

A stylized dove in shades of green and yellow, with its wings spread. The body of the dove is composed of several rounded rectangular shapes. Two hands are shown reaching up towards the dove's chest. The dove is positioned behind the main text.

**GOD
FAITH
PEOPLE**

***Mennonite Church
Canada Assembly
Saskatoon, Sask
July 6-10, 2016***

Minute Book

1 **Mennonite Church Canada Minute Book 2016**
2 **Mennonite Church Canada Minute Book has been published annually since 1996.**
3 **Minute takers: Karen Sheil and Harold Peters Fransen (Outgoing and incoming General Board Secretaries)**
4 **Editors : General Board**
5 **2002 and newer Minute Books available on-line at: <http://www.commonword.ca/ResourceView/52/9226>**
6

7 **Abbreviations**

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9	AMBS	Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
10	BFC	Being a Faithful Church
11	CMU	Canadian Mennonite University
12	ED	Executive Director
13	FDTF	Future Directions Task Force
14	FYE	Fiscal Year Ending
15	HWB	Hymnal: a Worship Book
16	MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
17	MCA	Mennonite Church Alberta MCBC
18	MCBC	Mennonite Church British Columbia
19	MC Can	Mennonite Church Canada
20	MCEC	Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
21	MCM	Mennonite Church Manitoba
22	MCSK	Mennonite Church Saskatchewan
23	LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer
24	MC USA	Mennonite Church USA
25	TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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1 **Mennonite Church Canada**
2 **Delegate Assembly Minutes**
3 **TCU Place**
4 **Saskatoon, Saskatchewan**
5 **July 6-10, 2016**

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7 ***Wednesday July 6, 6:00 p.m.***
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9 **1. Gathering Singing**

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11 **2. Opening and Welcome**

12 a. **Opening:** The Moderator, Hilda Hildebrand, declared the 2016 Delegate Assembly opened. The
13 Executive Director, Willard Metzger, thanked staff and volunteers for their work in preparing the
14 assembly.

15 b. **Area Church Welcome:** Ken Warkentin, Moderator MCKS, and Ryan Siemens, Area Church
16 Leader, welcomed delegates to Saskatoon.

17 c. **Indigenous Welcome:** Harry La Fond, Executive Director of the Office of the Treaty
18 Commissioner, welcomed delegates to the lands of Treaty 6. He shared the history of people
19 who have had a dream and yet recognised that change is inevitable. The creation of Treaty 6,
20 140 years ago, expressed a dream but the dream has not been fulfilled. He noted that together
21 we have an opportunity to create a new dream, and expressed faith and confidence that the
22 dream will come to life. Dignity of all people is a necessary part of moving forward. La Fond
23 encouraged Mennonite Church Canada to make the TRC recommendations work for us as
24 community and as church. He was presented with a quilt created by artist Elma Elias, as a sign of
25 our desire to live in covenant as partners with our First Nation neighbours. The quilt will be
26 delivered to the Muskeg Lake council office during the tour on Saturday. It will be displayed
27 there.

28 d. **Additional Greetings:** Ervin Stutzman, Executive Director of MCUSA, brought greetings from MC
29 USA. Don Peters brought greetings from MCC Canada, and thanked the church for its ongoing
30 support of the Syrian refugee project and other projects around the world.

31 e. **Additional Special Guests:** Patty Shelly (Moderator, MC USA), Pancho Peters and Tina Peters
32 (Conference of Mennonites in Mexico), Arli Klassen (Mennonite World Conference), Werner and
33 Marlene Franz, and Rafael Friesen (Paraguayan Mennonite Church).

34 f. **Introduction of General Board:** Board members were asked to stand.

35 g. **Welcome:** The Executive Director, Willard Metzger reminded everyone of the differing places
36 from which we have all come. He pointed to the differing attitudes, hopes and fears we have
37 each brought and reminded us that we can trust that God is at work. While the meetings ahead
38 may not be easy this is a gathering of God's people and as such we can rejoice in worship, pray
39 in faith and love one another.

40

41 **3. Worship**

42 Theme: Covenant Imagination

43 Scripture: Jeremiah 31: 31-34

1 Speaker: Cindy Wallace. Assistant Professor of English St. Thomas Moore College, University of
2 Saskatoon; Warman Mennonite Church
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4 **Business session**

5 **4. Business preliminaries:**

6 a. **Quorum:** The by-laws require one-half of the eligible area church voting delegates plus 150
7 voting delegates from constituent congregations. There are 36 of a possible 40 area church
8 delegates and 307 congregational delegates. Quorum is declared. Including registrants, guests,
9 staff, children and youth there are more than 525 in attendance at this year's Assembly.

