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**Mennonite Church Canada**  
**Joint Council Meeting**  
**September 30 & October 1, 2022**  
**Winnipeg, MB**  
**Final Meeting Minutes**

**Joint Council Present:** Geraldine Balzer (Moderator); Bruce Baergen (Assistant Moderator); Paul Gilbert (Secretary/Treasurer); Gerald Gerbrandt (Moderator MCM); Brenda Tiessen-Wiens (Moderator MCA); Terry Stefaniuk (Moderator MCSK); Gerry Grunau (Moderator MCBC On-line); Arli Klassen (Moderator MCEC); Betty Loewen (MCBC); Margaret Kruger-Harder (MCA); Andrea Enns Gooding (MCSK); Yoel Trakoon Masyawong (MCEC)

**Staff Present:** Doug Klassen (Executive Minister); Garry Janzen (EM MCBC); Tim Wiebe-Neufeld (EM MCA); Michael Pahl (EM MCM); Leah Reesor-Keller (EM MCEC) Josh Wallace (EM MCSK On-line)

**Guest:** Kathy Fast (fill-in for Susan Reynar, Executive Coordinator)

*Note: MCM 'rep' has not been named to date.*

*Regrets: Michael Pahl (Sunday morning session)*

*Absent: Josh Wallace (Sunday morning session)*

**1) Welcome & Opening – Geraldine Balzer**

Welcome and land acknowledgment. Reflection on the 'Orange Shirt Day' and how the awareness of the impact of Residential Schools has grown, much like the story of the Mustard Seed. Blessings from "Fourfold Benediction" were read.

**2) MC Canada Joint Council Litany** was read responsively.

**3) Agenda & Minutes**

**a. Intro & Agenda**

- New member Andrea Enns-Gooding (MCSK) was welcomed. Andrea DeAvila has resigned from her position (MCM). Acknowledgment of this being both Leah Reesor-Keller and Garry Janzen's and maybe Josh Wallace's last meeting. Susan Reynar's continued COVID symptoms were mentioned.
- The agenda was reviewed and accepted as circulated.  
Conflict of Interest: Arli Klassen noted her position as staff of MWC for discussion on the Fair Share Agreement. Geraldine asked her to provide an explanation on the topic but not an opinion.

**b. July 28, 2022, Joint Council Minutes**

**CONSENSUS: The Minutes of July 28, 2022, Joint Council were approved and circulated with edits as stated.**

\*Strike line101-102 & Correction: Karen Schellenberg. (not Sharon)

**c. August 1, 2022, Joint Council Minutes**

**CONSENSUS: The Minutes of August 1, 2022, Joint Council were approved as circulated, with amendments and corrected spellings.**

**4) Fiduciary Matters**

**a. Executive Minister Report**

46 Learnings from the travels were highlighted, along with information on staff changes coming up.  
47 Encouragement for the JC to move more intentionally into vision, goals, and strategy now that key  
48 policies are mostly complete. Four job descriptions will be ready to post shortly. Delays in maintenance  
49 (siding repair) are in large part due to weather-related issues.

50 **CONSENSUS – Esther Kern be MC Canada’s representative on the CPT Board.**

51 Discussion:

- 52 ➤ Urgency stated for filling all staff positions. The job description for Indigenous Relations is being shaped  
53 with input from Aboriginal partners.
- 54 ➤ Mission vs policy-focused board.

55  
56 **b. Secretary-Treasurer Report**

57 MCEC revenue sharing contributions of \$41,000 and Witness contributions of \$15,000 came in  
58 September, and are not reflected in the August statements. Individual contributions are over budget  
59 due to 2 large bequests totalling \$900,000 which are amortized to income over ten years and impact the  
60 current year favourably by \$90,000. The Witness funding shortfall is typical for this time of year. 2022  
61 Gathering costs and income were not in line with budgets and created unfavourable variances.

62  
63 **August 31, 2022, Financial Statements**

64 **CONSENSUS – The August Financial Statements be accepted as presented.**

65 **i. Financial logistics for our new year-end (Mar 31)**

66 Adagio (finance program) recommends ‘soft close’ on Jan 31, with full close on March 31, thus  
67 requesting Area Churches to send money in at year-end as per usual. Encouragement to set up  
68 a 12-month, and 2-month report(s).

69 The importance of communicating our fiscal realities to the area churches and congregations  
70 was noted.

71  
72 **c. Change in Signing Authority**

73 History of signing authority was provided and why Council members were brought in during the  
74 transition year(s). The agreement was that Council members don’t need cheque signing authority, but  
75 have 2-3 internal (staff) with signing authority. Council provides authorization on large financial  
76 commitments and the signing of engagement contracts.

