

95th Annual Delegate Sessions

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Breaking Down Gathering Up



**Mennonite
Church**
Alberta

Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton
MARCH 15-16, 2024



MCA STAFF

Tim Wiebe-Neufeld	<i>Executive Minister</i>
Ruth Bergen Braun	<i>Communications Coordinator</i>
Suzanne Gross	<i>Bridge Building Facilitator</i>
Jeff Schellenberg	<i>Manager, Camp Valaqua</i>
Jon Olfert	<i>Director, Camp Valaqua</i>
Highside Solutions	<i>Contract Treasurer</i>

MCA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Brenda Tiessen-Wiens	<i>Moderator</i>
Linden Willms	<i>Vice Moderator</i>
<i>Vacant</i>	<i>Finance Chair</i>
Doug Wiebe	<i>Personnel (interim member)</i>
Elizabeth Wall	<i>Secretary</i>
Tim Wiebe-Neufeld	<i>Executive Minister</i>

GENERAL COUNCIL

Jan Wilhelm	<i>Nominating</i>
Doug Wiebe	<i>Personnel</i>
Darrel Heidebrecht	<i>Camp Valaqua</i>
Karen Janz	<i>Community Building & Program</i>
Marie Moyer	<i>Mission & Service</i>
Timothy Burkholder	<i>Congregational Leadership</i>
Margaret Kruger-Harder	<i>Regional Church Rep to Joint Council</i>

JOINT COUNCIL

Brenda Tiessen-Wiens	<i>Moderator</i>
Margaret Kruger-Harder	<i>Regional Church Rep to Joint Council</i>



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Robert's Rules of Order

Mennonite Church Alberta (MCA) follows Robert's Rules of Order to maintain courteous and orderly discussion and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to speak.

1. All motions will be moved and seconded, followed by discussion.
2. The mover has the first privilege of speaking, followed by the seconder. It is preferable that those speaking in opposition to the motion will alternate with those speaking for the motion.
3. Each speaker to a motion will be limited to two (2) minutes. Speakers may speak a second time, but only after everyone has had an opportunity to speak once.
4. If no one wishes to speak against a motion, the Moderator will call for the vote.
5. Amendments require a mover and seconder. An amendment can be amended after it has been approved. Only one amendment or motion may be considered at a time.
6. The order of presentation of the resolutions will be decided by the MCA Executive.
7. Delegates may refer to the Moderator on points of privilege or information.
8. It is the privilege of any delegate to move the previous question if they consider that the discussion has been prolonged. However, a delegate will not be allowed to move the previous question while speaking to a motion, thus in effect ending the discussion.
9. Officials will be given time to make necessary explanations.
10. Guests have the privilege of the floor, but do not have voting privileges.
11. Ordinary resolutions require a 50% plus one of the majority of votes cast by eligible delegates. Special resolutions require 75% of those entitled to vote and present in person.

Agenda

Friday, March 15

7:30 – 9:00

Opening of Sessions & Welcome

Gathering Song

Call to worship & prayer

Praise songs & offering

Scripture reading: Ephesians 2:13-22

Guest Speaker: Joon Park

Embarking a new journey to become an intercultural church

Small group discussion, sharing & prayer

MCA Milestones

Presentation of Nominees

Youth Quiz

Announcements & Benediction

Hymn

Saturday, March 16

8:30 – 9:00

Registration

9:00 – 9:55

Opening & Worship

Sharing & praying

Scripture Reading: Galatians 2:11-14

Guest speaker & discussion: Joon Park

Embracing a disruptive journey

9:55 – 10:10

Break

10:10 – 11:15

Business Session 1

Introduction of guests

CMU & RJC greetings

Year in Review

Resolution #1 - March 17-18, 2023 minutes
Resolution #2 - 2023 Financial Review
Presentation of 2024 Budget
Mennonite Church Canada sharing
MC BC sharing

11:15 – 12:00 **Break-out Sessions**

12:00 – 1:00 **Lunch**

1:00 – 1:45 **Break-out Sessions**

1:45 – 2:25 **Worship**
Hymn
Scripture Reading. Rev 7:9-10
Guest Speaker and discussion: Joon Park
Envisioning a journey that is not finished yet

2:25 – 2:40 **Break**

2:40 – 4:00 **Business Session 2**
Report Book Q&A time
Round Table Discussions
Resolution #3 - 2024 Budget
Resolution #4 - Nominations
Commissioning of Volunteers
Hymn & offering
Announcements
Prayer & closing

MCA ADS 2023 Minutes

Forty-four delegates represented ten congregations.

Friday, March 17

7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Opening of sessions

Opening words

Parliamentarian: Paul Neufeldt (Lethbridge)

Resolutions Committee: Darrel Heidebrecht (Foothills), Anna-Lisa Salo (Bergthal)

Introduction of *Springridge Mennonite Church*

Guest Speaker - Joe Heikman *Undoing and Remaking*

Presentation of Nominees

Currently, our committee make-up/those taking an additional term (blue)/slate of new nominees (red) include:

Executive Committee (4 positions plus Executive Minister: Tim Wiebe- Neufeld)

Moderator Brenda Tiessen-Wiens (3rd term) 2024

Vice Moderator Peter Sang (2nd term) 2025

Secretary Elizabeth Wall (3rd term) 2024

Finance Chair _____ 2026

Personnel Committee (1 position)

Doug Wiebe (2nd term) 2024

Finance Committee (2 positions needed)

_____ 2026-proposed three year

_____ 2025

Congregational Leadership Committee (3 positions plus Executive Minister)

Anna-Lisa Salo (3rd term) 2025

Caleb Kowalko (1st term) 2024

Tim Burkholder (1st term) 2025

Community Building and Program Committee (3 positions)

Karen Janz (3rd term) 2024

Charlotte Wiens (1st term) 2024

Adela Wedler (1st term) 2025

Missions & Service Committee (4 positions)

Jake Froese (3rd term) 2024

Riek Tut (3rd term) 2024

Marie Moyer (able to accept first year of 2nd term at this point) 2024

Tracy Brown Ewert 2025

Camp Valaqua Committee (5 positions)

Albert Goerzen (3rd term) 2024

Kathryn Friesen (2nd term) 2024

Christine Hansplant (3rd term) 2025

Darrel Heidebrecht (2nd term) 2025

Liam Kachkar (1st term) 2025

Nominations Committee (1 position needed)

Jan Wilhelm (1st term) 2024

Joani Neufeldt (1st term) 2025

- Canadian Mennonite Representative [Art Koop \(3rd term\) 2026](#)
- Joint Council Representative [Margaret Kruger- Harder \(3rd term\) 2025](#)
- Palestine Israel Network of Mennonite Church Canada (Rep.) [Suzanne Gross \(2nd term\) 2025](#)
- MC Canada Nominating Committee [Joani Neufeldt \(1st term\)-affirm summer appointment 2025](#)
- CMU Board: Prairie Regions Representative (3 year term) Reece Zablocki 2024

Thank you to Ryan Dueck, Vince Friesen, Coreen Froese, Wayne Janz, Eric Peters, and Charlene Retzlaff who are finishing/stepping down. Your diligence and obvious commitment to MCA is appreciated. Thank you to those who have agreed to accept a new nomination or continue to serve for another term. Thank you to those who prayerfully considered accepting our request to let their name stand on a committee and could not do so at this time.

Milestones

Closing Worship

Saturday, March 18

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Opening & Worship

9:00 AM - 9:55 AM

Call to Worship

Sharing and Praying – Holyrood/Trinity

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 43:1-3a

Guest Speaker - Joe Heikman *The darkness of the tomb*

Break

9:55 AM -10:10 AM

Business Session 1

10:10 AM - 11:15 AM

Introduction of Guests

Mennonite Church Canada: Doug Klassen; Jeanette Hanson, Jonathan Neufeld.

Canadian Mennonite: Tobi Tiessen.

Mennonite Central Committee Alberta: Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, Jose Luis Moraga.

Mennonite Mutual Insurance: Marguerite Jack.

Canadian Mennonite University: Reynold Friesen.

RJC High School: Alex Tiessen.

Resolution #1 - March 19, 2022 Minutes

1. Be it resolved that MCA approve the minutes from the March 19, 2022 Annual Delegate Sessions, as presented in the Report Book.

Moved: Elizabeth Wall, First Mennonite Edmonton

Seconded: Karen Janz, First Mennonite Calgary

Carried.

Year in Review - Ruth Bergen Braun

Resolution #2 - 2022 Financial Review

2. Be it resolved that MCA adopt the 2022 financial review, as presented, in lieu of a formal audit as per the MCA Constitution and Bylaws.

Moved: Wayne Janz, First Mennonite Calgary

Seconded: Darrel Heidebrecht, Foothills Calgary

Carried.

Report Book - Q&A Time

Further sharing on Holyrood Mennonite Church interim process by Joon Park.

Q: Has Camp considered offering another family camp? A: Yes, it has been considered and do want to expand, perhaps in 2024.

Q: Shared Revenue Agreement is based on the number of churches, but some of our congregations have small numbers. A: The percentages are taken from what was given historically and reduced them to even numbers. Will look at again and perhaps recalculate this year. Built in is a regular review.

Presentation of 2023 Budget

Mennonite Church Canada sharing - Jeanette Hanson, Doug Klassen
Sharing from MC Saskatchewan

Break-out Sessions

11:15 AM - 12 noon

Church Engagement/Communications
Bridge Building
MC Canada Indigenous Relations
Q & A with Joe Heikman

Lunch

12 noon - 1:00 PM

Break-out Sessions

1:00 PM - 1:45 PM

Camp Valaqua
Mission and Service
MCA Executive & Finance

Worship

1:45 PM - 2:25 PM

Offering & Hymn
Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:6-10
Guest Speaker - Joe Heikman *The darkness of the womb*

Break

2:25 PM - 2:40 PM

Business Session 2

2:40 PM - 4:00 PM

Sharing from Break-out sessions

Jake Froese (Trinity) M & S - Question from Joon Park: even as we seek to be culturally aware, it is not always welcome to hear that we are concerned with Indigenous Relations. We could be more hospitable to our own diverse cultures.

Reuben Tut (ESSMC) - thanks for support of South Sudanese. You may not know what we are going through. Since 2011 independence, we are still suffering, e.g. no hospital, school, basic necessities. Pray for peace. Is. 43:4 South Sudan is Cush.

Round Table Discussions

1. What has changed for you, your congregation, the broader church? What is the same? What would you like to celebrate about being the church right now?

Some people have not returned, though we have some new attendees. Zoom for worship and committee meetings. Hybrid worship likely to continue. Another got the wider community together on zoom, but now meets locally in person.

2. The priorities of MCA can be summed up as supporting congregations, nurturing connections, celebrating faith in action.

What are ways you have seen these priorities lived out?

A lot of that has been non-existent. Even before COVID, there was not enough celebrating. MCA not a household word like MCC in previous decades. COVID made us realize being together is important, yet people haven't come back: why not? Should be vocalized more in person as well as in *The Communiqué*. Failure of communication. Some feel connected to the congregation but are not attending. As congregations we don't know what it means to be part of MCA. MCA is not just the staff people; we are all MCA.

3. What are the biggest challenges facing your congregation right now? Committee positions not being filled. Transportation. Limited number of volunteers. Low attendance. 35 members, 23 avg. attendance, 8 committees.

Excited about A Taste of MCA. Wondering if 2 regional events would get more to attend.

Supporting Chin church with new building; assisting Holyrood in hiring interim pastors; planning to support Bethel Church in hiring a pastor. Should share more exciting things happening in our churches. Having more interactions between congregations, e.g. pulpit exchange with a carload of people. How do we create regular awareness of MCA?

Hope for the future through our inclusion of world faith communities.

Envious of Chin's youth.

Some families did not have computer access or internet, so zoom was not a godsend for them. Numbers are down, so what can we do cooperatively?

Celebrating racially diverse pastor group (Inter-Mennonite Edmonton).

Pessimism, disillusionment. Hard to find people to volunteer. Desire to be together again. God is with us though whatever transitions we have.

MCA needs to be a resource to its congregations, even if it means pointing them to other consultants or organizations. So meaningful when people share their personal stories, drew people together.

Celebrating *The Communiqué* nurturing connections. Youth from different congregations getting together at Snow Camp.

We are less formal but too comfortable staying home and not connecting sometimes. Celebrating coming back together. Joint services and meetings, gatherings in MCA. Encourage congregations to collaborate. Accept who we are instead of trying to mimic larger congregations. Challenges of time commitments, combat hopeless social media messages with hope.

Resolution #3 - 2023 Budget

3. Be it resolved that MCA adopt the 2023 budget, as presented in the Report Book.

Moved: Wayne Janz, First Mennonite Calgary

Seconded: Darrel Heidebrecht, Foothills Calgary

Discussion: Will Loewen (Trinity). Do not support budget. Not sustainable. Increased reliance on individual donations. Model developed from above in Winnipeg rather than from here from below makes it feel like a competitor.

Deb Baergen (Edmonton First). Q: What is our plan for having a balanced budget next year? A: We either increase our income or decrease our expenses. The approach we are adopting is to increase income. We look the information that was shared from congregations.

Bruce Baergen (Edmonton First): how do we fundraise without stepping on someone else's toes? All institutions and conference levels are asking that. Donors want their donations to go to specific places. Conversation that needs to happen is, How do we partner in this resourcing of the ministries we are doing?

Paul Neufeldt (Lethbridge): Community Building funds has increased from past years due to fundraising for student bursaries. A good deal of the funds go to hosting the ADS.

Carried.

Resolution #4 - 2023 Auditors

4. Be it resolved that MCA appoint Retzlaff and Wong as auditors for 2023.

Moved: Wayne Janz, First Mennonite Calgary

Seconded: Coreen Froese, Bergthal Didsbury

Discussion: Paul Neufeldt (Lethbridge): Q: Are they only auditing 2023 or both years? And is there a difference in expense? A: We are asking them to audit 2023. It would cost a little more because they would have to look at 2022 somewhat.

Carried.

Resolution #5 - Nomination

5. Be it resolved that MCA approve the Nominations, as presented.

Moved: Jan Wilhelm, First Mennonite Edmonton

Seconded: Karen Janz, First Mennonite Calgary

Carried.

Commissioning of Volunteers

Closing of Sessions

2024 MCA Resolutions

1. Be it resolved, that MCA approve the minutes from the March 17-18, 2023 Annual Delegate Sessions as presented in the Report Book.
2. Be it resolved, that MCA adopt the 2023 financial review as presented.
3. Be it resolved, that MCA adopt the 2024 budget as presented.
4. Be it resolved, that MCA approve the Nominations as presented.



