

**Minutes of MCEC's 33rd Annual Church Gathering
Videoconference
Saturday, April 25, 2020
10:30 am**

1. Welcome

Arli Klassen, Moderator, opened the meeting with words of welcome. She introduced special guests from the Mennonite Church Canada nationwide community of congregations: Doug Klassen, Mennonite Church Canada Executive Minister and Garry Janzen, Mennonite Church British Columbia Executive Minister. Arli also recognized a number of other guests who were present from partner/affiliated organizations.

2. Meeting Instructions

MCEC planned an online meeting because of the impact of COVID-19. Arli explained that an online meeting was a new experience for an MCEC annual meeting and asked for patience with any technical glitches and the limitations of this meeting format.

3. Purpose of this Meeting

The purpose of this meeting was to address the basic business items that are required at annual meetings for not-for-profit organizations.

Arli announced that the gathering has officially met quorum with a total of 185 people registered, representing 82 of our 100 member congregations.

MCEC is planning a full day of table conversations on Saturday, November 14, 2020.

4. Opening worship

Bryan Moyer Suderman led opening worship.

5. MCEC Ministry Update

Executive Minister, David Martin, gave a brief MCEC Ministry update. We are one body, even when we do church differently and meet online. God is with us even in this pandemic. It is fantastic to see how pastors and congregations have adapted so quickly. All MCEC staff are working remotely from home. There are updates on the MCEC website with many resources, and our ministry continues online. We are trying hard to stay connected as one body nationwide.

6. Checking in with the MCEC Community of Congregations

Participants were divided into break out rooms of four or five people to share how they continue to worship, pray, and connect within their congregations during this pandemic.

7. Mennonite Church Canada Greeting – Doug Klassen

Doug Klassen, Executive Minister for Mennonite Church Canada, thanked MCEC for what it brings to Mennonite Church Canada. It is also good to meet newer congregations in MCEC. We see a group of deeply dedicated people strengthening the entire church body, not bounded by geography.

Mennonite Church Canada works in three main areas: CommonWord resources, Indigenous-Settler Relations, and International Witness. We are thankful for the contributions and work that comes from MCEC. Mennonite Church Canada study conference scheduled at Steinmann Mennonite Church this fall has changed to a virtual gathering. We will be talking about what it means to be the church.

8. MCEC Milestones

a. Congregational Milestones

- i. Bethel Ethiopian Evangelical Church – 10th anniversary
- ii. Shalom Worship and Healing Centre - 10th anniversary
- iii. Hunta Mennonite Church - 50th anniversary
- iv. St Catharines United Mennonite Church – 75th anniversary

b. Partner Milestones

- i. Rockway Mennonite Collegiate - 75th anniversary
- ii. Mennonite Central Committee - 100th anniversary
- iii. Women of MCEC ended on December 31 2019 – MCEC recognized the many years Women of MCEC served women in MCEC congregations. Although the formal women's organization has ended, women will continue informally connecting through a new working group.

c. Congregations Withdrawing Membership in MCEC

Six congregations withdrew their membership in MCEC over the past year. MCEC was in facilitated conversations with each congregation to explore differences. In all cases, they have agreed to bless and pray for each other even though membership affiliations were changing.

Calvary Church Ayr, Kingsfield Zurich and Clinton Mennonite Church, Living Water Community Christian Fellowship, Maple View Mennonite Church, Milverton Mennonite Fellowship, and River of Life Fellowship.

Participants recited a litany of release to bring closure to these relationships.

d. Staff Transitions

- i. Fanosie Legesse, Intercultural Mission Minister, began his ministry on March 1 2020
- ii. David Martin, Executive Minister, is retiring in the summer. A celebration of his ministry is planned
- iii. Leah Reesor-Keller has been appointment as the new Executive Minister
- iv. Michel Monette, Catalyzer Minister, began his ministry on August 1, 2019.

e. New Congregations

- i. Full Membership status:
 - o Grace New Life Mennonite Church, Hamilton ON
- ii. Provisional Membership status:
 - o Goshen Mennonite Church, Ottawa ON
 - o Mennonite Disciple Mission (MDM) Joliette, Joliette QC
 - o Soul House, Toronto ON
 - o Warden Underground, Toronto ON

Motion - The MCEC Executive Council moved and seconded the motion *to accept Grace New Life Mennonite Church as a Full Member congregation in MCEC and that we accept Goshen Mennonite Church, MDM Joliette, Soul House and Warden Underground as Provisional Member congregations in MCEC.* Carried.

93 votes cast: 98% voted in favour

9. Greetings from Mennonite Church British Columbia (MCBC)

Each year, Executive Ministers from Regional Churches attend the annual meetings of other Regional Churches in Mennonite Church Canada. This year, many of these visits are virtual ones. In March, David Martin joined the online annual meeting for Mennonite Church Alberta. MCEC welcomed Garry Janzen, Executive Minister of MCBC. He brought greetings from 29 congregations in MCBC.

A new moderator has been writing weekly newsletters in this pandemic time. Pastors are meeting weekly in two groups on Zoom sharing resources and supporting each other. Being a community is very important, and they appreciate the nationwide worship services prepared by each region. MCBC had an annual gathering on February 29. Garry highlighted that six congregations receive revitalizing support from MCBC. A new Vietnamese congregation joined the annual meeting.

