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As each year draws to a close the celebration of Christmas reminds us of God's presence, entering the world in new ways in the form of a tiny baby. The birth of Jesus is known as the coming of "Emmanuel", a name which means "God with us".

As I reflect on all that has happened within our MCA faith family this past year, it is so appropriate to do so through the lens of the Christmas season and its affirmation of God's presence. Through the blessings and challenges of life, God has been present in so many ways as we **Reconnect, Reset, and Renew.**

Reconnect:

After 3 straight years of zoom meetings and limited gatherings, **Springridge Mennonite Church** reminded us of the joy of being together in their hosting of the **Annual Delegate Sessions (ADS)** March 17-18. Highlights included:

- ▶ 66 participants enjoying the warm hospitality of the Springridge congregation, who made everyone feel welcomed and cared for. They added personal touches to our meetings, as well as adding a Saturday games night and Sunday worship experience for those who were able to stay.
- ▶ Guest speaker Joe Heikman presented messages of **"Hope and Trust during a time of Transition"**, sharing stories and scriptures of how we can trust God to be present even during trying times.
- ▶ Delegates made important decisions including resolutions, spending decisions, and feedback on priority areas for MCA ministries



In April **A Taste of MCA** brought people together to **Bergthol** church for a spectacular time of food and music from a variety of cultures represented within our MCA faith community. There are plans to host this event again in 2024, this time early in the fall.

Throughout the summer months and through rentals year-round **Camp Valaqua** brought people together to experience God in creation. Highlights were the annual Hike-a-thon and Garden Party in June, and of course the summer program that touched the lives of campers, staff, and volunteers.



In November **Fun and Fundraising** events in **Edmonton** and **Calgary** brought people together where they enjoyed entertainment from a Cowboy Poet to Barbershop Quartet to Jazz Duo and a variety of other musical ensembles; stories of the impacts of MCA and our nationwide MC Canada community of faith; and fundraising through silent auction and generous giving. A **Coffee and Conversation** event in **Lethbridge** nurtured further relationships and connection to the ministries we share.

MCA is...

- **12** congregations worshipping in 5 languages
- **900** members and **1300** church participants
- **24** pastors, credentialed leaders, and year-round ministry staff
- **5** regions in covenant as MC Canada, our nationwide family of **202** congregations
- part of Mennonite World Conference, which includes **109** national churches from **86** countries

MCA's Vision is...

"...to be a community of Anabaptist-Mennonite congregations worshipping the one holy and loving God. Joined together in Jesus Christ, we are guided by the Holy Spirit and scripture as we seek to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace. Together we seek to embody Jesus Christ in the world."

MCA Constitution



Throughout the year **A Window Into** featured the 12 congregations of MCA in prayer notes, short videos, and stories, renewing our connection to each other.

Reset:

At the ADS in March MCA marked the conclusion of the **E3 Action Plan: Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ in life, in community, in the world**. While the theme may have concluded, E3 will remain as a milestone on the journey represented by these words as we continue to seek Christ together. Since E3's conclusion MCA leadership has been focusing on who we are as congregations, individuals, and broader church connections that form our MCA faith family. Priorities include centring our faith in Christ as we **support congregations, nurture connections, and celebrate faith in action**.

In July MCA bid farewell to **Steve Guigovaz**, thanking him for his 2 years of service as **Church Engagement Minister**. This role remains vacant as MCA Executive re-evaluates how to best meet the goals of connecting congregations, building relationships with our shared ministries, and generating financial support.

The diversity of cultures present within MCA and our society emphasize the calling to become ever more united in Christ.

- The **Bridge Building** ministry continues to recognize the desire to develop intercultural and interfaith relationships. A highlight included the annual Muslim-Christian dialogue in Edmonton, which featured Indigenous leadership. Other Indigenous connections within MCA included re-engagement of the Buffalo Shout group in Calgary, and the continued work of Indigenous Relations nationwide through MC Canada.
- At the **ADS sessions at Holyrood Church** in March, the speaker Joon Park will focus on themes related to becoming ever more an intercultural church.

Renew:

MCA walks with congregations through the challenges of being the church in today's world.

- Hope for the future has been building at **Holyrood Mennonite** through the stability and guidance provided by Joon Park and Suzanne Gross as interim pastors. MCA continues to walk with Holyrood as it discerns its leadership needs.
- Jerry Buhler has begun part-time interim work at **Trinity Mennonite**. We continue to seek additional pastoral support during this time of leadership transition.
- Pastoral vacancies at **Foothills** and **First Edmonton** were filled by **Aiden Scherzinger** and **Debbie Bledsoe** respectively.
- A small amount of financial support has been provided for **Pastor Mezgebu** to assist **Bethel International** during its post-pandemic recovery.
- Preparations are underway for walking with **Bergthal Mennonite** as its pastor **Anna-Lisa Salo** looks to take on a chaplaincy role in Ontario in the summer of 2024.



Other nationwide ministries include the **CommonWord Resource Centre**; **International Witness** relationships in 15 countries, a Climate Action coordinator working with **Creation Care** networks in most regions, and a **Palestine-Israel Network** seeking peace for all in the Middle East.

Pastoral leadership, credentialing, accountability, and support are key elements of our relationship as part of the nationwide church. An Associate Executive Minister has been hired by MC Canada to work in this area.

We live in a world in desperate need of peace, hope, and blessing. I pray that as 2024 unfolds we as the church may increasingly open ourselves to Christ, alive and at work in the world, and with it the promise of God's presence, where-ever God's spirit may lead!

Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, Executive Minister, MCA

For more information about these and other ministries we share as **MCA** and **MC Canada** check out mcab.ca and mennonitechurch.ca