

it's **epic**
remembering
God's future
Mennonite Church Canada

assembly 2011
MINUTE BOOK

Mennonite Church Canada Minute Book 2011

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

Minute recorders: Don Friesen

Editor: Don Friesen

Available on-line at: www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1703

Abbreviations

AMBS	Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary
BFC.....	Being a Faithful Church
CBC.....	Columbia Bible College
CEC	Church Engagement Council
CFC	Christian Formation Council
CGUC	Conrad Grebel University College
CMM	Conference of Mennonites in Mexico
CMU	Canadian Mennonite University
CWC.....	Christian Witness Council
ELCC.....	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada
FLC.....	Faith and Life Committee
FPAC.....	Financial Policy and Audit Committee
FYE	Fiscal Year End
GB	General Board
GB Exec	General Board Executive
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
MCA.....	Mennonite Church Alberta
MCBC.....	Mennonite Church British Columbia
MCC.....	Mennonite Central Committee
MC CAN	Mennonite Church Canada
MCEC	Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
MCM	Mennonite Church Manitoba
MCUSA.....	Mennonite Church USA
MDS	Mennonite Disaster Service
MCSASK	Mennonite Church Saskatchewan
MEDA.....	Mennonite Economic Development Agency
MEI.....	Mennonite Educational Institute
MFC.....	Mennonite Foundation of Canada
MOU.....	Memorandum of Understanding
MPN.....	Mennonite Publishing Network
MWC	Mennonite World Conference

Slate of Elected Nominations

General Board Executive

Don Friesen, ON, as secretary;

Gordon Peters, SK, as treasurer.

Formation Council

Earl Reimer, MB

one vacancy.

Witness Council

Pat Gerber Pauls, SK.

Waldo Neufeld has withdrawn his name.

Church Engagement Council

Vincent Friesen, AB, chair

Louie Sawatsky, MB

Dori Zerbe Cornelson, MB.

Faith and Life Committee

Rudy Baergen, MB.

1 **MINUTES**

2 **ASSEMBLY 2011**

3 Mennonite Church Canada

4 12th Annual Session

5 University of Waterloo

6 Waterloo, Ontario

7 July 4-8, 2011

Theme: It's Epic: Remembering God's Future

Revelation 21:1-4, 22-26 and 22:1-5

8
9 **Monday, July 4, 2011, 7:00 p.m.**

10
11 **1. Opening Worship**

12 Theme: *Remembering God's future ... this is our story*

13 Sermon: Nelson Kraybill

14 Offering: Translation Project

15
16 **2. Preliminaries**

17 **a. Welcome**

18 i. **Moderator Andrew Reesor-McDowell** welcomed everyone to the 2011 MC Canada Annual

19 Assembly, saying: "We gather in the name of Christ,

20 as the people of God,

21 to discern and implement the mission of God,

22 in the manner and spirit of Jesus."

23 ii. **Aldred Neufeldt, Moderator of MCEC**, welcomed delegates, gave a brief introduction to

24 MCEC and invited MCEC attendees to welcome delegates from other regions.

25 iii. **Welcome to the MC Canada Youth**, who are also meeting on this campus. The theme for

26 their sessions is also "It's Epic – Remembering God's Future". They will join adults

27 during seminars, tours and meals.

28 iv. **Welcome to the children and Junior Youth**, whose Assembly is focussing on dreams:

29 dreams in the Bible, dreams of our own, other people's dreams, and connecting our

30 dreams with God's dream for a new heaven and a new earth. MC Canada international

31 ministry workers Jeff and Tany Warkentin and their children will share stories of life and

32 dreams in Ouagadougou with the children.

33
34 **b. Introductions**

35 i. **Conrad Grebel University College (CGUC)**. Andrew introduced Susan Schultz Huxman,

36 the new president of CGUC, Susan greeted assembled delegates and guests, announcing

37 that it was her first day on the job. As one of the church schools, said Susan, "we are

38 partners with you. We strive to live out that vision daily." She reflected on the changes

39 church schools face, much like the church itself. Like MC Canada, CGUC's mission is to

40 help grow leaders. Leadership is changing and CGUC is at the cutting edge of forming

41 faithful and forward-thinking leaders.

42 ii. **MC USA**. Willard Metzger introduced the video greeting from Ervin Stutzman, executive

43 director of MC USA. Ervin brought greetings from MC USA, and in particular Ed Diller,

44 MC USA moderator. Their assembly theme is "Bridges to the Cross". Ervin noted that

45 MC Canada and MC USA celebrate a common heritage, a common vision, and a

46 common purpose. MC USA's purpose statement is "Joining in God's activity in the

47 world, we develop and nurture missional Mennonite congregations of many cultures."

48 We're exploring what that means, said Ervin, and also working on a ten-year plan for MC

49 USA. He also mentioned the partnership covenant with MC Canada, and wished God's

50 presence in the Assembly.

51 iii. **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCC)**. Willard introduced Bishop Susan

52 Johnson, noting that Susan has appointed someone to take care of him at their national

- assembly in Saskatoon. He asked the delegates to help take care of Susan at our Assembly.
- iv. **Conference of Mennonites in Mexico** (CMM) Andrew introduced Peter Rempel Enns, chair of CMM. A larger delegation, including Sonia Bojórquez de Dyck (official CMM representative this year), Tina Dyck, and Isaak and Maria Bergen, will arrive later.
 - v. **Congolese delegation.** Andrew introduced Damien Palende from the Mennonite Brethren (MB) Church in Congo (100,000 members) and reflected on the difficulties they face dealing with poverty, homelessness, and illness. Pastor Mubango was unable to travel to Canada due to visa delays.
- c. **Quorum.** Andrew noted that the MC Canada bylaws require half (20 of 40) of the eligible voting delegates from Area Churches; we have 30. The bylaws also require 200 congregational delegates; we have 278. Andrew declared that we have a quorum of delegates registered.
- d. **Attendance** at this Assembly is 801.
- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Adult Assembly | 469 |
| Youth Assembly | 295 (Youth and Sponsors) |
| Children and Junior Youth Assembly | 37 |
- e. **Officials supporting the Assembly.** Andrew introduced those appointed by the General Board (GB) to serve the Assembly in an official capacity:
- i. **Parliamentarian:** Harold Peters-Fransen
 - ii. **Listening Committee:** Betty Loewen (GB rep), BC; John Redekop, SK; and Ruth Boehm, ON.
 - iii. **Resolutions Committee:** Henry Krause (chair), BC; Aldred Neufeldt (GB representative), ON; and Margaret Ewen Peters, SK.
- f. **Logistics.** Hilda Hildebrand, MC Canada vice-moderator, noted the venue for discussions and provided instructions regarding discussion groups and the following:
- i. **Discernment process.** Hilda encouraged delegates to conduct discernment in a spirit of the unity we have in Christ, and with respect and thanksgiving for the gifts each of us brings to this assembly. This is the work of the church and is best described as discussion and discernment that includes feedback, as well as debate and decision. Hilda challenged delegates to let the Spirit guide our discernment.
 - ii. **Amendments.** Delegates were invited to talk to the Resolutions Committee if they were planning amendments to a resolution. It would help us to accommodate the amendments.
 - iii. **Prayer Room.** The Conrad Grebel Chapel will serve as the Assembly Prayer Room and will be available for personal or group prayer throughout the Assembly. MCEC spiritual directors will be available to pray with individuals when requested.
 - iv. **Participation and Voting.** Hilda explained that the small group discussions will take place in classrooms. There is a mix of delegates and guests in each group; all are welcome to discuss the topic in the groups and at the microphones. Our bylaws state that only those who are delegates can vote.
 - v. **Information tables and exhibits.** Hilda encouraged delegates to visit the information tables of our valued ministry partners. Thank them for the work they do to build the church. Visit the Just Food exhibit, on tour from the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery and on display at Conrad Grebel.
 - vi. **Discernment guide.** Willard noted that some delegates did not have “Becoming a Faithful Church 3” in their Discernment Guide, and

1. Motion

(Don Friesen / Emily Toews)

The delegate assembly adopts the minutes of the 11th Annual Session of Mennonite Church Canada as recorded and published in Minute Book 2010 issued by Mennonite Church Canada.

Motion carried.

asked ushers to hand out revised copies.

3. Minutes of the 2010 Assembly

a. **Minutes.** Andrew noted that the minutes of the 2010 Assembly were distributed to congregations in May.

b. **General Board Actions.** Don Friesen reviewed the actions of the GB (Report Book, pages 10-11) on behalf of the Assembly.

2. Motion

(Don Friesen / Bev Suderman Gladwell)

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

4. Nominations.

Hilda noted, with gratitude, the results of the Nominations Committee's work. Gladys Bender indicated that further nominations require five

signatures, and that they should be shared with Gladys or with Lorne Buhr. She also indicated that the number of members on each Council has been reduced to eight.

a. **GB Executive:** Don Friesen, ON, as secretary; and Gordon Peters, SK, as treasurer.

b. **Formation Council:** Earl Reimer, MB; one vacancy.

c. **Witness Council:** Pat Gerber Pauls, SK. Waldo Neufeld has withdrawn his name.

d. **Church Engagement Council:** Vincent Friesen, AB, chair; Louie Sawatsky, MB; and Dori Zerbe Cornelson, MB.

e. **Faith and Life Committee:** Rudy Baergen, MB.

Tuesday, July 5, 2010, 8:30 a.m.