10 **b. Officials at Assembly:**

11 i. Resolutions committee: Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, Lynell Bergen and Craig Neufeld

12 ii. Listening committee: Gladys Bender, Moses Falco, Chris Lenshyn

13 iii. Prayer team: lead by Larry Epp

14 iv. Parliamentarian: Peter Peters reviewed how we work together and our relevant rules of
15 order. Both delegates and non-delegates were welcomed to participate in discussions at
16 the tables and the microphones. Only delegates are able to vote. Those speaking at the
17 microphones were asked to: speak to the whole delegate body, not particular
18 individuals, keep comments respectful and gracious, keep comments to a maximum of 3
19 minutes (to allow others opportunity) and to refrain from applauding in ways that show
20 preference.
21

22 **5. Minutes:**

23 a. **Assembly 2014:** Minutes were distributed to congregations prior to Assembly.
24

Motion: that the delegate Assembly adopt the minutes of Mennonite Church
Canada Assembly 2014 as circulated December 2014.

Moved: Karen Sheil, GB secretary, on behalf of the GB

Carried

25
26 b. **Actions of the General Board:** The actions of the board since the las Delegate Assembly in 2014
27 were distributed in the delegate package (Report Book page 8-9) as well as a Summary of In-
28 Camera donation revenue-related decisions made by Mennonite Church Canada General Board
29 in November 2015 and released for the public record as an addendum to the April 16, 2016 SLA
30 board meeting.
31

32 **c. Business arising from the minutes:**

33 i. At Assembly 2014 a resolution was brought forward tasking the General Board to form a
34 working group to study the issue of divesting from the fossil fuel industry and present a
35 recommendation to MC Canada delegates at Assembly 2016. There is a two page
36 summary of the report in the Report Book. The work has been completed.

37 ii. Renewal of Call of Willard Metzger: Willard's current term as Executive Director comes
38 to an end in November of this year. In accordance to our procedures the General Board

1 raised the question of continuation of call at an in-camera meeting. After a good
2 discussion it was determined that it would be highly desirable to have continuity
3 through the transition period following Assembly 2016 action on the Future Directions
4 Task Force Report, no matter what is decided. In this spirit the General Board
5 unanimously extended Willard's term for two years (through November 2018).
6 Following a regular annual Executive leadership review process an invitation for renewal
7 of call was extended to Willard. He has confirmed his sense of being called into this role
8 over the next two years.
9

10 **6. Finance (Discernment Guide page 30-32, Report Book page 59 ff)**

- 11 a. The Treasurer thanked donors, staff and volunteers without whom we would not be able to do
12 the work of the church.
- 13 b. Financial report since the last Assembly: Donation and Bequest revenues are down significantly
14 (\$280,134). This has contributed to a bottom line loss of \$652,127. Other factors include a
15 planned loss of \$85,000, and full severance costs being expensed in the current year. The
16 planned deficit allowed us to give the staff a small cost of living increase and avoid making cuts
17 so close to receiving the final Future Directions Task Force report. However, the revenue
18 reduction forced the General Board to make significant steps in November resulting in staff
19 layoffs and expense cuts where possible. Several graphs were shown demonstrating that
20 individual and corporate donations have remained more constant than congregational giving
21 which is dropping considerably. The revenue in is the revenue recorded and has not been
22 skewed to favour Future Direction changes.
23

**Motion: that the delegate Assembly accept the actions of the
GB since our last delegate Assembly as circulated.**

Moved: Karen Sheil, GB secretary, on behalf of the GB

Carried.

Motion: that KPMG be appointed as the auditors for FYE 2017.

Moved: John Goossen, Treasurer, on behalf of the GB

Carried

Motion: that Mennonite Church Canada postpone
implementation or reversal of the decision to change the fiscal
year end date until the completion of the Future Directions
Task Force process which has the potential to alter
organizational structure and direction, and in any case, to bring
the issue back to the Assembly by 2018.

