

**MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA
JOINT COUNCIL MEETING
October 5-6, 2019 – Winnipeg
Meeting Minutes**

Joint Council Present: Calvin Quan (Moderator), Geraldine Balzer (Assistant Moderator), Allan Hiebert (Secretary/Treasurer), Terry Stefaniuk (Moderator MCSK), Andrea De Avila (MCM), Brenda Tiessen-Wiens (Moderator MCA), Betty Loewen (MCBC), Lee Dyck (Moderator MCBC), , Gerald Gerbrandt (Moderator MCM), Ly Vang (MCEC), Margaret Kruger Harder (MCA), Arli Klassen (Moderator, MCEC)

Staff Present: Tim Wiebe Neufeld (MCA), Ryan Siemens (MCSK), Ken Warkentin (MCM), David Martin (MCEC), Garry Janzen (MCBC), Doug Klassen (Executive Minister)

Regrets: Henry Funk (MCSK)

1) **Welcome:** Calvin called the meeting to order at 8:30 am and welcomed everyone here.

2) **Opening:** Margaret Kruger-Harder provided an opening focusing on God's accompanying presence on the journey. I Corinthians 13:1-7. We closed our worship by singing "Gracious Spirit, dwell with me"

3) **MC Canada Covenant Litany:** The MC Canada Covenant Litany was read with all Joint Council and ESG members present participating.

4) Agenda and Minutes

a) **Agenda:** The agenda was approved as amended.

i) Minutes of Sept 18 added

ii) Further discussion of International Witness process and guidelines added

iii) Added to item 6, letter to Minister Freeland

iv) Adjusting schedule to accommodate Arlyn having to leave earlier

v) Arli identified a possible conflict of interest in any matters related to the Canadian Mennonite, and Andrea identified a conflict of interest with any discussion of the Company of 1000 administration or fund.

b) **June 27 Joint Council Minutes:**

CONSENSUS: The minutes of the June 27 Joint Council Meeting were approved as circulated.

c) **June 29, 2019 Delegate Gathering:** Allan indicated that an error has been pointed out subsequent to the docket production; that references to "Didsbury Mennonite Church" should be changed to "Bergthal Mennonite Church".

CONSENSUS: The minutes of the June 29 Delegate Gathering Meeting were approved, with the amendment as noted, for recommendation to the 2022 Delegate Gathering.

d) **July 1 Joint Council Minutes:** A spelling mistake was noted and corrected.

CONSENSUS: The minutes of the July 1 Joint Council Meeting were approved with the minor amendment as noted.

- e) **September 18 Joint Council E-mail minutes:** It was noted that “Wiens” was misspelled.

CONSENSUS: The minutes of the September 18 Joint Council E-mail vote were approved, with the spelling correction as noted.

5) Moderator Report:

- a) Calvin reviewed his report, adding a thank you to Doug and other MC Canada staff for the energy that they bring to their work. He noted that church engagement will be done differently at this JC meeting, with JC members joining three congregations in the Winnipeg area for worship and discussion.

6) Executive Ministers Report.

- a) Doug presented the Executive Ministers Report
- b) Future Program Director reports will also be shaped in a way that they can be duplicated in RC and Congregational report books. Directors will be encouraged to provide insight into their biggest challenges
- c) Staff transitions were reported on.
- d) We do not have a shared income agreement between MC Canada and the RC's, need to craft such a policy. Exploring the idea of extending the FYE to a later date to make forecasting more realistic, but this may make auditing more difficult in order to get statements out to AGM in July.
- e) Church Engagement: there is an unevenness in the RC for this role and it may very well be a good idea for the EM of MC Canada to assist in these roles
- f) Communication: Every Home Plan discussion led us to the conversation about the state of the communications plan.
- g) Archival needs. It has been difficult to find policy regarding archiving our documents, we may need to develop a new one.
- h) International Witness. ESG have interpreted Guidelines for New Ministry Initiatives as allowing ESG to develop new programs without JC consent. We need help interpreting the word “may” in section 1 point 10. Extensive discussion followed.

ACTION: ESG and Jeanette Hanson are to update guidelines Initiative for New Ministries, and develop a witness reference council to assist.

