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MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA
JOINT COUNCIL MEETING
October 2-3, 2021
Winnipeg and Via ZOOM
Meeting Minutes (draft)

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

Joint Council via Zoom: Calvin Quan (Moderator), Margaret Kruger Harder (MCA), Alison Jantz (MCSK)

Staff Present: Doug Klassen (Executive Minister); Susan Reynar (Exec. Assistant), Tim Wiebe Neufeld (MCA), Michael Pahl (MCM), Leah Reesor-Keller (MCEC), Garry Janzen (MCBC), Ryan Siemens (MCSK)

Staff via Zoom: none

Regrets: none

Friday, October 1 – An all-day session, with Joint Council and the Executive Staff Group and facilitated by Credence and Co, discussing governance and roles based on four years' experience with the MC Canada structure.

Saturday, October 2

- 1) **Welcome:** Calvin called the meeting to order at 8:40 am Central Time.
- 2) **Opening:** Gerald Gerbrandt reflected that it was good to meet (mostly) in person. In the beginning was the Word and the Word became flesh...we have moved from meeting on screen to meeting in the flesh. What does it mean for the Church to be the word become flesh and a light on the hill with the confidence that God's work will continue?
- 3) The **MC Canada Joint Council Litany** was read responsively.
- 4) **Agenda and Minutes (see JC Docket pp 4-20):**
 - a) The **agenda** was accepted as presented in the docket.
 - b) The minutes of the **June 19 Joint Council Meeting** were reviewed. It was suggested that rather than the "Conference administration building" we should use the name on the Lease agreement "Mennonite Church Office building".

CONSENSUS: The minutes of the June 19, 2021, Joint Council Meeting were approved with corrections as noted above.

- c) The minutes of the June 19, 2021 AGM and Delegate Gathering were reviewed.

CONSENSUS: The minutes of the June 19, 2021, AGM and Delegate Gathering are recommended for adoption at 2022 Delegate Gathering.

- d) The minutes of the July 13, 2021 Joint Council E-mail votes were reviewed.

CONSENSUS: The minutes of the July 13, 2021, Joint Council E-mail vote were approved as circulated.

- e) The minutes of the July 20 Joint Council Meeting were reviewed.

53 **CONSENSUS: The minutes of the July 20, 2021, Joint Council Meeting were approved as circulated.**

- 54
55 f) The minutes of the Joint Council Executive Committee meetings on June 24, June 29, and July 7, 2021 were
56 presented for information.
57

58 **5) Regional Church Moderator Reports**

59 a) **MCBC** – Gerry Grunau

- 60 i) Good to meet everyone in person - first in person board meeting
61 ii) Garry Janzen has announced his retirement in July 2022. MCBC expresses appreciation for Garry's
62 committed work. Appreciated sharing of resources for hiring from MCEC and MCM.
63 iii) Covid requirements lifted congregational worship services. MCBC AGM will happen by Zoom.
64 iv) 2 congregations closing. 2 misconduct cases this summer.
65 v) MCBC has committees for specific initiatives like ISR, Palestine Iseral, Climate. The Intercultural Church
66 committee representative from MCBC is Joon Park.

67 b) **MCA** – Brenda Tiessen-Wiens

- 68 i) MCA has hired a Church Engagement minister. Steven Giugovaz (a graduate of PBI). They have also hired
69 Suzanne Gross for 6 months to continue the momentum of the North Edmonton Ministry following Donna
70 Entz's retirement. Suzanne is to work with the leadership in determining how this the ministry with
71 Newcomers can move forward.
72 ii) Werner and Joanna DeJong are waiting to go to Ethiopia to work with MKC. They hope that they will be able
73 to help during transition from being a College to a Seminary.
74 iii) Heritage retreat took place this summer in-person and plans for a Fall retreat in Zoom gathering to create an
75 opportunity for people to connect.
76 iv) The summer program at Camp Valaqua took place this summer with rapid COVID checks, some changes and
77 75% capacity. The program was successful and felt like a little slice of normal.
78 v) MCA Congregations are now meeting in person.