77 **ACTION: Doug/Paul brings a draft of change to the current policy.**

78 **MOTION: by Paul Gilbert, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Gerald Gerbrandt - cheque signing authority be given to Doug Klassen,**  
79 **Zachary Entz, Laura Zacharias, and removing Allan Hiebert and Calvin Quan. CARRIED**

80  
81 **d. MWC Fair Share Agreement, changes, and impact**

82 Reviewed outline of the agreement currently set up with an option for negotiation by each Member  
83 Church. MC Canada, and other larger denominations, have not met their Fair Share for the past number  
84 of years. The agreement has been reworked and MWC asks for a commitment which is then set.

85 *Discussion:* Suggestion that each congregation holds a potluck lunch fundraiser which raises awareness  
86 at the same time. Suggest a communication video that would provide info on all the work MWC is  
87 involved in, and how MC Canada supports and is a part of the work. Two possible days to incorporate  
88 the communication piece would be Anabaptist World Fellowship Day in January or World Communion  
89 Sunday in October. It was noted that there is a 4-minute video (annual review) created by MWC. MC  
90 Canada’s Fair Share is currently set at approx. \$6/member (CDN). It was agreed we support MWC.

91 **ACTION: MC Canada staff to prepare a proposal for Regional Churches to process, regarding awareness and**  
92 **financial support, to come back with a full proposal for January meetings.**

93  
94 **e. Canadian Mennonite Covenant**

95 The extension of current covenant has been discussed and approved.

96 **CONSENSUS: Joint Council agrees to an 18-month extension of the covenant with CMPS to end of June 2024**

97  
98 **BREAK**

99 **f. Rationale for selecting volunteers to partner boards**

100 Propose that primary responsibility for finding suitable people (who are not staff) be shifted from EM's  
101 office to the MC Canada Nominating Committee in order to reduce the load on the EM and expand and  
102 diversify the network of suitable options. Bylaws will need adjusting.

103 *Discussion:*

- 104 ➤ To whom does the Nominating Committee report? Executive Minister. The current Nominating  
105 Committee does not have this expansion noted in its role. Check with current members about their  
106 willingness to take this on for this year. This could then be worked into next year's committee role  
107 description. Would like to see the role defined with the various board representation included.
- 108 ➤ More conversation was held regarding how to nurture relationships with the various organizations.  
109 The suggestion is that relationships don't all have to include board representation.

110 **ACTION: Doug to rework the Nominating Committee role description and bring it back in January.**

111  
112 **g. MC Canada CPT representative – Esther Kern, Valley View Menn. London, ON**

113 **Note:** accepted/carried in Executive Minister's report.

114  
115 **h. Shared Revenue Agreement – Regional Reporting**

116 Each Moderator gave their approval to the operating agreement. Due to complexity, concern was  
117 expressed on the best way to communicate this with the constituency.

118 **CONSENSUS: Re-Affirmation with all parties concerned, to be implemented in this next fiscal budget year and**  
119 **going forward.**

120  
121 **i. Operating Agreement**

122 Section 10: suggest dropping 10.6, the importance of communicating with Regional Church leadership  
123 prior to speaking in a congregation, ensuring an open relationship. It is understood that Doug can speak  
124 directly with congregations when he is approached.

125 Sections 12 13: discussion on the complexity of the different ways each Regional Church works and  
126 ambiguity on those who have an advising role with EM and Joint Council. The word "leader" adds to the  
127 confusion. A desire for a mechanism in which to work closely with pastors. Establish CLM as a program  
128 of MC Canada rather than as part of operations, a function within MC Canada for credentialing,  
129 resourcing, and building community. COSL is seen as a think-tank with a link across the nation, not an  
130 implementation group. Openness for communication and advice from the group.

131 **ACTION: remove 12&13, add a line re the existence of CLM, COSL.**

132 **ACTION: Need to review and edit the COSL document that was accepted by JC on June 27, 2020 with a revision**  
133 **on Jan. 12, 2021.**

134  
135 **j. MC Canada Covenant revision and re-signing**

136 Statement of Identity and Purpose to be included. Note that the focus of covenant can feel like it is  
137 more between MC Canada and the regions, rather than all regions covenanting with each other. Ensure  
138 language addresses this while staying true to MC Canada's Identity and Purpose.

