

# DUSTING OFF THE BIBLE FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY



Mennonite Church Canada • Assembly 2012 • Vancouver, BC • July 12-July 15



Holy Bible

**ASSEMBLY 2012  
MINUTE BOOK**

# Mennonite Church Canada Minute Book 2012

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

Minute recorders: George Epp and Lynell Bergen

Editor: Vic Thiessen and the General Board

Available on-line at: [www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2352](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2352)

## 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



## MINUTES

### ASSEMBLY 2012

Mennonite Church Canada  
Thirteenth Annual Session  
Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
July 12, 2012

*Theme: Dusting off the Bible for the 21st Century*

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**Thursday, July 12, 2012, 6:00 p.m.**

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## 1. Preliminaries

- a. **Welcome.** Delegates and guests were welcomed by moderator Andrew Reesor-McDowell and Executive Director Willard Metzger. Garry Janzen, Area Church Minister for MCBC and Brander McDonald, representing the First Nations of the Vancouver area, welcomed delegates and guests to Vancouver. The Assembly was blessed by a lullaby from the First Nations tradition.
- b. **Opening Business:**
  - i. Andrew Reesor-McDowell declared a quorum under the bylaws and indicated that 435 registrations had been recorded.
  - ii. Andrew Reesor-McDowell opened the Being a Faithful Church conversation, saying: We have determined that our church is in a state of hermeneutical ferment. We may have spent too little time with the Scriptures, and the General Board determined that a process of discernment must be put into motion. Two 75-minute sessions will focus on Being a Faithful Church 4 document, after which approval for the ongoing development of the process will be sought.
- c. **Approval of Minutes of Assembly 2011**
- d. **Approval of General Board Actions**
- e. **General Board Actions** (*Report Book*, page 13)
- f. **Introductions.** Andrew Reesor-McDowell acknowledged Valeria Silva of Brazil and Erwin Stutzman, Executive Director of MC USA, who had not yet arrived.

### 1. Motion

(George Epp / Emily Toews)

The delegate assembly adopts the minutes of the 2011 Mennonite Church Canada Assembly as recorded and published in Minute Book 2011 issued by Mennonite Church Canada. Motion carried.

## 2. Discernment Sessions

- a. **Voting.** Hilda Hildebrand commented on the arrangement of delegates and guests by tables for the purpose of discernment, and urged that the issues that will be tabled be given everyone's best attention and effort. She added that only delegates are authorized to vote.
- b. **Resolutions.** Hilda outlined the procedures for dealing with resolutions. None have been received to date and resolutions given to the Resolutions Committee will have to be dealt with at the next Assembly. The Resolutions Committee includes Carol Penner, Samson Lo and Earl Reimer.
- c. **Parliamentarian.** Harold Peters Fransen has been appointed parliamentarian.

### 2. Motion

(Gordon Peters / Dave Tiessen)

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

Motion carried.



- b. **Budget.** The budget for FYE 2013 was presented – changes from FYE 2012 were explained regarding staff and program cuts, as well as cuts in grants.

- i. A motion (Ingrid Peters-Fransen / Marv Baergen, Trinity) was made to postpone a decision on the budget until the reports have been made, because we might need to adjust the budget in light of the program reports. It was defeated. The original motion carried.

- c. **Auditor.**

- d. **Appreciation.** Gordon thanked Randy and his team for their thorough work and regular updates.

## 5. By law changes

- a. **Changes.** Vic Thiessen and Hilda Hildebrand presented the following proposed bylaw changes:

- i. Lines 61, 64, 145, 191, 333, 414, 463, 467, 469, 471 – Change “General Secretary” to “Executive Director.”
- ii. Line 549 (h): add “as part of the Pension Advisory Committee.”
- iii. Line 559 (c): the word “one” is changed to “two,” “person,” to “persons.”
- iv. Lines 568 & 569: delete the words “faculty members appointed by our higher education institutions”.
- v. Line 585: change the word “mission” to “ministries”.
- vi. Line 587 (d): change the word “Native” to “Indigenous”.
- vii. Line 649 (a): change “Mennonite Publishing Network” to “MennoMedia”.