Moderator's Report

This year, as I gaze at my computer screen and contemplate words and summary statements, I can't help but reflect on not just the past year, but on the last six years and the many experiences that have been a part of my time as moderator. The word "rich" doesn't begin to capture all that I've been a part of.



I've had the opportunity to worship in many of our churches and each time I'm struck by the uniqueness of each congregation in their style of worship and prayer, favourite songs, and the values and faith that's reflected in worship. As congregations take turns hosting delegate sessions, we get a taste of these different cultures, gifts and personalities that make up MCA.

Over six years, I've been in more meetings than I dare to venture counting. In each meeting, I learned something new - about a person or congregation, new ways to look at the past, or new ideas for the future. We worked through agendas and attended to business, but my lasting impressions are about the creative thoughts and energy that people brought to discussions, all because we care deeply about being the church together. With each ADS and new slate of nominees and with each pastoral transition, I'm encouraged that more and more people are drawn into the relationships that form us and that are an integral part of our congregational connections.

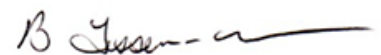
Have there been tough times in the past six years? Without a doubt. But with each challenge or situation that presented itself (I'm looking at you, COVID!), a group of people showed up who worked together to find paths forward. In our work and in supporting each other as committees, staff, pastors and delegates, we have grown, shaped each other and developed lasting bonds.

I won't pick up on all that 2023 asked of executive, but I'll include some key areas:

- We began the year without a finance chair and then the vice-moderator position also became vacant, leaving only three people on executive: Elizabeth Wall (secretary), Tim Wiebe-Neufeld and me. Linden Willms accepted the role of vice-moderator and Doug Wiebe (personnel) joined on an interim basis in late spring. I can't express enough appreciation for the thoughtfulness of executive members and the guidance they've offered. It can feel like a lot for a small group of people to carry, but we seem to make it work! Special thanks to General Council members, as well, who are creative and outward-looking as they share perspectives, history and vision.
- We worked through several staff transitions in 2023: Steven Guigovaz resigned as Church Engagement Minister and returned to Ontario with his family. We felt that given budget restraints, we should not immediately re-hire for this position, instead seeing how those responsibilities could be picked up by other staff. Tany Warkentin resigned as treasurer in fall and Highside Solutions Inc (Wayne & Austin Janz) was hired on a contract basis to fill this role.
- The MCA rep to the RJC board had been a part of the vice-moderator's role. We transitioned that into a rep position similar to what we do with CMU and Canadian Mennonite boards.
- A part of walking with Holyrood and Bethel in financial and pastoral support has included regular check-in times with congregational leaders. These check-ins have been a wonderful opportunity to be a small piece of a congregation's journey.

- Executive is available to committees for support. We worked with each committee on at least one occasion last year, either processing new items, working through concerns, and sometimes just bouncing ideas or lending an extra ear in a decision or in planning.
- In response to the conflict that broke out in Israel and Palestine in October, we wrote a letter to the Canadian government expressing our concerns and calling for our government to be a leader in bringing about a lasting peace for all in that region.
- In mid-January, executive and finance met with congregational chairs and treasurers for a time of sharing and checking in. I appreciate the openness of those who have participated in these meetings over the years. This has become an important part of strengthening ties among congregations and a place to test ideas and directions.
- When we ask people what they appreciate most about MCA, the occasions where we come together are always mentioned first. 2023 held numerous opportunities for growing together, including A Taste of MCA (April), Faith Studies (May), the Garden Party (June), the annual Christian/Muslim Dialogue (October), fall Fun & Fundraising events (November), online book studies hosted by Bridge Building and, of course, Annual Delegate Sessions in March!
- Together with other regions that make up MC Canada, we affirmed another three-year covenant with Canadian Mennonite. CM initiated meetings with regional leaders in fall; we had a vibrant and affirming discussion and look forward to the changes that CM is exploring.
- As moderator, I'm also a part of MC Canada's Joint Council along with Margaret Kruger-Harder, our MCA rep. That board has been working through clarifying several areas of governance and has also engaged in some great discussions about being the church and congregational life in our changing world.
- We did a more in-depth personnel review with Tim in January, inviting responses from several staff, pastors, and other individuals whom he works closely with. Tim brings many gifts, compassion, and a depth of experience to the many hats that he wears. We're privileged to have him as our executive minister and I invite your ongoing prayers and words of encouragement for Tim and for all of our MCA staff.

Blessings to all as we prepare for our time together!



Brenda Tiessen-Wiens, Moderator



Executive Minister Report

In recent months the presence of Christ has resonated deeply for me. At Christmas we celebrate “Emmanuel”, a name which means “God with us”. Jesus’ last words to his disciples include the promise, “Remember, I am with you always.” Through times of blessings and challenge, the promise of God’s presence in Christ gives assurance as we seek to be the church God is calling us to be!



As I reflect on the events of the past year I see so many ways in which God has been present with MCA as congregations, individuals, and in the ministries we share. These areas include:

► **Pastoral leadership.** Assisting in **pastoral searches** is a key part of my role, and it has been a privilege to walk with congregations during what can be an anxious time. Although the pathway may be uncertain, in my seven years in my role it has been amazing to see how consistently God’s spirit has brought forward people with ministry gifts to provide church leadership. This past year vacancies at Foothills and First Edmonton were filled by Aiden Scherzinger and Debbie Bledsoe respectively.

At the same time, there has often been the need to be patient as we wait on God’s provision. Jerry Buhler has begun part-time interim work, while Trinity continues to search for ongoing ministry leadership. Bergthal will also be searching for a new pastor as Anna-Lisa prepares to move to Ontario this summer to take on a chaplaincy role. How might God provide for these leadership needs, I wonder?

Pastors Council provides an important place for MCA ministry leaders to connect for prayer and mutual support. This group brings deep commitment to their ministry roles and engagement with each other. Every time this group gathers I come away feeling blessed!

At **Camp Valaqua** we see God’s presence not only through campers experiencing God in creation, and through the living out of Christ’s call to community, but also through the development of leadership gifts within the young people serving as staff. Each year I have commissioned the camp staff for their summer ministry, formalizing a connection between the summer program and the rest of MCA.

The broader church is a key place for the development and recognition of ministry gifts. After many years of leadership at the Edmonton South Sudanese Church, Reuben Tut was recognized through Ordination this past May. Nationwide, church leaders recognize the need to be intentional in how we call people and equip them for ministry. Ministry partners such as **CMU and AMBS** are critical for this important work. At CMU’s 2023 ReNew conference Dr. Kathleen Cahalan encouraged churches to become “**communities of calling**” characterized by **discernment, prayer, and storytelling**.

► **Discernment about the future.** Post-pandemic, several MCA congregations are facing challenges such as declining numbers and caring for older buildings. After over 35 years as a congregation the Edmonton Christian Life Community Church has decided to close once their pastor Ken Tse retires in April. Even as I lament the loss of this member of our MCA family, I rejoice in how God has walked with its people. We wish Ken and Jodi well as they move to the West Coast, and pray for God’s blessing on the former church members as they attend other places of worship.

At the same time, hope has been building at Holyrood through the stability, guidance, and encouragement provided by interim pastors Suzanne Gross and Joon Park. Their leadership has led to deep joy in the enthusiasm of participation in worship, especially with the inclusion of children. As I write this report I am in the midst of facilitating a series of 3 congregational meetings to discern God’s guidance for the way ahead once MCA’s financing comes to an end and the interim period concludes.

It has been a meaningful journey with the Emmanuel Chin congregation in Calgary. This group has been exploring possible membership with MCA. In the midst of this discernment their pastor suddenly passed away. I was able to attend their first worship service after this occurred. Together we experienced Christ's promise that "blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted".

▸ **Intercultural and Interfaith connections.** This continues to be an area of growth and opportunity on multiple levels. The different cultures represented in MCA congregations are a source of blessing, as exemplified in events such as the Taste of MCA. Across MC Canada the intercultural nature of the church is growing, as is also the churches represented by Mennonite World Conference.

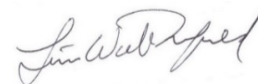
The work of Suzanne Gross has been instrumental, not only within Holyrood's intercultural make-up but also through her work as MCA's **Bridge Building Facilitator**, a program made possible through MCA's partnership with MCC Alberta. Highlights of this program include zoom meetings of a Bridge Building Network with people from seven congregations who gather to share about outreach activities in their communities, a book study, visits to congregations, and an annual dialogue in Edmonton that featured an elder teaching about spirituality from an Indigenous Christian perspective. The role of Bridge Building in Indigenous relationships is an area to explore further in the coming year.

▸ **Building the church around the world.** The intercultural relationships in Canada reflect the growing connections with churches in other countries. MCA is partnering with the Edmonton South Sudanese Church by sponsoring two students from South Sudan to attend Meserete Kristos Seminary in Ethiopia. That partnership is enhanced by our connection with Joanne and Werner DeJong, who are serving at the seminary through **MC Canada Witness**. MCA congregations have direct Witness relationships with the Poovongs in Thailand as well as Burkina Faso, while also connecting with Witness work in 12 other countries through MC Canada.

▸ **Other areas of ministry leadership.** As MCA's Executive Minister role has evolved my connection with **the other MCA staff** has grown in importance. It has been a privilege to work with gifted people with a passion for the ministries we share. Monthly zoom meetings have provided fertile ground for collaboration and connection. Steve Giugovaz's move to Ontario in July has meant some juggling as tasks are picked up among the remaining MCA Staff. Connections with colleagues in other regions and **MC Canada staff** provide critical support in responding to the challenges for the church in our world today, as well as giving access to the stories of God's presence in ministries around the world.

Our broader Mennonite connections provide grounding as we respond to the polarizing issues of our time. These include efforts to build peace and wholeness of relationship in a world torn by division, injustice, and environmental destruction. Local and nationwide efforts have been made to live out care for creation, reconciliation efforts with Indigenous people, and calls for peace for everyone affected by the war in Israel-Palestine.

As we seek to be the church in today's world, I pray that all we do may grow out of our focus on Jesus Christ, trusting that the presence of God's spirit will guide us toward the blessing God has in mind!



Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, Executive Minister

Communications Report

An annual report often begins with what was done in the previous year and what to look forward to in the next. In anticipation of working for MCA for a while yet but not forever, this year I started a file called *What do I do?* thinking it would be useful for when I pass the Communications portfolio on to someone else.



I was tempted to simply include a stream of consciousness-type paragraph, in no particular order, copied from that file, but when I asked for feedback, I was told it was “too much.” And so, I will simply say, communications work involves a myriad of details from the creative and relational to the technical.

A big piece of the work is gathering, and sometime creating, both text and photos from multiple sources – Menno Minute writers, Mennonite Church Canada, Witness Workers, our committees, and staff. And then, sharing this with you using the MCA Communiqué, bulletin announcements, donor letters as well as our website and social media.

I’m sure you have noticed that the Communiqué arrives weekly, on Wednesdays. Although I do get stats on Opens and Clicks those don’t mean as much as when someone says they’ve read it! I welcome you to also visit our website. I try to keep it current with new pieces and pages added as needed. Ideas always welcome!

A highlight of 2023 was working with pastors and administrators from each congregation to create the congregational focus *A Window Into*. Thank you to Steven Giugovaz for the idea and help during the first months. Now when you click Find a Church on the website, you can also learn a bit more about that congregation not just what the building looks like! As I did most of the interviews, I personally got a wonderful window into who we are as MCA congregations. If you missed any, please check the website. For 2024, we are following the same order for prayer requests. Congregations are also invited to update their *A Window Into* pages as necessary.

Our email issues have been largely resolved for which we are grateful but when something doesn’t work, contacting communications is the conduit to our on-call IT, Chris Don.

The Annual Delegate Sessions, both the promotion and the actual event, requires graphics, advertising, videos, power points, posters, an oral Year in Review, and managing the logistics of registrations, name tags, and delegates.

Surprising details under “communications” include responding to email and contacts through our website. Some of these are touching requests for refugee sponsorship, others are from people looking for some kind of Mennonite information. Often I can help. Sometimes, I’m helpless.

Steven Guigovaz began the work with the Congregational Resource Management (CRM) aspect of our website, but with him moving and that position ending, the maintenance of the database was added to both Communications and Treasurer.

Although the Canadian Mennonite is separate from MCA, CM is also communications and therefore maintaining a relationship with both Will Braun (editor) and Emily Summach (correspondent) helps tell the MCA story. With Emily accepting a full-time pastoral position, Canadian Mennonite is once again about to search for an Alberta correspondent. Suggestions welcome!

All that said, Communications Coordinator is a varied, creative, and fulfilling position within MCA. I am grateful for all those who contribute to helping me tell our story. Thank you to all the Menno Minute writers, to our pastors and administrators who keep in touch with me, and even thank you to those who find my errors – and remember to tell me.

It's a privilege to do *all that* with and for you.

Ruth Bergen Braun, Communications Coordinator



**Bridge building to:
Decolonize our Theology,
Witnesses to the Peace of Christ, Bring down walls that divide**



2023 has been a rich year for bridge building in Alberta. I summarize my mandate as follows: to contribute to strong, mutual intercultural and interfaith relationships, finding common purpose in diversity for both learning and witness to our One God, all with the goal of contributing to peaceful communities. I continue to find ways to be a catalyst for this work across the province, by preaching in Alberta churches (First Mennonite Calgary and the Calgary Chin Christian Church) this year, supporting Jake in Calgary with his South Sudanese relationships and presence in the Interfaith community, and through the Bridge Building Network book study this fall. It is through the Bridge Building Network that all congregations are connected. As we share what often seem to be small and insignificant stories of interaction with diversity, we leave our times together with renewed awareness of God at work in our communities through these beautiful mutual relationships.

I feel that God has put me places and spaces where, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I and those on the journey with me, have been servants of our one Loving God in the pursuit of God's Kingdom on earth. Below is my way of weaving this year together.

All that I do as Bridge Building Facilitator intertwines to shape how I approach opportunities to witness to our faith as vulnerable peacemakers in public spaces.

