

A Moment for Celebration: A Mission Moment

We invite you to share the following story with your congregation. It should take no more than 2 minutes to read aloud. You might also wish to include the story in your church newsletter.

Celebration Story

“Is that an X, or a cross, or just poor art?” was the teasing question posed to Norm Voth, Mennonite Church Manitoba’s director of Evangelism and Service Ministries, as he attempted to illustrate the relationship between an All Partnership Circle and the different Ministry Circles.

The ensuing laughter indicated the level of comfort among the participants of the Riverton Ministry Circle which met at the beginning of February. Norm was reminded that the circles he was drawing needed to have an opening to allow for more partners to be able to join.

Partnership and Ministry Circles are a response to the ongoing work of continuing a Native Ministry presence in a financially challenged environment. The Riverton Ministry Circle works at building relationships between a Native church and non-Native sisters and brothers in Christ from other churches. The circle will also help support the ministry of the Riverton Fellowship Circle after their pastors, Neill and Edith von Gunten leave at the end of August, 2005.

Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry has facilitated an emerging partnership among Riverton Community Fellowship and representatives from Bethel Mennonite Church and Sargent Ave. Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, First Mennonite Church in Berne, Indiana, as well as staff from Mennonite Church Manitoba and Mennonite Church Canada’s Native Ministry.

While Neill and Edith von Gunten’s term has been extended to August 2005, the circle is deeply involved in developing a vision and plan to ensure leadership and pastoral support beyond the end of their term. The representatives from Riverton left the February 4th meeting with a “stronger than ever” resolve that their church will not only survive, but grow in its vision and its ministry in the years to come.

While there are many obstacles to face, there is a good deal of hope and there is the conviction that the congregation does not stand alone. Each partner benefits from the sharing of gifts. That is reason to celebrate!

—Walter Franz, Director of Native Ministry



Edith and Neill Von Gunten look ahead with hope that the vision and ministry of the Riverton Fellowship will not only survive but grow, even after their term ends in 2005.