79 c) **MCSK** – Terry Stefaniuk

- 80 i) 2 pastor installations occurred this summer.
81 ii) Ryan took part in AMBS visioning program.
82 iii) Meghan Good coming up this fall to teach a class. Opportunities for CMU participants as well.
83 iv) Kirsten Hamm Epp is taking maternity leave and asked to lead catechism class.
84 v) Josh Wallace looking at ways to connect churches with Witness work – how to connect people w/ church.
85 vi) RJC up to 85 students. Budget looks good, 7 out of province 15 international, 7 indigenous/Meti people.'
86 vii) Camp was good but stressful due to Covid. Shekinah retreat center struggled because of Covid rules
87 changing. Camp Elim is looking for Camp director.'
88 viii) Senior complex looking for new director.
89 ix) Challenge – Does MCSK want to own cemeteries of closed churches?
90 x) Financially behind giving to MC Canada based on this time of year. The harvest was brutal this year. 70
91 bushels yield reduced to 25.

92 d) **MCM** – Gerald Gerbrandt

- 93 i) Dynamics in congregations – giving is struggling a bit. Going back to meeting in person. New regulations
94 with restrictions affecting congregations.
95 ii) Looking for someone to deal with congregational engagement.
96 iii) Board retreat on Sept. 18 at Camp Assiniboia:
97 iv) Camping has struggled but had a good summer ending in survival financially. Decision to launch 3.5 million
98 campaign was put on hold and re-initiated in Sept to build a retreat center that can be a financial
99 contributor to bottom line.
100 v) Formation of working group on climate action.
101 vi) Congregational health and how MCM can help. Jason Dyck and Norm Dyck. 2-year intensive initiative on
102 Congregational health: 1) Kathy's role/title change to Director of Congregational ministers 2) congregational
103 health committee with board members and leaders in community to develop a formal program 3)
104 emphasize 2 areas: pastoral care and local witness.

- 105
106 e) **MCEC – Arli Klassen**
107 i) Embarking on Courageous Imagination – moving to congregations to ask for input/feedback which is difficult
108 when we can't meet in person.
109 ii) Anticipate 9 congregations seek membership or provisional membership with MCEC. A lot of credentialling
110 work happens especially new Canadians.
111 iii) TRC/ISR working group and Palestine/Israel working group have formed for education and advocacy. They
112 don't speak on behalf of MCEC. They speak as a working group and have space on MCEC website and
113 through communications channels.
114 iv) Conrad Grebel relationship with MCEC and U of Waterloo looking at letter of Agreement
115 v) Covid protocols. Any MCEC events require people to be double vaccinated to participate. This is a bit hard to
116 meet for new Canadian congregations where there is lower vaccination uptake.
117 vi) Misconduct case that has been on-going for a long time and has taken a lot of energy for MCEC with support
118 of MC Canada. Hope to resolve soon.
119

120 **6) Executive Minister Report (see JC Docket pp 21-25):**

- 121 a) Doug gave some general updates
122 i) Assisting with misconduct cases was not envisioned when the EM job description was crafted. This is a
123 demanding task, requiring careful study of documents, outcomes, careful conversation, costly.... in our
124 imagined structural change this will need to be staffed.
125 ii) A pastor in Ontario asked about vaccine exemptions based on religious convictions. A statement was
126 crafted by ESG this week. This went to Regional Churches/congregations for bulletin announcements and on
127 website under Pandemic resources.
128 iii) Our current Misconduct Policy is based on sexual misconduct, which makes it difficult to apply to other
129 forms of misconduct. Prevention and accountability documents are being developed by Sandra Shenk Lapp
130 from MC USA, with a Table of Contents developed and assigned writers; in Canada – Doug, Carol Penner,
131 Heather Klassen (HR Background) will be reviewing. Definitions on “what is misconduct” and “what is work
132 performance” are needed. A rough draft is to be ready for regions to review early in new year. It is
133 envisioned that a final version, to pass to congregations in winter of 2023, will be available on Common
134 Word as a PDF document. The document will not be published through Menno media, due to ever-changing
135 labour laws.
136 iv) The Ministers' Manual (from 1992) needs updates and changes - with input coming from several pastors.
137 Michael Danner (MC USA) will act as executive editor. The focus is on new pastors and new-to-Mennonites
138 pastors. The draft will be reviewed by CLM.
139 v) A meeting is scheduled for next month, with ESG/CLM and 4 Mennonite university presidents, to talk about
140 a vision for higher education. (Michael and Garry are on this committee).
141 vi) According to our personnel policy, it is time for an EM performance review.
142 vii) Some questions and discussion of some of these items followed.
143 b) **International Witness** - We keep getting requests from around the world from organizations wanting to partner
144 with MC Canada. Many of these do not meet our guidelines, but we also need a strategy for partnering that
145 allows for free sharing of gifts in the global anabaptist community.
146 c) **Common Word** - Regions have ISR groups and Witness support networks. Arlyn laments that there are many
147 resources that are available, but he has no regional person to connect with and publicize these. Need to think
148 about how we can get CommonWord (I.e., Book loaning) into regions.
149 d) **Indigenous-Settler Relations**
150 i) Be it Resolved Challenge – People who are part of the challenge are encouraged to connect their intentions
151 with their congregations. Look for this activity in your regions.
152 ii) CPT is contemplating a name change to Community Peacemakers Teams because many partners are in
153 Muslim countries. They are not losing the Christian Identity, but they are becoming more inclusive of other
154 faith groups. Question: How does a name change take away from a witness that we are making through the
155 name of an organization?