- Preaching at First Mennonite Church and Chin congregations in Calgary introduced me to the unique community life of each of these congregations. When I was invited to be part of the Taste of MCA, I was able to draw on both experiences and make suggestions for inclusion of these two communities, both in terms of reconnecting with individuals, but more importantly to uplift the unique contribution these church communities make to our larger Alberta Mennonite community.
- Planning for Christian Palestinian Munther Isaac's visit to Alberta in October of this year put me in contact with multiple partners who were excited to meet with him. The partners included The Kings University, Edmonton Mennonite churches, Islamic Family, Rabbi Gila Caine, and Lutherans and Anglicans. Dealing with the cancellation due to the October 7 attacks and subsequent retaliation and protracted war in Gaza challenged me to consider ways to reach out to grieving and terrified members of the Jewish community, and subsequently grieving and terrified Palestinian families. Whereas there seemed to be openings for bringing these communities together early on in the conflict, bringing these communities together has become harder and harder in the context of a retaliation from Israel that has become genocidal in character. This is work for 2024, by the Grace of God.
- Studying and leading discussion on the book of Ephesians has helped me understand the concept of the "mystery of God's Grace" that brought into being the "Peace of Christ" that, through the resurrection, has the power to tear down walls of hostility for full inclusion of each other.
- Taking the ideas of the Bridge Building Network to organize a book study has been a rich and eye-opening experience. Steven Charleston, in "The Four Vision Quests of Jesus" pokes at us to give up seeing our perspectives on faith as superior to others. When our old ways of thinking germinate new

ways of engaging with the meaning and impact of our faith stories, we are humbled, and in that humility, we are able to be better peacemakers.

- Visiting with Muslim newcomer friends (Palestinian, Syrian, Kurdish) has taught me about their journeys and identities that help me connect stories of indigeneity, love of land and longing for home. We are peacemakers when we listen deeply to each other's stories.
- Breaking bread and sharing soup at the Soup and Bannock gatherings at Bent Arrow offers a wonderful experience of Indigenous hospitality and sharing. When we give up our power in order to accept hospitality, we contribute to peace.

These connections positioned me to bring my Jewish husband into a panel discussion of the film "Farha" - about the displacement of Palestinians in the 1948 Naqba

- to educate the Muslim and Christian communities that there are people in all three faith traditions in Israel-Palestine longing for and working for a just peace in Palestine. 100+ people were in attendance including 5 Mennonites from Edmonton.

I contributed to the community event to remember World Refugee Day in City Hall by painting a picture of the situation in our world when it comes to displacement and trauma of war and occupation

- to sensitize people in our community and help build a sense of urgency for demilitarization of our world, and for more welcoming communities here at home. Five organisations (Mennonite Church Alberta, IFSSA, EMCN, Catholic Social Services and Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society) collaborated to plan this event and 80+ people attended this event representing the diversity of Edmonton.

All of these experiences contributed to my being able to share a

- 10 minute reflection on Mennonite "faith identity in action" to 200 invited guests at an Interfaith Fundraiser for the Shama Centre, alongside Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu voices. An outgrowth of this activity was an invitation to join a presentation and banquet meal organized by the Shama Centre to expose our community to the diversity of the Indian Sub-continent faith traditions: Sikh, Muslim, Christian. We were invited to contribute a song from our own traditions, and my husband (who is Jewish) and I shared a Jewish Shabbat song, "Shalom Aleichem," inviting all to pray for peace in Gaza. Over 100 people were in attendance.

These webs of experiences helped me distill

- a 4-minute message and prayer appropriate to an outdoor Interfaith memorial service commemorating the (at that time) 6,000 deaths of Palestinian children. Hundreds of people from Jewish, Muslim, Palestinian and Christian faith backgrounds gathered in Churchill square and heard my message of nonviolent resistance for liberation from oppression and for Shalom for all.

These experiences gave me imagination

- to contribute to a Treaty Six signing ceremony, bringing together settler and indigenous people in the Holyrood community. Our intercultural Holyrood community sang "Open my eyes Lord" as a sort of spiritual smudge inviting us to open our eyes and ears and hearts to God our Creator. 15+ Holyrood Mennonite members, including children sang and participated in Indigenous games.

All of these experiences give me the insight

- to help lead the planning of an interfaith dialogue alongside a Catholic Parish supporting an Indigenous population - planning with an Elder and a helper who, as a schoolteacher, has the skill to

bridge knowledge sharing. We chose the title “Help me be teachable today” as a result of conversation we were having with the elder. This framed the tenor of our gathering and dialogue, which focused on the tool of the medicine wheel, and set a tone of mutual respect and learning from each other. All 50 participants walked away with new relationships, new insights, and the experience of mutual hospitality – Indigenous/settler, and, most importantly, a thirst for more opportunities like these.

With inspiration from the Bridge Building Network of 7 representatives from our MCA churches, I have been organizing discussion of “The Four Vision Quests of Jesus” book by Indigenous theologian Steven Charleston

- to open up our mind to alternative perspectives when it comes to how we understand Jesus, and our faith stories that have shaped us. Jonathan Neufeld, our MC Canada Indigenous Relations Coordinator, has been joining our discussions.

These experiences helped me pull together the threads of peacemaking through 11 blog posts shared through the MC Alberta Communique since October 2022

- to inspire our MC Alberta community to connect with diversity through stories and reflections, and to begin to recognize the stories of God at work in diverse spaces, right in our midst. 122 of our MCA members read the Communique each week.

As we move into 2024, I see my role as continuing the work of representing a Mennonite Christian voice that invites people to come together in worship of our One God, who, in Christ, invites us to full inclusion of each other as Children of God. I look forward to the spaces and relationships God will put me in for this work through me, and by extension through our Alberta Mennonite community who is on this journey with me. I have had many teachers this last year, teachers from European, Liberian, Ghanaian, Chin, Oromo (all Mennonites), Indigenous, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, United, Suni and Shia Muslim, and Reformed Jews. And I continue on this journey with the Bridge Building Network: Jake, Susanne, John, Eleanore, Don, LaVerna, and Beth. I am blessed and pray that through these connections and relationships of inter-learning, we can together break down walls that we build between each other, to the detriment of the Kin-dom of God!

Summary of the Impact of this work in our Alberta communities:

Date	Activity	Communities brought together	Number of participants
Oct. 2022- Dec. 2023	Blog postings in the Communique	Stories of Kurds, Palestinians, Indigenous, Muslims, Liberians	235 readers of the Communique
Feb. 2023	Preached at First Mennonite Church Calgary	Celebrated the emerging interculturalism with a recently arrived Pakistani family	50 attenders
Feb. 2023	Panel discussion after viewing of Farha	Jewish, Muslim and Christian	100+
Feb. 2023	Participating in a community Pipe Ceremony	Indigenous, Mennonite	6 participants from the Mennonite community;

			300+ from the Indigenous community
March-present	Joining Soup and Bannock lunch gatherings at Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society	Indigenous and Mennonite	10 Edmonton Mennonites have attended at least once, some more than once
June 2023	World Refugee Day: Presenting a picture of the world situation for refugees; hearing stories from the community	Indigenous, Muslim, Newcomer, Mennonite	80-100 participants in City Hall
August 2023	Participation in Treaty Signing Ceremony: Holyrood Mennonites sang "Open my eyes Lord" and played Indigenous games	Indigenous, Mennonite, Anglican, Holyrood Community League	16 Holyrood Mennonite congregants participated; 40+ people present
October 2023	Presented a Christian perspective on Identity through faith in Action at the Shama Centre	Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, Christian, Hindu	200+ in attendance
October 2023	Annual Interfaith Dialogue: "Help me be teachable today"	Indigenous, Muslim, Christian (Catholic, Anglican, United, Mennonite, Lutheran)	50+ in attendance at the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples
Nov. - Present	MC Alberta Bridge Building book study of "Four Vision Quests of Jesus" by Steven Charleston	Alberta Mennonites from across the province + Jonathan Neufeld	9 participants
December 2023	Represented the Christian voice at an interfaith (Muslim Christian) gathering to commemorate the 6,000 deaths of children in Gaza	Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Palestinian, Non-Palestinian	300+ people in attendance at Churchill Square

Report submitted by *Suzanne Gross*, Bridge Building Facilitator

MCA Financial Reports

2023 was a transitional year for the Finance Committee. After over 6 years of service by Wayne Janz as Finance Chair, the role of financial coordination was taken by Karl Blank in a non-executive role in April. In July, MCA received the resignation of Tany Warkentin, our Treasurer of over 11 years. This staff position was filled as a contract role in November, with Highside Solutions taking over these duties by year end. Highside Solutions is comprised of the father/son team of Wayne and Austin Janz. We gratefully acknowledge the long-term service of both Wayne and Tany, and we look forward to working with Wayne (again) and Austin in their new roles.

2023 Financial Results

The overall position of MCA finance in 2023 was very positive: we have reached the year-end ahead of budget! We were still in an operating deficit position for year-end 2023, but it is a smaller deficit than was budgeted (\$30,200 vs \$49,000). This, along with a generous, one-time designated donation of \$250,000 towards Camp Valaqua, contributed to an increase in MCA net assets instead of the forecasted decrease.

Here are some of the highlights of the year:

- Total income for MCA (including Camp and designated donations) met budget.
 - o Church donations came in essentially on budget.
 - o Individual donations (including donations designated to, or made directly to, MC Canada) were about 8% over budget.
 - o Notably, flow-through donations designated for Relational Witness were about \$8,400 lower than 2022.
- Camp Valaqua income was essentially on budget.
 - o Donations to camp (including the fundraisers) were above budget amount by \$30,400 for the full year and increased from 2022 by \$9,400.
 - o Rental and School Program income was also above budget by about \$10,000.
 - o This was offset by Camp Registration income being 79% of budget (approximately \$31,200 below budget after taking into account Campership support).
 - o A \$250,000 donation by Foothills Mennonite Church was designated to Camp Valaqua for future upgrades, facilities, operations and maintenance. This donation was not included as part of the Camp operational statement for 2023.
- Camp expenses were approximately 5% (\$23,200) over budget, driven by higher utility and councillor staffing costs (\$10,500 and \$6,700, respectively) plus other increased costs.
- Total MCA expenses (including Camp) were slightly underbudget (\$13,200). The Camp expense increase was offset primarily by the reduced salary and expenses related to the vacancy of the Church Engagement Minister position (\$17,100),
- The large donation toward Camp Valaqua increased MCA's cash and allowed the consolidation of investments into two larger GICs at better interest rates than MCA has historically received. While most of the funds are being held for Camp Valaqua, the interest generated will contribute to the MCA general budget in 2024.
- The loan balance to Holyrood Mennonite Church is currently approximately \$72,000 of the maximum \$90,000.

2024 Proposed Budget

The budgeting process for 2024 began with a request from MCA to the member churches for a proposed 5% increase of donations to address inflationary increases, primarily related to MCA and Camp Valaqua staff compensation. While most churches informed us that their contributions would remain at 2023 amounts, two churches indicated that their contributions would reduce in 2024.

The budgets for the last two years have been approved as deficit budgets due to the operating surpluses realized in 2020 and 2021. For the 5-year period beginning in 2019, MCA has operated at a deficit of \$4,300. Last year, it was indicated that MCA would drive to balanced budgets in 2024 or 2025.

For 2024, the MCA Executive Committee and General Council are proposing a deficit budget of \$14,500. Executive feels that this is a reasonable budget acknowledging that the 2023 deficit was not as large as projected, and that balanced budgets should be achievable in 2025. Here are the major changes and drivers of the 2024 budget:

- Total MCA income (including Camp and designated donations) is budgeted to increase 4.4% over 2023 actual:
 - o Church donation income budget reduced by \$15,000;
 - o Donations from individuals budget increased by 12% (to \$112,000 and includes \$15,000 designated to MC Canada, \$11,000 sent directly to MC Canada, and \$1,000 for Gifts-in-Kind);
 - o Interest income budget to increase from \$400 to \$9,000 due to GIC interest.
- Camp total income is budgeted to increase 9.6% over 2023 actual:
 - o Donations to Camp (including fundraisers) are budgeted to increase by \$9,000 (8.7%);
 - o Registration income is expected to increase by \$11,200;
 - o Government funding is expected to increase by \$3,100.
- Camp expenses are budgeted to decrease by \$2,100 over 2023 actual:
 - o Equipment maintenance reduced by \$7,000 (there was large expense to repair tractor in 2023);
 - o Other line items were lowered to reflect previous budgets (Crafts, Office Supplies, seasonal employee compensation, etc);
 - o Permanent staff compensation increase of \$8,200.
- The Camp Valaqua deficit is expected to be \$96,100 in 2024.
- Total MCA expenses (including Camp) are expected to increase 1.2% over 2023 actual expenses:
 - o Revenue sharing with MC Canada increases by \$6,600;
 - o Permanent staff compensation (including Camp Valaqua, excluding Treasurer) increased by 3%, offset by reduction of Church Engagement Minister position for net decrease of \$8,500 from 2023 actual costs;
 - o Treasurer compensation costs offset by contract bookkeeper costs;
 - o Increase in Audit expense (\$8,700) due to bi-annual financial audit in 2024.

The increased efforts in story-sharing and communication over the past few years have been successful in raising awareness of the ministry and funds for MCA programs from individuals. Gatherings like *Taste of MCA* and *Fun and Fundraisers* were well attended, promoting a sense of worship, community and awareness while contributing toward our general income. The Camp Valaqua *Hike-a-Thon* and *Family Feud* fundraisers, similarly, are important contributors toward that ministry.

On the flip side, MCA is cognizant that these fundraising efforts could compete with the ability of individuals to give to their own church and potentially exacerbating the church's ability to donate to MCA. This is a fine line that we will continue to walk with the churches.

MCA is very grateful for any amount that churches and individuals can share with MCA. We ask for your continued prayers that your gifts to us are used wisely and effectively.

