

2024

The Year in Review



Every day, some aspect of Mennonite Church Canada inspires me!

One day it might be an email that I receive from one of our International Witness workers. Another day it is a discussion that we have in a staff meeting, or connecting with the Regional Church executive ministers.

An inspirational highlight I can count on is when I join one of our 203 congregations for worship. Whether I am in a congregation of 13 or 300, God is present and the Holy Spirit moves among us.

Annual visits to a dozen or so congregations and meeting Regional Church colleagues remind me of who MC Canada aims to serve. In the 2017 restructuring process, congregations were the centre of our attention, and leaders re-shaped our governance structures at the national and regional levels to support these local communities.

Since 2017, it has become clear that some early communal expectations of looking to congregations and regional churches for select expertise created unprecedented challenges. For example, it has been a struggle for congregations and regional churches to effectively speak into matters of nationwide programming and binational and global partnerships.

This past year the “Group of 5” – an ad hoc committee of the Joint Council – made recommendations to address our challenges. Here are a few of them:

- The Joint Council gave MC Canada staff more freedom to navigate national, binational, and global partnerships.
- Additionally, the Joint Council decided to reintroduce congregational representation at nationwide Gatherings (formerly Assemblies). This will take effect at Gathering 2025 in Kitchener (July 2-5).
- MC Canada will coordinate and lead revenue generation efforts to provide congregations, Regional Churches, and Nationwide Church with coordinated approaches to raising needed funds for ministry.

In making the above adjustments to our governance, we strive to strengthen the ministries we do together:

CommonWord: Your centre for congregational resources is celebrating 10 years of serving churches as your national bookstore and resource centre! Arlyn Friesen Epp also reports on special activities as Mennonites prepare to celebrate 500 years of Anabaptism in 2025.

International Witness: Whether at home or abroad, we strive to cultivate the gifts an intercultural church offers. Learn more about how that’s happening in Jeanette Hanson’s report.

Indigenous Relations: Reconciliation is a long word that describes a long journey. Jonathan Neufeld’s report brings us healing initiatives with intriguing names like the Secret Treaty, the Strawberry Communion, and more in his report.

Climate Action: Sandy Plett shares survey results that show congregations are deeply and biblically rooted in the ethics of social justice and stewarding our resources. However, we need to better understand how social justice and creation care connect with how we care for our neighbours.

Leadership Ministries: Top of mind for Al Rempel is his work with Regional Churches to equip and grow those who are called to congregational ministry. In his report, learn about financial assistance to pastors and congregational leaders wishing to grow their skill set and a policy update that will interest all church leaders.

Please read the ministry report summaries that follow, and engage MC Canada staff with any questions you have.

Thank you for your companionship as together we seek to be People of God!

Doug Klassen
Executive Minister
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LEADERSHIP MINISTRIES

My ministry provides oversight to regional churches as they credential leaders, equip leaders with tools and resources for the congregation-pastor relationship, and develop leaders for the church.

It has been a year of significant steps:

- This year we launched a reformatted program called Transition into Ministry (TiM). All five regional churches have joined together with our primary partner, AMBS, to deliver formation experiences alongside ongoing coaching and mentoring. Thanks to the Company of 1000 leadership development fund, each participant is entitled to \$500 for an additional elective of their choice provided by one of our other Mennonite education partners across Canada to pursue excellence in one of the six core competencies of pastoral ministry. Your gift to the [Company of 1000](#) helps build strong new leaders for our church.
- Thank you to the many individuals and particularly

credentialed leaders who have helped shape new policy for Mennonite Church Canada. Joint Council formally adopted the Guiding Ministerial Leadership in Mennonite Church Canada (GMLC) in October of 2024. This strengthened policy reflects our best intentions to deal with conflict and create safe spaces for all. Regional church leaders will be introducing the new policy with congregations and their credentialed leaders in the coming months.

Looking ahead: Church leaders, pastors, and other interested individuals are invited to attend Leadership Day on July 2, 2025, as part of Gathering 2025. Plan to attend this day of worship, enrichment, and blessing for church leaders.

I'm grateful to my colleagues from the Regional Churches for the many ways they encourage leaders in our church!

Al Rempel
Associate Executive Minister
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CLIMATE ACTION

When I joined the MC Canada team just over two years ago, the big question for Climate Action was: How does the church 'respond faithfully to the climate crisis'?

Two years later there still are many unanswered questions, but the questions reveal a church that is engaged, wrestling, thinking, and moving toward action.