Moved: John Goossen, Treasurer, on behalf of the GB

Carried

24

25 **7. Closing prayer:** John Goossen

1 **Thursday, July 7, 9:00 a.m.**
2

3 **8. Plenary Session:**

4 Speaker: Safwat Marzouk, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite
5 Biblical Seminary.

6 Theme: History of Covenant
7

8 **Thursday, July 7, 2:15 p.m.**
9

10 **9. Being a Faithful Church Presentation**

11 The Moderator introduced the members of the BFC task force.

12 a. **Background:** Rudy Baergen, co-chair of task force began with a reading from Ephesians 3. He
13 then reviewed the history of the BFC and the process leading up to the BFC 7 report and
14 recommendation.

15 Laura Loewen led the delegates in singing *Spirit of the Living God* and a time of silence and
16 reflection before the table discussion.

17 Jack Suderman thanked those who have participated in the conversation and given feedback
18 throughout the process. The task force recognizes that the varying components of the
19 recommendation are held in tension. The four recommendations are like the four chambers of
20 the heart, each separate but seeking to beat as one. The recommendations reflect four
21 concerns: to take the bible seriously, to consider new questions seriously, a deep concern for
22 the unity of the church and that the conversation does not end with the close of the Assembly.
23 It is a struggle to keep these four together, not to leave any behind. This is the wisdom that has
24 come from the body through the process of gathering the information and having the
25 conversation.

26 b. **Table discussion:**

27 Delegates were invite to discuss in table groups the following questions:

28 i. Can you support the recommendation that has emerged from the wisdom of our
29 Body? Why or why not?

30 ii. Do you have additional counsel for the GB as it implements whatever is decided
31 here on Saturday?

32 c. **Table reporting:**

33 Tables were selected at random to share from their discussion.

34 Included the following comments:

35 i. Our table talked about what brought us to these points. Some of us participated in
36 congregational discernment, for others it was personal experiences, and still others the
37 BFC process.

38 ii. Our table felt there was a need for more education. What is the bench mark for testing
39 the movement of the Spirit?

40 iii. We acknowledged a sense of anxiety. This is God's church and we hope we will allow it
41 to exist past this one question. We hope that no matter what the vote we will all stay
42 together. There are so many gifts and not all about this question.

- 1 **iv.** We have questions about what space for diversity looks like. Some would like to keep
2 private life private. Others wish the process had been a broader conversation. A few feel
3 the conversation has been forced upon them.
- 4 **v.** Storytelling is really important. We need to hear each other stories. We would like
5 mechanisms to capture the different stories so that we can learn from each other. We
6 hope that stories could diffuse some of the tension.
- 7 **vi.** Our table affirmed the desire for unity.
- 8 **vii.** We acknowledged that without messiness there is no growth or need for change.
- 9 **viii.** We weren't sure what point 3 means.
- 10 **ix.** We heard affirmation for the recommendation. Room for inclusion invites us to live in
11 harmony and takes seriously a diversity of understanding.
- 12 **x.** We see a need for clarity on how we do testing and on understanding what unity is. It
13 means different things to those who get there way or not. It can be defined in unhelpful
14 ways.
- 15 **xi.** We thought it was a balanced recommendation.
- 16 **xii.** We had some concern that "prophetic" appears to be attached to one understanding, ie
17 to those who understand the Bible to teach a direction than traditionally understood,
18 but not the other. This is disturbing.
- 19 **xiii.** We mostly affirm the recommendation but have some concern that we haven't spent
20 this kind of time on other issues.
- 21 **xiv.** We had a very diverse table and a lively discussion.
- 22 **xv.** The recommendation finds good middle ground. It gives permission to remain.
- 23 **xvi.** We see a need for on-going dialogue on relationships and understanding the Confession
24 of Faith.
- 25 **xvii.** The generational shift that we have gone through since 1986 has not been experienced
26 by the first generation new Canadian churches. We are concerned this may be a lot to
27 absorb.
- 28 **xviii.** Concerns were raised about what this means at the congregational level. The next steps
29 are unclear.
- 30 **xix.** The BFC process has watered down or at least narrowed the conversation on sexuality
31 issues.
- 32 **xx.** Is this the Holy Spirit leading or popular culture?
- 33 **xxi.** The conversation has narrowed to same sex marriage and away from other issues such
34 as sexual abuse.
- 35 **xxii.** There will be people who will feel hurt either way. What can we do to help people feel
36 welcome and safe, whatever their position?
- 37 **xxiii.** The recommendation is a compromise that allows for diversity. There are various ways
38 to interpret scripture.
- 39 **xxiv.** Cultural contexts affect where a congregation sits.
- 40 **xxv.** There is a sense of fatigue, a desire to say "yes" just so we can move on but we are not
41 necessarily at peace with that decision.
- 42 **xxvi.** The church of God is bigger than this and thus is able to move on. How will we care for
43 those who feel side-lined or judged?
- 44 **xxvii.** Our diverse table shared some stories of personal impact.
- 45