139 **ACTION: rework a few points within the covenant to take to regional churches for review, and bring it back to**  
140 **the January meeting. The principle of the document stays the same.**

141 **CONSENSUS: Existing Covenant be extended for another year, and set up the covenant for review in 5-year**  
142 **periods.**

143  
144 **LUNCH**

- 145 k. **Misconduct policy** – to be ready for inclusion at the MCUSA delegate meeting in July 2023. The first  
146 draft will be ready for late November for the Binational Ministers/Leaders (MC Canada/MC USA)  
147 meetings.

148 *Discussion on the process:* The Joint Executive Council adopts the policy, which then goes to regions for  
149 affirmation. Concern expressed that Regional Church delegate bodies are not just ‘rubber-stamping’.

150  
151 **I. Gathering Report Summary and Table Discussion Responses**

152 Discussion on ‘two tiered’ system of delegate work and gathering for worship.

153 Initially decided that the focus of the Gathering was to worship/learn and resource each other, thus  
154 separating the delegate meeting. Further comments on what we want of pastors/what we do at  
155 gatherings/current structure.

156  
157 **5) Strategic Matters**

158 **a. Strategic Planning - Proposal for proceeding**

159 *Group discussion/assignment:* Draw how you understand the organization including those things that  
160 are directly or indirectly connected, to help understand who we are and what we are. 3 questions (pg  
161 45) are to be discussed.

162 *Report back/discussion:* Challenge of indicating authority line vs accountability line. Various images  
163 were used in charts: circular/boxes/images of the tree, and some that indicate reality, others whom we  
164 ‘aspire’ to be.

165 Responses to questions:

- 166 1. *Internal & External stakeholders.* Visioning needs to be done by Internal (as  
167 staff/councils/congregations) and then work at relating with external groups. When  
168 communicating with congregations, it’s taking a listening stand, then reflecting back on what  
169 we’ve heard, and listening for clarification. The core of the plan stems from listening to the  
170 constituency. Question of how priorities of the regions relate with the MC Canada’s priority.  
171 The roots of the strategic plan begin here (at the Council level), consulting with Internal  
172 Stakeholders. Questions around scope were asked.
- 173 2. *Who approves MC Canada’s Strategic Plan?* We have set our vision, and mission (identity and  
174 purpose), so we now need to work on our priorities/goals/objectives. Take into account the  
175 priorities we heard this summer: ISR, Climate Change, Intercultural Church, Int’l Witness,  
176 Leadership, yet not lose sight of the larger responsibility to articulate what it means to be the  
177 church. A strategic plan/priority does not need to go to regional delegates, but to MC Canada  
178 Delegate meeting in June.
- 179 3. *Timeline?* What is MC Canada’s role in enabling the entire system to work at these priorities?  
180 Identify priorities and then create a strategic plan around these. Keep priority language – and  
181 invite congregations to plug in. Since 2007, MC Canada’s priorities have been Forming a  
182 People of God – Becoming a Global Church – Grow Leaders for the Future (pg. 52 docket).  
183 Some incongruence around how the budget reflects these. It was noted that when putting  
184 money into something, it becomes our priority.

185 **ACTION: JC Executive creates a draft of Nationwide Priorities and brings a draft to the January meeting.**  
186 **Then bring Strategic Plan to June Delegate meeting.**  
187

188 **b. Philippines – Peacebuilders Coffee for Peace**

189 Doug provided an update on the ministry in the Philippines sharing the highlights of the ministry  
190 and also some areas that need further clarification before a capital campaign could be  
191 undertaken.  
192

193 **BREAK**  
194

195 **6) Regional Church Moderator Reports**

196 a. MCBC – Gerry Grunau

- 197 i. Covid restrictions in BC have been relaxed, with apprehension. Most masks have been  
198 discarded, potlucks resumed and online options continue.
- 199 ii. The camping season at Camp Squeah had a huge number of campers with retirees coming in to  
200 assist staff.
- 201 iii. The second round of interviews for an MCBC Executive Minister is taking place.
- 202 iv. Kelowna First Mennonite Church decided to sell their building, but they still want to be a  
203 congregation and seek resources from CommonWord to help small congregations continue on  
204 without a building;
- 205 v. Garry finishes in December as EM. We are grateful for his gracious willingness to postpone his  
206 retirement date.

