

Mennonite Church Canada Listening Committee

Listening Committee Members:

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Report #1 Monday evening, compiled by Randy Klaassen.

July 7, 2008

- 1) The opportunity for delegate feed back appears to be appreciated by the delegates. This was evident by the quick stream of respondents to the microphones.
- 2) We are growing as a multicultural church family. There appears to be more representation at these church sessions, which we celebrate. The Listening Committee observed the use of multiple languages in worship with appreciation. How will the conference encourage further integration of cultures and languages? The Listening Committee encourages the mixing of delegates with those we don't know yet.
- 3) The Listening Committee heard affirmations for national and international service opportunities for young adults. The Listening Committee encourages delegates to consider re-evaluation of the funding levels of Mennonite Voluntary Service and "Radical Journey" to strengthen these avenues of ministry.

Call To Prayer:

The Listening Committee calls delegates to share in prayers of celebration for the developments in Vietnam, for the training of pastoral leaders and the planting of new congregations. We praise God for the recent building of trust between government bodies and the church.

We further call delegates to prayer of discernment regarding the ministry avenues for young adults, particularly with regards to Mennonite Voluntary Service and "Radical Journey."

Prayer led by Judith Doell.

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Report #2 Tuesday late afternoon, compiled by Randy Klaassen.
July 8, 2008

Peace Witness

We recognize the value of walking with our ecumenical ministry partners in naming the gospel of peace as a wider church issue.

We celebrate the encouragement and sense the challenge given to us by our ministry partners. Raquel Contreras, President of the Baptist Union of Chile left us with a particular challenge with these words:

“When I think about what you (Mennonite Church Canada) are doing, keep doing it, and do it better, for the glory of God.”

We also heard the challenge from Jack Suderman, from Raquel Contreras, and from delegates that to be a people of peace begins in our own context of family, congregational and community life.

The Listening Committee understands there are dissenting voices to the way of peace within our congregations, and we wonder if the assembly sessions are a safe place to voice that dissent?

Faith and Life Committee

In the discussion of confessing Jesus Christ in a pluralistic world perhaps others would respect us more if we were clearer about our faith being grounded in Jesus.

We have heard affirmations for the setting and the efforts to make this an environmentally green assembly. We especially acknowledge those who took seriously the call to use alternative methods of transportation of travel to attend these sessions.

The Listening Committee observed with appreciation the way aspects of worship were woven into all facets of our sessions. We encourage continuation of this practice of worship and work being one.

Prayer led by Judith Doell.

[Note: There were many good comments offered late Tuesday afternoon, which preceded the committee's report, and not included.]

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Mennonite Church Canada Listening Committee

Session #2 Monday afternoon

NOTES: Open Microphone

Gospel of Peace – as a church witness to the wider community.

Concern over low budget amount for MVS administration.

Support of Aboriginal ministry especially in light of recent political apology. Request for Mennonite Church Canada need to take ownership of aspects of the apology.

Request for statistics for MC Canada growth.

Question of mission workers. Program of mission interns “radical journey” international teams for up to one year. Currently not a discussion of joint ownership with MCC regarding programs. We do communicate, but not participation.

Vietnam Church planting vision of 200 churches over a ten year period.

MVS in survival mode, Toronto and Winnipeg; Lethbridge and Montreal. Needs a new identity/vision/branding. Encouraged by development of “radical journey” but need more.

Vietnam needs training of pastors. House church development; 80 churches registered with government. Beginning to develop trust with government, and less persecution than in recent past.

Response to question of numbers – could be needed to develop data base of information. Last data was from 1989. R&D to help us know who we are, and to watch trends of where we need to be. We don’t have funding to “Lilly Foundation,” and perhaps there is someone who could (?)

Nominating Committee

Surprise when someone calls to indicate interest in serving the church.

Pastoral Trends Survey Findings

Ministry of growing leaders. Growing new pastors, and growing current pastors for healthy ministry/relationships.

Dieter – video clip of advertisement of herding cats.

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Invitation to active participation to note encouragement for future/current/past pastors. Ministry is a people thing, which brings both stress and joy.

Raised question of how to support the pastor's spouse, as the spouse is a critical person regarding call and sustaining ministry.

What makes fertile ground for pastoral formation?

What increases the congregational capacity for feeding and sustaining thriving pastors?

Comments:

Want a more complete summary. Abe Bergen has the results.

Pastoral calling is formed at an early age. How pastoral formation might be encouraged at an early age through Christian Education. Elsie Rempel works at formation for children.