156
157 **7) Finance**

158 **a) Secretary-Treasurer Report (see JC Docket pp 26-34):**

- 159 i) **Donor Privacy:** Based on discussions Sean East had with a lawyer, FPAC recommends that we change our
160 policy on sharing donor information when someone donates to a third party through MC Canada. Sharing
161 information between MC Canada and RCs is permitted, but files should be encrypted.

162
163 **ACTION: Create a financial policy on Donor information and Privacy for MC Canada and send to regional finance**
164 **departments for information.**

- 165
166 ii) **FPAC/PAC meetings** are scheduled for early November.
167 iii) Allan asked if there were any questions on the Financial Reports for August 31, 2021, previously e-mailed.
168 None were asked.

169
170 **b) Shared Revenue Agreement (SRA, see JC Docket pp 45-50)**

- 171 i) All Regional Church boards were ok with the proposed SRA -Part A.
172 ii) Responses to question in Part B were collated and sent to JC prior to the meeting.
173 iii) Extensive discussion followed.
174 (1) It was noted that the discussions on structure and governance may change the role of ESG in a new
175 Operating Agreement, and this may have a minor impact on some of the terms of Part A of the SRA.
176 (2) There is a diversity on the way that RCs handle individual donations and designated donations.
177 (3) There was agreement for some of the items considered in Part B.
178 (4) A small amendment was proposed to Clause 9, to include the rationale for the initial percentage sharing,
179 which differ be region. It was agreed to add the sentence "These initial percentages account for the
180 differences in scale and historical giving among Regional Churches."

181
182 **Motion: to adopt the Shared Revenue Agreement dated May 15 and circulated on May 15 with the understanding**
183 **that the work outlined in part b is ongoing.**

184
185 ***This discussion will be tabled until tomorrow at 9:30 am. Suggestion for break at 3:30 will be extended to***
186 ***regional areas to discuss SRA with the reps in respective regions.***

187
188 **Lunch Break: A presentation from International Witness Workers: Tobia and George Veith was followed by a lunch**
189 **break**

190
191 **8) MC Canada Covenant** - Covenant signed in 2018 and due for renewal this October. Due to the possible changes, we
192 are recommending that our current covenant stay in place until we have approved its' revision or possible
193 replacement considering structural changes for an extension of one year.

194
195 **CONSENSUS: that we extend the current covenant by one year.**

196
197 **9) Communications (see JC Docket pp 38-39):**

- 198 **a)** Two policies – Policy on Speaking Publicly, Policy on Acts of Conscientious Civil Disobedience - were passed at JC
199 meeting in January,2020. These were forwarded to each RC to review and see if they would adopt. Were any
200 questions/concerns raised?
201 **i)** Policy on Speaking Publicly - No discussion or comments
202 **ii)** Policy on Acts of Conscientious Civil Disobedience – There was some discussion, with some of the RC
203 adopting the policy with modifications or developing a different policy.
204 **iii)** MC Canada personnel policy is being updated. Some of the discussion points will be considered in any
205 updates to the code of conduct included in the personnel policy.
206

207 **10) International Witness Capital Project Fundraising (see JC Docket p. 40 and pp.51-54)**

- 208 a) In June, ESG recommended that Joint Council consider the Capital Project for PBCI-CFP in Philippines. JC
209 responded to some questions on this work, which are answered in the document included in the docket. At it's
210 September meeting, ESG discussed and supported this proposal.
- 211 b) **Discussion followed**
- 212 i) Concern was expressed about initiating a \$600,000 capital campaign
- 213 (1) some other witness workers were having trouble meeting their Witness Relational Giving targets.
- 214 (2) Will this deplete congregational giving?
- 215 ii) What percentage of staff time will be need to be coordinate this?
- 216 iii) Is there a business plan showing that the project is sustainable in the long term?
- 217 iv) Is investing a large amount in a capital project good development practice?
- 218 v) This is an example of an "exit strategy" for international witness. How are we working with our witness
219 partners in ways that empower them for financially sustaining ministries? Moving forward, how do we think
220 about local financial sustainability in ministry?