1 d. **Open microphone:**

2 A reminder to engage with care and respect.

3 Included the following comments:

- 4 i. Garry Janzen Executive Minister for MCBC presented proposed amendments that grew
5 out of extensive conversations in MCBC. In point 2, change the word “assumed” to
6 “understood”. In point 3 remove “prophetic” as seems to apply to only one side of the
7 conversation. With the close of the BFC process this becomes a pastoral issue so point 4
8 can be removed all together as pastoral care is a congregational or regional matter.
- 9 ii. The Moderator reminded delegates that there is no vote happening tonight. The MCBC
10 group’s recommendations have gone to the resolutions committee. Any other changes
11 can also be presented to resolution committee.
- 12 iii. Clarification: Any suggestions for amendments should be shared with the delegate body
13 as well as the resolutions committee.
- 14 iv. I would say “yes” but with a clarification; that the recommendation is not asking us to
15 vote on a position on same sex marriage or the Confession of Faith but on how we are
16 going to go live with each other.
- 17 v. The recommendation doesn’t say anything about reconciliation for anyone of LGBTQ
18 who has been removed from a church or from leadership.
- 19 vi. LGBTQ is an issue of justice and equality. Jesus stood in solidarity with the marginalized
20 and oppressed. Now is not the time for testing but for reconciliation and solidarity. We
21 cannot be in unity when some are denied full inclusion.
- 22 vii. This issue has become a lightning rod for other difficult issues that are unspoken on this
23 floor, issues of leadership, education, and more. It is hard to talk unity when we have
24 already fractured. We are burying more than we are baptizing.
- 25 viii. The recommendation may sound harmless but we are being asked to consider that God,
26 Jesus or Paul made a mistake. (The speaker read a series of biblical texts against same
27 sex relationships.) We are being led into a sinful position. I do not speak this out of
28 hatred for homosexual, but out of concern. Members of my own family are part of the
29 LGBTQ community.
- 30 ix. I am part of two congregations—one welcoming one not—but I feel affirming of both
31 because there is so much more to who we are than this issue. If we were to split over
32 this issue it would split me. We need to expand so that every interpretation belongs in
33 the body. No one should be removed from the family.
- 34 x. Ephesians 4:1-3 was read on behalf of a new Canadian church.
- 35 xi. That humility is the theme in the resolution, although it is not stated, could be included.
36 Without humility we can butt heads and not respect the other interpretation. Humility
37 in unity.
- 38 xii. The Emerging Voices initiative is inspiring. I’m glad to be church with all of you. I have
39 not come to a point where I can say that scripture permits me to participate in same sex
40 marriage, but in the spirit of Acts 5, I affirm a time of testing. “If it is not of God if it will
41 fail, if it is of God I do not want to stand in the way.”
- 42 xiii. I bear the weight of the congregation. I identify as gay. My wife is a supporter of the
43 LGBTQ community, walking particularly with youth who struggle. It is an important
44 conversation. How we have this conversation will affect how we have other
45 conversations; how we are open to spirit. I used to believe that God would change my

1 sexual orientation but I have come to believe that God wants me to stop beating myself
2 up. I want to live in a community of faith that allows for difference and works together.
3 There are members of LGBTQ community that have traditional understandings too, and
4 need support. I hope we can be a community that can bear witness for how to live with
5 diversity of conviction in one body.

6 **xiv.** We need to name how harm has been done to each other; to name the pain. How do
7 we work at reconciliation?

8 **xv.** Our congregation had a broad diversity of points of view. We couldn't come to a place
9 of agreement. I ask if it is possible to abstain, to state that we are not at a place to make
10 a decision, but want to be part of discussion, and remain part of the church. *Reply:* We
11 will have an answer to that on Saturday before the vote.

