

1 **MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA**

2 **JOINT COUNCIL MEETING**

3 **October 31, 2020**

4 **ZOOM**

5 **Session 1 (11:00 AM – 12:15 Noon CST)**

6 **Session 2 (12:45 pm – 4:00 PM CST)**

7 **Meeting Minutes**

8
9 **Joint Council Present:** Calvin Quan (Moderator), Geraldine Balzer (Assistant Moderator), Allan Hiebert
10 (Secretary/Treasurer), Terry Stefaniuk (Moderator MCSK), Gerald Gerbrandt (Moderator MCM), Andrea
11 De Avila (MCM), Brenda Tiessen-Wiens (Moderator MCA), Margaret Kruger Harder (MCA), Gerry Grunau
12 (Moderator MCBC), Betty Loewen (MCBC), Arli Klassen (Moderator, MCEC), Ly Vang (MCEC) Henry Funk
13 (MCSK)

14 **Staff Present:** Tim Wiebe Neufeld (MCA), Rick Neufeld (MCM), Leah Reesor-Keller (MCEC), Garry Janzen
15 (MCBC), Ryan Siemens (MCSK), Doug Klassen (Executive Minister); Kathy Fast (Exec. Assistant)

16 **Observer:** Michael Pahl – incoming Executive Minister MCM
17

18 **Session 1**

- 19 1) **Welcome:** Calvin called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM (CST). He gave a special welcome to
20 Michael Pahl, incoming Exec. Min. For MCM.
21
22 2) **Opening:** Gerald Gerbrandt spoke on 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. His reflection was on Reconciliation and
23 the meaning of 'Ministry of Reconciliation', and how to be agents of reconciliation through our
24 churches.
25
26 3) **MC Canada Covenant Litany:** The MC Canada Covenant Litany was read with all Joint Council and
27 ESG members present participating.
28
29 4) **Agenda and Minutes**
30 a) **Agenda Review** - accepted as presented. Arli flagged a potential conflict of interest in the
31 Canadian Mennonite discussion item.
32
33 b) **Joint Council minutes, September 26, 2020.** (pp 5-12 of the docket) The draft minutes of the
34 previous Joint Council meeting were reviewed.
35

36 **CONSENSUS: The minutes of the September 26, 2020 Joint Council meeting were approved as**
37 **circulated.**

- 38
39 c) **Joint Executive Committee (MC USA/MC Canada).** (pp. 22-23 of docket) The minutes of the
40 September 28,2020 JEC meeting were presented for information.
41

42 **5) Regional Church moderator reports**

- 43 a) **MCBC – Gerry Grunau**
44 i) Impacts of rising COVID counts – no changes to Congregational meetings (limit of 50 ppl)
45 though congregations are evaluating their protocols and forms of worship.
46 ii) Camping program anxiety is increasing as COVID impacts lengthen.
47 iii) Governance discussions continue
48 iv) Recent hiring of several pastors has been encouraging.