Submitted by Karl Blank, MCA Finance Committee

Mennonite Church Alberta

Balance Sheet (unaudited)

As of December 31, 2023

	Total, as of	
	Dec. 31, 2023	Dec. 31, 2022
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalent		
01-1010 Royal Bank - Operating	104,578.23	172,904.08
01-1011 Royal Bank - Camp Valaqua	2,713.19	10,167.91
01-1012 Telpay Clearing	4,102.59	0.00
01-1050 Undeposited Funds	58,425.00	62,016.17
Total Cash and Cash Equivalent	\$ 169,819.01	\$ 245,088.16
01-1102 GST Rebate Receivable	3,255.51	3,533.41
01-1103 Interest Receivable	987.95	169.48
01-1105 Miscellaneous Accounts Receivable	486.88	5,693.41
01-1106 Loan to Holyrood (max \$90,000)	72,806.20	14,369.57
01-1200 Investments		
Total 01-1200 Investments	\$ 286,670.87	\$ 36,246.99
01-1225 Prepaid Expenses	4,338.69	2,996.46
Total Current Assets	\$ 538,365.11	\$ 308,097.48
Non-current Assets		
Total Property, plant and equipment	\$ 699,710.79	\$ 739,206.60
Total Non Current Assets	\$ 699,710.79	\$ 739,206.60
Total Assets	\$ 1,238,075.90	\$ 1,047,304.08
Liabilities and Equity		
Liabilities		
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 280,545.45	\$ 16,067.50
Total Liabilities	\$ 280,545.45	\$ 16,067.50
Equity		
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$ 1,238,075.90	\$ 1,047,304.08
Monday, Feb. 19, 2024 07:46:23 p.m. GMT-8 - Accrual Basis		

Mennonite Church Alberta			
Summary Budget Comparison 2023 and Proposed Budget 2024 (unaudited)			
Before Amortization and Depreciation			
	2023		2024
	Actual	Budget	Proposed
Church Contributions	\$ 333,345	\$ 334,000	\$ 317,600
Individual Contributions	\$ 107,856	\$ 100,000	\$ 112,000
Witness Relational Funding	\$ 36,369	\$ 40,000	\$ 36,000
Camp Income	\$ 337,713	\$ 337,400	\$ 370,100
Other Income	\$ 39,760	\$ 38,100	\$ 44,000
Total Income	\$ 855,043	\$ 849,500	\$ 879,700
Operating Expenses	\$ 416,997	\$ 453,400	\$ 428,000
Camp Expenses	\$ 468,288	\$ 445,100	\$ 466,200
Total Expenses	\$ 885,285	\$ 898,500	\$ 894,200
Net Income	\$ (30,241)	\$ (49,000)	\$ (14,500)
Note: Individual Contributions and Operating Expenses included donated funds sent directly to Mennonite Church Canada contributing to MCA portion of shared revenue with MC Canada			

Mennonite Church Alberta									
Detailed Budget Comparison 2023 and Proposed Budget 2024 (unaudited)									
Before Amortization and Depreciation									
					2023			2024	
					Actual	Budget		Proposed	
Income									
Church Donations									
		Calgary - Chin Christian Church		\$	3,500	\$ 3,500		\$ 3,500	
		Calgary - First		\$	30,000	\$ 30,000		\$ 25,000	
		Calgary - Foothills		\$	110,000	\$ 110,000		\$ 100,000	
		Calgary - Trinity		\$	10,000	\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000	
		Didsbury - Berghthal		\$	6,500	\$ 6,500		\$ 6,500	
		Edmonton - Bethel Int'l Church		\$	-	\$ 300		\$ -	
		Edmonton - Christian Life CC		\$	600	\$ 600		\$ -	
		Edmonton - First		\$	108,100	\$ 108,100		\$ 108,100	
		Edmonton - Holyrood		\$	5,475	\$ 5,500		\$ 5,500	
		Edmonton - South Sudanese		\$	-	\$ 500		\$ -	
		Lethbridge		\$	42,000	\$ 42,000		\$ 42,000	
		Pincher Creek - Springridge		\$	17,170	\$ 17,000		\$ 17,000	
Individual Donations									
		General Budget		\$	79,579	\$ 100,000		\$ 85,000	
		Gifts in Kind		\$	1,340	\$ -		\$ 1,000	
MC Canada Donations									
		MC Canada - Operations		\$	26,938	\$ -		\$ 26,000	
		MC Canada - Relational Witness		\$	36,369	\$ 40,000		\$ 36,000	
Program Designated Income									
		Youth Leadership Team Income		\$	1,925	\$ 3,000		\$ 2,000	
		Bridge Building Donations		\$	15,735	\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000	
		Missions & Services Income							
		MKS - S Sudanese Training Donations		\$	5,000	\$ 800		\$ 5,000	
		Community Building Income							
		Annual Meeting Registration		\$	5,085	\$ 6,400		\$ 2,900	
		Student Aid Donations		\$	25	\$ -		\$ 200	
		Other CB Income		\$	1,415	\$ 4,500		\$ 1,900	
		Congregational Leadership Income		\$	1,864	\$ 3,000		\$ 3,000	
Camp Valaqua Income									
		Camp Donations - General Budget		\$	78,553	\$ 60,000		\$ 86,500	
		Campership Donations		\$	3,096	\$ 2,500		\$ 3,100	
		Summer Camp Registration Income		\$	120,900	\$ 157,500		\$ 139,100	
		Camp Rental Income		\$	89,256	\$ 80,000		\$ 90,000	
		School Programs Rental Income		\$	4,566	\$ 3,800		\$ 5,500	
		Resident Rental Income		\$	6,600	\$ 6,600		\$ 6,600	
		T-Shirt & Apparel Income		\$	5,106	\$ 7,000		\$ 7,000	
		Government Funding		\$	6,900	\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000	
		Camp Fundraising Income		\$	21,264	\$ 10,000		\$ 22,300	
		Other Camp Income		\$	1,472	\$ -		\$ -	
Other Income									
		Interest Income		\$	1,222	\$ 400		\$ 9,000	
		Miscellaneous Income		\$	7,489	\$ -		\$ -	
Total Income					\$ 855,043	\$ 849,500		\$ 879,700	

					2023		2024
					Actual	Budget	Proposed
Expenses							
MC Canada Expenses							
	MC Canada - Operations				\$ 81,900	\$ 81,900	\$ 88,400
	MC Canada - Relational Witness				\$ 36,369	\$ 40,000	\$ 36,000
	MC Canada - Gathering Registration				\$ 1,426	\$ -	\$ -
	Other MC Canada Designated Donations				\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Partner Ministries Expenses							
	Canadian Mennonite University				\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
	Rosthern Junior College				\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000
	Canadian Mennonite magazine				\$ 9,020	\$ 9,300	\$ 9,000
	Mennonite Historical Society				\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
	Mennonite World Conference				\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Youth Leadership Team Expenses					\$ 1,288	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,000
Executive Committee Expenses							
	Salaries & Benefits				\$ 187,843	\$ 201,600	\$ 171,700
	Employee Expenses				\$ 11,581	\$ 22,100	\$ 13,000
	SSMC Support				\$ 2,400	\$ 2,400	\$ 2,400
	Bethel Support				\$ 2,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 4,000
	Office Supplies				\$ 518	\$ 6,500	\$ 500
	Professional Services Expenses				\$ 22,368	\$ 20,500	\$ 32,600
	Liability Insurance				\$ 2,818	\$ 2,800	\$ 2,800
	MCA Fundraising Expenses				\$ 1,050	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500
	Executive Committee Expenses				\$ -	\$ 800	\$ 800
	Miscellaneous Expenses				\$ 3,000	\$ -	\$ -
Finance Committee Expenses					\$ 8,955	\$ 2,700	\$ 10,500
Missions & Service Expenses					\$ 2,303	\$ 3,300	\$ 7,500
Community Building Expenses					\$ 7,247	\$ 11,600	\$ 8,400
Congregational Leadership Expenses					\$ 1,910	\$ 4,000	\$ 3,500
Personnel Committee Expenses					\$ -	\$ 200	\$ 200
Nominating Committee Expenses					\$ -	\$ 200	\$ 200
Camp Valaqua Expenses					\$ 468,288	\$ 445,100	\$ 466,200
Total Expenses					\$ 885,285	\$ 898,500	\$ 894,200
Net Income					\$ (30,241)	\$ (49,000)	\$ (14,500)
Note: MC Canada - Operations Income & Expenses included donated funds sent directly to Mennonite Church Canada contributing to MCA portion of shared revenue with MC Canada							

MCA Treasurer Report

We took on the Treasurer role in the last two months of the year. Although we already had a strong background with MCA finances, it was still a challenge to learn all the operational details that are completed behind the scenes but handled so well by Tany Warkentin over the last twelve years. We want to thank Tany for the solid foundation she laid for us to work with going forward!



In addition to learning the treasurer role to keep the financial management running as smoothly as it has in the past, we have three short-term goals that we want to accomplish:

1. Migrate the accounting system into the Cloud to make the financial records more secure and more accessible to the Finance Committee. This was completed in mid-January 2024.
2. Move to paperless record keeping as much as possible to streamline our processes and reduce our paper usage and storage requirements. This is in progress.
3. Integrate our CRM and accounting systems to improve our donor tax receipting capabilities and provide more complete information to our Executive Minister, Communications Coordinator, and committees for connecting with our MCA stakeholders. This is in the beginning stages.

We are looking forward to the challenges the next year will bring and the rewards that come with serving MCA and the Kingdom!

Wayne and Austin Janz
Highside Solutions Inc.



Personnel Committee Report

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to continue serving Mennonite Church Alberta on the Personnel Committee this past year. A strength of MCA is all the people who, in both paid and volunteer capacities, are committed to the health and growth of the body of Christ that is MCA.

Significant happenings regarding personnel in the past 12 months include:

- In the absence of a chair for the finance committee, the chair of the Personnel Committee joined the MCA Executive on an interim basis until the Finance position is filled.
- In the summer of 2023 Steve Giugovaz resigned as the MCA Church Engagement Minister as he and his family were moving back to Ontario. A decision was made not to hire someone else to complete the last year of Steve's 3-year contract (Sept 2021 – Sept 2024).
- In the fall of 2023 Tany Warkentin submitted her resignation as the MCA Treasurer so she could pursue other interests. The position was advertised within the MCA constituency and applications were received from qualified people. Wayne Janz and his company, Highside Solutions Inc. accepted the position in November, 2023. As a former chair of the MCA finance committee, Wayne brings a high level of understanding, commitment, and stability to the role of MCA Treasurer.

Respectfully Submitted

Doug Wiebe, Chair – MCA Personnel Committee



Missions and Service Report

This past year saw the Missions and Service Committee in a phase of regrouping and re-envisioning. The Bridge Building Ministry, which this committee has been nurturing in its various forms over the past number of years, has fledged and soared off on its own, leaving us empty nesters wondering what our next focus should be!

To this end we have decided to take a strength-based rather than needs-based approach – we want to find out what is working well across the province in the broad areas of missions and service – how are our congregations reaching out beyond the boundaries of their own membership to minister to others? What is working well and how can we support it? Or, in other words, we want to open our eyes to what God is already doing to build God's kingdom and get on board!

We started this work in the fall by attending the MCA fun-raising events held in Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge and initiating some conversations with attendees. Our project for 2024 is to work in partnership with Suzanne Gross to meet with congregational representatives and build a comprehensive list of the outreach activities of each congregation. We hope to present our findings back to our member churches as a way of celebrating God's work among us and through us, as well as using our findings to discern where our committee might best support this work on a provincial level.

We have also been busy with two projects that have carried over from previous years. The first has been to walk alongside South Sudanese Christians in Calgary, seeking to find each other in proximity of Foothills Mennonite Church, possibly to be integrated into that congregation or to become a separate worshipping community utilizing the Foothills venue. Much of this work has been done by Jake and Riek from our committee and has taken the form of relationship building.

As new immigrants, they face many challenges including precarious entry level employment with weekend schedules that aren't conducive to finding a common time to meet to worship; some of their young people being drawn into gangs and violence; as well as carrying the ongoing weight of supporting suffering family members back home in South Sudan or refugee camps elsewhere. Intertribal conflict, civil war and famine are continuing threats. "Walking alongside" means listening and supporting this community far beyond just the stated goal of creating a space for worship.

The second project is the sponsorship of two South Sudanese students from refugee camps in the Gambela region of Ethiopia to attend Meserete Kristos Seminary, the seminary of the Ethiopian Mennonite churches. One pastor currently serves the nine Mennonite churches in Gambela. There is also a fledgling Mennonite church in South Sudan. These churches have requested help with discipleship and leadership training.

MCA's sponsorship, much of which comes from individual donors to this project, covers tuition, a tutor, room and board, travel between the seminary and Gambela, and a personal allowance. In total just \$5000 CAD covers all of this for two students for a whole year!

In addition to this work, Jake has also served as MCA's representative on the Calgary Interfaith Council and we are, as a committee, exploring how to be more engaged with the support networks of our Mennonite Church Witness workers abroad.

Finally, we want to extend our gratitude to Jake Froese (Trinity Mennonite) and Riek Tut (Edmonton South Sudanese Mennonite) who have finished their final terms on our committee this year. Jake's commitment to relationship-building and deep passion for ministry, and Riek's deep faith, wisdom, and leadership in bridging between cultures, have been invaluable to the work of this committee over the past years. We thank them for their service to MCA and wish them God's blessing in their continued work of mission and outreach to which they both feel called on a personal level.

Respectfully submitted by *Marie Moyer*, Chair

On behalf of the Missions and Service Committee

Tracy Brown Ewert, Secretary, *Jake Froese* (outgoing Member), *Riek Tut* (outgoing Member)



Congregational Leadership Committee Report

Be sure you know the condition of your flocks,
give careful attention to your herds;
for riches do not last forever,
nor a crown for all generations.
Proverbs 27:23-24

In these verses, the imagery of flocks and herds is used to symbolise one's possessions and wealth. The practical advice being offered is to be attentive to the state of one's resources, as neglect can lead to loss. Ultimately, a neglected, unhealthy flock weakens and threatens the health, sustainability, and longevity of the entire clan.

CLC understands that the wealth of MCA resides in its people. Responsible management and careful stewardship of our flocks and their shepherds ensure the long-term sustainability and well-being of our regional church. It is CLC's responsibility to know the condition of MCA's flocks and to give special attention to their shepherds.

The members of the Congregational Leadership Committee (CLC) for 2023 consisted of Timothy Burkholder, Caleb Kowalko, Anna-Lisa Salo, and Tim Wiebe-Neufeld. Caleb took on the role of chair and Anna-Lisa served as secretary. Timothy agreed to be CLC's representative on the General Council and in the All Committee meetings. CLC met (14?) times throughout the year. All of the meetings were held via Zoom.

In its primary purpose of equipping congregational leaders for their task and working with and supporting the Executive Minister, the members of CLC were engaged in fulfilling the various duties associated with their role within MCA.

1. CLC assisted member congregations with plans or problems in which MCA involvement was considered beneficial. When walking alongside congregations facing difficult decisions or issues, CLC respects confidentiality. CLC processes all issues that surface with the Executive Minister as he connects with and supports the congregations. CLC is committed to responding prayerfully for wisdom and discernment in each case and to treat each situation with compassion and care.

- This past year, CLC continued to process the aftermath of an investigation following an allegation of pastoral misconduct against an MCA pastor. Although the investigation concluded that there was no misconduct, CLC was committed to engaging in a restorative process with the pastor and initiated an internal review of the process. An external review of the process has also been initiated.

- CLC assisted Bergthal MC, Edmonton Christian Life Community Church, Holyrood MC, and Trinity MC in their respective ongoing processes of visioning and discernment.

