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Tim Froese  
Executive Minister, Witness  
Mennonite Church Canada

## As You Go

Although there remain many unknowns in this New Year we can be quite certain that life will remain full for many of us.

Deep hopes and best laid plans are often subject to life as it happens, whether it is unexpected news, a surprise conversation, or the necessary adaptations we as Canadians need to navigate our winter weather. It is in the uncertainty of daily life that I am inspired by Jesus of Nazareth, who lived a very purposeful life but yet was beset with numerous interruptions. And although Jesus' mission could have been completed without bringing along a questionable assortment of disciples, Jesus saw fit to share both his purpose and his interruptions with his disciples. And it is often in the context of these interruptions that we see and hear Jesus clearly.

Our mission as the church is also done in the context of regular life, of interruptions, busy-ness and other plans. It is done "on the run." Jesus echoes this reality, saying "as you go" before he shared his final command to the disciples to in turn "make disciples." This is a word for each of us, not just those inclined or paid to do so. Contexts, personalities, and circumstances may change, but as I go I have found the following elements to be helpful in seeking to be a faithful witness in calling and shaping others in following after Jesus:

**Trusted Authority:** A relationship with Jesus requires both trust and an acceptance of authority. Jesus himself is aware that the authority was given to him by the Creator. In today's diverse world we are challenged to identify a common basis for authority and even more so, one that is trusted. In the past we might have relied on common culture, history, people in positions of authority, the church and/or Scripture as authoritative. Now, we need to realize that the life and words of disciples are more important than ever. As disciples, you and I are key persons in fostering trust and credibility while reflecting a trusted authority beyond us and identifying that trusted authority as God through Jesus Christ.

**Good news embodied and spoken:** When I lived in South Korea, one pastor told me that good news for the Korean people was to receive a blessing, both spoken and material. We live in a more diverse culture and so good news may be different for different people. It may

be healing, hope, acceptance, forgiveness, or authentic relationship in community. The writings of the 4 good news-ers (gospels) remind us that good news can be as much about healing and joy as it is about denying ourselves and taking up our cross. Good news ultimately leads us to Jesus and to God.

**Invitation to journey together:** What some call conversion others may refer to as the dynamic between belief, behaviour and belonging. What appears to be needed is a voluntary action that puts some things aside in order to follow authentically, involving heart, soul, mind and strength. This is not just our work, but the mystery of God's Spirit in expanding the trust, authority and good news into actions of the individual will and the beginning of a shared journey with Christ. As disciples, we, like Andrew, have an important role of introducing others, like Simon Peter, to Jesus.

**Spirit filled life:** Recognizing, strengthening, affirming and releasing the gifts of the Spirit in each follower of Jesus is an important aspect of being part of a believers' church. The trust of Jesus in calling each of us as disciples to make disciples is echoed and reinforced with the 24-7 presence and gifting of God's Spirit within and among us. The diversity and need in our world is matched by creativity and resources of our Creator's Spirit. And it is the community that helps us identify, accept and affirm the gifts for service. The question of how we empower one another to disciple making is for each community. What would it look like if we began to view baptism as ordination for ministry?

**Loving community:** There are 59 "one another" passages in the New Testament, most including a verb in the command form. Life together is essential for trust, authority, learning the fullness of good news, for journeying together, and for receiving and sharing the gifts of the Spirit. Ultimately, it is the best context for "making disciples," where they can be taught to observe all the things Jesus commanded us. The advantage of a community where love shapes our relationship is that "everyone will know we are Jesus' disciples."

As you go forward in 2014, may you be encouraged and blessed as you make disciples.