12 **xvi.** I love the church and Jesus, want church to be welcoming and open to all people. I often
13 wonder when we will tire of analyzing people; making them wait while we decide if they
14 can belong. We ought to apologize to those we leave out of their God given place as
15 children of God.

16 **xvii.** Do not be afraid. I hope that we will one day have the courage to be leaders to our
17 world, to be able to live in the tension of disagreement.

18 **xviii.** There are much deeper theological issues at root; who is Jesus and what is nature of
19 salvation. If there is a decision, my hope it that it not to be divisive.

20 **xix.** Our congregation was not able to come to a fully affirming statement. We were able to
21 create a statement of hospitality, one that recognises that God is host, and God gets to
22 choose who God loves. We looked to Acts 10.

23
24 Closing song: *Christ we do all adore thee*

25
26 **Thursday July7, 6:45 p.m.**

27
28 **10. Nominating Committee** (Discernment Guide page 33)

29 The nominating committee, Renata Klassen, Marilyn Zehr, Marguerite Jack, was introduced. The
30 committee thanked all those who agreed to let their names stand.

31 The nominations to the General Board are:

32 Calvin Quan—Moderator

33 Allan Hiebert--Treasurer

34 Harold Peters Fransen--Secretary

35
36 **11. Council Reporting**

- 37 **a. Church Engagement Council:** (Report book beginning page 51) Vince Friesen (Council Chair),
38 Coreena Stewart (CAO), and Dan Dyck (Director Communications), gave highlights of the work of
39 Church Engagement. The communications department is busy producing news stories, podcasts,
40 Facebook posts and YouTube videos that reach thousands of people through the internet and
41 social media, as well as print media. Jason Martin and Daniel Horne are available to help
42 congregations to connect in more direct ways with the work of MC Canada. One way is by
43 partnering with a Witness worker or ministry.

- 1 **b. Christian Formation Council:** (Report book beginning page 19) Lisa Carr-Pries (Council Chair) Karen
2 Martens Zimmerly (Executive Minister, Formation), and Arlyn Friesen Epp (Resource Director
3 CommonWord) gave highlights of the work supported by the council. Company of 1000 provides
4 financial support for students and pastors for ministry training. Past recipient Jessica Reesor
5 Rempel shared about her work as part of Pastors in Exile (PiE), an Anabaptist rooted movement
6 that is passionate about connecting young people in the Waterloo Region with vibrant faith
7 experiences outside and inside the church. CommonWord connects churches, leaders and
8 individuals to books and on-line resources on a variety of topics. There is also a place to find or
9 share original community developed resources. The Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives and
10 Gallery pursues its mission of bringing faith to life—through art, digital collections and travelling
11 exhibits. Current projects include a newly completed documentary *The Last Objectors*, and the
12 Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID). Curator of the gallery, Ray Dirks, and interfaith
13 partners are invited, as religious people, to discuss faith and teach art within the public school
14 system.
- 15 **c. Witness Council:** (Report book beginning page 34) Tim Froese (Executive Minister, Witness), Norm
16 Dyck (Council Chair), Steve Heinrichs (Indigenous Relations) along with many international Witness
17 workers currently in Canada gave highlights of the work Witness Council is engaged in. Witness
18 Council currently supports 34 Witness workers and 20 international churches and ministry
19 partners on behalf of MC Canada. The Witness workers are involved in a wide variety of
20 ministries—church planting, church strengthening, refugee support, education, networking, and
21 more. There is much we can learn from, and share with these ministries and ministry partners.

22 23 **12. Resolutions Committee**

24 MC Canada Resolutions Guidelines affirm “we want to create ways for the members to raise concerns
25 and recommendation and to share/test insight into God’s will and a prophetic word.” We also want to
26 respect the time of delegates. In order to use time efficiently the guidelines ask that anticipated
27 resolutions be sent to the resolutions committee by May 1st so that they can be edited, if necessary, and
28 sent to delegates by June 15th. This year two resolutions were received in time for inclusion in our
29 proceedings.