5. Morning Worship and Bible Teaching

Theme: *Behold! A new heaven and a new earth* (Revelation 21:1)

Bible Teaching: Loren Johns

6. Witness Council stories.

Rudy Dirks and Tim Froese, respectively chair and executive secretary of the Witness Council, introduced the following:

a. **Native Ministry.** Edith and Neill von Gunten, newly-retired co-directors of Native Ministry, expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to serve in aboriginal communities, and shared aspects of MC Canada's engagement with those communities, with the help of Renata Klassen, moderator of MC Sask., and Henry Krause, of MC BC.

b. **Multi-Cultural Ministry.** Samson Lo, outgoing director of Multi-Cultural Ministry, asked Ge Yang, pastor of Western Hmong Mennonite Church in Maple Ridge, BC to share his cross-cultural experiences and his introduction to the Mennonite Church in Canada. Challenges for his church include passing on the faith to the first generation in Canada. Ge jokingly said that Mennonites run *before* the war, and the Hmong run *after* the war. If Mennonites are radical, Ge challenged delegates, why do they swim downstream like so many others?

c. **Congolese visit.** There are three Mennonite bodies in the Congo, together comprising the largest number of Mennonites of any national body in any area of the world. Damien Pelende, president of Communauté Évangélique des Frères Mennonites du Congo (the Mennonite Brethren Church in Congo), shared, through translator Stefan Cherry, of developments in the Congo. Speaking peace in the Congo has important implications. Mennonites were the first to translate the Bible into the local dialect, and were the first to say no to the dictators in the region and to war and civil strife. As a result some of their mission stations were destroyed. However, they continued to witness to Jesus Christ. 2012 marks the centennial of the Mennonite Church in the

Congo.

– Break –

Tuesday, July 5, 10:30 a.m.

7. Discernment — Being a Faithful Church 3

a. **Introduction.** Andrew introduced the *Being a Faithful Church 3* discernment process.

b. Worship

- i. **Introduction.** Rudy Baergen drew attention to the Apostle Paul’s letter to Philippi, specifically the reference to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13) The church by its nature is involved in spiritual discernment. This is more than hammering out a political compromise on difficult issues of our time. Our task is to discern the mind of Christ. What is the penetrating word of God for our time? This is not a focus on personal preferences or political correctness; our focus is on discerning the mind of Christ for our lives, and for our times. “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5) We need to use our minds, but to do so without the power of worship is like setting sail without any wind. We need to use our mind, heart and soul, individually and as a body. We need not be anxious. The Spirit surrounds us and enables us.
- ii. **Song:** “Open my Eyes Lord” (*Sing the Story*, #65)
- iii. **Scripture:** Romans 12 (selections)
- iv. **Prayer and Litany:** Karen Martens Zimmerly

c. The *Being a Faithful Church 3* document

- i. **Background.** Willard Metzger and Rudy Baergen led in presenting the BFC3 document circulated prior to the sessions, pointing out that it was put out by the GB, which, responding to congregations and Area Churches, discerned in 2009 that we needed a way to discern challenging issues: environmental issues; sexuality issues; etc. The GB asked Jack Suderman to put together his best thoughts. Jack, with his insight and with much consultation, put together BFC1, BFC2, and BFC3. The most recent task force to work on the document was comprised of Andrew Reesor-McDowell and Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, representing the GB; Rudy Baergen and Betty Pries, representing the Faith and Life Committee (FLC); Willard Metzger, General Secretary; and Jack Suderman, writer.
- ii. **Proposed Delegate Action** (Discernment Guide, page 7). Willard read the recommendation that would be discussed later in the discernment process.
- iii. **BFC1 and BFC2.** Rudy reviewed parts of BFC1 – foundational to the document we have today – noting that Scripture is foundational but that it can be interpreted in different ways; that we do not discern in a vacuum; and that previous documents are sufficient until there is further discernment. Willard reviewed the essential aspects of BFC2, in which peace was the test case. We were developing our discernment muscles. What are the criteria that we use to modify, change, or affirm what has been said? We can trust that God’s Spirit will guide us.
- iv. **A range of sexuality issues**, like cohabitation, same-sex relationships, extra-marital sex, pornography, etc., which have caused great pain, give us a sense of urgency to discern again the meaning of sexual fidelity. The church needs to face these challenges as part of the joyful task of being the church in Canada in the 21st century. Our discernment of these matters is designed to take place over a number of years, beginning with a discussion of criteria to help us in discernment. The GB has identified some common understandings.
- v. **In the church we look to the Holy Spirit** to be present in our discernment. Listening well

to our community is also important, as is respectful conversation and being clear about the ground rules for discussion. We must not predetermine the outcome of what the Holy Spirit wants us to discern. Discernment must be undergirded by prayer, study, worship, fasting, use of the arts, and more. We recognize the Spirit may nudge us in different directions. The church will speak again. Who, what, when, where and how will this discernment take place? Delegates are asked to approve the process.

- vi. **There are key questions** that require a common understanding to move ahead. Who has the responsibility and authority to lead the church? To set time lines? Final responsibility and authority lies with delegates. The bylaws give responsibility and authority to an elected GB and its officers. Who has the responsibility and authority to declare an acceptable consensus? Who has the responsibility and authority to speak for the church?
- vii. **The Process.** There are a variety of levels of consultation that will assist the GB in this process. We want broad participation out of which the guiding questions will emerge and be considered. Our first task is to establish the criteria. The fruit of discernment should not be injury to the body, but faithfulness. However, it is possible that not all will embrace the outcome. The democratic approach is not good enough for the Church. There is no blueprint; it will need to emerge from the process. Some parts of the process will require more time than others. We need flexibility. The process may point to other directions as we go. We need to apply our best expertise with boldness and humility. We depend on God's grace and timing, and not our efforts alone. Our efforts will be a witness to a watching world. Willard listed a group of "sins" that could arise and contrasted them with the "gifts of the Spirit" that are embedded in our identity. Will we see the process as a burden? Willard challenged delegates to experience the joy of discerning the times and living out our calling. We are boldly stepping into a risky conversation. We need to live out what we proclaim – that the unity of the church is not of our own doing, but of the Spirit whom we celebrate. We are bound together by more than our achievements or failures. We are bound together in peace through Jesus Christ's death on the cross.

d. **Prayer.** Betty Pries invited delegates into a time of centering prayer, to empty ourselves of our thoughts and feelings and our perspectives on the truth. God may or may not speak loudly, but centering prayer allows us to open ourselves to the guidance of the Spirit.

e. **Small Group Discussions.** Rudy introduced the questions to be discussed, stressing particularly the first question, which asks whether delegates are ready approve the recommendation. Andrew Reesor-McDowell encouraged groups to keep notes of their discernment.

— Lunch —

Tuesday, July 5, 2010, 3:00 p.m.

f. **Plenary Response**

- i. **Introduction.** Andrew read the motion, encouraging delegates to state their name, the name of their congregation, whether or not they are speaking in favour, and to speak briefly.
- ii. **Discussion** included the following comments and perspectives:
 - (1) A point of order: I'm curious why you're asking whether or not we're in favour. That may discourage listening. I'm concerned that we should be open. *Reply:* It's common practise, but it may not be necessary.
 - (2) We got a lot of helpful information from the GB member in the group. As a result of that we were very comfortable unanimously supporting this motion.
 - (3) We give overall affirmation of the document and the time-frame of the process,

- but have two suggestions: 1) the framework should be about covenant; we often break covenant in relationships. 2) We acknowledge many in our congregations have felt excluded on matters of sexuality, and the voices of these friends should be included in this discussion to give it integrity and wholeness.
- (4) I'm concerned about the speed going from the small group discussion to a vote. My feeling is that the vote should be put off until tomorrow at the very least.
- (5) We were mostly supportive of the resolution, but wondered why divorce and remarriage, and celibacy were left out. We too would stress covenant. *Reply:* What is in the document is what has emerged to this point.
- (6) We affirmed the direction of the proposal, and encourage a continuous loop of communication in this process, involving congregations, Area Churches, and the national church. Perhaps the Area Church could engage the subject in MC Canada's "off" years. A one-page summary would also be helpful.
- (7) Our group was concerned that, with biennial assemblies this process may get dragged out to ten years. How will it be modified in that regard? *Reply:* The idea is to keep the momentum, and we'll have to find ways to do that.
- (8) Our discussion raised so many questions, many of them to do with how we're understanding the process. We have a lot of suggestions, and those need to be reviewed before we can make a decision on the resolution.
- (9) Can the church say something together, rather than congregations individually? To be Scripture-based and Christ-centred is important.
- (10) All of the questions on the sheet are very important. Should these questions take as much energy as they will in the next five years? We also need to address other important things in the church. Can the national church provide materials to help us process it locally?
- (11) This is a complex document with many details. I very much appreciate parts of it: the church in the discerning process, Scriptural authority, etc., but some details leave me uneasy. Is it really possible to refine it? My preference is to affirm the direction, but still allow for refinement. I'm a little nervous about expecting us to find interpretive criteria to find a solution.
- (12) The invitation to dialogue is very good, but how does leadership plan to use the BFC process to deal with congregations who have already made up their mind? Can we embrace churches that have already come to a place on this issue? What does this mean in terms of our Confession of Faith?
- (13) Discernment on sexuality should not take up the majority of the missional church agenda; this issue will not help church growth among ethnic churches.
- (14) How do we respond to those who feel no need to be part of this conversation? Perhaps we should state more clearly what our end-goal is in this process? Is it a final statement? Should it not be about ongoing dialogue? Quite likely we need help talking about sexuality in general.
- (15) Considerable caution was expressed about the length of time this process will take, as well as concern that this will define MC Canada. We want to avoid making this a test of faith. Other issues, such as divorce and remarriage, may give us a clue to how we should approach this. Others in the group felt it is the Spirit calling us at this time.
- (16) We appreciate the broad scope regarding sexuality. We don't want it to focus only on homosexuality.
- (17) We should focus on developing human resources on this matter.
- (18) Our group felt we need to have this discussion. We may not want to, but we have an obligation. If we feel we need to make a final decision, we're going to force someone into a corner somewhere. We need to have this conversation reach the

place where we can say: It seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit. Timetables seem to indicate we want to control this, rather than let the Spirit lead it. We should not worry about timetables.

