

Mennonite Church Manitoba - 2007 Report to Congregations **Edgar Rempel, Executive Director**

The theme for Mennonite Church Manitoba in 2007 was “Living on the Edge” and is reflected in Luke 4: 18 & 19 “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.*”

This year’s theme is the conclusion of the three year theme “Rooted in the Centre – Living on the Edge”. The development of the “Living on the Edge” theme has called us to reflect on four important issues: the various stages of faith development, being the Church in our cultural context, dealing with conflict and change, and the development of leadership in the Church. These four issues will be the focus of our reflection and discernment for the next four years.

Camping Ministries: In 2007 Camping Ministries operated separately from Education Ministries as a result of Ministry Area Restructuring.

The summer program Bible theme was entitled “Come! Follow Me!” focusing on Jesus’ call to discipleship. Camper attendance increased slightly overall. A third Youth Camp session was implemented, with Assiniboia as the venue.

New retreats included a Winter Retreat for Adults with Disabilities (Koinonia) and a Homesteading Retreat (Assiniboia).

A diversity of guest groups visited our camps. Although the numbers attending overall decreased, there was interest among some new groups in using our camp facilities.

In late August 175 people gathered to mark Camp Moose Lake’s 50th anniversary. The event included a worship service, a recognition of past and outgoing Regional Committee members and the launching of the Picnic Shelter building project.

Building and equipment improvements also included completion of bathroom renovations (Assiniboia), a new ‘gator’ vehicle (Koinonia) and a new lawn tractor (Moose Lake).

A restructuring saw Regional committees transformed into Support Teams, which will be chaired by Managers. A new oversight body, the Camp Planning Committee, will work with the Director of Camping Ministries. The purpose of these changes is to improve both accountability and the ability of camping ministries to move forward in a unified way. The good will of all parties in the process was appreciated.

We thank all our volunteers, staff, donors, guest groups, committee members and friends without whom the camp ministry would not be possible.

Evangelism and Service Ministries: The diversity of opportunities offered by the mandate of Evangelism and Service Ministries is exciting and frustrating. A portfolio that includes evangelism and missional formation, church planting and congregational development and nurturing a culture of service abounds with potential and opportunity but seems overwhelming sometimes. Watching congregations wrestle with faithfulness and failure is to stand on holy ground. MCM congregations desire to live faithfully, aware that passing on faith requires a careful discernment of where God is working. Growing missional communities of faithful witness is a work in progress. This past year it has been exciting to join a number of congregations in such work.

How can we begin to see church planting as a natural response to God’s faithfulness among us? What needs to happen for us to shift our thinking from church planting as a functional solution to congregational space or conflict issues? We continue to work with a program called Refinery to immerse potential church planters with experienced church planters for at minimum of three months to learn about the practical realities of church planting. Several congregations and some individuals have expressed an interest in supporting church planting.

Evangelism and Service Ministries continues to promote and connect congregations with service opportunities. These include opportunities to serve through the Ministry Circles that include Aboriginal congregations as well as short term service assignments for youth groups. The annual summer camp at Matheson Island is one illustration where several partners join to offer an exciting summer camp program for Aboriginal children. In addition to that Norm Voth continues

to serve on the steering committee for Mennonite Voluntary Service Adventure that offers participants a rich two year experience in service and community living.

The frustration comes from seeing so many opportunities that must go unclaimed. May God grant us insight, joy and courage as we continue the journey of growing in our faith and faithfulness.

Leadership Ministries: The office of Leadership Ministries entered a second year of transition with Harold Peters-Fransen continuing the work of working with congregations in transition, and together with the Credentials committee, helping pastors and congregations walk through the processes of licensing and ordaining pastors. More than a dozen congregations faced some sort of pastoral transition in the past year, and several are involved in it right now. Pastors had several training opportunities, some planned by this office in the past year. Issues such as ministry in a post modern culture, and the role of communion in congregational life were examined in workshops for pastors. Harold identified a small group of people who are committed to offering congregations help in pastoral transitions, or pastoral evaluations. These people will be available in the coming year to congregations.

Peter Zacharias continued to offer pastoral care to pastors on a volunteer basis. This was appreciated by many pastors and their families.

As we await the hire of an associate to this position for areas of congregational ministries, including youth, expected to be hired in the coming months, a number of the youth pastors stepped up to the plate to organize various activities. The youth pastors group is a vibrant group of committed pastors to the church, both at the local level and at the Mennonite Church Manitoba level.

Church Community Building Ministries: Media Ministries continues with the work of communications... within MCM and beyond. The work varies from small, supporting tasks to managing MCM's web presence, creating video, and managing the recording studio and the Faith and Life Choirs. The task of communicating with congregations and their members remains a challenge.

The two websites that will be of interest for congregations are the main MCM website (www.mennochurch.mb.ca) and the Camps with Meaning website (www.campswithmeaning.org). These websites contain information about MCM ministries, camp program opportunities, news, notice of events, reports, photo galleries, videos and music and other resources for individual and congregational use.

The MCM Recording Studio has had another busy year. We continue to sense a need for communicating the ministries of the MCM office and the congregations with congregational members. This has led to the creation of an "every member" newsletter that will be coming out in the new year.

The foregoing is but a glimpse of the many activities that take place in the community of faith we call Mennonite Church Manitoba. These activities reflect what we do together as a community of congregations. They are an extension of the faith and commitment that flows from MCM's 50 congregations and the worship and discipleship that happens there. We pray God's blessing on the work that God's people do through Mennonite Church Manitoba.