Garry expressed deep appreciation and thanks for David's leadership, dedication and effort to make a nationwide church.

10. Adoption of Minutes of the 2019 ACG

The MCEC Executive Council moved and seconded the motion *to accept the minutes of the 32nd annual meeting of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, held April 26 - 27, 2019.* Carried.

94 votes cast: 96% voted in favour

11. Accepting the Executive Council Actions for 2019 – 2020

The MCEC Executive Council moved and seconded the motion to approve all actions taken by the MCEC Executive Council for the year May 2019 to April 2020. Carried

91 votes cast: 85 voted in favour, 2 voted against, 4 abstained

12. Financial Agenda

- a. **2019 – 2020 Financial Statements** - Sean East, Financial Manager, presented the audited statements from the year that closed February 28, 2020. The Auditors, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, did not see any issues during their audit.

The year ended in a deficit, largely due to a shortfall of congregational giving. MCEC is grateful to congregations for giving what they could and for the continued confidence they show for the work that MCEC is doing.

MCEC was able to meet budget regarding giving to partners, such as camps and schools. International Witness giving is passed on to Mennonite Church Canada to support the worker(s) to whom the income was designated. MCEC has been able to maintain support to the nationwide church and to the international ministry they support.

Overall, spending for internal ministry programs was \$31,000 less than what was budgeted. Some items that deviated from budget:

- Higher than budgeted expenses for delegates travelling to the Mennonite Church Canada gathering in British Columbia
- Leadership resourcing had a higher than budgeted loss when they invested in workshops like Healthy Boundaries in the Context of Ministry
- Generally less spending in the mission budget across a number of categories
- Congregational resourcing reflected a higher than budgeted loss on youth and junior youth events due to lower registration than in past years

The 2019-2020 budget was balanced by a draw of \$40,933 from the Faithful Steward Fund, at the discretion of the Executive Council.

The Executive Council moved and seconded the motion to accept the audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2020 as printed. Carried.

94 votes cast: 92 voted in favour, 2 abstained

- b. **2021 Budget/Spending Plan** – Sean East informed delegates that the spending plan was developed over a number of months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The new reality is unpredictable, and to deviate from something that had much thought and discussion, did not seem wise.

Sean presented the 2021 budget with a similar pattern of spending from last year.

Revenue for the coming year was budgeted at \$2,337,916, a slight increase from the previous year

- Over the course of the Legacy Initiatives Fund (LiF), a lot of staff time from the operating budget was expended supervising, participating in, dreaming with and working with all of the proposals, especially the larger ones that were paid for by legacy fund dollars. No revenue was reflected in the operating budget to recognize the staff time spent on those initiatives. The interest that the Legacy Initiatives Fund is earning on its principle investment will now be transferred as income to the operating budget.
- Staff position was filled by Fanosie Legesse
- Anabaptist Learning Workshops will be returned to MCEC from Conrad Grebel University College

The budget presented had a net deficit of \$162,595 which is offset by the allowed 15% draw from the Faithful Steward Fund to balance the budget.

Sean assured congregations that are not receiving donations as usual because of the pandemic that their congregational ministries and staff are the priority. MCEC expects to receive less funding from congregations this coming year but encouraged congregations to inform MCEC of their funding pattern so adjustments can be made in the budget.

The MCEC Executive Council moved and seconded the motion to accept the 2020 - 2021 spending plan as printed. Carried.

90 votes cast: 85 voted in favour, 3 voted against, 2 abstained

Legacy Initiatives Fund Update - A LiF update was available on line for review. Delegates were invited to contact Executive Council, staff or Finance Council members with questions. The Executive Council is striking a Legacy Initiatives Fund Advisory Committee to review the status of the fund. More information will be available in the future.

- c. **Approval of Auditors** - *The MCEC Executive Council moved and seconded the motion to appoint PricewaterhouseCoopers as auditors for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2021. Carried.*

89 votes cast: 88 voted in favour, 1 voted against

13. Youth Dream Team Report

A report and video update was posted online for delegates to review in advance. MCEC Executive Council has mandated the development of a LiF proposal for a position to catalyze faith formation for youth and young adults. More will be shared at the fall gathering.

14. Approval of Volunteer Slate

Gladys Bender, Chair of Gift Discernment Committee, introduced the slate. Gladys thanked the Gift Discernment Committee for their work to fill vacancies on the slate.

The MCEC Gift Discernment Committee moved and seconded the motion "That we accept the 2020 - 2021 slate as presented." Carried

84 votes cast: 82 voted in favour, 2 abstained

15. Introduction of New Executive Minister

Arli introduced Leah Reesor-Keller as MCEC's new Executive Minister. Arli offered thanks and appreciation to the search committee and to those who offered input in the focus groups. The search committee heard from 100 people on how to think of MCEC in the future. The conversation will be picked up in the fall. Members of the search committee were

Arli Klassen, Chair

Alissa Bender, representing the Leadership Council

Yoel Masyawong, representing the Mission Council

J D Penner, representing the Executive Council

Jason Yuen, Constituent

The candidate was recommended to and unanimously received by the Executive Council. Leah will begin as Executive Minister at the end of summer. An installation service for Leah will be held at the MCEC fall gathering.

Leah Reesor-Keller gave a brief greeting.

16. Closing Words and Worship

Arli made final comments and ended with a prayer.

Adjourned 12:40