- 30 **a. The Church and the “Doctrine of Discovery”** (Discernment Guide page 25-27)
31 The Resolutions committee presented a section of the pre-ambule as an introduction and the
32 resolution. It comes out of a call from the TRC for a response from the churches.
- 33 **Discussion included the following comments:**
- 34 i. There is a question of understanding of the terms ‘individuals’ and ‘peoples.’ In parts of
35 Europe Indigenous rights are being evoked to keep out migrants. What do we mean by
36 peoples? *Reply:* Individuals have human rights that extend to people groups.
- 37 ii. How do we follow this up given some of other issues that are also on the floor?
38 Specifically how do we follow up if FDTF passes? *Reply:* FDTF Final Report assumes that
39 whatever the church deems to be important will remain important. Indigenous relations
40 is already flagged as important through the conversation. Passing FDTF would not
41 change that.
- 42 iii. There are many ways this has application. I take people to ancient spiritual sites that
43 were once declared evil by the Doctrine of Discovery. We have a chance to right that.

- 1 iv. The Indigenous here in Canada did not reject those who came to live in their land. In
2 Europe there is a sense that “this land is my land, go find your own land.”
3 v. This resolution and its language is grounded in the TRC work and Doctrine of Discovery
4 language and the language should be read in that context. It will help us avoid some of
5 those difficulties.
6 vi. Would the working group include persons from First Nations representation? It is not
7 mentioned. *Reply:* That would be wise, and noted.
8 vii. Will there be a budget item need to handle that? Would this change the budget? *Reply:*
9 Budget hasn’t been talk about yet. The resolution would need to be affirmed first and
10 then plans sorted.
11 viii. We were not citizens but subjects when this was created. We didn’t have a voice or a
12 choice. For us to take responsibility for these documents does not lead us forward. It
13 absolves us of doing something creative. If we repudiate let us also embrace something.
14 And that requires better and more reflection. We need a sense of where we want to go
15 with our Aboriginal neighbours.
16 ix. Our own attitudes engrained in us because of this doctrine. We should be doing this as a
17 church body but also as individuals.
18 x. My son has Ojibway roots. I am excited for him to be part of church that is not in conflict
19 of him.
20 xi. This is not just a historical document but still a reality in current law and a current
21 political issue. First Nations people I know are complaining about how the Church still
22 hasn’t repudiated it. They may be referring to the Roman Catholic Church but people
23 can’t always tell the difference.
24 xii. The Indigenous way is not exclusive land rights, as we see some in Europe, but land is
25 for all to share. We may have to explain that to people but that is no reason for concern.
26 xiii. We may not be historically responsible for the doctrine of discovery but we do the reap
27 benefits. We do need to say “sorry”.

28
29 **Henry Krause/Joe Heikeman (Wildwood Mennonite Church)**
30

Motion: 1) that Mennonite Church Canada repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery as it is fundamentally opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and our understanding of the inherent dignity and rights that individuals and peoples have received from God.
2) that a working group be formed by representatives of Mennonite Church Canada and Area Churches to begin by reviewing the church related recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, make the appropriate study material available to congregations, and make further periodic recommendations to the General Board/Area Church Boards on steps along the path of reconciliation.

Moved: Henry Krause
Seconded: Joe Heikman

Carried

Walter Bergen from Emmanuel asked that it be noted that he voted “no”

- 1
2 b. The second resolution will be presented on Saturday.
3

4 **13. Listening Committee**

5 The purpose of committee of the listening committee is to hear, summarize and reflect back to the
6 delegate body what is heard.

7 The Listening Committee reported that:

- 8 i. Anxieties have been anticipated and named in worship.
9 ii. Many expressed appreciation for treasurer’s report. It was a difficult report delivered with
10 honesty.
11 iii. Saw good interaction and energy, evidence that we are glad to be together. There is a desire
12 for a safe space created and opened up. There are signs of that happening, manifested in a
13 desire for unity, in vulnerability, apologies and tears, and very little “us” and “them”
14 language, it is mostly “us.”
15 iv. It is stressful and there is some discomfort. Hilda continues to invite our comments to be
16 respectful and gracious.
17 v. Even the table that could not agree could tell stories.
18 vi. We feel hopeful.
19 vii. To ponder: the committee has not once heard the world “trust.”
20

21 *Worship and closing*
22

23 ***Friday July 8, 9:00 a.m.***
24

25 Hilda, the Moderator, opened the morning session with a reflection on conversations she had the night
26 before following the BFC discussion. She reflected on how she was aware of those who were hurt by
27 words yesterday in the feedback. It was reminder to speak respectably. Hilda invited Rachel Brnjas to
28 share part of their conversation. Rachel commented that while achieving “safe space” can often be
29 difficult it is sometimes easier to achieve “brave space”, to admit we cannot always create safe space
30 but we can hold each other in that tension. We can be brave together daring to have these hard but
31 important conversations.
32