207 b. MCA – Brenda Tiessen-Wiens

- 208 i. Congregations are in transition. Holyrood, an intercultural church, has invited Suzanne Gross  
209 and Joon Park to serve as pastors. First Mennonite has called a person. Foothills needs a .5 FTE  
210 person. Other churches are discerning the future.
- 211 ii. MCA now has more of a staff presence. Suzanne Gross is the ½ FTE Bridgebuilding Facilitator  
212 with other interfaith groups and equipping congregations in intercultural work and interfaith  
213 work. Regular staff meetings are helping to grow connections in the team.
- 214 iii. Edmonton S. Sudanese church has concern for people in refugee camps in Ethiopia. This  
215 developed into MCA providing financial assistance for 2 students to attend Meserete Kristos  
216 Seminary. This is facilitated by DeJongs. Students committed to returning to provide leadership  
217 and training. Everyone is thrilled.
- 218 iv. MCA is behind in meeting the budget and will be working intentionally to catch up.

219  
220  
221 c. MCSK – Terry Stefaniuk

- 222 i. Andrea Enns-Gooding, pastor of Rosthern Mennonite Church, member of MC Sask Council is  
223 attending this meeting as a stand-in regional representative.

- 224 ii. Congregations are gathering in person once again with some trepidation.
- 225 iii. Camping programs operated closer to what they were prior to COVID. Camps in general faced  
226 some difficulty recruiting counselors due to the gap in counselors-in-training. A consultant was  
227 hired to guide the camp consultation process to develop an overview and direction of the  
228 camping program. The report is scheduled to be presented at the March 2023 ADS.
- 229 iv. Rosthern High School has seen a continued increase in enrolment, with enrolment approaching  
230 100 students after dipping to 64 students. Recruitment staff and school leadership have worked  
231 hard.
- 232 v. Council is considering a number of options to fill the MC Sask EM position at the Oct. 11  
233 meeting. We ask for your prayers in this time of uncertainty and possible candidates.
- 234 vi. Josh Wallace will be reducing his time as interim executive minister to .3FTE beginning October  
235 1st. At the end of December will return to a church engagement focus.
- 236 d. MCM – Gerald Gerbrandt
- 237 i. The MCM board retreat was held in Sept. Doug was there for ½ for brainstorming on  
238 congregational health and to discuss the Covenant, Operating Agreement, SRA, and  
239 International Witness. 3 new staff members (Melanie Neufeld, Church Engagement, Karen  
240 Schellenberg, and Jeff Friesen, Church Leadership Ministers) made presentations. There was a  
241 lot of good energy.
- 242 ii. Many MCM congregations are looking for leadership. Many congregations are asking “Who are  
243 we once the pandemic is over”? Questions of viability exist in some congregations.
- 244 iii. Camp numbers were strong. Lost 1 week due to Covid. Volunteers have not come back, so there  
245 were more positions hired.
- 246 iv. Financially MCM is behind where anticipated. There is still hope to catch up by year-end.  
247 Steinbach Mennonite Church has sold their building and bought a smaller building and now has  
248 the resources to hire a pastor. Sean East’s resignation affects MCM. Zachary Entz is taking  
249 Sean’s role.
- 250 v. Gerald attended the funeral of his uncle – George Groening, the oldest ordained minister in MC  
251 Canada a and key person involved at the beginning of the Mennonite Pioneer Mission.
- 252 e. MCEC – Arli Klassen
- 253 i. Financial: Some congregational giving is behind what we expected but may catch up by year-end.
- 254 ii. Ministry: Pastoral training workshops are continuing this fall, including the Transitioning into  
255 Ministry Program and other workshops through the Learning Commons and INNOVATE.
- 256 iii. INNOVATE is on track to develop into a fully independent organization, with its own charitable  
257 status.
- 258 iv. 17 provisional and full membership congregations in Ottawa and East, many in Montreal &  
259 Quebec City with the need to be connected, supported and resourced as francophone pastors –  
260 i.e., Transition in Ministry Program.

- v. An established non-denominational LGBTQ+ affirming congregation in Waterloo recently initiated a conversation with MCEC about exploring membership. This congregation is unique in that it is MCEC's stance on LGTBQ+ inclusion that is a primary reason for seeking membership.
- vi. Staff changes: MCEC part-time youth events coordinator Katie Goertzen Sheard ended in August. In the interim MCEC is partnering with Rockway to run a youth event in the new year, and start peer resourcing groups for youth pastors and leaders.
- vii. Sean resigned from MCEC's part-time financial role and took a full-time financial director position elsewhere. Working with an accounting/book-keeping firm for interim support.
- viii. Leah Reesor-Keller resigned a week ago as Executive Minister. John Reimer, our Operations Director, will become Acting Executive Minister when Leah leaves on Oct 14. Recommendations are accepted for an Intentional Interim Executive Minister for a period of at least a year.

