and national church to do this better?

Responses:

- i. **Challenge:** to overcome fear. We don't know what to do because growth was not an issue in the past. Demographics have changed, church is facing decline and they don't know what to do. Identifying God's call to us now. Leadership. Attracting people in the local community. Support: needs a new leader for a new church plant.
- ii. **Challenges:** feel that there are a number of people drawn to mega-church/evangelical church. Consumerism, people are shopping for different churches. Attitude that we can be served in the church. Fear of the unknown. Would be afraid to have Jesus at the centre.
- iii. **Challenge:** preoccupation with other things, internal church difficulties; too busy, self-satisfied; easier to build than to renovate (a congregation). Support – how define community, who is us. Sharing stories helpful.
- iv. **Challenge:** Vietnamese church growing like mad, fearless for the gospel, English language group within the Vietnamese church is much more western, more Anabaptist. More fearful, less fervent about evangelism. Some congregations have reached plateau. Exclusively Caucasian. Is there a desire for new relationships? One congregation has been experiencing growth through funerals – opportunity to reach out. Support – want stories on DVD or internet, and want more stories. Simple stories can be so powerful. Money is needed. Facilitate local church growth through resourcing. Area churches help us address question: what will it take to grow? Do you want to grow?
- i. Brian Bauman thanked the panellists and participants for their engagement. He invited us to take these stories and questions back to our congregations, to sit down with church leaders, mission committees, to see what God is calling us to do. May this session have been a blessing to you, and may that blessing follow you home.
- j. Norm Voth announced that he represents Manitoba on the national executive of Church Planting Canada. Every 2 years they meet in congress. This year's event is called "Renov8" meeting in Calgary – tracks for church planters, pastors, interested individuals, and denominational leaders. Everyone is welcome. MC Canada attendees will meet in a caucus at this event.

– Break for supper –

17. Opening singing led by Ben Pauls.

Andrew Reesor-McDowell thanked Ben Pauls, and welcomed everyone to our final delegate and discernment session. Introduced Betty Loewen and Ed Janzen, General Board members.

a. Nominations Committee.

Dave Feick reported that no nominations have been added to the list. Campbell Nisbet has agreed to be on Formation Council for one year to finish a term that was vacant.

Motion #7 (Dave Feick/Garth Ewert Fisher)

Motion that nominations be closed.

MotionCarried

b. Nominations to various posts were accepted by acclamation at the Saturday evening delegate sessions:

i. GENERAL BOARD

Don Friesen

Ottawa ON (Ottawa Mennonite Church) Nominated as General Board Secretary. Served on the General Board since 2007.

Gordon Peters

Saskatoon, SK (Nutana Park Mennonite Church) Nominated as Treasurer. Served on the General Board since 2007.

ii. **CHRISTIAN FORMATION COUNCIL**

Lisa Carr-Pries

Waterloo, ON (Waterloo North Mennonite Church) Nominated as Chair.
Served on the Christian Formation Council since 2006.

Naomi Unger

Rabbit Lake, SK (Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite Church) Served on the
Christian Formation Council since 2003.

Coreen Froese,

Didsbury, AB (Bergthal Mennonite Church) Served on the Christian
Formation Council since 2006.

Florence Benson-Umpherville

Cross Lake, MB (Living Word Church)

Campbell Nisbet

Stratford, ON (Avon Mennonite Church) Appointed for one year to
complete a term that has become vacant.

iii. **CHRISTIAN WITNESS COUNCIL**

Irene Crosland

Tofield, AB (Tofield Mennonite Church) Served on the Christian Witness
Council since 2003.

JD Penner

Toronto, ON (Toronto United Mennonite Church) Served on the
Christian Witness Council since 2006.

