

**MCEC**

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Deepening Our Relationship with God

Psalm 27

Minutes of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's 32nd Annual Church Gathering

Steinmann Mennonite Church, 1316 Snyder's Road W., Baden, ON

April 26-27, 2019

Friday, April 26, 2019 7:00 pm

1. **Welcome** – David Martin, Executive Minister
Josie Winterfeld, Mission, Peace & Justice and Outreach Worker at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, offered land recognition
2. **April Yamasaki, guest speaker**, spoke on Drawing Near to God: Psalm 27:1 – 14 read by Allan Rudy-Froese, First Mennonite Church.
We want to go deeper in our relationship with God but cannot seem to get there. Psalm 27 gives us a glimpse of an intimate relationship with God. She invited us to seek God together by praying Psalm 27, as a way of deepening our relationship with God and listening for what God has for us.
3. **Celebrating and Thankfulness for our Faith and Work**
 - a. **Milestones**
 - i. **Congregational Anniversaries:**
 - *St. Jacobs Mennonite Church – 175 years*
 - *KW House Church – 50 years*
 - ii. **Congregational Transitions**
 - Calvary Mennonite Church (Monetville) withdrew their membership in MCEC because of differences of understanding.
 - Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Resource Response Team (SMARRT) turned 25 this past year; SMARRT has been instrumental in supporting congregations with difficult issues related to sexual misconduct; SMARRT is reimagining their ministry for future service.
 - Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) – Sarah Wenger Shenk, President, was thanked by MCEC; she is concluding nine years of service to MCEC and AMBS.
 - iii. **Staff Changes** – Departures: Scott Albrecht, Accounting Assistant, concluded his service with MCEC in February. Brian Bauman, Mission Minister, is retiring at the end of the year.

4. 2019 – 2019 Financial Statement

a. Review of audited financial statements - Sean East, - Financial Manager, and Linda van Bergen from the Finance Council presented the audited financial statements. 2018 – 2019 was the first year with the new arrangement between Mennonite Church Canada and MCEC. Sean encouraged congregations to send their donations throughout the year, not just at the end of the year.

Motion - *“On behalf of the Executive Council, Arli Klassen, Moderator, moved that we accept the audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2019 as printed.”*

Seconded by Ken Martin, Elmira Mennonite Church. Motion carried.

5. Legacy Initiative Fund Update – Linda van Bergen reviewed the financial report for the Legacy Initiative Fund.

6. Approval of Auditors – Motion *“On behalf of the Finance Council, Linda van Bergen moved to appoint PricewaterhouseCoopers as auditors for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2020.”*
Seconded by Mike Johnson, Hanover Mennonite Church. Motion carried.

7. Offering - Offering this evening designated for the Eastern Africa Diaspora project.

8. Ministry Updates

a. Working Group Concept –David explained how MCEC wants to focus on areas of peace and justice. It is the work of the church, not staff, so church working groups are picking this up.

b. Israeli/Palestine Working Group – Fred Redekop and Palmer Becker shared that Mennonite Church Canada passed a motion a few years ago to focus on issues in Israel/Palestine. Palmer gave a biblical reflection on Genesis 12.

c. Truth and Reconciliation Working Group – Josie Winterfeld, Anne Brubacher and Scott Morton Ninomiya shared an update. Canada went through an extensive truth and reconciliation process; Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) made commitments to live into reconciliation. Ninety-four calls to action were issued to Canadian people. How are we as a church living into the commitment of reconciliation? Several working groups in different geographical locations harnessed the energy that congregations have for these issues. A survey last fall brought people together across MCEC to discern how they might walk with indigenous communities in their particular areas. Four area working groups are formed in Niagara (Herb Sawatzky giving leadership), Hamilton (Randell Neufeld organized group from The Commons), KW area (Ron Fleming giving leadership), and Markham Stouffville area (Miriam Reesor giving leadership from Willowgrove). Peter Haresnape and Tim Schmucker are considering what the Toronto area can do. Representatives from each area have formed an MCEC coordinating group to work on larger projects. Scott is taking leadership of the larger coordinating group.

9. Introduction to Bylaw Changes – Arli Klassen gave a brief introduction to bylaw changes. Changes were last made 13 years ago. This bylaw revision reflects changing practice in MCEC, commonly accepted best practices, and legislative changes in Ontario. The most substantive difference was in section five on membership. It reflects current practices and clarifies practices. The proposed bylaw had input from the Executive Council, legal counsel and ten people took advantage of advance videoconference meetings to ask questions and offer feedback.

10. Closing Worship – Mike Erb and Anneli Loepp Thiessen led in a song of worship.

11. Adjourned - 9:22 pm

Saturday, April 27, 2017 - 9:00 am

1. **Opening Worship and Welcome** – Arli Klassen introduced herself as moderator and welcomed everyone. Arli acknowledged the land on which we stand. She introduced April Yamasaki as a writer, author and first ordained woman pastor in MC British Columbia.