- 49 **b) MCA – Brenda Tiessen-Wiens**
- 50 i) Annual Christian-Muslim dialogue is happening today
- 51 ii) Appreciated MCA’s involvement in Study Conference
- 52 iii) Next weekend- special ZOOM gathering of Congregations to talk/share/check-in and get an
- 53 update from MCA’s activities and events, along with budget overviews.
- 54 iv) Tim will be meeting with the Chin Church this coming week and MCA pastors are gathering
- 55 for a retreat.
- 56 v) Budget is on track – currently in surplus, which includes Camp Valaqua budget (due to lack
- 57 of summer camp operation costs, plus receiving govt support) December may present a
- 58 different picture once final church giving is known.
- 59
- 60 **c) MCSK – Terry Stefaniuk**
- 61 i) Kirsten Hamm-Epp is back from Maternity leave as Regional Minister, with slightly reduced
- 62 FTE
- 63 ii) Camps – instructed for NO overnight camps – thus concern on impact. Camp Shekinah has
- 64 zero income with bills and debt to pay
- 65 iii) Upcoming AGM (in spring) will be a ZOOM meeting
- 66
- 67 **d) MCM – Gerald Gerbrandt**
- 68 i) Continue to review governance – desire to add a committee to pay attention to Int’l Witness
- 69 and local congregation mission
- 70 ii) Financial situation seems OK – but anticipating a fair amount of loss due to camp
- 71 iii) Manitoba – Winnipeg is in COVID Red Zone as of yesterday
- 72
- 73 **e) MCEC – Arli Klassen**
- 74 i) Nov 14 will have an MCEC ZOOM meeting to install Leah (ZOOM link will be forwarded),
- 75 along with updates. Working towards licensing her for special ministry.
- 76 ii) Leah began a weekly blog/update for congregations.
- 77 iii) Budget – appear to be OK at this point, dependent on Dec giving. Camps do not affect
- 78 budget
- 79 iv) Most churches have not moved to in-person re COVID - continue in ZOOM. Question on
- 80 role of regional church with churches who do not comply to COVID protocols set in place by
- 81 govt.
- 82 v) Arli reflected on the publicity and response on two misconduct cases. Heaviness of this work
- 83 was expressed and need to find ways to walk with congregations and pastors who feel
- 84 betrayed by leaders.
- 85 **f) Discussion:** Re Misconduct cases. Annual Boundry Training took place in MCBC this past week
- 86 with pastors, looking at including Congregational chairpersons. Affirmation of process was
- 87 expressed.
- 88
- 89 **6) Executive Minister’s Report** (pp 24-35 of docket)
- 90 a) General Updates -Doug (pp 24-35 of docket)
- 91 i) Just as coordination at a nation-wide level was needed in communication, coordination is
- 92 also needed on fundraising.
- 93 ii) Planned work on the cultural diversity training and implications is shifting from an in-person
- 94 consultation to a virtual event.
- 95 b) International Witness Report – written by Jeanette Hanson (pp 36-44 of docket)

- 96
97 c) Indigenous-Settle Relations Report – written by Steve Heinrichs (pp. 45-52 of docket) Doug
98 noted that Steve had suggested an addition to Policy on Civil Disobedience for Joint Council
99 consideration.
100 d) Common Word Report – written by Arlyn Friesen Epp (pp 53-56 of docket). CommonWord is
101 currently determining it's actions in response to increased COVID cases and new regulations.
102 e) **Discussion:**
103 i) **Intl Witness:** our structure disadvantages non-English speakers, needing further attention
104 to make it workable. Suggest a broader sharing of the stories in Jeanette's report. Short
105 video clips have been appreciated and used in congregations.
106 ii) **ISR:** statement on superiority of Indigenous laws needing more conversation.
107 iii) **ISR:** concept of advocacy and accountability of Regional Working Groups requires further
108 discussion.
109 iv) **ISR:** Book Club is appreciated by participant(s).

110
111 **ACTION: Joint Council needs to discuss the current policy of need for 50% relational funding support.**
112 **Request for ESG to process these concerns, with some urgency given to current end date for IW**
113 **contracts. A plan will put together for the Dec JC meeting.**
114

- 115 **7) Finance - led by Allan Hiebert** (pp. 57- of docket)
116 a) **Allan presented his Secretary/Treasurer report** (pp. 57-60 of docket).
117 b) **Financial Reports** as of September 30, 2020 were reviewed (pp. 61-67 of docket). Allan
118 expressed appreciation for Sean's regular reports and explanations.
119 c) **Benefits Plan Change:** FPAC was considering shifting to self-Insured for dental and drug plans,
120 as this could bring the premium costs down 3-4% for churches participating.
121 i) Confirmed this is a JC decision – due to risk factor, but noting discernment of claims is still
122 done by insurance company.