222 ***Motion: That we accept the proposal as presented with 2 considerations: 1) examination of the business plan by
223 someone who has knowledge and skill and 2) that there is appropriate time allocation for Jeanette and Norm's roles
224 in fundraising for this project and that management will decide if and how to proceed.***

226 ***The motion was passed, with some members opposing the motion, but not blocking it.***

227

228 c) **New Initiatives – Witness Vision/Strategy**

- 229 i) Jeanette along with Norm and Tany will craft a witness vision strategy so that when new initiatives come
230 along, we will have a grid with which to assess them to see where they fit. Draft will be ready for January
- 231 ii) We have a New Ministries initiative guide. The guide does not clarify the overall vision in the beginning by
232 which to determine if all requests must go through the guide. This will act as the initial filter or entry point to
233 the guide.

234

235 **11) Sustainability Leadership Group report:**

- 236 a) Tim, as Chair of the SLG, e-mailed an update from the SLG prior to the JC meeting
- 237 b) Question of representation: Group formed by invitation of Tim with a representation from a variety of regions in
238 mind. Is regional representation important in serving a purpose for which interested people?
- 239 i) Are you appointing people or can anyone who is interested join?
- 240 ii) It needs to be a manageable size, prefer some vetting process through the region.
- 241 iii) Prefer process through region to affirm interest or appointment of person. This is not group for advocacy or
242 Watershed issues which could be done by more local working groups.
- 243 c) Reminder that the SLG was formed with 2 purposes:
- 244 i) Provide guidance to joint council for ways MC Canada operations can be done in a sustainable way
- 245 ii) Prepare resources to be given to the congregation to do the same
- 246 d) Valuable skill sets for leadership group members
- 247 i) People who have experience with preparing education materials
- 248 ii) People who have expertise in sustainable practices for our operations with ideas and encouragement for
249 congregations.
- 250 iii) May be more important to have keen, skilled people than regional representation.
- 251 e) Gathering 2022 -- Do not have a comprehensive sustainability plan
- 252 i) Joanne Moyer will connect with Gathering planners to anticipate pieces for this gathering and develop a
253 rubric for next gathering
- 254 ii) Will explore carbon offset program that can be part of the gathering.

255

256 **12) Saturday Closing – Arli Klassen**

- 257 a) Psalms hold so many positive and negative emotions and have become an inspiration this year. Arli read Psalm
258 26 using “us and we” language. She ended with words to reflect on: Integrity.....trust.....steadfast love.....we
259 love the house of the Lord.
260

261 **Saturday Adjournment at 4:30 pm**
262

263 **13) Sunday Opening and Worship and service of Communion. Led by Doug**
264

265 **14) Delegate Gathering 2022:**

- 266 a) On July 29 (Friday) CLM will meet at First Mennonite (Edmonton). The first session of the Gathering will be
267 Friday evening, July 29, with further sessions on Saturday, Sunday worship and tours and finishing Monday by
268 noon.
- 269 **b) Gathering Planning Committee Update**
- 270 i) People are in place to take care of the children’s program.
 - 271 ii) Theme around 1 John 4: “We declare to you that we have seen, what we have heard...”
 - 272 iii) Hotel, speakers, theme in place. Katie is working on promotion for fall and bi-weekly in the new year.
 - 273 iv) Registration and cost will be determined soon.
 - 274 v) Study guide has been delayed (Doug and Jessie Yum) goal to be done by end of the month.
 - 275 vi) Group of youth (late high school/ young adults) will join as a separate session. This is still being worked out.
 - 276 vii) The Youth portion (12-18 yr. old) of the gathering will be at Camp Valaqua.
 - 277 viii) A Contingency plan is being developed to hold the gathering in a hybrid (in person/virtual) format. The
278 on-line only registration option should be lower than in-person registration. MC USA experience indicates
279 that virtual may not feel equally participatory to in person.
 - 280 ix) The worship service should be open to the public and have a public link on-line (with an offering).
- 281