- i) Setting up Witness Support Teams has not been successful to date. Discussion followed.
- j) Lease agreement with CMU. Some of the issues with the current agreement with CMU were discussed. Consensus was to further pursue revising the agreement.
- k) Common Word: Aryln joined us at 9:15 am (page 50 of docket) to present an oral report (see appendix). He answered questions from JC.
- l) Indigenous -Settler Relations (page 41 of Docket)

i) The Indigenous-Settler Relations report was discussed, with Doug answering questions from JC

7) Letter to C Freeland regarding Israel/Palestine (sent via email September 30 and in Sharepoint). After some discussion, JC arrived at the following consensus.

CONSENSUS: We ask that this letter be sent to C Freeland signed by the MCM working group and ask them to invite the other RC working groups to sign or send separately as well. It is felt that multiple letters from the RC would be more effective than one letter from a centralized source.

MORNING BREAK:

8) Finance Update

- a) **MC Canada Salary Scale increase proposal.** Annually, FPAC brings a recommendation for an increase to the MC Canada Salary Scale, to compensate for inflationary increases. This is for MC Canada staff (which is different from Pastor's salary guidelines).

CONSENSUS: That the MC Canada Salary Scale be increased by 2.0 % on February 1, 2020, to reflect the July/July CPI increase in the past year.

- b) **Consolidation of Internally Restricted Funds.** Allan had circulated a proposal to simplify and reduce the number of internally restricted funds that MC Canada holds. This will be revisited in January, but Allan would appreciate comment, so that the proposal is acceptable to all before it is brought back to JC. Some discussion followed, with agreement to follow up in January.

9) Communication Strategy

- a) Canadian Mennonite Every Home Plan, 2020 Funding Commitment. While JC agreed to move ahead with funding the Every Home Plan for 2020, there was some discussion on what would need to be involved in a future, long term commitment.
- b) Communication Hub: An update was received on the progress towards the new website and communications hub.

LUNCH:

10) Strategy Planning Session: JC spent time in a strategy planning session. Results will be brought to the JC Meetings in January for further processing.

ACTION: Betty, Margaret, Geraldine, and Alan will draft a test paper for distribution by October 31, 2019

11) Civil Disobedience Policy – Feedback from Regions

- a) The draft policy on Civil Disobedience was discussed. Some questions were raised that need to be clarified in the final policy. The policy will be further refined and brought back to JC.

12) Study Conference 2020, Planning Update (Gerald Gerbrandt reporting)

- a) The planning group consists of Kim Penner, Marilyn Rudy Froes, Ryan, Gerald, Doug. The theme is "Why the Church". Planned dates are October 22-24, 2020, with a location at Steinmann Mennonite Church, near New Hamburg, ON. The guiding scripture will be Peter 2:9-10, with leadership from Sara Wenger Shenk and Sheila Klassen-Wiebe.
- b) Strong affirmation of the plans to date was received from JC.

13) Gathering 2019 Follow up

a) Listening Committee Report

- i) Plan is to put this feedback on our website or on CommonWord with the understanding that names will be removed.

b) Table group discussion summary

- i) Plan is to put this feedback on our website or on CommonWord with the understanding that names will be removed

c) Analysis of the venue and format

- i) Some issues with the venue, costs, and registration procedure were discussed.
- ii) Discuss of the delegate gathering format followed. A number of concerns arising from the feedback were discussed, including how the AGM was held, the focus of the Leadership day, accessing documents, and the carbon footprint of the gathering.

- d) **International Witness special offering at Assembly:** This money, and some additional funds voted by JC, will be used to make a few videos on the current IW work in Korea and Thailand.

14) Global Youth Summit

- a) All RC have received applicants and will process who will represent each individual RC in consultation to ensure demographics are noted and tended to, following the process previously agreed to by JC.

ACTION: Calvin will ask MWC for an extension for the deadline to the end of January, so that final selections can be made at the January JC meeting.