How do we nurture a call to the church ministry? What are the gifts to be named for children?

Tradition of seminary training is a 'blip' in our Mennonite history. How might we dig into our own heritage – the gifts of the laity – and how that shapes pastors? How might we make the seminary resources more broadly available to the church?

How might congregations share pastoral resources in the future? We need to be aware of the need to call pastors from within our own congregations.

Expectations of congregations often not aligned with what seminary or universities are teaching.

Encourage psychological testing when a pastor moves from one church to another to ensure past experience is dealt with. (Churches should be subject to same scrutiny.)

Note: When an auto-mechanic trains to become licensed, they are required to be in a working environment first, prior to academic training which supports their work experience. With our current training model, we typically expect a person to be fully trained with an MDiv. before they are allowed to work as a pastor.

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Session #4 Tuesday morning

NOTES: From Monday evening, recognition of Creation Care.

Un-sung heroes:

Our older generations (esp. those 75 yr +), who unknowingly taught the 3-R's.

Reduce – so there is more to share.

Reuse – so as to value what you have, and treat it well.

Recycle – so as to fix things,

rather than replace by buying the same thing new.

First Nations Peoples, who knowingly taught us ...

The land does not belong to us, but is a gift for all.

That sharing is not our gift but our responsibility, so everyone has enough.

Creation Care Guide can be found at www.mennocreation.org

The Osler resolution, “Call to promote the peace message in the public square.”

- Affirmation of the resolution. “What might be different if forgiveness and peace had been the response to 9-11?”

- Noted how willing politicians are to shed blood by Canadian young adults, using “redemptive violence.”

- Strong need to communicate with images/pictures.

- Don't 'study' how to promote the peace message; just do it because the need is urgent!

The peace message is part of the core of who we are. A response is urgent.

- Military promotion targeting children with aggressive and uses 'freebies' attractive to children. The response must be urgent.

Talking about the way of Jesus as a way of peace, how do we engage the dissenting voices among our congregations without succumbing to a response of redemptive violence?

Mennonite World Conference

Image of the church (from Fredrik Buekner) as a pile of manure. When it's piled high the smell is equally high. But when you spread it out there are nutrients and roots find life and growth.

Various church leaders expressing appreciation for Mennonite Church peace message.

How might MC Canada express 'grief' over the deaths of Canadian soldiers, while affirming their lives and names the alternative of a restorative justice without violence?

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Session #5 Tuesday mid-morning

NOTES:

Union Baptist Evangelical Church

“To be a peace church we are working toward eliminating gossip from our churches.” (There was a collective ‘gasp’ from delegates.)

“When I think about what you (Mennonite Church Canada) are doing, keep doing it, and do it better.”

“What are the implications of Jesus’ life and death with regards to being a peace church?”

What are the behaviors within our congregations which need to be addressed with regards to peace and non-violence?

Many aspects of “Christian media” support militarization. How might MC Canada counter that message?

There is an importance on telling current stories of peacemaking. How might MC Canada help facilitate that for local congregations?

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Session #7 Tuesday afternoon

God what do you want me to do? What is MC Canada doing to converse with people of Gay & Lesbian orientation?

There is a variety of response. On behalf of General Board we have talked a fair amount about the pain being experienced in our congregations. 1986 Saskatoon resolution called for on-going discussion. From General Board meetings there is support to continue a long term plan for discussions. Desire to put in place a longer term process (unknown at this time, but have made a commitment to put it in place.) Conference Ministers will be establishing pastoral guidelines for care of people of Gay and Lesbian orientation.

I would hope for forgiveness for past hurtful things having been said from Christians to other Christians. I would hope that congregations would be in discussion with people of Gay and Lesbian orientation.

How do churches support people who are ‘bullied’ in the work-place? The peace stance is not a security blanket, nor ...

Our institutions seem to be thriving, while the ‘church’ seems to be flat lined. Congregations need empowerment to do the work of God in the world.

Desire to plant a seed. Why do we refuse to fight war, while we pay for it? What would happen if we “Mennonite Church Canada” withhold taxes for war?

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Concern for U.S. conscientious objectors who are faced with deportation from Canada. What can we do?

Who is training our pastors? Call for new pastors to have a minimum of one hour of CPE to support their training.

When we address pastoral needs, and try to encourage young adults to consider pastoral ministry, we must also articulate a vision of what we are calling them to.

In British Columbia we found the re-covenanting process helpful in naming what we commit to each other, and to post that somewhere in the church building.

Being environmental 'green' is important for congregations, but how might we communicate to governments with a theological basis.

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