- (19) There may be a desire for control, but we're entering a process where we're not in control. This issue more than many is going to test our trust as to whether Christ really is the head, and whether the Spirit truly is leading us. If we can see this overall as relationships with one another – human relations, generally – then it has fantastic potential. My sense is that there is fear in our midst, but the potential for renewal of covenant among all of us is huge. This is to be joyfully entered into, so that in the end others can say: See how they love one another!
- (20) I affirm what was just said. One of the hardest things has always been the assumptions we all bring to the discussion. I hope we can enter this process, landing our boats on the beach, and then burn them. No other denomination has attempted to go where we are anticipating going. Let the Spirit lead! I'm strongly in favour.
- (21) We also have a commitment to becoming a global church. We wanted to emphasize that if we approve this, we need to encourage the leaders to help explain it to those who have not been a part of the process. Our group supported it unanimously.
- (22) Regarding authority and leadership, who does lead this? We see this document as leadership, and wonder if we have failed to empower the GB to use that word. We want to affirm that you are leading us.
- (23) I support the proposal as a good witness to a watching world. However, we can't choose what people watch. I had an experience where I was asked how the Mennonite Church feels about homosexuality. The response was that they would have thought the Mennonites would be all over it because it's an issue of peace and justice.
- (24) We affirm the language of justice and power in relationships, but we should not be limited by society's language. We look to Scripture, but Scripture also asks us to put Scripture down to engage the spirit of life that is around us.
- (25) The document refers to "Christian Scripture". I hope it's clear that Scripture includes Old and New Testaments.
- (26) I would like to promote heterosexual marriage.
- (27) Andrew noted that the purpose of this document is to give direction to the GB. Your responses will provide a general direction, and give the GB a sense of how to precede.

3. Motion

(recommended by the General Board)

We approve Being a Faithful Church 3 as a framework and plan to guide the ongoing discernment in Mennonite Church Canada on matters of sexuality. Our approval is also a commitment to encourage and support the General Board as it continues to provide the leadership needed to implement this plan, and to encourage our congregations and Area Churches to participate as fully as possible.

Motion carried.

8. Financial Report

- a. **Introduction.** Gordon Peters MC Canada Treasurer, expressed gratitude to delegates and to staff for their support and hard work in a difficult year.
- b. **Report.** Randy Wiebe, Director of Finance, noted the following:
- i. **Audited statements** were included in the Report Book. (pages 53f) In the opinion of KPMG, our auditing firm, our financial statements present fairly the financial position of MC Canada.

- 1 ii. **Assets.** Overall, our cash position decreased, by around \$40,000. Our liabilities
2 decreased by over \$116,000. Capital purchases during the year almost fully offset the
3 amortization of existing assets. This resulted in capital assets being reduced to \$100,000.
4 What this means is that our assets are older and continue to be depreciated.
- 5 iii. **Reserves.** The general funds and internally restricted fund balance is \$1,678,000, a
6 further increase of \$142,000. FPAC has long determined that 25% should be held in the
7 internally restricted general fund account. This would amount to \$1,500,000. We are not
8 there yet. These reserves help us to smooth out the ups and downs from one year to
9 another..
- 10 iv. **Ratios.** Our current ratio has improved from 4.33-to-1 to 5.49-to-1, due to the small
11 decrease in our cash position and the decrease in outstanding accounts payable. MC
12 Canada financial policies require that a current ratio of 2-to-1 or higher should be
13 maintained. We are in a good position. Due to the increase in internally restricted fund
14 balances, our debt-to-equity ratio has improved from 0.20-to-1 to 0.21-to-1 a year ago.
15 MC Canada financial policies require that debt-to-equity ratio should not be greater than
16 1.5-to-1; we are well within those limits.
- 17 v. **Operations** (Page 3 in the audited financial statements; page 58 in the Report Book.) Significant shifts
18 have occurred, due to the creation of CEC and other changes.
- 19 vi. **Total revenues** were \$5,068,000, an overall decrease of \$325,000.
- 20 (1) *Donation and bequest revenue for core programs continues to decrease*, from
21 \$3,732,000 in 2008, to \$3,574,000 in 2009, to \$3,564,000 in 2010, to \$3,370,000 in
22 2011. The overall donation trend was not good this year, and by year's end we had
23 experienced a \$193,454 decrease in donations.
- 24 (2) *Congregational giving fell by \$29,000* compared to budget
- 25 (3) *Individual and corporate donations fell by \$165,000* compared to budget.
- 26 (4) *Donation revenue for MC Canada partner programs also fell.* Several projects
27 received fewer dollars. Other self-generated income increased somewhat, allowing
28 projects to carry on.
- 29 (5) *Donation revenue for MC Canada related organizations increased* from
30 \$287,000 in 2010 to \$311,000 in 2011.
- 31 (6) *Donation revenue by source shows the steady decline* in congregational support,
32 which has decreased by over \$400,000 over the years. Taking into account inflation
33 and the downward trend in congregational support, it's clear that maintaining or
34 growing church program is impossible. Individual and corporate giving continues to
35 fluctuate the most, with a significant drop after last year's recovery.
- 36 vii. **Expenditures** were \$5,037,000, as compared with \$5,229,000 in 2010. (Pages 17-32 in the
37 audited statements; pages 72-77 in the Report Book) This includes all funds expended by MC
38 Canada, including partner programs and funds designated for related organizations. There
39 remain some significant vacancies, especially in the CEC department as well as
40 international workers that contributed to the reduction in expenditures.
- 41 (1) *Witness Council* suffered another reduction, its international work most
42 impacted. Congregational partnerships has been moved to CEC.
- 43 (2) *Formation Council* shows significant variance, due to the youth assembly, which
44 takes place every second year. The CMU grant was moved to Formation.
- 45 (3) *Engagement Council* shows an increase in expenditure as it starts up operations.
46 There are still vacancies, but the savings are offset by startup costs. This department
47 is comprised of executive office, communications, development, and the *Canadian*
48 *Mennonite*.
- 49 (4) *GB* expenses are very similar to previous years. Assembly costs were
50 significantly higher last year than the year previous.
- 51 (5) *Partnership programs* shows a drop because of multiple lines receiving less
52 support. In order for partnership programs to remain strong our core budget needs to

1 remain strong.

2 (6) *Related organizations* (a full list can be found on page 22 of the audited financial statements).

3 viii. Our financial situation was carefully managed. When contributions do not arrive,
4 adjustments need to be made. Randy expressed gratitude to the congregations and
5 individuals that make our ministry possible.
6

7 **9. Listening Committee.** The members of the committee reported the following:

- 8 a. **A spirit of unity** has been experienced so far. Worship and stories have made us feel that though
9 we come from many different places and backgrounds, the same Spirit leads us.
10
11 b. **There are also challenges to unity**, like fear. People are waiting for the church to be their place
12 as well. One of our challenges is to be a multicultural church; we need to be careful to say that
13 Mennonite is our faith perspective and that we come enculturated in different cultures.
14
15 c. **MC Canada staff are tired.** In the last several years we've made major changes in staff roles,
16 and we have asked them to pick up the slack. They are hurting and tired, and on top of that they
17 have had to organize an Assembly. Betty Loewen offered up a prayer for them.
18

19 – *Joint Adult/Youth Seminars* –
20

21 *Tuesday, July 5, 2010, 5:30 p.m.*
22

23 **10. Evening Worship** (Taizé worship)

24 Theme: *Behold! A new heaven and a new earth* (Revelation 21:1)
25

26 – *Supper* –
27

28 *Wednesday, July 6, 2011, 8:30 a.m.*
29

30 **11. Morning Worship and Bible Teaching**

31 Theme: *Behold ... the Lamb* (Revelation 21: 22-23)

32 Bible Teaching: Loren Johns
33

34 **12. Formation Stories**

- 35 a. **Strategic Plan for Leadership Development.** Karen Martens Zimmerly noted that since the
36 1980s more than 250 students and pastors have received financial support from the Company of
37 1000 for their pastoral leadership formation. Karen expressed thanks to all who have caught the
38 vision to continually form the next generation of leaders for the church. This summer, through
39 the Ministry Enquiry Program, the Company of 1000 is helping to support, financially, five
40 undergraduate students from CMU and CGUC who are exploring ministry in congregations,
41 with the support of a supervising pastor. MC Canada, with the help and support of Area
42 Churches, finds congregational placements for some of these students. Supervising pastors are
43 grateful that MC Canada is paying attention to leadership development among our young
44 people.
45
46 b. **IMPACT** (International Mennonite Pastors Coming Together). Karen reported on the B.C. Area Church
47 hosted IMPACT, an opportunity for pastors to learn from one another. This experience continues
48 to have a transforming impact on its participants.
49
50 c. **Task Force for Leadership Development.** Karen noted that the pastoral trend survey of several
51 years ago indicates many of our 365 pastors are of the baby boomer generation. Unless we are
52 intentional about calling and nurturing new leaders, the potential is for a shortage. A task force

was formed to address this concern. Karen introduced the members of the task force: April Yamasaki, MC BC; Bruce Baergen, MC Alberta; Jim Pankratz, CGUC; Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, MCEC; and Rebecca Slough, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries (AMBS). The task force will present its final report to the Formation Council in October. It will then become our guiding document.

- d. **Resource Centre.** Arlyn Friesen Epp reported on the riches available in the Resource Centre, with improved links and resources.

– Break –

Wednesday, July 6, 2011, 10:30 a.m.

