

Growing into the Future: Navigating Change in MCEC Structure and Staffing

November 20, 2024

Greetings MCEC:

Thank you for your ongoing support to Mennonite Church Eastern Canada through prayer, time and finances. We continue to seek ways to live into our purpose of energizing congregations, encouraging leaders and embodying God's reconciling ministry.

As you know, MCEC's finances have faced increasing pressure in recent years. At the Annual Church Gathering (ACG) in April, Ben Cassels, MCEC moderator, noted the internal tensions that the executive council has grappled with over the past year. They have worked diligently to find the right balance between reducing our spending and lowering the deficit, all while ensuring MCEC can effectively live into the priorities set by our delegates.

Since ACG 2024, the executive council and staff have made MCEC's finances a key area of focus, responding to input from delegates, mid-year finance meetings, and the 2023 pastor and congregational survey.

As part of this intentional effort, we have developed a multi-year budget reduction plan to align with these insights and challenges. This includes:

- A 17% reduction in salary costs in the 2025-2026 budget year;
- A significant reorganization of MCEC's structure to streamline operations and reduce costs.

In order to do this, we used the following guiding principles to guide our work:

- Honour MCEC's identity, purpose and values;
- Honour the priorities, goals and objectives of the strategic plan: *Growing into the Future*;
- Allow for a deeper cross pollination between mission, leadership and operations;
- Continue the work of intercultural ministry;
- Allow for increased focus on resource generation and stewardship;
- Ensure that relationships that have been built between MCEC staff, pastors and congregations over the last number of years can continue.

In most organizational changes, there are changes that involve people; which is the case at MCEC. Effective January 1, 2025, a new organizational structure will begin that will include both an Operations Team and Congregational Ministries Team. The new structure will begin under Ann L. Schultz's leadership and will continue under the leadership of MCEC's new Executive Minister, Anthony Siegrist, who will begin on February 1st.

The Operations Team will include:

- Operations and Finance Director – Laurie Castello
- Communications Director – Lisa Williams
- Office Administrator – Ellen Kim
- Accountant – Sharon Schwartzentruber
- Communications Assistant – Ben Thiessen

The Congregational Ministries Team will include:

- Engagement Minister – Norm Dyck
- Intercultural Minister – Fanosie Legesse
- Leadership Minister – Marilyn Rudy-Froese
- Regional Minister Quebec/Ottawa – Michel Monette
- Regional Minister Ontario East – Yoel Masyawong
- Regional Minister Ontario West – Cathrin van Sintern-Dick

We will be saying goodbye to Al Rempel, who will continue at Mennonite Church Canada in the role of assistant executive minister. We are also saying goodbye to Ronald Alexandre, Wendy Janzen, Stephen Reist and Charles Tabena. The work of these staff will be incorporated into the work of the Congregational Ministries Team and some of the work will be taken on through the staff of MC Canada. We will take time in the coming weeks to express our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to these special individuals. We are deeply grateful for their years of service at MCEC.

We appreciate that there may be questions surrounding the financial impact of this re-organization and also questions surrounding the new roles.

For a deeper understanding of the current budget and a look ahead to the 2025-2026 financial plan, you are welcome and encouraged to attend the online finance meeting to be held on Wednesday, November 27th at 7 p.m. In addition to a financial update, there will be an opportunity to ask questions of clarification regarding MCEC finances. [You can register here.](#)

In January, more information about the roles and key responsibilities of the Congregational Ministries Team will be sent to pastors and congregational leaders.

We acknowledge that with any new organizational structure, there will be both joys and challenges as it unfolds. We thank you in advance for your patience and support as we grow into this new organizational structure.

While it is very sad and hard to say goodbye to friends and colleagues, we hold belief that God has been a part of this process, and will continue to guide MCEC as it *grows into the future*. There is much strength around the MCEC table and we hold deep hope for its future.

We thank you for your thoughts and prayers as we embark on this significant transition.

With gratitude,

Ann L. Schultz – Intentional Interim Executive Team Leader
Ben Cassels - Moderator