The MC Canada Environmental Sustainability Survey shows that a stewardship ethic built on biblical creation narratives is firmly established in our church family alongside a strong justice ethic.

The survey also showed that we need a stronger understanding of how environmental sustainability/creation care connects to social justice and care for our neighbours. And we discovered that the link between peacemaking and creation care are not yet fully formed in our thinking as a faith family.

While there's loads to do, congregations are meaningfully engaged:

- Six congregations greened their buildings with help from the Emissions Reduction Grants totalling \$18,000.
- Congregations looking to weave climate justice themes and learning into the life of the church now

have even more help from new resources created by collaborators in MC Canada and MC USA:

- *Journeying with Creation: Advent Prayers in a Time of Climate Change.*
- *Worship series – To Hope and Act with Creation: A Season of Creation Worship Guide.*
- Several events this past year gathered young adults, Anabaptist organizations, Indigenous relations, and regional climate working group leaders to nurture the health of the nationwide church, invite the Spirit, and spark energy for the work of climate justice.
- Organized online meet-ups helped equip participants to green our buildings, green our burials, and preach about hope in a time of crisis.

Up next? From February to July of 2025, pastors and church leaders will gather for "Faithful Leadership in the Climate Crisis: Responding in Hope" to strengthen their skills and understanding of how to weave creation care into the life of the church.

Submitted by
Sandy Plett
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INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

I believe this to be true: that being in relationship with Indigenous neighbours is not an opt-in/opt-out concern.

From coast to coast to coast, we are neighbours—touching the earth, living on the same lands, walking the same streets, breathing the same air, sustained by the same earth, and loved by the one Creator. It is never a question of our being in relationship but rather what sort of relationship we seek to nourish and incarnate.

- Through the [Secret Treaty](#) project, Mennonite Church Manitoba congregations and schools are learning how treaty was the starting place for a relationship of reciprocity and mutuality. We are invited to reclaim our treaty commitment to one another as neighbours on these lands.
- Similarly, congregations of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada showed up with reparative gifts to the [Strawberry Communion](#), a spiritual covenant between churches and Six Nations.
- Congregations of Mennonite Church Alberta oriented themselves to the history, protocol, and role of powwow in Indigenous communities. They ventured together to bear witness to the sounds, sights, and movements of powwow.

- In Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, the ongoing work of sacred site protection was cinematically shared through the film [Custodians](#).
- In Mennonite Church British Columbia, congregations have been encouraged to support Indigenous Theological Education through the Elijah Harper Fund.

Choices to embrace and incarnate relationship is being discerned and pursued on many levels across MC Canada. To encourage regional church collaboration, the MC Canada Climate Action and the Indigenous Relations working group leaders met for a weekend in October (see below). This in-person gathering was important to building relationships across the regional churches of MC Canada to reinforce that none of us are alone, that we have ideas and passion to share, that we are co-conspirators in Climate Action and Indigenous Relations, and that we share many overlapping concerns and hopes.

In 2025, we anticipate building on these more recent nationwide connections to make further strides in our shared ministries of healing and restoration.

Respectfully,

Jonathan Neufeld
Indigenous Relations Coordinator



Leaders of Indigenous Relations and Climate Action/Creation Care working groups from all five regions of our nationwide family of faith gathered in picturesque Pinawa, MB on October 4-6.

The weekend served to deepen connections across the regions and discuss collaborative possibilities. They hope this initial gathering will inspire and ultimately lead to broader awareness and hyper-local uptake of earth-care and Indigenous reconciliation among congregations.

Photo by Ruth Bergen Braun

INTERNATIONAL WITNESS

The theme for the MC Canada's Gathering 2025 is "Each has a gift" (based on 1 Peter 4:10). It emphasizes the diversity of gifts that everyone brings to enrich the ministry of an intercultural church. In the International Witness program, we have talked about this as bringing dishes to a global potluck where God is the host, and we share with each other the gifts that God has given us. Welcome to God's Global Potluck!



The table in Asia is being set by small conferences of Mennonites coming together to share what they are doing and what they dream to do in Anabaptist training in Asia. Mennonite Church

Canada, in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network, and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, is invited to the table to share what we have as these Asian churches build pathways to lay leadership training, pastor in-service training, and theological education. Ten church leaders from different parts of Asia met together in September 2024, and formed working groups to move forward with this dream, developing curriculum, and forming a platform where resources can be accessible.