123
124 **CONSENSUS: Joint Council will make a decision after receiving more background and further details on**
125 **risk factors, either for the Dec meeting or possible EMAIL vote.**
126

- 127 d) **MC Canada Salary Scale COL Increase:**
128

129 **CONSENSUS: That the MC Canada Salary Scale be increase by 1.0% on February 1, 2021, to reflect the**
130 **July/July CPI increase in the past year.**
131

- 132 e) **Regional Church Subsidy Calculation** (pp 68-69 of docket): There was a short discussion on the
133 proposal presented, and clarification that this is considered a "one-off" for only this year.
134

135 **CONSENSUS: That the formula, based on the decrease in actual donation revenue compared to**
136 **budgeted donation revenue, be used to calculate the Regional Church subsidy on committed**
137 **contributions to MC Canada, as explained in the document "Subsidy Recommendation" circulated in**
138 **the meeting docket.**
139

140 f) **Shared Revenue Agreement** (pp. 70-73 of docket). Doug’s paper gave some background on the
141 financial discussions before and after the implementation of the Future Directions Task Force.
142 The Regional Churches understood and followed various aspects of the recommendations from
143 the FDTF differently. The new draft agreement works at inequity between the regions, with
144 sliding scale of percentages.

145 i) **Discussion:** Many questions were raised, and a suggestion to include regular reviews be put
146 in place; develop clarity on ability for Regional Churches to determine their program
147 priorities; rational for % used; and general framework on how increase/decrease would be
148 implemented.

149
150 **CONSENSUS. Shared Revenue agreement to be TESTED with regional bodies in Nov, with intent of**
151 **bringing this back to Dec Joint Council meeting.**

152
153 **LUNCH BREAK**

154 **Session 2:**

155
156 g) **Financial Policy on Surplus Allocation** (pp. 74-75 of docket). MC Canada financial policies were
157 updated to the new structure and adopted by Joint Council in Jan 2020. However, some
158 discussion arose around the Surplus Allocation policy, which led to the proposed policy revision.

159 i) Discussion included concerns and clarification about IW struggle with relational funding
160

161 **CONSENSUS: That MC Canada adopt the amended “Surplus Allocation Policy”, circulated in the docket**
162 **as one of its financial policies. The amended policy reads:**

163
164 *Mennonite Church Canada*
165 *Year End Operating Surplus Allocation Policy*

166
167 *Net Excess of Revenues over Disbursements (after budgeted and additional Joint Council approved*
168 *deferred contributions and restricted fund transfers) in any year shall be allocated to the General*
169 *Reserve Fund, Capital Reserve Fund, and Missional Initiatives Fund as follows:*

170
171 *1) First, an allocation of 2/3 of the excess to the General Reserve Fund, to a cumulative maximum of*
172 *20 percent of the total MC Canada disbursement budget for that year.*

173
174 *2) Second, an allocation of 50% of the remaining excess after #1 above to the General Capital Reserve*
175 *fund to a cumulative maximum of \$250,000.*

176
177 *3) The remainder of the excess after the allocation in #1 and #2 above is to be added to the General*
178 *Reserve Fund, but then an equal amount will be budgeted to be drawn into revenue in the next fiscal*
179 *year, as an explicit reduction of the required Regional Church contributions.*

180
181 h) **Pension Plan Change:** Early Oct, Pension Advisory Committee met. An earlier report on a
182 survey of plan holders requested that the Dove Portfolio Social Responsible Investment strategy
183 also exclude companies producing fossil fuels. A new equity fund that meets the requirements
184 was presented and accepted by PAC for inclusion in the Dove Portfolio.

185

186 **8) Diversity and Intercultural Awareness** led by Geraldine Balzer. Referenced presentation from last
187 Joint Council and Sara Shenk Wenger 's comment at Study Conference regarding 'Tribal Church'.
188 Identity question and defining "Mennonite" was highlighted.