Hugo Neufeld

Calgary, AB (Trinity Mennonite Church)

iv. **SUPPORT SERVICES COUNCIL**

Gordon Baergen

Sherwood Park, AB (Holyrood Mennonite Church)

Harry Wiens

Altona, MB (Altona Mennonite Church) Served on the Christian
Witness Council since 2006.

v. **FAITH AND LIFE COMMITTEE**

Sharon Schultz,

Eyebrow, SK (Eyebrow Mennonite Church)

c. Listening Committee Report

Melissa Miller reported that we are reminded to bring discernment to the gathering. Many positive affirmations of the 'Discerning the Spirits' paper. We discern and we also need action. Respect has been shown by staff, presenters and people at the mics. How do we get the energy of small groups pushed out further? There are voices that don't get heard. For instance how do we hear the voices of Aboriginal neighbours in questions like peace in the public square? How do we hear the voices that are not here? How do we tell the story of MC Canada? Does it represent all the streams that have shaped it?

- i. Prayer by Sharon Schulz of the prayer team.
- ii. Andrew Reesor-McDowell offered thanks to Listening Committee and Prayer Team
- iii. Andrew Reesor-McDowell gave Jack Suderman the floor to respond to many things that have been said.
- iv. Jack Suderman expressed appreciation to Prayer Team, Listening Committee, Nominating Committee and especially for a card of support and prayer he had received.

The paper presented represents a high view of scripture and the church. It represents a high view of humanity. It represents a high view of the presence of the Spirit among us. But would we want it any other way? Do we want a low view of any of these things? To establish a vision for what it means to be God's church it is inevitable that we hold a high view of the scriptures, the church, of God, of humanity and of the Spirit. Strategy of the church is moving even if we haven't found what we're looking for. Optimism and hope are not the same. Hope begins when optimism ends. "We have decided to postpone our pessimism until times get better" – Colombia.

"Two things that you must keep in mind. One is that the horizon is clear. Second is that the road is foggy and that's why you need headlights. Don't mistake the fog for the horizon or the horizon for the fog." (Cuba). The headlights illuminate enough to move ahead even if it's not enough to see the horizon through the fog yet.

“Discernment should be energizing and not draining” is something from the paper that some have not agreed with. And sometimes this is true. But when you have a high view of things, in the strategic process we must always appeal to confession, repentance and lament because the church is always in need of these things. If we see the fog as the final answer, discernment must be draining, but if we see the horizon, it will be energizing. Imagine if God’s energy got drained by the possibility of salvation. Our task is to continue to be energized by the possibility of salvation on the horizon.

d. Resolutions Committee

Hilda Hildebrand reported that no resolutions were received so they wrote one themselves.

Be it resolved that we have been privileged to be the Church – listening, speaking and engaging the gifts of God, at this 2009 Annual Assembly.

There are many people who have shared their gifts:

- i. The gift of hospitality from our hosts in Saskatchewan is much appreciated. We are grateful for the many tasks graciously and joyfully performed by people from the local congregations and area church.
- ii. We value the staff of Mennonite Church Canada, who organized and resourced the church in coming, being and acting together.
- iii. We appreciate the members of our church who volunteer in service on the General Board, Ministry Councils, and working groups.

And as we have gathered here these past days, we are thankful for the many individuals who shared their gifts in various roles to facilitate our time of discernment – from prayer, worship, reporting and table dialogue – to listening, visual worship and refreshment.

We are grateful for the attendance and participation of all those who have gathered from across the country – sharing our thoughts and holding the work of what we do together, as a church, in prayerful attention.

We have been blessed!

Approved by a round of applause.

Walter Wiebe invited the delegate assembly to Calgary in 2010. The dates are June 30 – July 3, 2010. You are all invited, plus bring someone with you. The text will be Colossians 3:12-17. Please hold MC Alberta in your prayers.

18. General questions from the floor

- a. Concern about how we talk about our history. Re: 1985: it is vital to represent our history accurately, and acknowledge the two bodies that came together.
- b. Excited about the peace in the public square proposal. Please pray for our own circles; if we have stories in our own community of violence we won't have credibility.
- c. Lament that we don't have the voice of our new Canadian churches here. What can we do to be able to be together?

19. Announcements

- a. Season of prayer material by Patty Friesen. Lost and found. Evaluation. Clean up.
- b. Renata Klassen was invited forward to receive our thanks, to her as well as to all the volunteers of MC Sask.

20. Andrew Reesor-McDowell declared the 10th annual MC Canada assembly closed.



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