

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA REPORT



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Annual Report to Area Churches and Congregations - by Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary, December, 2009

Our priorities: Forming a people of God, Growing leaders for the church, Becoming a global church

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

As I reflect on our life together in Mennonite Church Canada, there are so very many things for which I am grateful. Somewhere, in our church-body and beyond, at this very moment:

- The salvation of Christ is offered to those who have not yet responded;
- The Lordship of Christ is proclaimed as the life-blood of the salvation we seek;
- Young parents are nurturing their children to Christian faith;
- Pastors are leading congregations, inspiring them to persistent faithfulness;
- Teachers are creatively communicating the profound wisdom of our commitment;
- Seniors are nurturing each other and others;
- Young people are singing the songs of peace in new and powerful ways;
- Leaders are being formed;
- New congregations are emerging in surprising ways;
- Our challenge to engage 1,000 Acts of Peace in the public square is being addressed with zest and enthusiasm;
- Our contribution to the Canadian Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is being appreciated;
- We are contributing significantly, through people and financial resources, to the growth, stability, and ministry of Mennonite World Conference;
- Children, youth, and young adults are being encouraged to attend our schools;
- Persons are being tapped on the shoulders to consider seriously a vocation of pastoral ministry;
- Resources are being discovered and utilized;
- Our workers are building sensitive and effective partnerships in ministry all around the world;
- New leadership is being shaped; and people are being formed through our ministries and partnerships in over 25 countries around the world;
- Resources from our Resource Centre web site will be down-loaded over 100,000 times this year;
- Our congregations are receiving a portion of a total of over \$40,000,000 in donations that supports a wide variety of ministry through our agencies, schools, and more.
- Very important initiatives are being engaged with the First Nations people of our country;
- Deeper understanding among the religious faiths of our world is being fostered;
- Your generosity is being shared to make our denominational priorities possible.

I am grateful for the very hard-working staff, international ministry workers, and volunteers of the joint ministries of Mennonite Church Canada. They have worked tirelessly, with joy and hope in the ministries under their responsibility. At the time of writing we are anticipating a strong financial finish to this fiscal year ending on January 31, 2010. We are hopeful that the final accounting of your gifts in early February will validate the information we have thus far.

“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 3:11

We all entered this year with some trepidation, wondering how deeply the financial challenges of our world would impact our capacity for ministry. But you are being faithful, and you are being generous. And we are very grateful because this makes our part of so many partnership ministries possible, and that, in turn, makes others very grateful.

Thank you for your strong support for our joint ministries. I trust we can finish the fiscal year well. It is indeed a privilege to be called into this vocation. I invite you to consider how we might together grow in joy and gratitude as you consider continued giving to the many ministries of Mennonite Church Canada when you plan your budgets for 2010 and beyond.

May God be gracious to each of you, and grant you peace.

Ministry Highlights for 2009

In 2009, Mennonite Church Canada is working to form a people of God by finding several ways to share the message that God's all-encompassing shalom is attainable without violence:

- At Assembly 2009, delegates affirmed a proposal for Peace in the Public Square that would see concepts of non-violent peace building promoted across the country on bus boards, transit shelters and billboards.
- In November, Mennonite Church Canada launched the website www.liveforpeace.org; a forum for sharing and discussing peace initiatives. Thank you for the prayers and encouragement that have made this development possible.

Your support of Mennonite Church Canada ministries is helping to grow leaders for the church by encouraging youth and young adults:

- Radical Journey, a young adult service program of Mennonite Church Canada Witness with Mennonite Mission Network, gave seven Canadian young adults the opportunity to serve in 2009. Scott Bergen, Dorothea Toews, and Rebecca Wilms were in South America to help with preparations for the Mennonite World Conference Assembly which took place in July. Kyle Berg, Tim Wenger and Gabriella Wiebe are currently in South Africa, while Ruth Weber is serving in Paraguay. Thank you for helping these young people gain cross-cultural experiences that will help to shape them for a lifetime of service to God's church.

Mennonite Church Canada Witness is helping us become a more global church by sending several people abroad on special, short-term assignments that allowed us to share Anabaptist perspectives with others in 2009.

- Palmer and Ardys Becker served at Bethlehem Bible College in Palestine/Israel. Bethlehem is fifty miles from war-torn Gaza.
- Pieter and Susie Niemeyer and their family (Markham, Ont.) spent over three months in Philipstown, South Africa. During their stay, Pieter taught basic theology from an Anabaptist perspective at Grace Community Churches, while Susie worked with those churches on women's issues.

Throughout 2009, Mennonite Church Canada Witness found a number of ways to become a more global church at home and around the world by building relationships between congregations:

- Jim Loepp Thiessen from the Gathering Church (Kitchener, Ont.) and Barb and Wilmer Froese, co-pastors of Rosthern MC (Sask.) explored the work of Mennonite Church Canada Witness in urban and rural areas of China with Witness worker Jeanette Hanson as their guide.