

Mennonite Church Canada Gathering 2019 Report from MCEC Delegates

Mennonite Church Canada gathered in Abbotsford, BC summer 2019 to ignite the imagination of the Church. MCEC sent 25 delegates as Regional Church - MCEC - representatives. Through “firestarter conversations,” worship, teaching from Dr. Elaine Heath and connections throughout the weekend, we heard stories that demonstrated how the Spirit is at work in and through faith communities in our nationwide community of faith. Here are some of our delegates reflections.

- It felt like a big family reunion
- Pastor Lyne Renaud’s (Hochma, Montreal) story impressed me the most. I sobbed when she told us how an addicted man’s life was changed.
- Delegates were committed to see the new structure and vision become a reality as we live into God’s desired future for the church.
- I was impressed with the diversity of the people who are part of the church. What a gift to us all.
- All weekend discussions took place about what the church will look like in the future and what our part of that will be.
- I was moved by Dr. Heath’s comments that “the failing, anxious system will crush the innovators unless the innovators speak back into the anxious system and reflect back while they’re in it, by saying ‘come and see’”. She said 20% of people in a congregation need to experiment and be open to trying something new, that’s the tipping point. I felt a renewed sense to stay the course, keep trying new things, and trust God.
- God expanded my relationships, broke down my stereotypes and surprised me during the Gathering.
- Connecting with Mennonites across Canada helped me feel positive about the direction we are moving together as a nationwide church.
- It was very moving as the baton of leadership passed to our new Executive Minister, Doug Klassen.
- My attention was pointed toward God in conversations with like-minded people who care about the future of the church.
- I experience God in the informal and social times. There was so much joy in the intergenerational socials (crokinole and coffee house), it felt a little like heaven might be.
- The idea that we are in the front end of a new reformation was inspiring and hopeful.

- We are the people of God, brothers and sisters in Christ, a united family on a journey of discovering what God is doing through God's church.
- I started to think creatively about how I could get to know my community better. I need to practice neighbouring at home and encourage others to do the same.
- My imagination was ignited when I witnessed members of Mennonite Church Canada listening to one another and challenging one another to work for peace and redemption in light of a very difficult history and tradition.
- Hearing about small gatherings in specific contexts that were intergenerational and outside of structures re-emphasized that church is the people living out their life in relationship with God and each other.
- Dr. Heath referred to our culture's state of post-Christendom as a reformation that calls us away from "big" and back to the small and the real.
- It was good to hear the update from each mission worker around the world. That was an encouraging and up-lifting message.
- Evangelism is the fruit of true presence, deep listening, wise discernment and loving action.
- We are on the cusp of a new reformation. Look back, remember the story and where you came from, love those who will not change, look forward and innovate.
- Trauma is something we must take seriously if we are to be good neighbours to anyone.
- When we come together in many languages and nations, we look beautiful like a bouquet of flowers. We learn from each other and build each other up.
- We need to move out of the church walls.
- We are at a tipping point. Being Mennonite is not a cultural group, but rather a diverse spiritual movement. This was evident in the stories and teachings at Gathering 2019.
- I realized how beneficial it is for our churches to communicate and share ideas and resources with one another.
- To see many delegates from many cultures was a great sign. This was the first time that I saw many first generation churches as a part of MC Canada.
- It is a wonderful feeling being part of a nationwide community of faith and being able to have communion and an anointing service together.
- How might my congregation become more welcoming to those who are in need and to those who may not share the same set of experiences?
- I was encouraged to get at the content of faith.
- We need each other. The church is alive.
- Re-imagining how we describe our faith, and seeking to understand how those around us view life and faith, will give our conversations about God and spirituality more meaning, causing both parties to dig deeper in their understanding.

MCEC Mennonite Church Canada Assembly Delegates

- Gladys Bender, Steinmann Mennonite Church
- Suzanne Bender, Steinmann Mennonite Church
- Ruth Boehm, Faith Mennonite Church
(Joint Council)
- Stephanie Chandler Burns, Bloomingdale Mennonite Church
- Tina Charbonneau, North Leamington United Mennonite Church
- Gord Driedger, Petitscodiac Mennonite Church
- Hannah Geurkink, Montreal Mennonite Fellowship
- Karlie Haining, Vineland United Mennonite Church
- Ernie Harris, Nairn Mennonite Church
- Emily Hunsberger, Shantz Mennonite Church
- Max Kennel, Rainham Mennonite Church
- Anneli Loepp Thiessen, The Gathering Church
- David Martin, MCEC Executive Minister
- Gloria Martin, Elmira Mennonite Church
- Yoel Masyawong, Grace Lao Mennonite Church
- Roberson Mbayamvula, Hagerman Mennonite Church
- Randell Neudorf, The Commons
- J.D. Penner, Toronto United Mennonite Church
- Brian Quan, Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church
- Al Rempel, MCEC Staff
- Lyne Renaud, Hochma
- Yared Seretse, Meheret Evangelical Church
- Katie Steckly, Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church
- Chung Vang, First Hmong Mennonite Church
- Mesfin Woldearegay, Bethel Ethiopian Evangelical Church