

Mennonite Church Manitoba 2020 in Review



Mennonite Church Manitoba is 8,000 people in 39 congregations that covenant together to follow Jesus and live out the call of Christ within an Anabaptist perspective. Together with our regional partners of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Eastern Canada, we are part of a nationwide community of faith that is extending God's love to our neighbours locally, nationally and globally.

How does one measure the past year where familiar patterns and routines have had to give way to new and creative practices and where virtual gatherings through online "ZOOM" has replaced the familiar in-person meetings. How do we give account for the 525,600 minutes in 2020? I highlight a few of the more memorable of this past year.

Leadership Transition

We said farewell to Ken Warkentin after 10 years of serving as Executive Minister. We welcome ***Michael Pahl*** as Executive Minister beginning in January 2021. Michael's theological astuteness and pastoral experience will serve the Mennonite Church well into the future.

Rick Neufeld (Director of Leadership Ministries) served as Interim Executive Minister. Peter Rempel served in the role of Interim Administrative Assistant.

Worship Gatherings

What a gift to worship together virtually with the Nationwide Church. Through the medium of video technology, a weekly online worship service gave opportunity for gathering altogether. Many comments received suggested that this way technology provided a renewed sense of belonging to the larger community of faith. With the partnership of the Regional Churches, worship reflected a wide scope of diversity across the Mennonite Church. Thanks to Douglas Mennonite, Morden Mennonite, Charleswood Mennonite, Springstein Mennonite and the MCM Staff who provided worship on behalf of the MCM Regional Church.

"Camps with Meaning" Ministry

The pandemic of 2020 left the Camping Ministry with only a few options. Pop up camp days in Winnipeg, Steinbach, Morden, Camp Koinonia and Assiniboia provided a welcome relief to the many summer fun cancellations. Two weeks of day camp at Camp Assiniboia presented both camper and staff opportunity to experience the beauty of God's creation in a safe outdoor environment.

Due to pandemic restrictions and public health protocols, overnight camp and potential revenue generated from Camp Assiniboia rentals diminished drastically. As a result and most disappointing was the lay-off of seven camp staff personnel in September. The impact of these decreases in staff and revenue has been extremely difficult. Thanks to all the staff for their huge contributions that they have made as well as many sacrifices because of the prevailing circumstances.

Pastors are connecting

Online pastoral conversations have provided MCM Pastors to connect with one another across the region. These times of meeting provide support to pastors with helpful insights in responding to the immediate challenges that Covid-19 presented. These meetings provided new and creative ways to navigate ways to offer care to the congregation in the midst of Covid limitations that restrict and hindered our gatherings together.

MCM pastors and leadership teams have maintained connections with their congregants virtually; regular email updates and via personal phone calls. Congregational Search committees have used ZOOM virtual technology for continued pastoral discernment and placement. Webinars and online seminars for professional development have been encouraged for pastors to learn and grow.

Mennonite Church Ministries

International Witness global ministries and Indigenous/Settler Relations is the work of the five regional partners of the Mennonite Nation-wide church. Regional funding for these ministries works to assist local congregations in their mission initiatives.

MCM serves as the conduit for the funding of these ministries from the regional Church. Furthermore, MCM supports the work of Canadian Mennonite University and the Canadian Mennonite publication. More than 50% of all money received from congregations and individual donors that come to MCM support these areas of ministry.

Moving forward

There is little doubt that 2020 will be remembered for many things, perhaps not the least, will be the impact that a pandemic has had on our lives and the world. We have needed to adapt to a new reality and we will need to continue to draw on this strength as we move forward. Together we seek to follow the path made by Jesus.

Submitted by Rick Neufeld, Interim Executive Minister