**7) Closing – Brenda Tiessen-Wiens**

**DINNER**

**October 1, 2022**

**8) Welcome – Geraldine Balzer**

**9) Opening Worship – Arli Klassen/Doug Klassen**

Being World Communion Sunday, Arli led us in a reflection on the various meanings of communion and Doug shared stories of special periods of communion and holy times in the Philippines. Communion ritual was held.

**10) Generative time – breakout discussion**

A review of the minutes of the Delegate meeting held at the Gathering. A correction was noted for item 3.E.i

**a. Gatherings. Why do we do them?**

- i. *Why?* Worship and work are one (though potential to do the financial work separately but keeping this info before people). Importance of interaction with people coming together from across the nation, emphasizing Peoplehood. Indigenous understanding of Gathering is a focus.
- ii. *Where?* Negativity about hotels, in part due to cost (food, IT, lodging) with a desire to look at other locations, such as our schools. Facilities will need IT access, including virtual participation. Who attends will factor into the decision as to where. Who attends depends on the focus of the gathering. If only people going are on subsidies, need to change the cost factor.
- iii. *When? Who?* "A microcosm of doing life together as a diverse, intergenerational, intercultural church." Thus, summer is a better time to get a larger group. Is the process as much a part of it as the event, the ministry of this gathering? The desire for more pastors to be present/involved.
- iv. *Delegate Sessions.* Clarity of role is important, and the question of rubber stamping or engaging. As council – what issues are we working through where we can use the discernment of delegates? What questions about MC Canada should be happening in the Regions? Questions on how to bring questions/issues that come up here into our regions. Setting up delegates as a separate piece, and then developing the gathering as a celebration of being the body together. Possibilities were explored.
- v. *Youth Leadership Experience:* Naming this group as Young Adults, rather than youth. Selection is made due to involvement within the local church. They engaged well in the larger sessions. Lack of visibility could be improved with a special sign or button. Suggestion to extend a similar

306 invitation for Young Adults at our regional gatherings, and then involve them in  
307 planning/execution of future gatherings.

308 *Discussion:* Leaning towards a smaller, delegate meeting to work through the By-law type of  
309 requirements, then structure the 'Gathering' event, encouraging all pastors to come together.  
310 Need to work on communication through the Regional Gatherings – where the churches have a  
311 direct link to this Council. Importance of building peoplehood through Worship, ensuring Christ  
312 is the centre and core of the gathering.  
313

314 **b. Theme for Gathering 2024**

315 *Testing the theme:* Each has a Gift – Becoming an Intercultural Church, guided by 1 Peter 4:10-11.  
316 Caution expressed regarding "Intercultural" tending to focus on non-Caucasian. Work with language -  
317 Welcoming God's many people - Exploring our postures of openness. (Cultural/race/sexuality) Desire to  
318 get into spaces where we are embracing diversity, with a focus on what creates unity. Metaphors:  
319 Canadian Mosaic - includes the 'division' of the many colors. Weaving the People of God – emphasizes  
320 all threads being important – the beauty of weaving is due to the diversity of threads used. Affirmation  
321 of bringing people groups together.  
322

323 *To be considered:* Affordability; ample space/time for discussion/discernment in a forum-type format;  
324 greater emphasis on worship/work as one; delegates potentially meet separately (if only working on By-  
325 Law requirements, or find ways to engage more specifically in issues.)  
326

327 **11) Upcoming Agenda**

328 **a. Items to consider for future meetings**

- 329 1. Strategic Planning
- 330 2. Gathering 2024 planning

331 **b. Items for Regional Church Boards to process for next Joint Council Meeting**

- 332 1. Covenant review
  - 333 2. MWC Fair Share
- 334

335 **12) Next Meetings**

- 336 a. Sat, Jan 28 & Sun, Jan 29 afternoon, only if needed (ZOOM)
  - 337 b. May 6-7, 2023 Saskatchewan, to be confirmed by MCSK Council (In person)
  - 338 c. June 17, AGM (ZOOM)
  - 339 d. October 14-15, 2023 Winnipeg
- 340

341 **13) Closing: Yoel Trakoon Masyawong**

342 We are called to live between times. Living in faithfulness, as we embrace our past & recognize our hope, which  
343 lies in the richness of the meaning of diversity, meaning of community, and the meaning of love. Philipians 3:7-  
344 16 As leaders we are called to encourage people to live more fully in Christ. Closing in Prayer.  
345

346 **14) In Camera**