13. Introductions. Andrew Reesor-McDowell introduced:

- a. Gerald Gerbrandt, the President of CMU, and his wife, Esther.
- b. Sara Wenger Shenk, the President of AMBS, who returned home yesterday.
- c. Ron Penner, the President of Columbia Bible College.
- d. Andrew also introduced members of the MC Canada General Board.

14. Finances

- a. **Budget.** Gordon Peters, MC Canada Treasurer, outlined the involved process of putting together the budget, and Randy Wiebe, Director of Finance, presented the budget (Report Book, pages 49-52), noting the following:
 - i. **The consumer index** used is 1.8%.
 - ii. **Salary increases.** The GB mandated salary increases beyond the CPI, more in line with pastoral salary guidelines and similar charitable organizations.
 - iii. **Significant budget cuts** are being implemented, due to the drop in individual and corporate giving.
 - iv. **Other income anticipated** includes \$525,388 from a variety of fees, sales, administrative fees, etc; \$91,763 from partner subsidies, mostly from Mennonite Mission Network (MMN); and \$99,043 from interest and investment income.
 - v. **Net expenditure budgets are mostly flat** compared to the previous year. The costs within each program have been reduced to a bare minimum. Any further reductions will force us to cut entire program lines. Inflationary costs along with salary revisions resulted in net annual dollar increases in the budget. Reduced support cannot sustain current programming.
 - (1) **Witness Council:** \$1,655,000 in net expenditures is budgeted, compared to last year's budget of \$1,567,000, and \$1,000,490 in actual expenditures. Witness is in the process of filling some of the international ministry vacancies. The regional breakdown of the Witness budget is \$441,000 for Africa; \$682,000 for Asia and the Middle East; \$150,000 for Europe; and \$130,000 for Latin America.
 - (2) **Formation Council:** Net expenditures budgeted are \$739,000, compared to last year's budget of \$733,000 and actual expenditures of \$708,000. Expenditures have been shaved away, to the point where further cuts will force us to cut program lines.
 - (3) **Engagement Council:** Net expenditures budgeted are \$709,000, compared to last year's budget of \$702,000 and actual expenditures of \$594,000. The major source of under-expenditure is due to staff vacancies. The communications budget remains inflated in light of the start-up costs of this Council.
 - (4) **GB:** Net expenditures budgeted are \$634,000, compared to last year's budget of \$594,000 and actual expenditures of \$601,000. The increase in this area is largely due to the GB administration line.
 - (5) **Partner programs** are generally revenue neutral. It's a dynamic part of the

budget, but it fluctuates from year to year, and the funds are largely flow-through funds.

- vi. **A challenge.** This year's budget is a challenge to increase donations. To balance the budget includes a planned increase of \$150,000 in donations as well as a transfer \$166,793 from reserves. MC Canada's financial policies do not permit deficit budgeting. We are confident that our policies and procedures serve us well.
- vii. **Donations to the end of May** are \$2,000 ahead of budget, and \$56,000 ahead of last year's actual.

4. Motion

(Gordon Peters / Waldo Neufeld)

The delegate assembly approves the budget as presented for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2012.

Motion carried.

b. Auditors

15. Staffing and Structural Changes

- a. **Staff changes.** Willard reported the changes, referring to the update sheet included in delegates' Assembly packets, and expressed his gratitude for prayer support during a very stressful time. Eight staff persons will no longer be with us. There are also new roles for many staff members, and some roles remain to be filled. Willard commended the staff for the exemplary way they worked during the implementation of these changes.
- b. **Priorities.** Willard stated that MC Canada remains committed to our three priorities – to form a people of God, to become a global church, and to grow leaders for the church – and that this fall staff will determine more specifically how this will be implemented. There will be grant reductions to ministry partners. These are challenging times for all Canadian denominations. How do we reconfigure ourselves for a new church paradigm? MC Canada is encouraged by the generous response to recent appeals; we are heading for a strong future, although its shape is unknown.

5. Motion

(Gordon Peters / Janet Thiessen)

The delegate assembly appoints KPMG as auditor for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2012.

Motion carried.

- 16. **Nominations.** Lorne Buhr updated the slate of nominees, adding the names of Justina Heese, MC MB, and Gladys Bender, MCEC, for renewal of their service on the Nominations Committee.

17. Related Organizations and Guests

- a. **Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS).** Nick Hamm, chair of MDS, expressed his gratitude for MC Canada's support. He noted the epic proportions of disasters this past year – tornadoes, forest fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, flood – but noted that these difficult experiences also allow us to witness to Christ. Nick shared a story of his gratifying involvement in a restoration project in Mississippi. He noted current projects in various locations from Newfoundland to British Columbia.
- b. **Conference of Mennonites in Mexico (CMM).** Sonia Bojórquez de Dyck, the official CMM representative this year, brought greetings and shared aspects of CMM's ministry. For example, 600 students are involved in their school program. There is growing interest in the high school; 30% of their students continue on to post-secondary education. Their goal is to prepare young people to serve God in a country desperately looking for peace. We are living in difficult times, but we are convinced, she said, that God intends us to be a people of peace.
- c. **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC).** Susan Johnson, ELCIC's National Bishop,

6. Motion

(Lorne Buhr / Barry Lesser)

To accept the Nominations slate presented.

Motion carried.

brought greetings. ELCIC has 142,000 members. She referred to the apology in Stuttgart, Germany last year and the developing relationship between our two churches in Canada. We've produced a study guide together. She encouraged congregations to use it, together with Lutheran congregations. God is bringing us into a new period in relationship, to find new ways of partnering. The ELCIC Convention will take place in Saskatoon, the theme of which is "Covenant People in Mission for Others."

– Lunch –

– Tours –

– Supper in Waterloo Park –

Wednesday, July 6, 2011, 6:30 p.m.

18. Joint Youth/Adult Worship (Waterloo Park band shell)

Keynote Speaker: Willard Metzger

Prayer Walk

Thursday, July 7, 2011, 8:30 a.m.

19. Morning Worship and Bible Teaching

Theme: *Behold ... the Light!* (Revelation 21:23-24)

Bible Teaching: Loren Johns

20. Greetings. Willard Metzger read greetings from the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, from Paul Loewen, the moderator, and Willy Reimer, the new director.

21. Church Engagement Stories

- a. **Norm Dyck.** Willard expressed appreciation for Norm's service to this new area of church ministry.
- b. **Changes.** As of August 1, Vic Thiessen will transition from the Chief Operating Officer (COO) into a joint role of executive secretary of CEC, and Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). Changes include Randy Wiebe, Director of Finance, assuming some of Vic's former operations responsibilities, and Dave Bergen assuming some of Vic's former Assembly planning responsibilities.
- c. **Introduction of Daniel Horne.** Willard introduced Daniel as the new director of Partnership Development. Daniel, who has served with CMU, shared some of his hopes and aspirations in connecting with congregations.
- d. **New materials and appeals.** Willard introduced a new publication, the *Generosity Report*. Many positive comments have already been received about it. A spring appeal letter was sent out; almost \$60,000 was sent in response, double the best response we have ever enjoyed. A video greeting was produced for those unable to attend the Assembly.
- e. **Live for Peace initiative.** This four-year initiative continues to attract the interest of congregations and Area Churches, strengthening our testimony for peace.

22. Mennonite Women Canada (Report Book, page 37). Erna Neufeldt, president, introduced the executive committee, the next president – Liz Koop – as well as the theme for their annual meeting:

1 “Celebrating Connections”. She also highlighted their web site, blog, *Pennies and Prayers*
2 Inheritance Fund, Bible study guide, and new brochure.

3
4 – Break –

5
6 **Thursday, July 7, 2011, 10:00 a.m.**

7
8 **23. Witness Stories**

- 9 a. **Financial concern.** Rudy Dirks shared the difficulty in making cuts to the Witness budget. Of the
10 six core mandates given to Witness when MC Canada was formed only two are funded and
11 staffed.
- 12
13 b. **Staff changes.** Rudy noted the following: Neill and Edith von Gunten are retiring; Samson Lo’s
14 position was cut, leaving multicultural work homeless at the moment; Val Pankratz is leaving;
15 and Janet Plenert resigned. Rudy asked for prayers for all of these people and encouraged
16 delegates to honour the staff leaving, as well as those still with us. Rudy also welcomed Tim
17 Froese to his new leadership role.
- 18
19 c. **Israel-Palestine.** Hinke Loewen-Rudgers, returning from a two year assignment in Israel-
20 Palestine, said that she was sent there to discern the best direction for MC Canada’s work there,
21 and to study Arabic. Witness has decided to work there with congregational partnerships. Hinke
22 returned to Canada because of visa issues; in the meantime she is developing resources and
23 visiting congregations. Challenges include political tension, religious persecution, and regional
24 instability. MC Canada wishes to offer a vision of hope to this region.
- 25
26 d. **Columbia** is experiencing many challenges. A Mennonite seminary began in Bogotá in 1989.
27 Pastoral challenges are considerable. MC Canada’s help with the seminary is both important
28 and necessary; it helps to prepare leaders in the Colombian communities. Columbia and Canada
29 can learn from each other, sharing our gifts at the same table.
- 30
31 e. **Service opportunities.** Ben Wiebe, recently returned from two months in India, worked with
32 students returning from internships. The Wiebes have been there ten times; there is a great
33 need, and a great opportunity to serve. He told of a great event that gathered pastors from
34 various places. All of these opportunities help to strengthen our relationship with the Church
35 there.
- 36
37 f. **Philippines.** Gordon Janzen reported on Dan and Joji Pantoja’s work in the Philippines. MC
38 Canada’s investment helps strengthen the witness of the peace church there. The Integrated
39 Mennonite Churches of the Philippines (IMC) consists of about twenty congregations with a
40 shared commitment to being an Anabaptist peace church in that country. Intern Matt Tiessen,
41 and Darnell and Christina Barkman, are helping the Pantojas’ ministry.
- 42
43 g. **Other Witness workers** mentioned: Andrew and Karen Suderman, in South Africa; and Jeff and
44 Tani Warkentin, in Burkina Faso. Bruce Wiebe, a Leamington pastor, reported on
45 congregational support of Witness workers. Mission is costly, but as a Cuban church leader
46 said: What has been the cost of the Anabaptist voice being absent?