2. CLC assisted congregations and pastors with the process of pastoral call, ordination, evaluation, transfer, termination, credentialing, and de-credentialing. We are grateful for all who have responded to God's call to pastoral ministry and to serve with such dedication and passion.

- Ken Tse is planning to retire after many years of service with the Edmonton Christian Life Community Church. The church has voted to close after Ken retires in April of 2024.
- A service of ordination was held on May 13th for Reuben Tut.
- Aiden Scherzinger was hired as Associate Pastor at Foothills MC and was interviewed by CLC for a Licensing Toward Ordination.
- Interviews with new pastors to Alberta were conducted with Debbie Bledsoe (FMCE), Rachel Siemens (FMCE), Ryan Siemens (MCC), and Aiden Scherzinger (FHMC).
- Exit interviews were conducted with Louisa Adria (FHMC), Will Loewen (TMC), and Steve Guigovas (MCA).
- Debbie Bledsoe was Licensed toward Ordination.
- Anna-Lisa Salo has submitted her letter of resignation to Bergthal MC.
- Credentialing for Tom and Christine Poovong (Witness workers with MC Canada) is pending.

3. CLC planned and promoted a number of events to support, train, and connect MCA pastors and congregational lay leaders.

- The Pastors Council met 5 times in-person.
- CLC promoted and offered financial support for pastors attending CMU's *ReNew* conference (January 30-31).
- CLC promoted *Pastor's Week* (February 13-16) at AMBS.
- A *Faith Studies* event (May 5-7) organised by Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, featuring Dr. Joni Sancken, was promoted by CLC.
- A pastor's retreat was held October 23-25 at Camp Valaqua. These retreats offer time for refreshment, reflection, and connection.

4. CLC reviews applications of congregations wishing to become MCA members or wishing to discontinue their membership in MCA.

- CLC responded to the Calgary Chin Emmanuel Church following their expression of interest in joining MCA.

As we reflected upon the past year, we noticed several things:

- MC Canada continues to work together with MC USA in making revisions and expanding policies related to pastoral misconduct. We are grateful that this update is happening as we seek to respond to these kinds of situations with integrity, wisdom, and compassion. These updated policies are being crafted under an umbrella document called "Guiding Ministerial Leadership in the Church" that attempts to respond within a policy framework to the uniqueness of each situation as it arises. While policies and procedures are helpful, they don't always tick all the boxes. Pastors and congregations are being confronted with an increasingly complex and complicated world. Situations that arise from these events require difficult and often painful decisions that don't fit the categories contained within set policies and procedures or constitutions. We have learned the value of utilising a trained facilitator to help navigate these situations.
- The ways in which pastors emerge to give leadership to the church are changing. While in the past many young people would enter ministry as a career choice, today pastors come to ministry at a variety of ages and through various pathways. The pastor role is also evolving, with fewer full-time pastors, more bi-vocational pastors, and the emergence of pastoral leaders who provide leadership in worship and pastoral care in less traditional ways.

- Changing dynamics in congregations. Some of MCA's congregations are struggling with questions about their future in the face of declining numbers and ageing members. Some struggle with the need for leadership or developing common vision. Some have buildings they find difficult to maintain, or struggle with the administration needed to remain organised.
- The need to lean into our intercultural relationships. We have seen tremendous value in the contributions of groups like the Chin, South Sudanese, Oromo, and other African groups at Holyrood to our faith family.

Looking to the year ahead, CLC will continue to pay attention to the needs of our ministers and congregations. We will strive to serve in ways that exercise responsible management and careful stewardship of our flocks and their shepherds, thus ensuring the long-term sustainability and well-being of our regional church.

Submitted on behalf of CLC,
Anna-Lisa Salo



Camp Valaqua Committee Report

2023 proved to be a very active year at Camp Valaqua. As highlighted in the Director's report, we ran our full summer camp programs and had active use of camp land and facilities throughout the year. Please refer to the Director's report for the details of our summer camp and rental programs.

A highlight of this year includes Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary selecting Camp Valaqua as the recipient of a large donation after the sale of the Guest House. This donation has initiated the camp committee and camp staff, in collaboration with MCA Executive, to undertake a visioning process in order for us to think through who is using the camp, how we use the land and facilities and how we envision the camp programs moving forward. We are very appreciative of this donation and are looking forward to reflecting on where we are and where we hope to go and grow.

Coming out of the pandemic and taking part of this visioning process, has resulted in our camp committee taking stock of the role camp plays in Mennonite Church Alberta (MCA). Taking a step back and reflecting on the many ways camp is used and depended on invites us to realise how essential this place is and how much happens here that we often take for granted. For example, the rental groups accessing camp between September and June lead to an additional 1,800 people enjoying camp, two-thirds of whom have no affiliation with MCA. Camp is an important public facing institution of MCA.

In addition to the considerable financial donations Camp Valaqua has received this year, we also receive significant in-kind support throughout the year, particularly through the engagement of volunteers. A very low estimate of volunteer hours worked at camp would be 8,180 hours. This can be calculated in financial terms at a value of at least \$122,700. This is an incredible contribution and includes volunteers from tweens to people in their 90s. We are so fortunate to have this incredible place where intergenerational engagement happens, leadership skills are developed and so many memories are made. We see the effects of this in our MCA churches and on the camp committee.

We continue to be grateful for the support we receive through the wider MCA community and look forward to an exciting year in 2024.

Submitted by *Kathryn Friesen*

Camp Committee: *Darrel Heidebrecht, Liam Kachkar, Kathryn Friesen, Albert Goerzen, Christine Hansplant, Tim Wiebe-Neufeld*

Camp Director's Report

We were so happy to have a camp full of kids last summer! This was our first true "Post Covid" summer and while illness was still a consideration, it returned to the normal level of worry. We were grateful for full camp weeks and an amazing staff team!



Campers

Our final number of campers for 2023 was 348. This was an increase over 2022 (326). We continue to rebuild momentum after the covid shutdown and restrictions, but we are growing year over year. Our Family Camp saw a large uptake and waiting lists as well as a few of our out-trips. We added a second weekend of Family Camp in 2024 and revised our out-trip offerings.

We were so happy to help so many Discover God in Creation this summer. Our chaplains shared stories and lessons, our counsellor shared devotionals and wisdom, and we took every opportunity to worship together.

We gave out over \$8400 in campership aid to help 23 kids get to camp. We are so grateful to have the freedom to tear down any financial barriers that may lie between kids and camp. Thank you to all the amazing donors that helped to support this program. It makes a huge impact!

Out-trips

Our Out-trip program ran successfully this summer, and we were very pleased to have returning staff to lead the trips. Many of the trips were full and had waiting lists. We were thankful for safety on these trips, and we were able to arrange drivers more effectively than in previous summers.

Facility Upgrades

The Yurts have been a popular destination during the summer months. The transition from the Faith Retreat Centre to the Yurts is now complete with a picnic shelter, the loveliest outhouse you will ever see, and a fire ring to sit around on those cool evenings. The Yurts allow families and groups to access camp while our summer programs are going on. If you are interested in booking the yurts, please contact the camp office.

The brown house (small house) has a new tin roof and the Jackpine has had a structural assessment by an engineer. The repairs necessary to keep the Jackpine in service will be completed in spring. For now, the Jackpine main area is closed until the structural repairs can be completed.

We feel incredibly blessed to have accomplished almost all the goals on our site development plan! This means we need to set new goals and we were blessed by a very generous donation from Foothills Mennonite Church. We are beginning a visioning process to help us determine the best path forward with regards to site development.

Valaqua the rest of the year

Our rental program is back in full swing, and we do not have an available weekend until late in the fall. It is good to see the facility getting good use again! We continue to host a nature school program on Fridays and have a few midweek bookings through the winter and spring.

Over **1800** people used the Lodge in the rental season: **39** different groups enjoyed Valaqua; **10** MCA-related (churches, families, weddings, pastor's etc); **29** groups with no MCA affiliation. One of these groups (Rediscover Play Nature School) used the camp on a one day per week basis throughout the year. The 39 groups consisted of:

Cubs/Scouts (**14**)
 Family gatherings (**7**)
 Church groups (**6**; 4 MCA/2 non-MCA)
 Weddings (**3**)

Quilters (**2**)
 School groups (**4**)
 Other (**3**)

Staff

We were blessed with an extremely strong staff team in 2023. These young folks did incredible work with the kids who came through our programs and showed amazing dedication and commitment to each other and to our camp ministry.

Camp Valaqua staff 2023

Leadership Support Staff

Program Director:

Charlene Lauzier

CIT Director:

Delaney Janzen

Office Manager:

Jenna Blank

PIT Crew Boss:

Jeremy Wiens

Camp Gardener:

Misa Storkova

Out Trip Co-Directors:

Jessi Brandt, Sam Jobson

Head Cooks:

Louisa Adria

Assistant Cook:

Vic Ip

Male Counselors:

Tino Baergen
 Kyle Wiebe
 Ben Olfert Wiens
 Asher Warkentin
 Patrick Dunn
 Spencer Wood
 Liam Strashok

Female Counselors:

Erynn Anderson
 Jade Janssen
 Ainsley Dunn
 Margo Ratzlaff
 Sarah King
 Liesel Retzlaff
 Maddie Loranger
 Danaka Feddema

Male CITs:

Yohannes Abera
 Jordan Wiens
 Wyatt Hunt
 Micah Schellenberg

Female CITs:

Donatella Filewych
 Josephine Koop
 Sarah Giesbrecht
 Kienna Krahm
 Madison Nugent
 Mikka Kostanecki
 Charlotte Reid

Youth Leadership Team

I continue to be involved with mentoring the Youth Leadership Team. We will be hosting Snowcamp on February 24-26 and are very much looking forward to it! Look for announcements around a ski day and we are planning for an Edmonton event on March 22-23. It is always a pleasure to work with these young folks and see them taking leadership in our Provincial Church.

Volunteers

We had over 60 people who generously volunteered their time to help with our camp program this summer. Teen and adult volunteers served in the kitchen, helped with maintenance, served as chaplains, and came out to help prepare the camp for the summer. Thank you for all your help through the summer months, we could not do it without you!

A BIG THANK YOU to everyone (and there were a lot of you!) who lovingly baked and sent cookies for our camp kitchen. Our freezer was full of cookies all summer and our campers enjoyed those delicious treats so much!

Rudy Wiens also needs to be mentioned here. Rudy dedicated his eighth full season to Valaqua, serving in the kitchen for the entire summer. Rudy told me when he started that he hoped to be able to volunteer until he is 90... and he did it! We are so grateful for the wisdom, commitment, and sense of play he has brought to our camp community over these many years!

We owe a huge **thank you** to the chaplains who came and brought our chapels and campfires to life. Chaplains shared stories, lead activities and games, challenged us, got us thinking and talking and helped us to learn how we can light up the world with our love and faith.

We continue to encourage our Conference Churches to support your pastors, youth pastors, and other leaders in faith to come and serve with us here at Valaqua. It is a great opportunity to see the summer program in action, and it's kind of fun too!

Camp Valaqua Chaplains 2023

Family Camp - **Joani Neufeldt** - Lethbridge Mennonite Church
Breakaway (13-16) - **Leana Sudom** - Foothills Mennonite Church
Explorer I (10-12) - **Rob Peters** - Foothills Mennonite Church
Adventurer I (8-12) - **Will Loewen** - Trinity Mennonite Church
Discovery (7-10) - **Rachel Siemens** - First Mennonite Edmonton
Explorer II (10-12) - **Caleb Kowalko** - First Mennonite Calgary
Adventurer II (8-12) - **Don Douglas** - First Mennonite Edmonton

Conclusion

2023 has been the first year that feels truly "post pandemic." Our rental traffic and summer camp numbers were almost back to pre-pandemic levels. We continue to rebuild in many ways, but it felt like good momentum. We managed to exceed our projected rental income, though we fell short on registration income for summer camp.

The highlight of the season was our incredible staff team. I was so impressed with the young folks who chose to give their summers to Valaqua. They are a shining light within our church conference, with these folks around, the future is bright! If you know anyone on the staff or volunteer list, thank them for their help!

Thank you all for your support of our camp ministry. Valaqua continues to be formative in the faith of so many of our young people and we couldn't do it without your amazing support.

Jon Olfert, Camp Director

COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Our committee welcomed Adela Wedler this year and said goodbye to Coreen Froese, who has done much organizing and planning during her time with this committee. Thank you!

It's been busy year, with many added events planned. Last year's Annual Delegate Sessions (ADS) in Springridge was attended by around 65 people. It was a time of encouragement and community building, after many years of pandemic isolation. Thank you to Springridge church for all their help in organizing, serving and hosting!

Then came "Taste of MCA" in April, a new event that was added last year to help build community and bring us together for a relaxed evening of sharing our diverse cultures through food, song and scripture reading in various languages. As the event drew closer, the enthusiasm grew! Around 100 people attended! Many cultures were represented, including the Oromo, Sudanese, Chin and Liberians. The music reflected this same diversity. We came in under budget on this event as most of the food was generously donated. Comments reflected the enjoyment of this event..."we should make a weekend out of it next year!"

Straight from the excitement of The Taste of MCA, we dove into planning three more "FUN and FUNdraising" events. These events were also new to our committee so we were starting from scratch. It had been discussed that fall events would be part of the fundraising strategy, with the purpose being to bring together congregation members, donors and other MCA supporters to highlight the ministries of MCA, build relationships with MCA staff and provide an opportunity for people to donate. From ideas of staff sharing and dessert, the planning burgeoned out to include musical groups, skits, book signing and selling, silent auction and poetry! We planned an evening in - Edmonton, November 5, one in Calgary, November 17, followed by an evening in Lethbridge the following day. We raised over \$7000.00!

Now we are on to planning the next ADS in Holyrood Church together with help from First Mennonite Edmonton in March 2024. Joon Park will be our guest speaker, who brings much experience in Intercultural worship, having been on the Intercultural Steering committee and having just completed a series on that topic at his church. The theme is "Breaking Down, Gathering Up: Embarking on a new journey to become an intercultural church". The music, scripture and sharing will reflect the many cultures in our conference. We have a large list of workshop suggestions so it will be a great sharing and learning experience.

Our committee also approved four bursary applications for students who are attending CMU and CBC.

We are on budget this year as the Taste of MCA did not cost what we thought it would due to the donation of most of the food. The fundraising events came out of the fundraising budget and this year's ADS meeting will cost considerably less as MC Canada will be paying the honorarium and we do not have to rent a venue. We also had fewer students applying for scholarships.

There are more suggestions for gatherings such as resurrecting the women's retreat and a volleyball tournament for the youth but we will see what the year brings, as quite a few more events have already been added to our committee's responsibilities.