2. **April Yamasaki** spoke on Seeking and Waiting for the Lord: Psalm 27:7 – 14 read by Allan Rudy-Froese.

In the Bible, we usually connect physical thirst with spiritual thirst. When we are preoccupied with our lives, we may not realize that we are thirsty even when we are. For our spiritual thirst, we need to spend time with God. Scripture reminds us that we are thirsty for God.

It is not with our effort that we can have a close relationship with God; God draws us near.

The first part of Psalms 27, 1 – 6, is full of confidence and second part, 7 – 14, turns to lament as the psalmist directly prays to God. With the shifted focus, we are reminded that we need to talk to God to develop relationship with God. Psalms 27 does not end with lament, but turns around to thanksgiving. Anxiety turns into deep trust. A close relationship with God is waiting for us all.

3. **Minutes of 2018 Annual Church Gathering** - Ernie Harris, Executive Council Secretary, highlighted the minutes of the 2018 Annual Church Gathering. One amendment received under 14b, in MCEC discernment. "Bethel Mennonite Church is not a member of Evangelical Anabaptists Partners (EAP) but the pastor, Dave Tiessen, is a member." **Motion** – *"On behalf of Executive Council, Ernie Harris moved to accept the minutes of the annual meeting of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, held April 27 and 28, 2018, with one correction."*

Seconded by Dave Burkholder, Rouge Valley Mennonite Church. Motion carried.

4. **Review and Accept Executive Council Actions - Motion** – *"On behalf of the Executive Council, Ernie Harris moved to approve all actions taken by the MCEC Executive Council for the year May 2018 to April 2019."* *Seconded by Lorne Metzger, East Zorra Mennonite Church. Motion carried.*

5. **2019 – 2020 Slate** - Gladys Bender, Chair of the Gift Discernment Committee, introduced the slate and gave verbal updates of changes that were not printed in the Discernment booklet.

6. **Leadership Ministry Update** – Marilyn Rudy-Froese, Church Leadership Minister, and Jean Lehn Epp, Interim Coordinator of Youth Ministry Resources, gave an update on youth ministry consultation. MCEC has been responding to a call for youth ministry from last year's Annual Church Gathering. MCEC hired Jean Lehn Epp on contract last September. Jean has been sharing stories from congregations, connecting people, and providing resources. MCEC also hosted a youth consultation. MCEC invited 50 youth and adults representing different regions, congregations, schools and camps. There was strong youth participation, one third of the group. It was led by an organization from the USA called ULEAD. They led in team building and dreaming, using the appreciative-way approach. Marilyn and Jean gave a sampling of the comments. They ended the day drafting a provocative proposition to guide work in youth ministry: investing in an intentional unconditional relationship with youth walking with them toward a fearless faith in Christ Jesus. Next year is a year of discernment to learn what it means to do this. The statement invites all of us to be fearless in our faith with Jesus Christ as we enter this new terrain. Jean's contract has been extended for another year giving leadership to the youth ministry dream team.

7. **MCEC Ministry Updates**

- a. **Changes to Bylaws** – Arli Klassen reviewed the changes to MCEC's bylaw, section by section. The changes refreshed and updated the bylaw with a strong community framework that supports our work together.

Executive Council and legal counsel reviewed the bylaw. People were given opportunity over the last few weeks to speak to staff and Executive. If anyone has specific questions or suggestions, please speak to David Martin, Arli Klassen or Ernie Harris.

- b. **Mennonite Church Canada Updates** – Alicia Good, Mennonite Church Canada Joint Council member, and Arli Klassen gave an update on the nationwide church. Alicia has been encouraged and inspired by how God has been at work with the new structure of Mennonite Church Canada. Arli found it interesting to work out what it means to be Mennonite Church Canada together. MCEC is about half of Mennonite Church Canada, but when we sit at the Joint Council table, we are one of five, and we work out what it means to be Mennonite Church Canada together

Willard Metzger, Executive Director, resigned. Henry Paetkau is in an interim position and Doug Klassen, new Executive Minister, will begin his assignment in June.

Henry Paetkau spoke of the privilege of living into opportunities and challenges of the new structure. The foundational unit of the structure is the local congregation meant to strengthen regional churches into a nationwide church. For the first time, each regional church has a communicator in order to connect congregations, regional churches and the nationwide church across regions. Under discussion is a new website that will connect all of us, built on a congregational website, but extending seamlessly through the regional and nationwide churches.

Mennonite Church Canada's Gathering will be held from June 27 to July 1, 2019 in Abbotsford, BC.

Financial donations are channelled through the regional churches. There are eleven staff in total with eight FTE (Full-Time Equivalent). MCEC's Financial Manager, Sean East, has been seconded to Mennonite Church Canada to put finances in order, develop new practices, support staff and develop budget for this coming year.