A study guide for Anabaptist Essentials piloted with the Evangelical Vietnamese Mennonite Church by Nhien Pham and Garry Janzen (MC Canada liaison workers for Vietnam), is being shared with congregations in China. Youth Peace Conferences set up in Myanmar are brought to the table by the Bible Missionary Church Mennonite. Anabaptist centres in Northeast Asia are connecting to share ideas. Witness workers, Bock Ki Kim and Sook Kyoung Park, are active in connecting congregations and church leaders in China, South Korea, and Japan with opportunities to share experiences in restorative justice and peace education.

The Malipayon Peace Hub, a coffee production and peace training facility, was opened in November 2024. PeaceBuilders Community (PBCI) and local Indigenous communities celebrated this space for training and economic development. It continues to be a work in progress as Coffee for Peace expands its collaborative work in the area.

In 2024, MC Canada congregations had the opportunity to learn from and develop relationships with global

companions from Thailand and China with visits across the country. This is an important part of the mutual learning that is a basis of working together.

Witness workers Werner and Joanne De Jong completed three years of teaching at the Meserete Kristos Seminary in Ethiopia. Their contributions to the development of theological education at MKS are deeply appreciated by church leaders there.



Palestine Israel Network volunteers worked tirelessly at advocacy and education in the ongoing crises in Palestine. Several members participated in a solidarity visit to the area in November, bringing stories from Palestinian Christians living with war.

Sharing also happened globally through a three-part online conversation on "Land, Identity, and Faith" – a conversation about decolonization from South Africa, Palestine, Philippines, and North America – building solidarity, relationships, and learning from each other.

These and many other gifts are being brought to God's banquet table. Thank you for participation in this potluck through your prayers, relationships, and financial gifts.

Submitted by Jeanette Hanson
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(l to r) Tom Poovong, Khamphan Sudcha, Doug Klassen, Jeanette Hanson, and Thipawan Sucha on a visit to our MC Canada offices. Talked about the growth of *Friends of Grace* church network in Thailand and the need for leadership development training.

CommonWord

Bookstore and Resource Centre

In 2024, CommonWord recognized several significant milestones. We completed our tenth year as a combined national bookstore and resource centre. Over that time, we have served about 93,000 retail customers and have circulated over 29,000 loan items across Canada. This past year we also celebrated 50+ years of Christian formation efforts nurtured through a resource centre and bookstore. We compiled a [brief history](#) of CommonWord and its predecessor organizations.

A highlight this past year has been our partnership with MennoMedia in the Canadian distribution of the Anabaptist Community Bible. Your response has been overwhelming! We pre-sold almost 1,400 copies. This significant publication – with marginal notes from 600 small study groups around the world – helps mark the 500th anniversary of Anabaptist beginnings in Europe in 1525. Please consider ordering yours, if you have not already done so, and watch for other anniversary publications in the next months. See [full collection](#).

CommonWord served as a public venue for various resourcing events. We hosted ten book launches, a climate action conversation, and a Christian formation seminar. Each of these events were livestreamed and attended by a total of 540 people. One highlight was a touching personal conversation between literary icons Rudy Wiebe and Margaret Atwood during the launch of *Rudy Wiebe: Essays on His Works*. This and all past discussions are available to view [here](#).

CommonWord's partnership with [Together in Worship](#) remains strong. We have seen the addition of many digital Anabaptist worship resources to our website again this year, including original music, video, visual art, and words for worship. These resources are free to use in your congregational settings. And we welcome your own [submissions](#).

We continued to shoulder our three main daily responsibilities: curation, accessibility, and communication. We carefully select materials through an Anabaptist lens for the purpose of Christian formation in the home and congregation. We make these materials accessible instore and through our website (to buy, borrow or access online). We also ship loan items across Canada for free. These materials

and services are profiled through your regional church newsletter, social media, and our Curator newsletter.

Thank you for your engagement this past year. In eleven months (as of November 30), we have fulfilled over 850 online retail orders, completed nearly 8,500 in-store purchases, delivered over 2,300 loans, and had 16,300 items downloaded.

We want to hear from you. Are there titles you would recommend? Are there original resources you would like to share? Are there displays of loan materials you would wish to host? Are there ways we can serve you better? Are you unfamiliar with us? Please be in touch (1-877-846-1593 or info@commonword.ca).

We are grateful for the church and university's ongoing commitment to Christian formation. On behalf of the rest of our staff - Anita Neufeld, AnaSara Rojas, Josh Paetkau, and our student employees and volunteers - we look forward to serving you in 2025.

Submitted by Arlyn Friesen Epp
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