SUPPER:

15) Regional Church Reporting

a) MCBC – Lee Dyck (page 82)

- i) Considering restructuring which rises out of the fact that they are having difficulty finding people to participate in leadership
- ii) Working on a concrete proposal to plan for the resources available when Clearbrook Mennonite is sold
- iii) Continue to work with the implications of ACOM
- iv) Number of congregations are in transition

b) MCA – Brenda Tiessen-Wiens (page 85)

- i) All committee meeting clearly indicated interest in supporting South Sudanese congregation
- ii) North Edmonton Ministry is vital part of the MCA ministry

163 **c) MCSask – Terry Stafaniuk (page 86)**

- 164 i) Reminder that this fall is difficult for farmers due to over much moisture
165 ii) Sean East is helping restructure MC Sask financial reporting
166 iii) Betty Pries will help with one more round of follow up
167 iv) David Fitch was speaker at the annual delegate meeting and MC Sask has developed a series
168 based on this presentation. It is available on the MC Sask website

169 **d) MCM – Gerald Gerbrandt (page 87)**

- 170 i) Infuse event is our congregational resource event
171 ii) Three-year missional plan is in preparation
172 iii) Camps with Meaning is looking to develop Camp Assiniboia with a major fund-raising drive

173 **e) MCEC – Arli Klassen (page 88)**

- 174 i) David Martin has announced his retirement (Next July).
175 ii) His ministry has enabled MCEC deal with sexual misconduct investigations and created a
176 climate where revelation around this issue is safely possible
177 iii) Several congregations have indicated that they will leave fellowship and conversations are
178 taking place with them
179 iv) Looking at new strategic planning. What comes out of MC Canada strategic planning will be
180 put in the strategic planning conversation in MCEC
181 v) David encouraged all of us to consider the strategic planning and new priorities as important
182 for all regions to share

183 **16) Next Meetings**

- 184 a) Sunday, Oct 6 Winnipeg church engagement logistics were discussed.
185 b) **Jan 25-26, 2020 Joint Council meeting location is Conrad Grebel College in Kitchner-Waterloo.**
186 c) **May 23-24, 2020, Winnipeg**
187 d) **June 27, 2020, AGM Zoom meeting**
188 e) **Oct 3-4, 2020, Winnipeg**

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190 **17) Closing:** Geraldine Balzer closed the meeting with reflections and prayer.

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192 **ADJOURNMENT at 8:35 pm**

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194 **SUNDAY, October 6: Reconvened at Sargent Mennonite Church after church visitations**

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196 **18) Welcome:** Calvin called the meeting to order at 1:10 pm

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198 **19) Opening:** Gerald opened the session with a reflection on World Communion Sunday. Why do we
199 celebrate this by worshipping on our homogenous Mennonite churches? How do we work at
200 worshipping together with other Christians are different than us?

201
202 **20) Debrief from worship and church engagement:** Reflections were shared on the mornings worship
203 and connection with MCM Congregations (Douglas, Springstein, Sargent Mennonite Churches).

- a) A number of connections and re-connections were made
- b) It is also good to reflect how people attending feel when they have no connections to the congregation. How do you feel that you belong if no one recognizes you? The warmth of the reception was somewhat mixed for visitors whose names are not known.
- c) Feeling a Spirit among the people even though there is no historic connections
- d) Reminder of the connections we have which are far bigger than ethnic distinctions
- e) Interesting of the similarities and the differences between our home congregations and where we visited
- f) It is also interesting to note what bridges connect us
- g) Struck by the intimacy that occurs in small congregations
- h) Sense that our congregations felt honored to be visited by JC
- i) Being visited by MC Canada makes the denomination real for our congregations
- j) Visiting made us aware of the diversity of worship styles
- k) Even in Winnipeg, there are churches that are far from the conference office and have trouble connecting with MC and MC Canada.
- l) Sense that we are in “family” and connections are surprisingly close in some cases
- m) This shift also indicates that worship is important for JC
- n) It would have been good to have some JC time in worship as well
- o) It was also noted that it was good for us simply to participate in worship as congregants and not voiced leadership
- p) Good way to connect with congregations and show that worship is important to the JC and church leadership.
- q) Some opposition to moving toward individual support and WST for our Witness Workers was voiced.
- r) Our congregations are becoming hubs for community members – this opens the idea of membership to our congregations and becomes a challenge for us. Is there anything that MC Canada can do to help us work through this issue?
- s) Support for the idea of worshipping in the local congregations of where we meet
- t) Emphasis on “retaining members” rather than going overseas to create new members
- u) What does “missional” look like in small rural churches in Canada
- v) It would be good to have JC on the hot seat to explain what it is we are doing in frank conversation. How do we structure these visits to encourage dialog?
- w) There were questions that were more difficult to answer when not everyone is at every meeting
- x) Consensus that we will continue this model when we meet in Kitchener Waterloo. It may be possible to do four churches in the future which would mean that our group size would be 4 or 5.