Adela Wedler, Charlotte Wiens, Karen Janz



Nominations Report February 2024

A Nominating Committee is given the task of gift discernment. We work throughout the year responding as vacancies remain or arise after the Annual Delegate Sessions.

MCA positions are for 2 years, with a maximum of 3 consecutive terms.

Committees are as follows:

- those taking an additional term (blue)
- slate of new nominees (red)
- those in term (black)

Executive Committee (four positions plus Executive Minister: Tim Wiebe Neufeld)

Moderator			2026
Vice Moderator	Linden Willms	Springridge	2025
		(affirm Exec. appointment May 2023)	
Secretary			2026
Finance Chair	Rachel Siemens	First-Edm.	2026

Personnel (one position)

Doug Wiebe (3 rd term)	Lethbridge	2026
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Finance Committee (two positions)

Rachel Siemens	First-Edm.	2026
Karl Blank	Lethbridge	2025
	(affirm Exec. appointment April 2023)	

Congregational Leadership Committee (three positions plus Executive Minister)

Anna-Lisa Salo (3 rd term)	Bergthal	2025
Caleb Kowalko (2 nd term)	First-Calg.	2026
Tim Burkholder (1 st term)	First-Edm.	2025

Community Building and Program Committee (three positions)

Rachel Hunsberger	Trinity	2026
Charlotte Wiens (2 nd term)	Foothills	2026
Adela Wedler (1 st term)	First-Edm.	2025

Missions & Service Committee (four positions)

		2026
Mezgebu Tucho	Bethel Oromo	2026
Marie Moyer (2 nd term)	Lethbridge	2025
Tracy Brown Ewert (1 st term)	Bergthal	2025

Camp Valaqua Committee (five positions)

Kathryn Friesen (3 rd term)	First-Edm.	2026
Christine Hansplant (3 rd term)	First-Calg.	2025
Darrel Heidebrecht (2 nd term)	Foothills	2025

Liam Kachkar (1 st term)	First-Edm.	2025
Noah Thiessen (1 st term)	First-Edm./Foothills	2026
Nominations Committee (two positions)		
Jan Wilhelm (2 nd term)	First-Edm.	2026
Joani Neufeldt (1 st term)	Lethbridge	2025
Joint Council Representative		
Margaret Kruger- Harder (3 rd term)	Foothills	2025
MC Canada Nominating Committee		
Joani Neufeldt (1 st term)	Lethbridge	2025
Canadian Mennonite Representative		
Art Koop (3 rd term)	Foothills	2026
CMU Board: Prairie Regions Representative (3 year term)		
Reece Zablocki (2 nd term)	Foothills	2027
RJC Rep		
Ashley Gusztak (1 st term)	Foothills	2024
Palestine Israel Network of Mennonite Church Canada (Rep.)		
Suzanne Gross (2 nd term)	First-Edm./Holyrood	2025

There are still one volunteer required for Moderator.

We hope to have this position filled by the time of our Annual Delegate Sessions on March 16, 2024.

Thank you to Brenda Tiessen-Wiens, Elizabeth Wall, Karen Janz, Jake Froese, Riek Tut, Albert Goerzen, Peter Sang who are finishing/stepping down. Your service to MCA is deeply appreciated.

Thank you to those who have agreed to accept a new nomination or continue to serve for another term.

Thank you to those who prayerfully considered accepting our request to let their name stand on a committee and could not do so at this time.

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Wilhelm and Joani Neufeldt

MCA Representative to Mennonite Church Canada Joint Council Report

Over the past year, as Mennonite Church Alberta representative to Mennonite Church Canada Joint Council, I have attended two in person meetings (Saskatoon in May and Winnipeg in October) and three meetings on Zoom. The meetings come with a docket of around 100 pages or more used for background information and discussion. Topics range from managing finances, to visioning the future of the church, to discussing the relationship between MC Canada and partner organizations, to considering how to care for creation and foster church health (to name a few).

The Publishing Partner Covenant between Mennonite Church Canada and The Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service (CMPS) came up for review. Last October in Winnipeg, Joint Council met together with the CMPS Board members to discuss CMPS's communication initiatives and the details of the covenant. We found common ground in how the two organizations will support each other. MC Canada has a consultation role and gives financially, while CMPS maintains its publishing independence and is an important part of the communication function for MC Canada and the regions. The covenant is renewed for another three years.

Joint Council has been part of the process of developing a transition plan for the ministry of Coffee for Peace (CFP), a social justice enterprise in the Philippines rooted in peace building work sponsored by MC Canada. The creation of CFP began with Dann and Joji Pantoja, who were sent by MC Canada to Mindanao, Philippines in 2006. In an often-violent context, Dann and Joji developed relationships and nurtured peace. Their work led to the creation of Peacebuilders Community Inc. (PBCI), a community of peace practitioners, pastors, academics, and indigenous leaders who work together to provide peace and reconciliation training. The Peacebuilding work of PBCI also extends into local farming communities who had been engaged in armed conflict over land use. As a result of PBCI's work, several communities came together in peace to form the farming cooperative that produces and brings to market the high-quality coffee of CPF. Funds from CFP are used for the continued work of PBCI in peace training.

The development of CFP is great example of a mission becoming self-sustaining. When Dann and Joji retire in 2026, CPF and PBCI will continue without witness workers in residence. The continuation will involve a transition in leadership to primarily indigenous people. The financial sustainability of the ministry is envisioned to be possible with the building of a center to provide office, training, and rent-free housing space for PBCI and CFP staff, as well as to increase the capacity of CFP to buy, process and store beans, enabling access to a larger market. MC Canada is currently fundraising to help support the Malipayon Peace Hub's construction. You can find more information on the MC Canada website [HERE](#) and on the CFP website [HERE](#).

On Joint Council, a number of people came to the end of their terms and new people have taken on the roles. Among the new members is a childhood friend whom I sang with for a few years in an Ontario children's choir. I am constantly amazed at how people reoccur in our lives despite the separations of geography and time. It is also encouraging to have people from a variety of backgrounds and bringing many abilities. There is much positive energy and courage around the Joint Council table as we function together in service to the nationwide Mennonite Church.

I am entering my seventh and final year as Alberta representative to Joint Council. I joined Joint Council in 2018, the year after the 2017 restructuring of Mennonite Church Canada. Being part of navigating group dynamics, visioning a good direction, and refining structures and policies, has been fulfilling. Thank-you for the opportunity to represent the Alberta Mennonite Churches in the governance of Mennonite Church Canada.

Minutes from Joint Council meetings are available on the CommonWord website [HERE](#).

Submitted by *Margaret Kruger-Harder*



Alberta Palestine-Israel Network (PIN) Report

From Byron Rempel-Burkholder in the February 15 PIN update:

Yesterday was Ash Wednesday, which starts the season of Lent in the Christian calendar. It's a time of introspection and repentance, a time to recognize our fragility as mortals. It's also a time of defiant hope, as we live into the mystery of Jesus' journey through death, to resurrection. This has special meaning as we consider the situation in Gaza. The news beat on Palestine has become grimly routine. We lament, and we keep lamenting the catastrophe that is Gaza and the growing fear, violence, and restlessness in Israel, the West Bank, and beyond. The heartbreak can be exhausting for those of us committed to solidarity. But there's a strange energy that kicks in when we know it doesn't have to be this way. By joining others in confronting the darkness, we rise, convinced that faith, hope, life, and love will have the last word. Lent turns to Easter.

The Alberta Palestine-Israel Network (PIN) is the regional working group that contributes to the larger "faith in action" work of Mennonite Church Canada. There are PIN groups in each region of the church. Representatives of each group meet every two months to share about local initiatives, concerns, conversations, and collaborations to imagine together what God is calling us to do with respect to the occupation and violence in the Holy Land, now in its 57th year. Alberta PIN has a small, committed group of 10+ people who meet monthly to discern together actions we engage in.

While this is not the only violence happening in our world, Mennonite Church Canada identified this issue in 2016 as demanding a specific response to a "the plea of Palestinian Christians [and] that the global church come alongside the Palestinian people as they suffer under Israel's 49-year military occupation of their lands: the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza." (2016 Resolution on Palestine-Israel). That year, we committed to upholding our identity as peacemakers recognizing that: God calls us to speak truth to power; to care for our brothers and sisters suffering from the climate of occupation – both Palestinians and Israelis; and to lament the ongoing military occupation in contravention of international law, including its violations of Palestinians' rights to movement and self-determination (summarized from Resolution on Palestine-Israel, 2016)

Each regional PIN has been guiding conversations and actions, contributing prayer material for church bulletins, composing draft letters to our government representatives to change course with its support of the state of Israel, and organizing workshops on various topics. Each region has taken a turn composing a letter for all PIN regions to use in an effort to hold the Canadian government accountable to International Law in its dealings with the State of Israel, and its countless documented violations of human rights of Palestinians.

One area of interest that emerged during 2023 was understanding 'antisemitism', and coming to terms with Mennonite complicity in antisemitism historically and theologically. Some PIN members joined the Independent Jewish Voices webinar on antisemitism to understand how real antisemitism shows itself in our world. We recognise that it is critical to distinguish between the real and toxic antisemitism that continues to exist and valid criticism of the actions of the State of Israel. Conflating the two, as our IJV facilitators point out, ultimately puts Jews in greater danger, and puts us at risk of racism against Palestinians.

In Summer and Fall, we, in Alberta, were busy planning for an Alberta tour in October by Reverend Dr. Munther Isaac, from Bethlehem Bible College. Those plans were stalled when the Hamas-led massacre happened on 7th October. As we were grieving the senseless loss of life, and coming to terms with the onslaught of violence in Gaza organized by the Israeli government, the message Munther Isaac had for the world, especially Christian churches, was unequivocal. He and other Christian Palestinians joined together pleading for churches to hold the Israeli government accountable to international human rights laws as Palestinians in Gaza, including Christian Palestinians in their churches, were -- and are, as of this writing -- being slaughtered by the thousands. For his challenging Christmas message see:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbHzqU3ZdTs>

In December 2023, Alberta PIN joined other North American Mennonite, under the umbrella of "Mennonite Action" to voice our opposition to our governments' inaction - to call for a permanent ceasefire, and to free all hostages including Israelis held by Hamas and Palestinians held in Administrative Detention by the Israeli Defence Force. More recently, we are calling on our government to recommit funding for UNRWA, the UN body that oversees schools, food, and healthcare in the 68 Palestinian refugee camps, 8 of which are in Gaza.

We invite prayers for our PIN work. We pray for wisdom as we navigate the waters of history, culture, human rights and safety for all. We build on the relationships many of us have with both Israelis and Palestinians who all long for the same thing in the area called the Holy Land: dignity, freedom, and shared land for both peoples.

Submitted by *Suzanne Gross*, Alberta PIN convenor



It thrilled me to read the 2023 year-end reports from staff this year!

But before I tell you why, an important note: This one-page summary cannot do justice to the work that's been done. Please see (and share!) a more comprehensive four-page edition at www.commonword.ca/go/3761.

These reports thrilled me because of how closely they reflect the themes of MC Canada's refreshed priorities. Meant to help staff and the Joint Council focus on how we work toward our broad Vision: Healing and Hope statement, our desire is to: 1) join in restoring all of creation; 2) be companions who make known God's welcome, generosity, and forgiveness; 3) joyfully cultivate intercultural communities.

Each of these priorities reminds me that God intends for us to work together. That we are not alone in our journey to be more Christ-like is happily evident from our work in 2023...

Leadership Development: In 2023, the coordination of leadership development was moved to the national church office, and Al Rempel was appointed to take over this work as associate executive minister. Al works with the Company of 1000 leadership development and the TiM (Transitioning into Ministry) programs, and updating leadership and pastoral development policies.

Indigenous Relations: After just over a year in the position of Indigenous Relations Coordinator, Jonathan Neufeld celebrates a growing network of reconciliation groups, events, and actions across all five regional churches of MC Canada. Jonathan has responded to invitations to resource a national ecumenical group on Indigenous spirituality, and to support the Winnipeg landfill search for



missing and murdered Indigenous women (pictured with Doug Klassen representing MC Canada). A highlight was the Singing in the Arbor gathering on Muskeg Lake Cree Nation with Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's Walking the Path Initiative.

Climate Action: Also with just a year on the job, Sandy Plett reports that nine congregations have taken steps to reduce carbon emissions, supported by MC Canada's Emissions Reduction Grant. MCM's Living Hope Retreat gathered folks from across generations and four regional churches to help us move from grief and lament to action. Those who support youth and children studied In Deep Waters to provide spiritual care for younger generations in a time of climate crisis. Leaders of the five regional working groups on climate/creation care meet regularly to share ideas and encouragement.

International Witness: Jeanette Hanson connected Anabaptist church leaders in South Korea, Thailand, Philippines, Colombia, China, Vietnam, and Ethiopia with North American resource people to study the Bible, theology, and discipleship in an Anabaptist context. She notes that while church leaders in China are feeling increased pressures from the state to restrict faith-based activities, they remain eager to know more about Anabaptism. One Chinese church leader told her that, "God has given you this gift to bless the wider church family. You will receive other gifts from us."

CommonWord: Arlyn Friesen Epp reports that retail and loan activity recovered well after Covid restrictions were lifted. Approximately 750 copies of the new family storybook Bible, *The Peace Table*, were bought in 2023. And new resource collections have been created on topical themes such as climate change, right relations with Indigenous communities, medical assistance in dying, and the longstanding Palestine-Israel conflict.

Blessings to you in your work together as congregations in 2024!



Doug Klassen
Executive Minister
dklassen@mennonitechurch.ca



Identity

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
is a diverse community

Transformed by the love of God

Inspired by the hope we find in Jesus

Called to action by the power of the Holy Spirit

Purpose

We come together as a regional church to:

Energize congregations

in worship, discipleship and mission

Encourage leaders

of hope, vision and transformation

Embody God's reconciling ministry for all creati

We celebrate congregations and pastors

105 congregations

- 2 congregations transitioned to full membership congregations: Hochma (Montreal) and Shalom Worship and Healing Centre (Kitchener)
- 2 congregations welcomed to provisional membership: Église Jésus-Christ Appelle Tous (Trois-Rivières) and Église Bethésda Mennonite de Saint-Hyacinthe (Saint Hyacinthe).
- 42 years of ministry celebrated with Mississauga Mennonite Fellowship who closed on August 31, 2023.