- b. **Financial year-end**

- i. **The idea.** Willard explained that much of our donation revenue is realized in the fourth quarter of year, so it is difficult to engage with trends, and to respond to changes in a timely manner. With the new system, 40% of revenue will come in the first quarter, rather than the last quarter, which gives us time to respond.
- ii. **Discussion** included the following comments:
- (1) Was the giving pattern related to communication regarding the needs? *Reply:* Most of the pattern was related to giving at year-end.
  - (2) This change gives us more opportunity to engage congregations without the usual year-end pressure.
  - (3) What are the consequences for congregations regarding their budget planning?
  - (4) The move to biennial assemblies will require that the General Board has to be relied upon more.
  - (5) The “short year” deficit will be balanced by the “long year” surplus.
  - (6) Our fourth quarter will become our wonderful first quarter. What about the timing of the financial statement approval?
  - (7) Delegates will be given opportunity to

## 4. Motion

(Gordon Peters / Jake Thiessen, FMC Kelowna)  
The delegate assembly approves the budget as presented. Motion carried.

## 5. Motion

(Gordon Peters / Gerald Dyck)  
The delegate assembly appoints KPMG as auditor for next year.  
Motion carried.

## 6. Motion

(Earl Reimer / Reese Ratzlaff)  
To approve the bylaw changes as presented. Motion carried.

## 7. Motion

(Gordon Peters / Virginia Gerbrandt)  
To approve the bylaw amendment regarding change of fiscal year from January 31 to September 30 as follows:

Line 723 – 725 delete "MC Canada's fiscal year shall end on the 31st day of January each year" and replace with:

"In 2012-2013, MC Canada's fiscal year shall end on the 31st day of January 2013. Effective February 1st, 2013, MC Canada's fiscal year shall end on the 30th day of September." Motion carried.

approve a budget with best estimates for the second year, but the General Board will be relied upon more for the second year.

(8) The bylaws require that the Assembly approve the budget. *Reply:* We will find a way.

## 6. Christian Witness Council

### a. Report

- i. Rudy Dirks and Tim Froese introduced the list of new workers expected to serve under MC Canada Witness Council.
- ii. A new staff member, Cheryl Woelk, was acknowledged.
- iii. A variety of short term assignments have been requested and candidates are being sought.
- iv. The Truth and Reconciliation brochure was introduced and people were encouraged to participate in their areas.
- v. Steve Heinrichs was introduced as the Indigenous Relations Director.
- vi. Witness expressed appreciation to congregations and individuals for their prayers and financial support.

## 7. Church Engagement Council

### a. Report. Vince Friesen and Vic Thiessen reported the following:

- i. Communications, with the help of an IVEPer, has been putting together a clip about the work of MC Canada. A series is underway to show that you don't have to be a "traditional" Mennonite to be a Mennonite. Two clips are complete.
- ii. We are working on our first major website update since 2002, including a completely new donation portal which will allow people to make specific donations.
- iii. New staff include Daniel Horne, Brent Charet, and Monica Krahn. Daniel and Brent have been visiting churches across the country and report that there is passion in the pews for the work we are doing.
- iv. Daniel Horne introduced the Learning Tour to South Africa planned for February, 2013; Karen and Andrew Suderman are hosting the tour.
- v. Vince and Vic thanked everyone for their ongoing support of the work of MC Canada.

## 8. Christian Formation Council

### a. Report. Lisa Carr-Pries and Dave Bergen reported the following:

- i. A new resources website is being developed, with improvements in search and layout.
- ii. A new venture is to bring together the Resource Centre with the CMU bookstore to create a unique centre of Anabaptist resources for the CMU community, our congregations, and the broader church. It's a CMU/MC Canada agreement to combine the Resource Centre with the new CMU library facility.
- iii. A new resource appealing to grandparents is Elsie Rempel's *Please pass the Faith*.
- iv. Youth Assembly 2013 will take place at Camp Assiniboia on July 29 to August 2, 2013.

### b. Schools and education: Our schools are fundamental to our denominational health.

#### i. *Canadian Mennonite University*

- (1) Lisa Carr-Pries paid tribute to Gerald Gerbrandt's exemplary service to the church. He retired from the CMU Presidency on June 30.
- (2) Gerald said: "I grew up in this conference. Our parents rewarded us with conference attendance." Gerald thanked the conference and its people for their support.
- (3) Gerald introduced incoming CMU president Cheryl Pauls. Cheryl thanked all for the welcome she has received. She paid tribute to the history of CMU, and held up CMU as an amazing place of learning and peace.
- (4) Lisa welcomed Cheryl on behalf of MC Canada and promised prayer and support as she assumes her role as the new President of CMU.