21) Closing: Arli Klassen the meeting with reflections and a prayer.

22) In Camera with EM

23) In Camera without EM

24) Adjournment at 2:40 pm.

Recording Secretaries: Ken Warkentin

Appendix: Oral Report to Joint Council

October 5, 2019, Arlyn Friesen Epp (*Also see my October 2019 written report*).

The central mandate of CommonWord, and for me as its Director, is two-fold: to curate content, to build an in-store and online hub of materials that will strengthen our collective Anabaptist identity and also serve the wider church. And secondly to have those materials as accessible to a nation-wide community of faith as possible. The Future Directions Task Force, when it submitted its final report a few years ago, said it this way: “CommonWord is to have “a central and expanding role (be a centre of energy) in: curating content, facilitating the sharing of resources from congregations, expanding the kind of content, creating electronic linkages and develop and publish new resources with like-minded groups.”

We’ve developed policies, shaped practices and asked questions around these two particular foci: curation and accessibility.

Curation

Resource Selection. We chart a course and give direction by the resources we ask our congregations to engage. What criteria does one use? (I cite the climate emergency conversation as one example). Another question we always ask: How distinct are our MC Canada, CMU, ecumenical church and general public audiences? We serve a wide range of people. We manage a hybrid business-ministry endeavour. In what ways should our instore experience mirror our online presence? In what ways should it differ? Do our retail items reflect our loan library? How does one measure ministry?

Partnerships. It’s vital that CommonWord is a player within the larger MC Canada/church family. So we’ve established new relationships with MCC, Herald Press, Together in Worship. And wrestle how best to partner with individual authors, and other organizations (e.g. Canadian Council of Churches).

Regional churches. What is CommonWord’s centralized role in a new decentralized structure? How is it to be a “centre of resourcing energy?” CommonWord has always had a privileged role in relating directly to congregations and individuals – we’re in direct connection with the end-user.

Resource generation. In a decentralized structure, it is the congregation and regional church, more than ever, who generates resources. How do we define what is best served locally and what is for wider dissemination? MennoMedia is primarily a US entity. National staff is limited (ISR resourcing would be a notable exception).

CMU. How is CW their resource centre? One MC Canada school among others.

Accessibility

Accessibility means offering these resources to both the local and the national audience. It means extended Saturday store hours and off-site displays. It means courteous in-store service and prompt email replies and free loan shipping. It means local book launches and competitive online pricing. It

280 means local retail sales and a nation-wide CommonRead book club. It means offering digital resources
281 for all customers. It means a robust website, currently under major revision.

282 Accessibility means expanding markets. US ecommerce. Manitoba MBs.

283 Accessibility means a marketing strategy that works with regional church communicators, CMU,
284 *Canadian Mennonite*, Herald Press. It means distributing products that we have generated (ISR).

285 Accessibility has always meant customer choice – to buy, borrow or access online.

286 **Customer service**

287 Relationship – being present in person, connecting with individuals across Canada (traveling, CW =
288 strong location)

289 Prompt, reliable service – immediate shipping, special orders

290 Special orders

291 *Amazon can offer you a million resources. CommonWord can get you the right one. Both a curation*
292 *and an accessibility goal marked by good customer service.*

293 **Comments/Questions from Joint Council:**

294 “This is who we are. CommonWord ought to be non-apologetic about what we place before our
295 congregations.” E.g. CommonRead initiative and Megan Good’s connection with MCBC Pastors, BC MBs,
296 CMU, AMBS, etc.

297 “CommonWord needs a focused niche or audience. It presently is trying to serve too many audiences.”
298 The reality of moving from a denominational office to a public space with a shared university mandate
299 has expanded our scope of service – and our practices need definition. Management Committee will be
300 wrestling with this.

301 “Is it a niche audience or niche products that should be our focus?” “Sausage and books combo is
302 working; entrepreneurial efforts should support our core purpose.”

303 “I’ve been involved in social enterprise for many years – the balance between ministry and business is
304 difficult.” “I’m told that a good current balance between in-store and online retail activity is 65/35.
305 What is our goal?”

306 “From my perspective as a local pastor, Arlyn and the staff team are doing a great job with curation and
307 accessibility. This is *my* resource centre.”