282 **15) Affiliations**

- 283 a) In the past, due to MC Canada’s size, we have had three representatives on the Mennonite World Conference
284 General Council. Currently we have only two representatives (Doug and Calvin) as the term of the previous 3rd
285 rep has expired. The General Council is the delegated body from 107 churches around the world. They are the
286 final decision-making body for MWC.
- 287 i) The hope for each delegate to be 6 years or more so that they can get to at least 2 MWC conferences.
 - 288 ii) Looking for gender diversity, consistency, taking on roles in-between meetings to stay in touch between
289 meetings. Strong interest and knowledge in how the global church works – knowing the issues.
 - 290 iii) **Consensus with reservation: for Doug to reach out to two specific persons in order for this role.**
- 291 b) Some JC members had concerns that the timeline and process for this decision is problematic. Appointments for
292 a lengthy commitment like this need to be brought to the attention of the Joint Council well in advance for
293 thoughtful, open opportunities for diverse representation or new perspectives. Perhaps it is the role of a
294 nomination committee moving forward.
295

296 **ACTION: A list of all the representatives we have on partner agencies boards, together with a timeline for replacing**
297 **these positions, be regularly shared with Joint Council, so that selection of representatives can be discussed with**
298 **sufficient lead time.**
299

300 **16) Shared Revenue Agreement (continued)**
301

302 **CONSENSUS: that Joint Council adopt the SRA document dated and circulated May 15 with the addition of a sentence**
303 **to clause 9 that reads: *These initial percentages account for differences in scale and historical giving among regional***
304 ***churches* and with the understanding that the work in part b is ongoing.**
305

306 **ACTION: Secretary/Treasurer e-mail the adopted SRA to JC and ESG, and store in SharePoint.**
307

308 **17) Governance Review**

- 309 a) Each Joint Council and ESG member were asked, in turn, to give feedback on the Friday Governance and Roles
310 session, including on the conversation format and the conversation.
311

312 **BREAK**

- 313
314 b) Next Steps: Homework Questions left by Credence and discuss merits or expand and come up with a plan of
315 action for January meeting to make it as productive as possible.
316 i) It was agreed that the next step would be one or more structured small group discussions, each with a
317 recording secretary, then a synthesis group to collate small group responses.
318 ii) Everyone will be put in groups of 5 with representation/roles from each region. This will allow for everyone's
319 voice to have a place. Groups will meet several times.
320 iii) With founding documents in hand: (Vision/Mission/Priorities, bylaws and operational agreement) groups
321 will look at the lists of ideas generated during the Friday session:
322 (1) What problem does this solve,
323 (2) What challenges or new problems does this create?
324 (3) What needs to be done in response -- What actions or next steps?
325 (4) Discern benefits, challenges and next steps
326 c) Synthesizing group to collate responses and provide to Credence prior to the Jan. meeting.
327 d) Small group work on making concrete proposal related to changes to Operating Agreement and By-laws
328 e) Invite JC and ESG to comment on outcomes.
329 f) Large Group: Bring work of 1 and 2 to large group for fine tuning and decision making.
330

331 **18) Upcoming Agenda: New Items to consider for future meetings**

- 332 a) Shared Revenue Agreement. Allan will collate the feedback document into a revision for Part b of the shared
333 revenue agreement and circulate it to JC for written feedback and comments.
334 b) Submissions for budget planning: It is hard for ESG/RC to propose budget numbers when they have not yet hit a
335 year end. There is some need to add a MC Canada staff position in Pastoral Leadership.
336

337 **19) Next Meetings:**

- 338 a) Next meeting: Jan 29-30, 2022, was originally planned for Saskatoon. However, due to the current high cost of
339 air tickets to Saskatoon, it was suggested that the meeting be in Winnipeg. Zoom options are appreciated.
340 i) After some discussion, Calvin will see if Credence can present on Saturday or Sunday. Perhaps have a session
341 on Friday evening. Will work with Geraldine and Doug to organize agenda accordingly.
342 b) April 9-10, 2022, Winnipeg
343 c) July, 2022, Delegate Gathering, pre and post meeting, Edmonton
344 d) October 1-2, 2022, Winnipeg
345

346 20) **Closing** – Gerry Grunau reflected on the three days of meetings, then closed with a prayer.
347

348 21) In Camera
349

350 **Adjournment at 12:52 pm Central.**