Jason Martin, Director of International Witness, introduced International Witness workers and the Witness funding model through video.

- 8. **Celebration of the MCEC Community of Congregations** – Brian Quan, Assistant Moderator, and Brian Bauman, Mission Minister, introduced the congregations receiving full status membership in MCEC.
 - a. Refuge de Paix - Pastor Lucy Roca shared greetings.
 - b. Markham Christian Worship Centre - Pastor Kapilan Savarimuthu shared greetings.They received symbols of their membership from MCEC and Mennonite Church Canada. Introduction of these groups was followed by a litany of reception into membership and a prayer of blessing in multiple languages.

- 9. **Offering** – The offering will assist with bringing new and emerging churches to this gathering.

10. **Lunch Break**

11. **Introduction of 2020 Spending Plan/Budget** – Sean East reviewed the budget for 2019 – 2020. The budgeting process resulted in a \$130,000 deficit. This deficit was higher than what has been typical for the last several years. Restricted funds drawn from the Bequest Fund and the Faithful Steward Fund support the MCEC operating budget. We cannot continue to draw from these restricted funds.

This left us with a difficult budget decision and deficit was made up in the following ways

- i. Reductions to external partners (23% of deficit)
- ii. Eliminating the accounting assistant staff position (35% of deficit)
- iii. Accrue for 50% of Mennonite Church Canada delegate expenses in 2018-19 (14% of deficit)
- iv. Increase restricted fund draws (28% of deficit)

These changes allowed us to balance our budget.

Questions:

- Marcus Shantz, Conrad Grebel University College – He consulted with other partner ministries and, speaking on behalf of that group, they are grateful for continued support from MCEC and the trust that is given for the work of the church.
- Victor Klassen, Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church – A request was made on the floor last year for more support for youth. Where is that reflected in budget? It is included in Leadership Council budget or congregation resourcing budget.

12. **Mennonite Church Canada Partnership - Mennonite Church Alberta** – Executive ministers from each region attend annual meetings in other regions. MCEC welcomed Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, Executive Minister of MC Alberta. Tim brought greetings from the community of faith in Alberta and shared his ministry work in that province. Of 12 churches in Alberta, five languages are spoken. They have embarked on a visioning process: 20/20 Faith (re)focused.

13. **Bylaw Changes** – Arli Klassen received one amendment to reformat the wording of Section 5.9 to provide greater clarity. Under 5.9 Withdrawal from Membership add;

- i. In the case of a provisional congregation:
 - a) A Congregation that is a Provisional Member...
 - b) If requested by either party,
 - c) A Congregation that is a Provisional Member...
- ii. In the case of a full member congregation:
 - a) A Full Member Congregation that...
 - b) A Congregation that is a Full Member of...

- a. **Adoption of MCEC General Bylaw No. 4 – Motion: Motion:** *“On behalf of Executive Council, Arli Klassen moved to accept that whereas Mennonite Church Eastern Canada desires to have a Bylaw that serves the mission of MCEC, which is dedicated to actively support God’s mission in the world and the congregations of MCEC; and Whereas MCEC for the purposes of greater clarity and due to the numerous amendments to the existing General Operating Bylaw, being By-law No. 3; and Whereas the revised Bylaw No. 4 has been reviewed in its entirety, and with opportunity for amendment, by Delegates to the 2019 MCEC Annual Church Gathering; Be it resolved that the Corporation of MCEC shall now adopt a new General Operating Bylaw, being Bylaw No. 4, which replaces in entirety the existing General Operating Bylaw No. 3.”*
Seconded by Victor Klassen, Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Motion carried.

Follow-up Comments:

- Marcus Shantz, Conrad Grebel University College – He suggested for future consideration an addition to the definition section to define what a partner ministry is, and what it does for MCEC. Current language does not capture what is in the relationship.

- b. **Motion Clarifying MCEC Ministry Priorities:** *“On behalf of Executive Council, Arli Klassen moved to accept that whereas MCEC seeks to be a church that supports God’s purposes in the world; Be it resolved that in addition to the purposes expressed in the bylaw governing MCEC that MCEC also adopts as one of its primary mission priorities the sharing of MCEC owned or leased properties with other charitable organizations at nominal cost, provided that the mission of such charitable organizations is deemed to be compatible with MCEC. Decisions to support the efficient and cost effective operation of such minded charitable organizations shall be made at the discretion of the Executive Council.”*

Seconded by Heather Whitehouse, Bethany Mennonite Church, Motion carried.