- ii. **Conrad Grebel University College**
    - (1) Fred Martin described the current situation at Conrad Grebel, and shared a video address from Susan Schulz Huxman, President of Grebel.
    - (2) There are 300 students enrolled, a hundred involved in leadership opportunities.
    - (3) Fred shared a videotape address by Len Enns. 40% of Grebel teaching is in music.
    - (4) Peace and Conflict Studies; there are 14 students in international placement. Fred shared a video address by Lowell Ewert regarding Peace and Conflict Studies.
    - (5) Student Ben Castle talked about his impressions of studying at Grebel: its flexibility, its support, the quality of the professors and their challenges and encouragement.
    - (6) There is a building campaign to expand facilities, at a cost of \$8.7.
  - iii. **Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary**
    - (1) President Sara Wenger Shenk said, “We dust off the Bible every day and delight in it.”
    - (2) There are pivotal changes happening: faculty turnover, etc.
    - (3) The seminary has a new name, continuing as AMBS, but Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary will become the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.
    - (4) Our focus is “Anabaptism for the 21st Century.”
    - (5) We have a new Master of Divinity Degree: Leading Communities of Shalom.
    - (6) Six new Anabaptist short courses will be offered online.
  - iv. **Columbia Bible College**
    - (1) Ron Penner is retiring. Gratitude was expressed to him, as well as the wish of God’s blessings for his continued ministry
    - (2) Brian Borne, the President-elect, brought greetings from CBC to the Assembly, noting that support of the conference is much appreciated. He also expressed his joy in the decision of the Dirks to become long-term workers in Botswana.
- c. **Menno Media**
- i. Russ Eames brought greetings from all workers in MennoMedia.
  - ii. The merger and move to Harrisonburg, Virginia was completed a year ago.
  - iii. Melissa Miller is the new board chair.
  - iv. A new curriculum to follow *Gather Round* is in progress.
  - v. Song selection to succeed the *Mennonite Hymnal: A Worship Book* will begin shortly.
  - vi. All material is now selling on par in the USA and Canada.
  - vii. A documentary on Dan Terry’s life is in production and is being spun into a book .

## 9. Closing

- a. Andrew noted that the condensed version of business this year is an experiment, and he invited feedback.
- b. Dan Rempel closed the evening in prayer.

Adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

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**Saturday, July 14, 2012, 6:00 p.m.**

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## 10. Discernment Time

- a. **Recommendation 1.** Discussion included the following comments:
  - i. This is hard to explain to my congregation. Is it an experiment? *Reply:* It is an emerging work. We would like to receive feedback of whether this is a good framework.

## 8. Motion

(FLC TF / Marco Funk)

That we acknowledge with gratitude the counsel received from congregations, groups, scholars, and individuals of our body. We receive this summary report as a sign of the Holy Spirit’s work among us, and will use this emerging framework in future efforts to interpret Scripture together for our faith and life. Motion carried.

- ii. The image of paths and ditches can be confusing, because we need ditches.
- iii. Having received responses from only 14% of congregations seems low – how do we engage the rest? *Reply:* We are hoping that once we develop the corresponding tool more congregations can use this and find it accessible. We hope the numbers will go up.
- iv. I appreciate the document, and especially the study conference, and beginning discernment with prayer and worship. I wish that was also in the document.
- v. How does the BFC document connect with our Confession of Faith from a Mennonite Perspective? They may be in tension at points. Is there a dialogue process between the two documents? *Reply:* We hope to strengthen the comparison to the Confession.
- vi. I am impressed with the effort. I have the feeling that issues being anticipated require careful planning. All the care and concern in the frameworks might exclude other emerging understandings that may come forward.
- vii. What is planned for moving from an emerging document to a concrete one? *Reply:* The document is workable now, and we are looking for feedback and shaping this as we go. All are needing to rely on the Holy Spirit as to what we are trying to figure out. We don't know what the final piece should look like. We want to invite congregations to participate. Then we will gain more clarity and know the status of the final document and shape.
- viii. I commend the work and the congregations. It is remarkable. The tool used to produce this fruit included reference to 2 Timothy 3:16, and this reference is excluded in the final document regarding Scriptural inspiration. Do we assume it, or did no one respond on that particular question? A mirror is not a final product – the tool made an important point regarding 2 Timothy 3:16, and this could be a source of rich further reflection.
- ix. I am concerned that this framework may not be suitable for future efforts. Is this a starting point for a common framework?