47
48 – Lunch –

49
50
51 **Thursday, July 7, 2011, 1:30 p.m.**
52

24. Resolutions Committee

a. **Resolutions process.** Henry Krause reviewed the process for dealing with resolutions.

b. Resolution 1: Biennial Assemblies

- i. **An amendment** to the resolution – that biennial Assemblies begin after the 2012 session – was received. This would put us on an alternating schedule with MC USA; allow youth to attend both youth assemblies; sustain current momentum in the “Being a Faithful Church” process for one more year; and put us on an alternate year with the next MWC.
- ii. **Discussion of the Amendment**
 - (1) I support the amendment, given resource realities, and given that we have annual Area Church meetings.
 - (2) I am in favour of the motion, but is there another way we can maintain connections? This schedule/amendment would allow us to do so.
 - (3) I support the amendment. The resolution should include the amendment, to facilitate our transition to biennial Assemblies. Nomination issues have to be dealt with.
 - (4) I am not enthused by this. It means that only once in ten years our province will have the fortune of hosting an Assembly. New people coming into the fold from other traditions, backgrounds, and countries need Assemblies. This means less opportunity to interact. When newcomers join they will become too narrow in their perspective without the benefit of a sense of the larger church. We need to give people the benefit of participation at least once in five years.
 - (5) We have concerns, from a Formation Council perspective: What will this do to youth assembly? If moving to 2012, we could potentially wait three years until a youth assembly. Our other concern about 2012 is that we cut staff that helps to plan assembly, and we’re wondering about the impact on reduced staff.
- iii. **Discussion of the motion as amended**
 - (1) The GB, in consequent years, can still review whether we continue with biennial assemblies. We should review it every year.
 - (2) Our congregation made a novel suggestion, that in the off-years there might be a pared-down event in Winnipeg, where we have staff and facilities.
 - (3) In the off-years we should use media, and gather as clusters in our Area Churches.
 - (4) We should block off extra time at the Area Church Assemblies to continue MC Canada conversations.

7. Motion to amend

(Ross Penner / Ryan Siemens)

Proposed by-law (proposed amendment):

9 (1) Regular delegate assemblies shall be held:

(a) biennially, beginning normally during the first two weeks of July

(b) This by-law to come into effect following the 2012 Assembly

Motion carried.

- (5) Meeting every second year would distance us even further in an age of electronic media. It's important to look each other in the eye and speak face to face. Could we offload some of the work the staff has to do to prepare for assembly? *Reply:* Most of the additional cost goes to hiring specific staff for Assembly preparation.
- (6) Modern technology has made the world smaller, and can be used. Cost-cutting makes sense. We're not cut off from each other just because we're not meeting. Even Paul had to write letters because he could not meet face to face.
- (7) I understand, as a GB member, the reason to move to biennial Assemblies, but I and the FLC lament the lack of an opportunity to meet every year. We wanted to have a study conference, but this motion frustrates that. However, we want to look at other possibilities to meet in those off-years. We have discerned that it's important to spend time studying together. FLC is prepared to work out ways of continuing to keep working at that in some way.
- (8) I was not thinking of hiring staff, but using volunteers.
- (9) It costs a lot to the environment to meet every year. This may also be way of caring for creation.
- (10) This creates problems for youth assemblies. Give us some counsel about how to approach this, given this motion. Should Formation Council plan for two back-to-back youth assemblies?
- (11) Youth assemblies are important, but every two or three years is okay. There are lots of ways for youth to be enriched in their faith. I worked for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and found we had a drop in service workers during Assembly years.
- (12) There is a third possibility, working with MC USA, to see if the MC USA youth assembly could be for us as well – a binational assembly. Three years wait is too long if high school students are to get at least one chance to have this experience.

8. Motion

(recommended by the General Board)

Whereas the budget reductions being implemented in 2011 limit the amount of staff time available for assembly planning, making it impossible to continue with annual assemblies unless additional staff are hired, the following by-law change is recommended:

Current by-law on annual assemblies:

Delegate Assemblies

9 (1) Regular delegate assemblies shall be held:

(a) annually, beginning normally during the first two weeks of July

Proposed by-law:

Delegate Assemblies

9 (1) Regular delegate assemblies shall be held:

(a) biennially, beginning normally during the first two weeks of July

(b) This by-law to come into effect following the 2012 Assembly

Motion carried.

1
2
3 c. **Resolution 2: Quorum for**
4 **Delegate Assemblies**

5 i. **Discussion**

- 6 (1) Why not a
7 fraction instead of a
8 fixed number?
9 *Reply:* The work that
10 was done only
11 considered the new
12 quorum in terms of
13 consistency with the
14 existing bylaws.

15 d. **Resolution 3: Peace in the**

16 **Middle East.** Rick Cober
17 Bauman, executive director of
18 MCC Ontario, spoke of his visit
19 to the Middle East and
20 encouraged MC Canada to work
21 with MCC to provide
22 congregational resources in this
23 regard.

24 i. **Discussion** included the following comments:

- 25
26 (1) I returned from the region recently. Many
27 peace groups are working there but peace has
28 avoided the region for decades. I would support
29 the involvement of the churches in peace
30 efforts there and encourage partnership with
31 MCC in doing so. I strongly support the
32 resolution.
33 (2) I like the motion, but would like it to refer
34 to a *Christ-like* response rather than a *common*
35 response (accepted as a friendly amendment).
36 (3) I served in Nazareth for nine years, and
37 heard many voices about Israel/Palestine; they
38 very much welcome a Mennonite peace
39 perspective.
40

41 – Break –
42
43

44 **Thursday, July 7, 2011, 2:30 p.m.**
45

46 e. **Resolution 4: The Harmony Motion.** Henry Krause read the motion, e-mailed to congregations.

- 47 i. **Introduction.** Ben Born introduced the resolution, which comes out of the Harmony
48 group, which meets monthly to share stories of pain. Nearly 300 people have embraced
49 the resolution. We want this motion to do several things: to acknowledge the commitment
50 to loving dialogue in the 1986 Saskatoon resolution; to acknowledge the pain of non-
51 heterosexual persons in our midst; and to encourage conversation. We affirm the BFC
52 process, and we hope conversations about homosexuality will occur quickly. I see where

9. Motion

(recommended by the General Board)

Whereas there has been increasing anxiety about achieving quorums at recent assemblies and whereas other denominations (including Mennonite denominations) require at most one-third of eligible voting delegates for a quorum (with no impact on attendance), the following by-law change is recommended:

Current by-law on quorums:

Voting at Delegate Assemblies

11 (1) The quorum for a delegate assembly shall be one half the total number eligible voting delegates from the area churches plus 200 voting delegates from constituent congregations.

Proposed by-law:

Voting at Delegate Assemblies

11 (1) The quorum for a delegate assembly shall be 20 eligible voting delegates from the area churches plus 150 voting delegates from constituent congregations.

Motion carried.

10. Motion

(Leon Kehl / Rick Cober Bauman)

Peace in the Middle East

Be it resolved that Mennonite Church Canada work with Mennonite Central Committee to provide congregations with resources to help churches and individuals discern and seek Christlike responses to the ongoing lack of peace in Palestine/Israel.

Motion carried.

1 this motion could cause confusion and anxiety; it need not come to a vote, but it's
2 important that the issue be raised. This resolution is for the future, for the young people
3 who have been worshipping nearby. It's also for LGBTQ people who are marginalised
4 and may resort to taking their own lives. We need to listen to the stories of pain, to those
5 who struggle with same-sex attraction. How do we respond? It's a difficult conversation.
6 It's difficult to hear the stories of pain. The BFC concept is so important. We strongly
7 encourage people to wrestle with the question of today, and we refer this motion to the
8 responsibility of MC Canada.

11. Motion

(Ben Borne / Egon Enns)

Human Sexuality from the Harmony Group

Whereas nearly identical Resolutions on Human Sexuality were adopted by the predecessor conferences to Mennonite Church Canada in 1986 and 1987 (for convenience hereafter collectively referred to as "the Saskatoon Resolution");

And whereas the Saskatoon Resolution addresses a number of important issues relating to sexuality, and calls us to remain "...in loving dialogue with each other in the body of Christ", but it has seldom been referenced for any topic other than homosexuality;

And whereas non-heterosexual people in our congregations, whether in a same-sex relationship or not, have felt excluded and marginalized by all levels of MC Canada;

And whereas the way the Saskatoon Resolution has been applied, has led to a deep struggle with unspoken pain, resulting in silence for individuals, their families and church communities, and it has led to schisms, withdrawals and disciplinary action for individuals, for their families, and for congregations within MC Canada;

And whereas the intent of the Saskatoon Resolution never was to exclude from the fellowship of Christ's table, nor the discipleship of the Church, any person who confesses Jesus as Lord in the context of an Anabaptist perspective, but rather to articulate the then-current understanding of MC Canada that certain kinds of sexual activity were to be regarded as sinful;

And whereas there is now renewed questioning about that understanding, especially in the context of loving, Christ-centred, monogamous, same-sex relationships;

And whereas the church is a body formed by those who "have sinned and come short of the glory of God", and there is no mandate for the Church to exclude from its fellowship, those whom Jesus invites to His table;

Now therefore be it resolved:

That MC Canada acknowledge that there are non-heterosexual individuals who are struggling within its congregations, whether or not those individuals have publicly acknowledged their orientation, and whether or not they are in a relationship with another person;

That MC Canada further acknowledge that all Christians have a legitimate place in God's Kingdom generally, and in the Church specifically;

That MC Canada urge its area churches and congregations to take seriously the call to continue in loving dialogue, and to fully embrace by inviting and welcoming into their midst, all persons including non-heterosexual members, adherents and neighbours; and

That MC Canada be encouraged to expedite the present "Being a Faithful Church" process, especially as regards to education and discernment on matters of sexuality.

- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12 ii. *Motion to Refer*
- 13 iii. *Discussion of the Motion to Refer*
- 14 (1) The motion to refer came out of

12. Motion

(Ben Born / Rudy Dirks)

To refer the Harmony motion to the General Board.

Motion carried.

- 1 conversations on the GB, and with Ben and others. Our concern was that the
2 resolution would have to come to a vote, and that seemed premature and harmful.
3 We appreciate that the motion can be referred to the GB and the BFC process.
- 4 (2) I thank Ben for his sharing. I was inclined to go along with his motion, but my
5 congregation asked me to turn it down. I support the motion to refer.
- 6
- 7 (3) I appreciate this being put into the BFC discernment context. Too often we have
8 only focussed on homosexuality, instead of looking at sexuality in general.
- 9 (4) Thank you, Ben. I really appreciate the care that has been taken in talking to a lot
10 of people and paying attention to how people feel, and that both nervousness and a
11 sense of urgency were taken seriously. I strongly support the motion to refer. I want
12 the GB to take it seriously and to care for people in the body of Christ.
- 13 (5) I thank Ben and the Harmony group for bringing forth the motion, as well as the
14 motion to refer. Mostly we have dealt with sexuality in silence. This empowered me
15 to say that this is an important conversation. You have shown the spirit of Christ in
16 being willing to refer it to the GB.
- 17 (6) Sex is everywhere. We wouldn't be here without it, so we should be thankful for
18 it. The criticism of the church is that we don't talk about sexuality. I appreciate Ben
19 coming up and making himself vulnerable; it's an example for us on how to do that.
20 I'm glad that the GB will take this to help us move forward.
- 21 (7) I'm in favour of the motion, with the proviso we speak to this in the context of
22 covenant.
- 23 (8) Two short questions: How many years must a people exist before they're allowed
24 to be free? How many years can we pretend that we cannot see?
- 25 (9) I have some qualms about referring. I'm afraid it may get buried. I would prefer
26 to have respectful discussion so that we can model what we're asking for in the
27 earlier action we took. We're not doing as well as we think. Consequently, I will
28 vote against referral.
- 29 (10) I will go along with referral because there is a BFC process. The church needs to
30 be a place where people can struggle and ask questions. We need a space for people
31 who struggle with sexuality. Is this resolution one we can't handle? It seems like
32 we're taking it away. I regret we cannot engage in loving dialogue.
- 33 (11) What does referral mean? *Reply:* It means the GB will report back annually on
34 how it is dealing with the content of the resolution. It will look at how to incorporate
35 it into the BFC process. The GB does not see this as taking it off the table or as
36 stopping dialogue.
- 37 (12) Our church gave us permission to vote for the resolution, but I will vote for the
38 referral. We had small miracles at our church: A same-sex couple has been attending
39 our church. Another non-heterosexual preached a sermon on salvation.
- 40 (13) *The parliamentarian suggested that we respectfully listen to comments and*
41 *refrain from clapping, booing, etc.*
- 42 (14) I brought this motion to our council, and they did not support it. I can't either.
43 Dialogue over the next several years could be constructive. I hope it is. As a person
44 in support of our current Confession of Faith, patronizing statements about those in
45 favour of our current confession doesn't encourage dialogue. I'm hoping that will
46 change.
- 47 (15) I strongly support discussing issues of sexuality in our families and churches.
48 Our congregation struggled with it. We need to think hard on how we start this
49 discussion. How do we help ourselves live up to our statements? To state the truth
50 that we stand on? We need strong leadership in national and Area Churches in this
51 regard.
- 52 (16) I've been amazed how our viewpoints can change. I want to offer a testimony. I

- grew up in a Somerfeld church, where my mother had to petition to use an overhead projector. I've changed my view of a lot of things over time. I have learned to see that I must examine the structures that keep me from loving as I should.
- (17) I express my appreciation for the Harmony group to come forward with their concerns. A lot of pictures went through my mind about individuals and families who were excluded from church fellowship, for whatever reason, and have become bitter and failed to reenter the church door. My appeal, simply, is that God's grace is much bigger than imagined, and we need to be inclusive of everyone.
- (18) I look forward to this conversation. We have not followed the 1986 resolution faithfully. I also look forward because theologically, we, as a church, are in a different place than we were in 1986. The resolution then was not framed missionally. We developed a confession of faith, the beginning of thinking missionally – and sexuality falls under that overarching umbrella. Since then, too, we have developed a vision statement. Talking of the church in mission solves a lot of problems for us, and now, what does human sexuality look like through the missional lens? I would have voted against the resolution as it was framed under the old paradigm.
- (19) I had a desire to support the resolution in spirit, but someone pointed out that some of the language predetermines the outcome of the BFC process. Our vote was not against the spirit of inclusion. I also encourage the GB to resist predetermining the outcome.
- (20) I am humbled by the graciousness of referring this motion and by the time given to us by the people who have been marginalised by the church. I encourage us to carry this spirit back to our congregations. We all need to work diligently in our local congregations to move this dialogue forward.
- (21) As a pastor I have taken the Saskatoon thing seriously. The Church's response has to be open ears. While I disagree with this motion, it's a reminder to us that we haven't been following the Saskatoon resolution very well. Try talking to some of the individuals and families struggling with this. I interpreted the Saskatoon resolution to extend grace. We have not been extending grace.
- (22) We should look at this as a human rights issue. Many young people see it this way and have been driven away from the church because of this issue. Did Jesus not eat with tax collectors and sinners? We are a church with a history of working for peace and justice.
- (23) I commend the GB to begin to lead this discussion on sexuality. Our commitment to look at the whole spectrum of issues is a daunting task. My prayers will be with you. Our language can mean different things. How do we define sin? What does transformation look like? What does it mean not to be conformed to the world? Take us back to square one to clarify the language.
- (24) Regarding human rights, our values were established before the foundation of the earth. I have seen many people who have been set free by the power of God. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Twenty years ago I attended a conference of people who have been freed from various sexual problems. Jesus came to set the captives free.
- (25) I am grateful for the leadership the GB has provided, and grateful to Ben for his courage. We need all of our prophets. We need to lead well and acknowledge that not all will be happy. I will pray for wisdom for you. Lead by the grace of God.
- (26) We can learn from people with different perspectives than ours. In our congregation we did not end up agreeing, but we continued to love. I learned I can change my deeply emotional response to others. Let's put aside the fear that we will separate. We can learn to love each other.
- (27) I echo that. God is not anxious about this issue. It's an important issue because

it's important to a lot of people, but also, it shouldn't be blown out of proportion. There's elasticity within the Confession of Faith; for example, the different interpretations of the creation story. People read Scripture different from one another, but we call each other brothers and sisters no matter how we read Scripture.

(28) Andrew thanked everyone for their responses. Willard said, "This has been a holy time," and invited Ben to pray for our church. Ben prayed.

iv. Song: "Gentle Shepherd, Come and Lead us," led by Ben Pauls.

25. Congregational Transitions

a. **David Martin, MCEC**, reported the following:

- i. **Église évangélique Mennonite de Rawdon** (Rawdon Mennonite Church) closed as of June 30, 2011. The Rawdon church began in 1980, and built a building in 1991. We celebrate their 31 years of faithful ministry. Mel and Eileen Schmidt were founding members of the congregation.
- ii. **New congregations.** David reported that on April 29, 2011 MCEC welcomed two new emerging congregations, the Refugio de Paz / Refuge de paix / Refuge of Peace Iglesia Menonita in Quebec and the Freedom Gospel Ethiopian Church in Toronto. He invited prayers for these congregations.
- iii. **The Gathering.** MCEC also welcomed The Gathering, a church plant in Kitchener-Waterloo under the leadership of Jim Lepp Thiessen. Jim reported: "I didn't feel I had the right DNA to be a church planter. We don't put Menno at the centre of congregational life; Menno was a passionate follower of Jesus Christ. The minute we put Menno at the centre we put culture at the centre. Jesus didn't die for a culture." Jim told a story of a transformed individual, and showed a video, "Year in Review," of the church's activities. He thanked Brian Bauman, MCEC, for supporting the church plant. Willard Metzger presented Jim with a plaque and welcomed the congregation into membership.

26. Listening Committee

- a. There are fewer people moving about the assembly puzzled over space and movement issues.
- b. Appreciation has been expressed for the spiritual focus of this Assembly.
- c. The joint service with the youth and the prayer walk last night were very meaningful. We are an affirming group.
- d. We have been bathed in a spirit of faith. Worship services have been very meaningful. Silence was incorporated, and Taizé services have helped us to invite the Spirit to be active in our midst.
- e. Elsie Rempel, coordinating the Children's program, said she heard from cleaning personnel how different our children and youth were, and how they hoped they'd be back.
- f. There is a sense of lament about needing to switch to biennial assemblies.
- g. The discussion around the Harmony resolution was very respectful. There is gratitude for naming pain, and appreciation for concluding with prayer and song. It was a fitting close to a challenging time together.
- h. The tours went very well.
- i. The challenge for us is how to bring the same spirit present here back to our congregations?

– Joint Adult/Youth Seminars –

Thursday, July 5, 2010, 5:30 p.m.