188 pastors serve as congregational pastors, chaplains and in other capacities

- 17 pastors installed in congregations
- 6 pastors licensed toward ordination
- 6 pastors ordained

We give gratitude for volunteers, donors and prayer

- Over 60 volunteers serve on councils, committees or as board representatives
- Volunteers assist in pastoral credentialing interviews and provide support for MCEC events.

We are excited by ministry throughout this past year

- Church planters met to talk about the joys and challenges of multi-vocational ministry
- Church leaders gathered for workshops focused on connecting to God's creation, intercultural church, medical assistance in dying, becoming a restorative church and more.
- Pastors learn together in Pastoral Circles and Transitioning into Ministry initiatives.
- Youth, and those who work with youth, gather at junior youth events and participate in conversations about youth engagement in the church.

Your support has brought inspiration and allows us to journey together in ministry as we become a transformed, inspired and called people of God. We are grateful.



Shalom Worship & Healing Centre led in worship at Annual Church Gathering.



Transformed by the love of God – 230 met in Kitchener at Annual Church Gathering.



Jr. youth from across MCEC came together for games, fun, worship (and cookies!)

Mennonite Church Manitoba Annual Report for 2023



At our annual Gathering March 3-4 at Douglas Mennonite Church, delegates from our community of congregations began “Re-Imagining Church Together.” We called on God, who is “able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine,” to work among us and through us as we began dreaming of new ways of being and doing church in these days of change and turmoil.

Two new congregations joined MCM at that Gathering, even as we grieve the departure of two other congregations this year. Thirty-nine congregations have covenanted together to be MCM, and we are grateful to God for these relationships of common identity, mutual support, and shared ministry.

In 2023 we re-imagined pastoral ministry. Co-Directors of Leadership Jeff Friesen and Karen Schellenberg supported our pastors with a New Pastors Orientation, training on Healthy Boundaries in ministry, and a Pastors Retreat which allowed pastors to rest and be refreshed for ministry. Two pastors were ordained in 2023; another three were licensed toward ordination. Fourteen pastors were installed in new positions, including nine new to MCM.

We also re-imagined congregational health. Director of Congregational Ministries Kathy Giesbrecht developed MCM Mondays, a series of online conversations on topics related to church life and ministry. We hosted “Living Hope,” a gathering of youth and young adults from across Canada joining with members of our Climate Action Working Group to lament and learn about climate change. This fall Kathy began piloting Congregational Check-Ups, an opportunity for congregations to reflect on their life and ministry and so move toward greater health as a community. Woven—our women’s ministries working group—has also been re-imagined, concluding its ministry by re-investing its funds in Anabaptist education for women in Asia through Mennonite Church Canada’s International Witness program.

Mission was re-imagined as Director of Mission Engagement Melanie Neufeld worked with our Mennonite Coalition for Indigenous Solidarity to host “New Blood,” an Indigenous-led dramatic performance which sparked important conversation among us about reconciliation. She also worked with MCIS and MC Canada colleagues to host a session on land reparations, and with MCM congregations to connect our southern and northern communities. A key part of Melanie’s work has been supporting congregations as they re-imagine mission in their local communities and partnerships with our International Witness ministries. We have also relied heavily on our Palestine-Israel Network since the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas and the subsequent invasion of Gaza by Israel.

Camps with Meaning was re-imagined after three years navigating Covid and public health restrictions. This summer we had 549 campers, including 177 adults with disabilities, who were served by 82 youth and young adults as summer camp staff. In addition, throughout 2023 Camp Assiniboia hosted about 170 groups representing nearly 7,000 people. In 2024 we will celebrate 75 years of camping ministry, and all are invited to join us for this celebration June 21-23.

An important piece of “Re-imagining Church Together” is sharing our stories of what God is doing among us and through us. In 2023 this led to the launch of MCM Monthly, an online newsletter telling these stories of our regional church, complementing our weekly MCM Updates which highlight prayer items and upcoming events. Anyone is welcome to sign up for these at www.mennochurch.mb.ca/contact.

“Now to God who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (MC Sask) is a family of 21 congregations, covenanted together as Christ Centred & Sent. We prayerfully support one another, joining together in ministry alongside the other congregations of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite World Conference, trusting that as we do God's healing and hope flows through us to all the world.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. (John 15:12-14)

2023 again was a year of changes and adjustments for MC Sask. Gary Peters consented to serve as Interim Executive Minister. Kirsten Hamm-Epp resumed her role as Youth Minister. Josh Wallace continues as Congregational Engagement Minister and Marianne Siemens keeps everything organized as Office Administrator



Our congregations, too, were in the midst of change. Many congregations are still adjusting ministries after the restriction and effects of COVID-19. Also, we have had numerous pastoral changes which are described below. As individual congregations and as a Regional Church we are attempting to understand what it means to be faithful and Christ-centred in today's world of polarized thinking and the many and various priorities that demand our time and energy.

In March, we were hosted by Bethany Manor and online for our Annual Delegate Sessions. We gathered with the theme, “Rooted in Good Soil.” David Boshart, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary encouraged and challenged us to faithfulness.

MC Sask affirmed the calls of Rodney Hennessey (Grace MC) and Curtis Wiens (Aberdeen MC), joining with their congregations to ordain them to pastoral ministry. We rejoiced together with Mount Royal MC in the conclusion of the faithful service of Garth and Claire Ewert Fisher and in the appointment of Don Froese as interim Pastor. MRMC also called Evan Bueckert to serve as interim part-time associate pastor. Likewise, we gave thanks for the years of faithful ministry by Lois Bukar at Zion MC and for the installation of Zachary Stefaniuk as its pastor. Andrea Enns-Gooding concluded her time at Rosthern Mennonite Church.

We regret the withdrawal of Laird Mennonite Church from our fellowship. We wish them God's blessings as they discern their faithful path of discipleship.

Throughout the past year we have planned and scheduled events to support the ministries of our congregations. In May, pastors were invited to participate in a daylong retreat during which Claire Ewert-Fisher led the sessions focusing on prayer for our congregations and our regional church. In October, Carol Penner, professor at Conrad Grebel College led us in a workshop for worship leaders.

The Youth Program under the recommenced leadership of Kirsten Hamm-Epp continues to nurture the youth. Josh Wallace, Congregation Engagement Minister, is working on ways to energize our congregations through his involvement in the Ministries Commission and the new opportunities presented by the New Leaf Network and MC Canada's Intercultural Church Steering Committee.

We continue to work on the Camping Ministry Study to review and strengthen our shared ministry through MC Sask's three camps (Camp Elim, Youth Farm Bible Camp, and Shekinah Retreat Center).

Through transitions, expected and unexpected, joyful and sorrowful, the God of peace remains faithfully near to us, supporting each of our congregations in MC Sask and tenderly caring for all the world. Thank you for partnering with us in this work of peace.

With prayers for peace, healing, and joy,

Gary Peters, Kirsten Hamm-Epp, Josh Wallace, & Marianne Siemens (MC Sask Staff)

MCBC Annual Report 2023

Greetings MCBC family!

This is not exactly an “annual” report, more like a five month learning reflection as your new Executive Minister (still struggling with that way too businessy title). Since August 1st I have made it a priority, with the blessing of the powers/Executive Committee, to simply get to know our churches. I have met with most of our pastors and been in most of our congregations. It's been a joy to preach, participate in pastoral installations, consult on searches, work with the Credentials and Calling Task Group catching up on the credentialing needs of our churches, and being part of the Funds Discernment for Revitalization and New Congregations. In addition to this and ongoing executive tasks, I shared some teaching and conversations around being Jesus Centre-Set at the Fall Pastor/Spouse Retreat, started to participate in the three Mennonite Church Canada roles this position requires (EMG: Executive Ministers Group, CLM: Church Leadership Ministries, JC: Joint Council), and continue to dream with our leadership board about the next seasons in MCBC.

Based on what I am seeing and hearing I believe my priorities for the next 2-3 years should be shaped around 4 main areas:

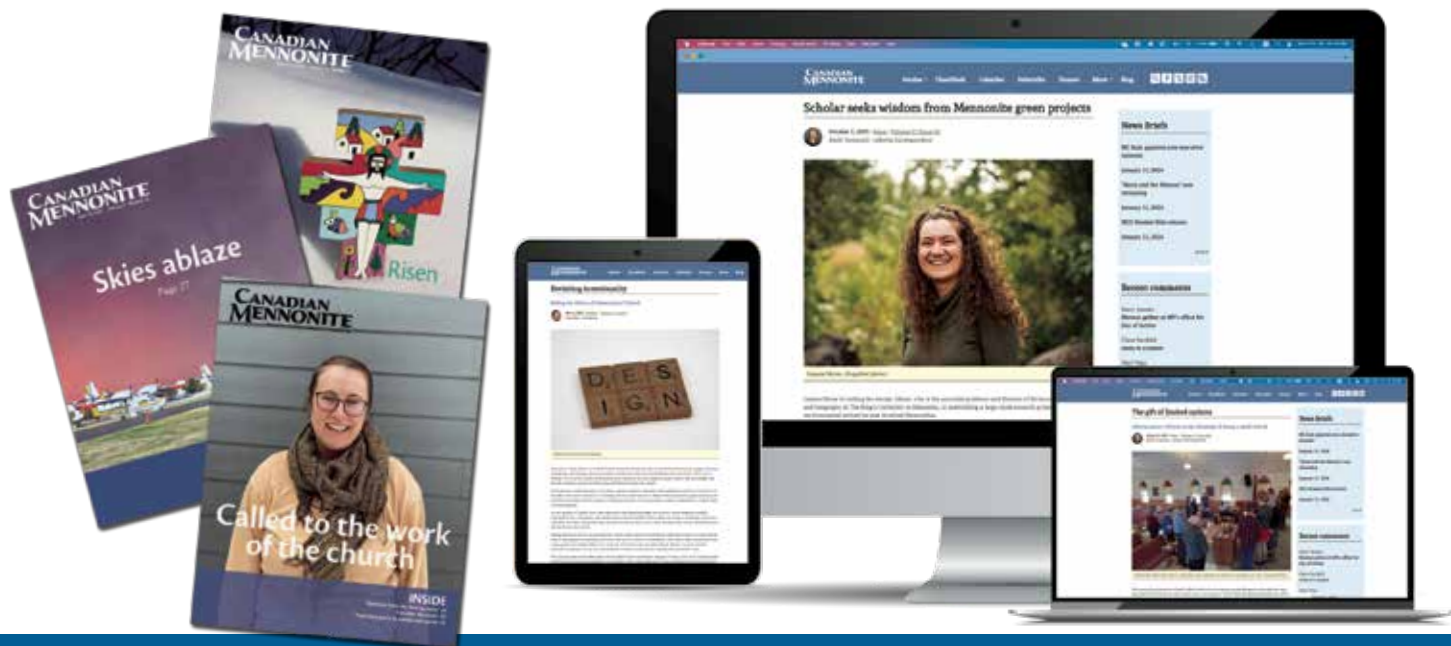
1 New Congregations and Revitalization

New Congregations: a wonderful opportunity for a new congregation presented itself through my connections with Jesus Collective in Jordan and Elizabeth Pilgrim. They had been sensing a call to start a church that would centre more on Jesus and be less bounded in its view of living out the faith. We had multiple conversations and some shared prayers in discerning if MCBC might be a good fit. The beautiful work of the Holy Spirit seemed quite apparent, from a building they had used pre-covid for a site of worship opening up again, to MCBC having some resources from the closure of another church. We had 23 churches when I started, now its 23+1 baby.

We have also had four congregations/groups contact us about aligning with MCBC mostly because of MC Canada's willingness to let there be tension and debate around inclusion. Discerning a better way to approach these conversations amongst ourselves, and our cultural differences and tensions, is an important task ahead while affirming our Confession of Faith as a centring document.

Another area of learning and desired change is in **Revitalization**. I have been in conversation with a group called Cyclical Full Circle <https://cyclicalfullcircle.com/> . They have a three step approach to walking with churches that desire to make deep change and renew. One of our churches is exploring this partnership as a possible option. My background is in church planting and transition/revitalization, a life-long passion.

Read More [HERE](#)



CANADIAN MENNONITE

2023

Report to Mennonite Church Alberta

Canadian Mennonite (CM) tells the story of the church, in partnership with the Churches of Mennonite Church Canada.

Online and in print, *CM* is a place for our faith community to gather. We share news about churches, pastoral transitions, milestones and passings. Readers write letters to the editor, opinion pieces, social media responses and website comments. Pastors and leaders contribute feature articles that foster dialogue. We seek to nurture a nationwide sense of belonging. We want people to feel connected to the broader faith community. And, we are interested in creative new ways to host conversations about what it means to be Mennonite today.

In 2023, approximately 9,000 households subscribed to the magazine. Online, 16,000 people per month read articles on our website. We hosted three *CM Events*, where *CM* moderates an online conversation between two or three panelists. The most popular event of 2023 was about medical assistance in dying. Videos of past events are available on the *CM* website.

At the end of 2023, Mennonite Church Canada and the regional churches signed a three-year covenant with *CM* to continue offering *Canadian Mennonite* magazine through the Every Home subscription plan. Anyone who attends a Mennonite Church Canada congregation can subscribe at a cost paid collectively through the church.

In 2024, *CM* will launch new initiatives to further engage Mennonites across Canada. We want to connect with, and give voice to, as broad a cross-section of the church as possible. Go to canadianmennonite.org to read more.

With your help, we are strengthening the faith community. We are making space for people with wide-ranging views to speak and to listen. Online, *CM* articles form a witness to the world about our faith. We do this in the spirit of Hebrews 10:24, spurring one another on to love and good deeds, to build up the Kingdom of God.

Thank you for partnering with us in this ministry to tell the church story.

✉ Have a story idea? Email Emily Summach at ab@canadianmennonite.org.

Greetings to Mennonite Church Alberta

CMU Mission

Canadian Mennonite University is an innovative Christian university, rooted in the Anabaptist faith tradition, moved, and transformed by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Through teaching, research, and service CMU inspires and equips for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.

Denominational Enrolment Snapshot

Mennonite Church Canada: 35 congregations

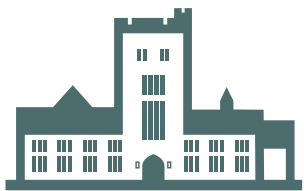
Mennonite Brethren: 21 congregations

Mennonite (Other): 10 congregations

Hutterite: 7 colonies

Other Denominations: 118 congregations

Small university Big opportunities



Arts | Science | Business
Music | Social Work

For more information and connection to CMU view our **Report to the Community** at cmu.ca/communityreport.

Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter **Through this Place** for more stories and happenings at cmu.ca/newsletter.

cmu.ca



Here's a glimpse into CMU classrooms this year

The Art of Preaching | Dr. Andrew Dyck

Cultivates the skills needed to preach effectively by exploring topics like the nature and purpose of preaching, how to move from biblical text to sermon, creative sermon forms, and the power of stories.

Biochemistry I: Biomolecules and Metabolic Energy | Dr. Candice Viddal

Introduces the structure and function of biomolecules, including proteins, carbohydrates, nucleic acids, and lipids.

Adult Development: Aging and Society | Dr. Heather Campbell-Enns

A comprehensive study of aging in individual and societal contexts, including the psychological aspects of aging in society today.

Exploring Social Work Practice | Dr. Alex Sawatsky

Introduces the profession of social work, including the history and theoretical evolution of social work practice through a critical lens.

Ways of Knowing | Professors of various disciplines

This course introduces students to the university by getting them involved in asking a big question alongside other students and professors from many subject areas. Our big question this year is "what are people for?"

Resourcing the church

Xplore | A lifelong learning program investigating dimensions of Christian faith, our world, and life. Spring session begins February 20, 2024.

Visit cmu.ca/xplore.

renew | Pastor and church leader conference, happens February 5-6, 2024.

Visit cmu.ca/renew.

Graduate School of Theology and Ministry | Study part- or full-time, in person or online. Full scholarships for full-time students available.

Visit cmu.ca/gstm.

CMU 2030: Four Strategic Directions

Visit cmu.ca/cmu-2030 to explore these strategic directions in more detail.



Relationships



Program Renewal



Lives



Reckoning... with
life out of balance

RJC BY THE NUMBERS: 2023/24 SCHOOL YEAR

105 Total Students

57 Girls

48 Boys

37 Grade 10

30 Grade 11

38 Grade 12

59 Day Students

(11 Shuttle Students)

46 Dormitory Students

89 Saskatchewan Students

4 Out-of-province

12 International

Percentage of total students:

27% Students of Alumni

66% Indicated a Church Affiliation

10% First Nations & Metis

2023 was a busy year at RJC. We were grateful for another increase in enrollment as we started the 2023/2024 school year with 105 students. This was the first time in over fifteen years that we have had over 100 students, and it felt good to have full classes, choirs and teams.

Along with school programming, we continued to invest in capital upgrades to meet the needs of our aging facilities. Our two main capital projects included the replacement of our school boilers, along with the restoration of our gym and chapel roofs. A huge thank you to MC Sask for their generous donation of \$50,000 from the Special Projects Fund to help us with the chapel re-roofing.

In 2023 faith formation continued to be a foundational cornerstone at our school, and we were thankful for our ongoing partnerships with MC Sask, MCA and our supportive churches and church organizations. We hosted four chapels a week, along with Christian ethics classes throughout the school year. These were supplemented by an overarching anabaptist approach to education that focused on the whole person and provided many opportunities for students to put their faith into action. Thank you to the churches that hosted our choirs and students, either on Sunday mornings or during our various learning opportunities this past year. Thank you, as well, to our churches for their continued financial and bursary support which provided opportunities for students to attend our school.

Moving forward, we have plans to continue to invest in opportunities for students to engage with the church and their world through retreats, out-trips, tours and service projects. Thank you again for partnering with us as we prepare a new generation of leaders for our church and world.

Thank you.



Ryan Wood
President, RJC High School

Report to Mennonite Church Alberta

AMBS serves the church as a learning community with an Anabaptist vision, educating followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world.

Our programs integrate academics, spiritual formation and practice. Join us — in person or at a distance, full time or part time — and deepen your understanding of Scripture, faith and Anabaptist theology!

Degrees and programs (* = distance-friendly program)

- Master of Divinity*
- Master of Arts in Christian Formation
- Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies
- Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism*
- Doctor of Ministry in Leadership*
- Graduate Certificate in Spiritual Direction*
- Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies* (fully customizable)
- Mennonite Education Agency Hispanic Ministries – AMBS Graduate Certificate in Theology* (in Spanish)
- Journey Missional Leadership Development Program* (undergraduate-level, nondegree)

ambs.ca/degrees-and-programs

We offer generous need-based financial aid, scholarships and matching grants for both full- and part-time graduate students. See also benefits for Canadian students!

ambs.ca/canadian-students

Leadership and enrichment

Grow your ministry skills and gain Anabaptist approaches to today's leadership challenges through our nondegree offerings. (* = distance-friendly program)

Short-term options

- Practical Leadership Training modules*
- Online Short Courses*: six weeks, discussion-based, noncredit (no grades, no papers!)
- Invite AMBS*: request a speaker (in person or online)
- Pastors & Leaders conference*: Feb. 17–20, 2025

Yearlong offerings

- Spiritual Direction Seminars*
- Transition to Leadership: program for new pastors
- Integrity Circles*: reflect theologically on leadership within a group

ambs.ca/leadership-and-enrichment



(Above) In April 2023, 12 men and eight women from five countries — Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, the U.S. and Zimbabwe — graduated from AMBS. Ten completed part or all of their studies at a distance.

Regional church connections

- **Board members:** Paul Bergen and Rachel Siemens (First—Edmonton)

AMBS statistics

- In 2023–24, 149 graduate students are enrolled at AMBS: 65 from the U.S., 11 from Canada and 73 international students. The undergraduate-level Journey program has 40 participants in Canada, the Philippines, Southeast Asia, Uganda and the U.S.

Want to try out seminary?

- Sign up for an Online Short Course:
 - Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible
 - Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology
 - Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture
 - Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication
 - Biblical Interpretation Across the Two Testaments
 - Resisting Christian Nationalism with the Gospel of Peace

ambs.ca/online-short-courses

- Take a graduate-level course — online or on campus. Nonadmitted students get 50% off tuition for their first three credit hours! ambs.ca/upcoming-courses
- Schedule a virtual or in-person visit and learn what AMBS has to offer! ambs.ca/visit
- Stay connected: facebook.com/followAMBS • instagram.com/ambs_seminary • youtube.com/ambsedu • ambs.ca/subscribe

Mennonite Disaster Service Canada **REPORT**

MDS Canada 2023:

“You brought hope and love to the community”

“You brought hope and love to the community.” That’s what Amanda McDougall-Merrill, mayor of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, said about volunteers from Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) who came to Cape Breton to repair homes damaged by Hurricane Fiona in Cape Breton.

After the storm, which struck on September 24, 2022, people “felt alone and hopeless,” she said. “You did more than build walls and fix houses. You brought love here,” she said. “There are no words that have the capacity to show how grateful we are.”

Altogether, 458 volunteers from across Canada provided over 32,000 hours of service for 272 families and community organizations in Cape Breton. This included repairs to 44 houses, 28 new roofs or roof repairs and 179 tree-cutting and cleanup jobs.

Caroline Purnell’s daughter, Rosalyn, had her house repaired by MDS volunteers. When it hit, the hurricane damaged the roof of Rosalyn’s house, causing rain to leak in every time a new storm came along. Unable to afford repairs, and with a deadline from her insurance company to fix the roof or lose her house insurance, the situation seemed hopeless for the single mother of three boys.

When MDS offered to fix the roof, everything changed, Purnell said. “When you said you would do the repairs, not only were you helping someone with a leaking roof, you were changing the outcome of an entire family’s life. I have seen my daughter go from hopelessness and despair to gratitude and hopefulness for her future,” she added. What MDS did “was a miraculous answer to prayer and a

source of encouragement to everyone who hears how you answered God’s call,” she went on to say.

Along with service in Cape Breton, MDS Canada responded to a tornado in Alberta and did other repairs in other provinces. We also offered the Spirit of MDS Fund once again, providing 26 grants worth just over \$137,000 given to churches and organizations across Canada.

The goal of MDS Canada is to restore homes and hope for survivors of natural disasters in Canada and the U.S.



Caroline and Rosalyn Purnell and family

Hearing about the impact of our service in Cape Breton, I am happy to hear both of those things happened. We thank God for the mission God has called us to: To be the hands and feet of Jesus for those affected by natural disasters. We invite you to pray for us as we explore where in Canada we can be of best service in 2024.

—Ross Penner, Executive Director



Mennonite Disaster Service
Canada

MDS Canada
200-600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB Canada R3P 2J1
204-261-1274 / toll-free 866-261-1274
mdscanada@mds.org
mds.org

2023 has been full of exciting work and meaningful connections as the work of Mennonite Men continues to benefit our communities and congregations. Our three programs—JoinTrees, JoinMen, and JoinHands—continue to thrive as we invite men to grow, give and serve as followers of Jesus for God’s shalom.

To learn more about our work, download resources, or contribute to our programs, visit mennonitemen.org.

Steve Thomas, Mennonite Men U.S. Coordinator
stevet@mennonitemen.org | (574) 202-0048

Don Neufeld, Mennonite Men Coordinator for Canada
don.neufeld@outlook.com | 905-650-1577



Mennonite Men

Engaging men to grow, give and serve.

JoinTrees

Planting trees to restore the earth



JoinTrees is our campaign to plant one million trees by 2030. This campaign targets climate change—an existential threat to life on our planet. By increasing tree and forest cover with this JoinTrees campaign, our goals are to help: (1) mitigate global warming, (2) serve climate justice, and (3) support vulnerable communities.

Our vision is a healthy, thriving planet where God’s abundant life of shalom is enjoyed by all from generation to generation.

The largest project we funded this year was again in Baja Verapaz, Guatemala. Community members were extensively involved in planting and caring for these trees. In this project, 14,104

were reforestation seedlings on badly eroded land, 10,040 were agroforestry plantings, 9,479 were for living fences, 250 for maintaining soil on terraces, and 375 were fruit trees for a total of 34,248 trees.

We now have ten projects lined up to plant 133,585 trees. Most of our projects continue to be agroforestry projects in communities in Latin America and Africa. These agroforestry plantings not only sequester CO2 and help cool the planet but also help restore degraded land, protect intact forests, and support the livelihood of vulnerable communities impacted by climate changes.

To fund these projects, we need \$145,830. Once these projects are funded and completed, our total tree count will be 333,610—one third the way toward our goal of 1 million trees!

JoinHands

Sharing resources for new church buildings



JoinHands is our program for giving and grantmaking. Through our JoinHands Mennonite Church Building Program, we provide grants to help new congregations acquire their first church building. Mennonite Men has given over 2.3 million dollars to new congregations for this purpose.

We invite individuals and congregations to give to JoinHands. We especially ask churches pursuing building projects to give as a way of sharing resources and serving “fair balance” with congregations in need.

Our recent JoinHands grants assisted with church

projects in Burkina Faso and Columbia. One went to Iglesia Menonita Caminando En Esperanza in Bogota, Colombia. The other went to Kodení Evangelical Mennonite Church in Kodení, Burkina Faso. In this predominately Muslim context, Muslim youth helped with construction—illustrating Christians and Muslims living together in community.

Our board recently approved a JoinHands grant to assist the Omaha Chin Christian Church (Central Plains conference) with purchasing a used church building. This congregation is connected to a large population of Chin immigrants in Omaha and has a special ministry of assisting people navigate a challenging new life in North America and find a home in the Anabaptist family. We now need to raise funds to make this \$40,000 grant.

JoinMen

Gathering men and promoting their growth



JoinMen provides gatherings and resources from an Anabaptist perspective to promote healthy masculinity, Christian formation and community. We desire that all men find a place of belonging among men who are strong, loving and wise as we follow Jesus in building God’s shalom.

Gatherings provide opportunities for men to join together and engage issues in community. More than an event, these experiences are also meant to encourage participants to be part of an ongoing men’s group and growth process. A full list of gathering themes we offer can be found at

mennonitemen.org/joinmen.

We receive encouraging reports of individuals and groups using our new book *Living that Matters* (Herald Press, 2023). Here’s a response from Chicago: “At Reba Place Church in Evanston, Illinois, a group of men gather once a month to encourage and pray for one another. At the core of our gatherings is the invaluable resource *Living that Matters: Honest Conversations for Men of Faith*. Many of us have a tendency to isolate and disengage, but the book has helped our group grow closer together because of the wisdom that draws us in every time.”

We’ve led several gatherings based on our book and invite your congregation to host one in your community

Thank you MCC partners, for all you do locally and around the world to feed the hungry, build sustainable livelihoods for people who have lost everything, and to spread hope into the troubles of this past year!

Thank you for partnering with MCC! Your gifts and prayers are appreciated as we seek to be the hands of Christ. We are thankful to work in relief, development, and peace with many churches here and around the world.

Each week, MCC announcements are emailed to churches. These are in point form with links to more information. Anyone can be on the list, just contact the office at 403-275-6935 or <office@mccab.ca>

Highlights from the 2022-2023 fiscal year: <https://mcc.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/ALBERTA%20IMPACT%20REPORT%202024.pdf>

In Alberta:

*You helped support 50 newcomers from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Syria.

*134 volunteer hours supported 8 former offenders to live accountable and constructive lives and expanded the Circles of Support and Accountability program into Edmonton.

*197 Low German Mennonites near Taber received translation and social program referral assistance.

*GO!100: You biked, sewed, and more, raising \$111,150 with the help of a Flaman Foundation \$50,000 match!

*Grow Hope: You sponsored 325 acres. Our dedicated farmers gave time, land, and skills and sold the crops for \$310,911! This was matched up to 4-1 by the Canadian government for food security projects around the world.

*Fall Festival at Bergthal Mennonite Church, pastor's breakfast events in Calgary and Edmonton, and a Donor appreciation event at Foothills Mennonite Church were well attended and great events for fellowship.

From Alberta to the world:

*1,712 comforters, 1,720 hygiene kits, 46 infant care kits, 2256 school kits and 656 relief buckets went to people in places like Zambia, Ukraine, and Jordan. Volunteers in the Material Resources Centre gave over 559 hours to sort and pack items for shipment!

*66,189 volunteer hours empowered 4 Thrift shops, Lethbridge, Taber, Calgary, and Edmonton to raise almost \$3.5 million, serve their communities and keep used items out of the landfill.

*\$3,9990,664 was forwarded to MCC Canada for International Programs.

Stay Tuned For MCC's 2023-2024 Annual Impact Report! (MCC's fiscal year ends March 31)

Exciting things have happened, and are in the works! 2023 featured Grow Hope and GO!100, a fantastic speaking tour by the Area Reps for South and Central Africa, a supporter event in Edmonton with speakers from Colombia and Nepal, and more! Mark your calendars for a **RELIEF SALE** event on June 15, 2024 at the Bergthal Mennonite Church.

Ryan Siemens



Executive Director

Donita Wiebe-Neufeld



Church Engagement Coordinator