189 a) Breakout rooms discussed culture and traditions that are taken for granted and the resistance of
190 change. Suggestion to name some Resources for congregations to encourage these reflections.
191

192 **9) Facilities - update**

193 a) Lease Agreement is still on hold as timing of MCM board meetings and further clarity needed on
194 2nd floor rental space.

195 b) Several delays were experienced on roof repair and HVAC, though project is almost complete.
196

197 **10) Communications**

198 a) **Covenant renewal with Canadian Mennonite Publishing Services (CMPS)** (pp. 76-82 of docket)

199 i) Discussions between CMPS and ESG lead to a better understanding of what each meant by
200 "collaborate" and "consult". This led to a final wording as indicated in the docket.

201 ii) **Discussion:** Concern was expressed about some recent actions of CM, and need to hold
202 difficult conversations, building a good relationship. This relates to controversial subjects –
203 suggests conversation should go both ways.
204

205 **CONSENSUS: Joint Council approves the Covenant as presented in the docket.**
206

207 **ACTION: Doug, in conjunction with MCEC leadership, to check in with CM on the issues recently**
208 **identified and to report back to Joint Council on or before our Spring meeting (May 22).**
209

210 **11) Witness**

211 a) **Ministry Initiative Guidelines update:** Tabled for Dec meeting
212

213 **12) Study Conference – Table Talk: Does the Church still have legs? – October 24**

214 a) **Feedback from Conference.**

215 i) 180 participants (213 registered)

216 ii) positive feedback, and appreciation for recordings being available for broader viewing.

217 iii) future considerations: schools to host these conferences in the off years of assemblies;
218 develop diversity within presentations and participation; provide leading questions in
219 breakout rooms along with a facilitator.
220

221 **13) Delegate Gathering, Joint Council Roles**

222 a) **2022 Delegate Gathering:** There is a potential conflict of dates, due to MWC having been re-
223 scheduled for 1st week of July 2022.
224

225 **CONSENSUS: Schedule the MC Canada Delegate Gathering for July 28-Aug 1, 2022 in Edmonton, AB.**
226 **It may be necessary to hold a separate smaller AGM earlier to conform with CRA requirements.**

227 **ACTION: Provide information on change of dates for Delegate Gathering to Regional Churches.**
228

- 229 **b) Joint Council roles:** The terms of several 2nd representatives of regional church to JC are
230 approaching end. As new people may be filling the roles, there is a request for the creation of a
231 Job Description for this role.
- 232 **i)** Some suggestions include recent communications coming in to request communication
233 protocols – finding people to arbitrate... how to we deal with communications and
234 responses...

235

236 **ACTION: Betty Loewen and an ESG member will draft a job description for the second regional church**
237 **representative by December meeting.**

238

239 **14) Upcoming Agenda for Joint Council.** Joint Council was asked to list topics

- 240 **a)** Continuing diversity discussion. Can questions be sent in advance so some time for reflection?
241 **b)** Fundraising – regional church role and nation-wide coordination
242 **c)** governance topics
243 **d)** advocacy – what role for staff leadership, regional working groups, and what role for Joint
244 Council.
245 **e)** branding/marketing on how to communicate our presence
246 **f)** Reports from moderators – provide tidbits about conversations they have in their areas which
247 would be good to have larger conversations.
248 **g)** environmental sustainability, topics from Sustainability Leadership Group
249 **h)** Formation/education - SS materials (to remain strong in this area - involvement of
250 children/youth and adult classes)
251 **i)** Items to bring to Regional Churches for review and input were noted:
252 **i)** Shared Revenue Agreement – draft for discussion
253 **ii)** Update on change of dates for Delegate Gathering to July 28-Aug1, 2022.

254

255 **15) Next meetings:** Dec 5th by Zoom.

256

257 **16) Closing led** by Arli Klassen.
258 Reflection on how we think of Reconciliation, defined within the broader Truth and Reconciliation and
259 biblical Ministry of Reconciliation.

260

261 **17)** In-camera session

262

263 **18)** Adjournment at 4:19 pm Central.