14. **Blessing and Sending of Brian Bauman** – Yoel Masyawong, chair of Mission Council, and David Martin, made a few comments on Brian’s work at MCEC. Brian is retiring at the end of this calendar year. It marked an era of 16 years of service to the church and shaped what we do in mission. Brian came to MCEC in 2003 where mission was at the heart of our life of congregations. For about 15 years prior to the merging of conferences, all three collaborated on how we work in mission through Inter-Mennonite Conference of Canada. Brian helped MCEC think about how to do ministry with marginal communities. How do we extend welcome to our new Canadian congregations? Brian was instrumental in sharpening our desire to build our faith. MCEC owes him a debt of gratitude. David thanked Brian for his ministry.

Yoel shared a few reflections. Brian brings a warm heart to those who are first Canadians. Yoel expressed appreciation for inspiring him, and an essence of passion for mission. We are blessed to have him as a mission minister for MCEC.

Brian was grateful for being allowed to do this work for the past sixteen years, and the encouragement he received. Brian thanked colleagues for working with him in mission, support of people on Mission Councils, and the MCEC Administrative team. He also thanked all of the church planters who were open to the crazy work of church planting and to the constituents who have honoured him. Thank you to Floradale Mennonite Church where he was born, raised and shaped as a disciple.

15. **Table Discussion** - Brian Bauman introduced table discussion question: We are confident that God will respond to our individual longing/relationship. How will this impact your personal mission?

16. **MCEC Business**

- a. **Approval of Spending Plan – Motion:** *On behalf of the Executive Council, Linda van Bergen moved to accept the 2019 – 2020 spending plan as printed on pages 28 – 30 in the Discernment documents. Seconded by Dave Rogalsky, First Mennonite Church, Motion carried.*
- b. **Approval of Slate – Motion:** *“On behalf of the Gift Discernment Committee, Gladys Bender moved to accept the 2019 – 2020 slate as presented.”*
Seconded by Lily Hiebert Rempel, Breslau Mennonite Church. Motion carried.

17. Mission Reflections

a. Introduction of new Mission Minister – David Martin, announced Norm Dyck as the new Mission Minister.

Norm shared his sense of longing for what God will do in mission. Together we explore what God planned for us. Calling leaders among us. He invited congregational support and challenged everyone to work together. Leadership is finding balance, love and to know where God is calling us. The difference between what we can see over our headlights vs. horizon of sunrise. We need to see beyond our headlights.

Deepening our relationship with God involves working together with others. Have your own Paul, Barnabas, and Timothy to challenge and lead you. Seeking people of peace is the heart of mission field. Invite, encourage and challenge them to walk together. David prayed for Norm.

b. Table Discussion: There were table conversations over two questions.

- i. We are confident that God will respond to each congregation's longing/desire for a deeper relationship. How might this impact your congregation's mission?
- ii. We are confident that God will respond to our longing for a deeper relationship. How might this impact our mission together in MCEC?

18. Mission Office Updates – Brian Bauman and Norm Dyck, Mission Engagement Minister, gave an update on the Mission office. Brian shared how mission office strives to find ways to make disciples, form leaders and grow congregations.

Norm reported on ReLearning Community. How do we disciple people well? This is the call to Missional discipleship. We need disciples who make disciples.

Since 2014, MCEC has invested in ReLearning Community with 27 congregations in total. Norm invited congregations to cohort five starting this fall. Through our relationship with Catalyze Change, we have been invited to a networking relationship with other regional teams around the world. In June 2019, the relationship with Catalyze Change shifts from coach-student relationship to one of partner. We are called to develop an umbrella-like ministry to house a broad range of missions to be "innovative". Rich Robinson, a leader of Catalyze Change, shared his journey with MCEC. Being innovative helps MCEC to grow together with brothers and sisters around the world including Myanmar, Ethiopia and Philippines.

Brian shared a story of what was happening with Mission in Quebec. It has been slow and difficult but last night we ran out of headsets for translation. This is a great story!

19. Leadership Office Update – Marilyn Rudy-Froese shared many gifts and challenges from the past year. She worshiped with many different congregations, officiating at installations, licensing services and ordination, had meaningful conversations with pastors and met people. She introduced new pastors to MCEC and recognized former pastors who passed away in 2018. We give thanks for their life and their ministry. Marilyn apologized for past MCEC mistakes re: managing sexual misconduct. She introduced Healthy Boundaries Workshop and encouraged pastors to attend in their region. Healthy Boundaries Workshops were offered in different languages and the credentialing interview process has been adopted to language needs.

Marilyn introduced three Regional Ministry Associates (Kevin Derksen, Roberson Mbayamvula, and Cathrin van Sintern-Dick) and Regional Minister, Al Rempel. They briefly shared their work.

Marilyn thanked all the pastors for their hard work and prayed for them.

20. **Closing Worship** - Mike Erb and Anneli Loepp Thiessen led in a few songs of worship.

Sending Prayer by Norm Dyck, newly appointed Mission Minister.

21. **Adjourned** – 4:46 pm