**b. Amendment to Recommendation 1**

- i. ***The idea*** is to use this report as the starting point for finding a common framework for interpreting Scripture. Thus an amendment to change the word, “use,” to “test and experiment with”. So the amended motion would read (changes underlined and italicized):
 

That we acknowledge with gratitude the counsel received from congregations, groups, scholars, and individuals of our body. We receive this summary report as a sign of the Holy Spirit's work among us, and will *test and experiment with* this emerging framework in future efforts to interpret Scripture together for our faith and life.
- ii. ***Discussion*** included the following comments:
  - (1) We feel confident the document is ready to use.
  - (2) I'm concerned with the starting point language, concerned that we are trying to delay actually getting to hermeneutic practice. Let's go forward, trying to use this document; then we can work on amending. The process is going to take quite a few years. *Reply:* This document is ready to use and we will be preparing a resource tool that will be supportive. It's like circling back to continue to improve rather than wandering around.
  - (3) This process is not solely about LGBT, but at the last Harmony meeting there was concern about the scholars all being of heterosexual orientation. Have there been any changes to this? *Reply:* We invited all congregations and all scholars, individuals to respond; there were no limits to who could engage with this.
  - (4) The BFC task force discussed how important it will be that we are getting all the voices – we are committed to that – ethnic voices, Harmony voices, all voices are needed.
  - (5) The amendment seems to extend the process. The wording makes me lean toward voting against it. *Reply:* This will not extend the process; the process is outlined.
  - (6) I don't like the starting point language. This is undergirding for the whole process. This is the springboard, our jumping off point, and we will then leave the framework behind. *Reply:* This does not change the substance or the timing or the process.
  - (7) Where will this language of starting point be used? Where will it be read? It could be misinterpreted by those who are not here. *Reply:* This document is adequate to do what we need to do. We are ready to go. These changes do not affect the pacing or the intent



of the document.

- (8) I feel that either set of wording works, but there is a growing concern with this wording. I wonder if we could take a straw vote about the preferred wording.
- (9) – *Straw vote taken; favours going back to original wording* –
- (10) My intention was not to postpone the process. I was looking for something that would let us work a little bit more with this document while going ahead with addressing the issue that is in front of us.
- (11) The word is “emerging,” so change is possible.

c. **Recommendation #2.** Discussion included the following comments:

- i. Regarding the 12-month time frame and moving to biennial assemblies – what happens July 2013? *Reply:* We will come to the time frame later.
- ii. We have been eagerly anticipating resources generated, hoping for lots more.
- iii. I’m in favour of the recommendation, and affirm the sense of principles we want to follow and avoid; we need to know the rules of game: how we are having this conversation, and what behaviours and actions we want to avoid and can call each other to account on – in keeping with life and teaching of Jesus.
- iv. I would like clarification of other resources we are to use. *Reply:* We want to create resources that will be helpful for Sunday School classes by end of September.
- v. Will this have any binding on Area Church? Is this a recommendation? *Reply:* It is a recommendation, but we have AC moderators on the board and are consulting with the Area Churches all the time.
- vi. Thank you for the recommendation. We would value a common set of Scripture we might use collectively between our congregations, so that there is a possibility of congregations being in conversation with each other
- vii. We are giving the Area :Churches a very big job. Can this be done in one year?

## 9. Motion

(BFC TF / Emily Toews)

We recommend that in the next 12 months (July 2012 – July 2013) each Area Church of Mennonite Church Canada organize opportunities to explore, deepen and strengthen our understandings of each of the “paths and ditches” identified in this summary report. We further suggest that some common resource generated and/or identified by Mennonite Church Canada be used. Motion carried.

d. **Recommendation 3.** Discussion included the following comments:

- i. I speak in favour. We are together shaping a covenant to bind us together as a group of people – an identity-forming behavioural covenant. Let’s keep the Holy Spirit as our focus, and do this to God’s glory.
- ii. I have a question about the content of #3 versus #2; this is directed at congregations without a time frame – and it does not indicate resources. *Reply:* The three recommendations go together, but we thought it best to break them up for purposes of discussion.

## 10. Motion

(BFC TF / John Klassen)

We recommend that congregations process this document carefully. We further recommend that congregations highlight particular questions or issues they are facing that could benefit by using this framework of scriptural discernment. Motion carried.

e. **The Harmony motion.** Andrew presented the General Board’s report on the Harmony motion presented last year – our major focus has been the BFC process. Harmony and executive staff have an ongoing relationship. Three members of the GB, plus Willard, attended Harmony meetings to hear concerns; their feedback was shared with the GB and the BFC task force. We believe the BFC process is the best place to work at these issues. We have spent quite a bit of time working on BFC and will continue to do so.

- f. **BFC process time-line** (Discernment Guide, page 5). Andrew presented the BFC process time-line. We're looking at a maximum four year schedule – some of the work will be done by email and letters. The BFC task force would be happy to receive feedback on the time-line. We will send out tools and resources to congregations by the end of September, and will be asking for feedback from congregations about what two top issues we want to see this process used to deal with in the coming years. We would like this information by January 31, 2014. Sexuality will be a major issue, but there are other issues as well. We want to focus on issues that are felt nationally. We trust that BFC will be life-giving for us.
  
- g. **Closing.** Rudy Baergen closed with prayer .