27. Evening Worship (Taizé worship)

Theme: *Behold ... the Mystery and the Glory!*

– Supper –

Friday, July 8, 2011, 8:30 a.m.

28. Morning Worship and Bible Teaching

Theme: *Behold ... the gates are open!* (Revelation 21:25)

Bible Teaching led by Loren Johns

29. Acknowledgement of Leaders: John Neufeld and Ralph Lebold

Andrew Reesor-McDowell acknowledged John Neufeld, preacher, teacher, and former president of CMBC, who continues to make a significant contribution to the Church. Andrew thanked him for his many years of service. He also acknowledged Ralph Lebold, church leader, former president of Conrad Grebel University College, conference moderator; etc., for his fine contribution to the Church.

Friday, July 8, 2011, 9:30 a.m.

30. Open Microphone

a. Responses:

i. Length of Assembly; Youth Assembly

(1) Could we shorten the assembly next time?

(2) I agree. Younger folk can't see their way clear to taking a week off work, or a week of holidays. I suggest a Friday-to-Sunday event.

(3) I want to speak in favour of the Assembly length the way it is. We saw this as a family vacation. Secondly, I want to speak in favour of having a youth assembly next year.

(4) I speak in support of a youth assembly next year. Many families plan their holiday time as a family, particularly as our children become young adults. Three years is too long to wait for another youth assembly.

ii. Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (TUTC) is a centre for doctoral students studying to become leaders in our church. Jim Reimer was very crucial to the centre, representing us as a church. Jim died this year, a great loss for us, and we don't have anyone who has been able to take his place. We have a great deal of concern for elementary, secondary, and college level education. Could we put some resources into the graduate level? It's important to keep their connection to the church at that stage. We need someone to carry that vision forward.

iii. Pastoral leadership development

(1) I have a question regarding the strategic plan for pastoral leadership development. Who accepts the responsibility for this, and where do we go from here? How will this be followed up? *Reply:* It will be the responsibility of MC Canada to ensure that this moves forward, in gathering the partners together. Some things are still fuzzy, but this was an unusual year and it hasn't received the focus it should have received.

(2) I want to follow up on the strategic plan for pastoral leadership development. I want to note the amazing opportunities offered by our camps for leadership development. I realize camps fall under Area Churches, but how can MC Canada follow up? How can we capture those skills? I don't want it to be a lost opportunity.

iv. Multicultural ministries. I'm concerned that MC Canada decided not to find a replacement for multi-cultural ministries. Who will work with us now? Who will the ethnic churches contact? And how will MC Canada contact us? You try to put us in one

- family, but you eliminate the other colour of people who work with you. It's not clear how we will work together from now on. *Reply:* That has yet to be determined. That's one of the items to which we want to pay close attention in the fall. We want to be in further dialogue with Area Churches to look at how we can work at this collaboratively. The concern will not be ignored. It's still vital to the future of MC Canada.
- v. ***First Nations.*** There was a resolution at the last assembly, acknowledging complicity in the First Nations residential school experience and expressing concern about that. *Reply:* We followed through on the motion that was rescinded. We contacted a number of our churches, went to the archives and researched, and put it in a booklet which we have in our office. There were some workers from the Mennonite Church that worked in residential schools, but we did not feel a need to pull out names. MC Canada was not in any way involved in the schools.
- vi. ***Overextending staff.*** Sometimes in my sermons I try to cover too much, and then everything is said but little is heard. With reduced staff, I am concerned that too much will be attempted and nothing accomplished, and our workers will be burned out. *Reply:* That's also my concern. One of our first tasks in the fall is to identify the areas that will no longer be served, out of concern for our staff.
- vii. ***Homosexuality and human rights.*** I want to respond to the idea that homosexuality is a human rights and peace and justice issue. I tend to agree with that. How do we combine love and grace and truth and righteousness in tandem? Historically, and unfortunately, the church has gone too far to the side of truth and righteousness and forgotten to be gentle, compassionate, and gracious. As I examine this topic from the human rights perspective, I'm also compelled to weigh that against the freedom of religion and religious expression. These are sometimes positioned as opposites. I encourage the GB to combine these things.
- viii. ***Recognizing Anne Garber Kompaore.*** Yesterday MC Canada Witness acknowledged a number of people who have served with Witness over the years. I was waiting for acknowledgement of Anne Garber Kompaore, Bible translator in Burkina Faso, who served Witness for over 25 years. This spring she terminated her service with Witness, and I would like us to acknowledge her, with gratitude to God for her gifts and service.
- ix. ***Concerns about the budget***
- (1) Wednesday morning this assembly was asked to vote on the MC Canada budget. There was absolutely no debate. It was passed, and away we went. Now we are spending time on issues that have budgetary implications. I'm wondering about the sequencing; perhaps the acceptance of the budget would better come at the end of our sessions after the sharing of concerns, when the implications can be ascertained.
 - (2) There are larger questions at work. The trends have been in place for a while. Are we going to have to ask questions again in five years? Exciting things are happening; the work of the church at many levels is alive and well, but what does that mean if we, as congregations, continue to choose to send less money to the larger Church. How do we continue to do mission work? I didn't hear a lot of response to the difficult decisions you had to make. There are peoples' lives are at stake. Families are affected when cuts are made. I'm optimistic about the Church, and yet I'm pessimistic about direction. Funds are difficult to come by. I'm extending my sincere compassion, lamenting what this means for ourselves. Do we need a different vision? Can we commit ourselves to do some things together that we cannot do ourselves; e.g., leadership development? Are we competing with our own institutions, who all have development people at work? It feels good to be together and have a spiritual focus, but have we really grappled with the situation that led to the cuts? It's easy for us as delegates to say, "Rah, Rah, MC Canada is doing God's work," and yet we go back, and congregationally we make decisions that don't reflect that financially.

- (3) This is the time for us to give. I think MC Canada does a lot of wonderful things, but a lot of wonderful things have been cut. I want to bring the issue to my congregation so that we can work together.
- x. **Seniors.** Many seniors' social life revolves around going to funerals of friends. How do we address the specific needs that all seniors face? All seniors have burdens and fears they've carried for decades, and are hesitant to voice. How can we help? Let's not forget the seniors.
- xi. **Concern about Process.** I have a concern about process. We get an amendment to a motion that has been brought forward. We have lots of time to think about the motion, but we have to make a very quick decision about the amendment. Sometimes the amendment changes the original motion. I wish sober, second thought could be given. If we could postpone a decision – over a break, or a day – when an amendment is made, then we would have an opportunity to think about the ramifications.
- xii. **Gratitude**
- (1) I would like to thank everyone who organized this event. Jesus hated sin, but he opened his arms to embrace all sinners, including me.
- (2) This is my second assembly. I appreciate the way people engaged me; I never felt I couldn't say or ask something here. It's encouraging for young people. I thank everyone for that. It reflects the posture of charity, of Christlike love.
- (3) I appreciate the fact that we have listening committees. We are also each a listening committee of one. In the 60s we took a turn, and we're now bearing the fruit of that with some of the things we're seeing with the Harmony group and the human rights discussion. That's not a negative comment. Along the way, however, we have allowed some things to drop away, or to atrophy. I'm hopeful we can also embrace evangelism.
- xiii. **Secularization.** I've noticed a growing secularization when it comes to social justice issues. I want to be sure that we remember that when we go out and do good deeds it's not because we're humanitarians. We need to remember why we do what we do. We do social justice because we are the Church.

31. Formation Stories

- a. **Resources.** Lisa Carr Pries and Dave Bergen introduced a video clip, "What Qualities Make a Good Pastor?" Appropriate resources for the local church can help develop good pastors. With MC USA we observe ten special days; these include World Communion Sunday; Stewardship Sunday; Mennonite World Fellowship Sunday; etc. Resources from congregations are very welcome and helpful to other congregations. We also have a joint Mennonite-Lutheran study resource. One exciting new resource written by Palmer Becker is entitled, "What is an Anabaptist Christian?" Lisa told a moving story of an artist touched by an exhibit in the Heritage Centre.
- b. **Young adults.** MC Canada and MC USA have been holding an annual bi-national young adult retreat. Dave reported on a think tank focussed on engaging young adults in the Church.
- c. **Painful cuts.** Miriam Tshimanga, our assistant in the Resource Centre, will have her work time reduced, as will Elsie Rempel, Director of Christian Nurture. Elsie's job title will change to Christian Formation Consultant. Anna Rehan will end her role on August 1.
- d. **MennoMedia.** Partners include Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN), now called MennoMedia, which develops curriculum.
- i. **Ron Rempel,** retiring executive director of MPN/MennoMedia, reflected on the financial *barn-raising* necessary eight years ago. Much has changed in publishing, and we've created a virtual publishing house. We called the new organization a network, rather than

- a “house”. We need a centre of discernment for creating resources for the church. Ron was thanked by Dave Bergen for his service to the Church.
- ii. **Russ Eanes**, the new executive director of MennoMedia, expressed gratitude to Ron, to his staff, which includes two Canadians. He looks forward to working with us.

e. **Conrad Grebel University College**

- i. **Henry Petkau** was honoured for his service to Conrad Grebel University College. Henry spoke of how the church embraced him and held him tight, encouraging his congregational ministry, which eventually included leadership of CGUC. The missional church depends on the educational church. It’s been a great satisfaction to see CGUC embraced by the national church, said Henry. The history of the church has to be written with reference to its schools; likewise, in its schools the future of the church is being written even now.
- ii. **Susan Schultz Huxman** was welcomed by Lisa to the leadership of CGUC. Susan acknowledged the support of the constituency and spoke of her Canadian roots. She was drawn by Grebel’s mission to nurture faith, to seek wisdom, and to pursue peace and justice. She was also taken with the job description: to model scholarly excellence, and community service to the church and the wider society. Susan acknowledged Henry Petkau’s past leadership, and also noted new professors joining the Grebel faculty. The Peace and Conflict Studies program is booming, and approval is being sought for a master’s program to begin this fall.

32. Small Group discussions on “The Heart of Mennonite Worship”. Lisa Carr Pries and Dave Bergen introduced the topic of the next small group discussion time.

– Lunch –

Friday, July 8, 2011, 3:00 p.m.

33. Plenary Responses to “The Heart of Mennonite Worship”

a. **Introduction**

- i. **Songs:** “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High,” and “Breathe on me, Breath of God”.
- ii. **Resources used over the years.** Mark Diller Harder and Dave Bergen surveyed the musical resources we have shared over many years: hymnals; song collections, etc.
- (1) The 1856 copy of the *Ausbund*, still used in the Amish community.
 - (2) The red hymnal, 1969. “Holy God, we Praise Thy Name” is the first hymn in it, with the German words included. It has the stamp of George Wiebe and Mary Oyer all over it.
 - (3) *The Mennonite Hymnary*, 1940.
 - (4) The *Gesangbuch*, with its chorales and songs of the heart.
 - (5) The 1927 *Church Hymnal*. S.F. Coffman was one of the compilers.
 - (6) Some books used shaped notes, or singing by numbers.
 - (7) The 1992 blue hymnal, its first song “What is this place where we are meeting?” A good Catholic hymn; we do a lot of borrowing.
 - (8) *Life Songs 1* (1916), and *Life Songs 2* (1938), with fun songs to sing at youth events.
 - (9) *The Youth Hymnary*, a 1956 supplement to the main hymnal, included spirituals.
 - (10) *Sing and Rejoice*, 1973, with songs like “Alabare” and “Unity”.
 - (11) The last two supplements, *Sing the Journey* (2005) and *Sing the Story* (2007).
 - (12) MWC international songbooks, with songs like “Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore,” which expanded the international flavour of our singing. The diverse songs reflected our increasing multicultural demographic.

- 1 (13) Camp songs, in duo-tangs and on overhead transparencies; with songs like
2 "Majesty".
- 3 iii. **A variety of methods**, like the memory stick, for the projector; worship bands; CCLI;
4 YouTube; the songs of Bryan Moyer Suderman, Phil Campbell-Enns and other
5 composers.
- 6 iv. **A dynamic tradition**. Our music tradition is always changing. There are songs that we let
7 go at some point. It's a rich heritage. Mark shared a personal anecdote about the songs
8 used at his wedding in 1992; the new hymnal arrived just a few days before the wedding.
9 Like a marriage that continually changes and matures over time, so too our musical
10 tradition. We're in a new age of technology. Will there be a common music in the years
11 ahead? The songs of tomorrow may be in multiple formats. We are conducting an online
12 survey to record what congregations are singing. The bi-national Worship Council is
13 considering these trends and encourages each congregation to work through the "Heart of
14 Mennonite Worship".

15

16 b. **Bi-national Worship Council**. Dave Bergen gave an overview of the Worship Council's work.
17 Dave, Mark Diller Harder, and Irma Fast Dueck are the Canadian representatives on this body.
18 The next song collection will not necessarily be a hymn book, so it's important that we have
19 this discussion. In order to make good decisions, it's helpful to discuss the nature of worship.
20 Our most recent hymn book is 19 years old; the average lifespan of hymn books is 25 years.
21 We have had the advantage of having added two supplements. It's a complex and challenging
22 task to determine what will serve the church well. We are asking: What are the Anabaptist
23 rhythms?

24

25 c. **Feedback** from the Small Group discussions included:

- 26 i. Much of the worship in our congregation is reflected in the worship at this assembly – the
27 large level of involvement, and the variety of songs.
- 28 ii. Should we be acknowledging that it's North American worship we're talking about? We
29 recognized the many different ways we worship. We wondered about the word,
30 "rhythms". Some of these rhythms occur outside the church.
- 31 iii. Worship is there to facilitate connection with God; sometimes it's a more heartfelt
32 worship, sometimes a more intellectual one. Emphasis upon community is important, as
33 is the movement from gathering to prayer, proclamation, and sending.
- 34 iv. The need for worship leading; we need to develop this skill. We want to involve many
35 lay people. Sharing time is a rhythm in our churches. People take liberties in sharing.
36 Some of our older congregations gather because they're neighbours in the same
37 community, and have to work at intentionally welcoming others.
- 38 v. We need bilingual lyrics because in many of our congregations we have bilingual
39 settings. It's no longer German and English, so we need songs that have lyrics in two or
40 more languages. "Trust and Obey" is a "heart song" for us.
- 41 vi. We had a little bit of reaction to the term, "heart song". A song may have touched my
42 heart, but what makes me uncomfortable is that the purpose of worship starts with me.
43 It's also important that a song to take me into new areas, to see God in new ways.
- 44 vii. I'm part of a congregation that can barely sing. We don't teach music anymore in the
45 public school system. Our group discussed the importance of singing. We don't want to
46 lose that, but how do we teach it, and keep it valued? For Mennonites music carries our
47 theology, but it's fading in some places.
- 48 viii. I challenge the Council to add art associated with certain songs. For my church a "heart
49 song" is "Der Friedensfurst".
- 50 ix. Dave Bergen thanked everyone for their ideas. What is next? We're interested in the very
51 things you're naming. The Worship Council meets in fall and will consider all the
52 feedback received. Pray for us as we work at this. Please go online and let us know what

you're singing.

- 34. Recognition of Anna Rehan.** Dave Bergen and Lisa Carr Pries thanked Anna, noting that the fruit of her eight-year MC Canada ministry with thousands of young people will continue. We give you our blessing and pray that God will continue to lead you (standing ovation). Anna said, "It's been a real privilege for me to do this ministry. I hope I've been an influence, but I do know that I've been blessed by the many youth and youth sponsors I've met over the years. I hope that we can hear them, and include them. They want to be the church today, and I hope we can embrace them."
- 35. Resolutions Committee.** Aldred Neufeldt expressed appreciation for:
- MCEC, our hosts.** Aldred invited all volunteers to stand, invited John Cornies and Maurice Martin to come forward, and invited delegates to show their gratitude.
 - Volunteers.** John Cornies, the coordinator, said that it was a privilege to work with the volunteers.
 - The University of Waterloo, and Conrad Grebel University College,** who were also our hosts. We were provided with ample food, and ample exercise.
 - Staff.** Vic Thiessen noted that Assemblies come together through the incredible efforts of MC Canada staff. He mentioned Lois Friesen Wiebe, the "heart of Assembly" the last two years, who works weekends and more to make sure there are no surprises. Coreena von Kampen, new in the office, will be taking over Lois' duties. Thanks to Elsie Rempel, who did great work with the children's program and seminars; the communications team – Ryan Bartel, Grant Klassen, and Lois Bergen – and many others.
 - Our leaders.** Thank you to children's and youth assembly planners. Thank you to our presenters, worship leaders, musicians, speakers, Bible study leaders, and delegates, for coming and participating in thoughtful discernment. Mostly we want to thank God for calling us and commissioning us to be the people of God.
- 36. Commissioning Ceremonies**
- Staff, appointed leaders, and elected members.** Karen Martens Zimmerly led in a commissioning litany written by Ruth Isaac Wiederkehr, recently returned from MCC work in Cambodia.
 - Tim Froese,** executive secretary of the Christian Witness Council. Willard Metzger introduced Tim, and Karen Martens Zimmerly led in the commissioning ceremony, and in prayer.
- 37. Listening Committee.** Betty Loewen and Ruth Boehm shared the following observations:
- Appreciation**
 - Prayer.** We had lots of prayer, in a variety of forms. We were challenged to listen humbly, and to pray.
 - Relaxed pace.** We can listen to each other well, and we can also laugh together. There was appreciation for the more relaxed pace of the last day or so.
 - Music.** The Assembly music received a very positive response. It was well-coordinated with the spoken parts. There was lots of joy in our singing. There was also appreciation for the art work that was shown.
 - Laments**
 - Financial concerns.** There was a feeling of lament around financial things, of what it might mean for our future, as we switch to biennial assemblies.
 - Program losses.** There was also lament over the effect on our staff, and for the programming we've lost – particularly the loss of the multi-cultural focus. How could our assemblies better reflect more our multi-cultural reality?
 - Youth** were invited to adult seminars, but it felt a little tacked-on.
 - The food** was not very good, but there was a lot.

1 c. **In the future:**

- 2 i. **More stories.** We'd like to hear more story telling.
3 ii. **A challenge.** We heard a lot of hope for the church, as it is and as it is becoming. We
4 leave with a challenge, to listen to God's Spirit, and to go in peace into an unknown
5 future.
6

7 **38. Assembly Evaluation.** Hilda Hildebrand invited delegates to fill out the evaluation forms.
8

9 **39. Next Assembly.** Dan Rempel, moderator of MC BC, read a message from Garry Janzen,
10 executive minister of MC BC, inviting us to meet in B.C. in 2012, where we will seek to continue to
11 discern being the faithful church.
12

13 **40. Adjournment.** Andrew Reesor-McDowell declared the 12th Annual Assembly of MC Canada
14 closed.
15

16 – *Joint Adult/Youth Seminars* –

17 – *Supper* –
18
19

20 **Friday, July 8, 2011, 7:00 p.m.**
21

22 **41. Closing Worship and Communion Service**

23 Theme: *Good news ... God dwells with us!*
24 Keynote speaker: Nelson Kraybill
25 Offering: Burkina Faso Project
26

it's **epic**
remembering
God's future

 **Mennonite Church Canada**
ASSEMBLY 2011 • Kitchener/Waterloo, Ontario
July 4-July 8 • Revelation 21:1-4, 22-26 and 22:1-5