33 **14. Future Directions Task Force** (Discernment Guide pages 8-23)

34 The Moderator introduced the task force, reviewing the history of and the reasons for its creation.

35 The task force opened with Romans 12: 1-17 and a prayer.

- 36 a. **The Process so far:** The work of the task force focused on two questions: What is God calling us
37 to in 21st century? And what is the best way to thrive and grow? These questions guided a
38 lengthy process of gathering input from a broad range of groups and experts and conversations
39 with countless individuals that informed interim documents for testing ideas, principles and
40 directions with constituents, area church and national assemblies in 2014 and 2015. A draft of

1 the Final Report was submitted to the General Board for review in Nov., 2015. It was accepted in
2 principle and released for consideration. The release was followed by critical scrutiny,
3 conversation and, sometimes, intense debate on various position. The five Area churches
4 brought the report to their annual meetings for delegate consideration, debate and action. Four
5 approved the Report in principle, one (Alberta) decided not to decide until it had more
6 information addressing its particular needs. Following these meetings, the FDTF prepared an
7 addendum, included in the Discernment Guide, identifying six main areas of concern heard in
8 the feedback and some suggested responses.

9 **b. Litany of Lament:** The task force led in a Litany of Lament naming regrets, fears and losses. The
10 Lament finished with a declaration of confidence in God's mercy and hope.

11 **c. Reflections:** Three voices, from across Canada shared their hopes for our future directions.

12 i. Laura Carr-Pries shared from her work with the Emerging Voices Initiative group. She is
13 confident that the church is not dying, but a vibrant body seeking to follow Christ. While
14 there are expressions of fear and concerns regarding polity and direction, she has hope
15 we will have the courage to try something new, to descend boundaries of age race and
16 gender, be held together by worship, and that we will trust God in whatever lies ahead.

17 ii. Lee Dyck (Moderator of MCBC) hopes that the church will be a safe and brave place where
18 all are welcome. Becoming a powerful, purposeful and present place will mean taking
19 the risk of attaching ourselves to our neighbours, whoever they may be. Hope lies in
20 being called to live out in such a way that shalom is evident for all to see. It rests in
21 God's reconciling love. God is faithful and he will do it.

22 iii. Dann Pantoja (Witness Worker, Philippines) shared his thoughts via a letter as he had to
23 return to the Philippines unexpectedly following his mother's death. Dann envisions the
24 church building peace by being a martyr witness of God's good news of the prince of
25 peace, whatever our context. We are not machines to be fixed but organisms in need of
26 healing. The root conflict between the creator God and humanity spills over into our
27 lives and cultures. Wherever human beings interact there is conflict. We are called to
28 exemplify harmony in our lives and relationships.

29 **d. Table discussion:** Delegates were invited to respond in table discussions to the question: In this
30 discernment on our future directions, what resonates with you?

31 **e. Table reporting:**

32 Tables were chosen at random.

33 Included the following comments:

34 i. Many at our table resonated with the need for a financially and sustainable model. Two
35 key issues: How can we continue to support the amazing work of our international
36 ministries? Whatever the decision there is work needed in communicating a vision.

37 ii. This may not affect our congregation much. It is more a plebiscite on our leaders.

38 iii. It is a way forward. Funding is inspired by something that changes and saves lives.

39 iv. Appreciation expressed. There is a sense that this isn't just driven by money. There was
40 a comment that we are coming full circle, returning to less governing body and more
41 sharing of resourcing.

42 v. There are concerns about who will reflect back to us what we are together; a shared
43 vision. There is a need for conferences like these to see who we are across the country.

44 vi. We had to remind ourselves that this is a recommendation phase. The implementation
45 phase will have a lot more details. There is some anxiety and concern for less engaged

1 congregations. The process has felt quick. There are questions about how much is driven
2 by money and concerns about the effect it will have on the Witness program and
3 relationships there.

- 4 vii. There has been a graciousness in the process. There is a desire to be lighter
5 administratively and in structure with more local engagement and a possibility for more
6 direct communication between area churches.
- 7 viii. Stream lining makes sense and requires confidence in the accountability structures of
8 area churches. This plan places a lot of weight on regional leaders.
- 9 ix. The Addendum was gladly received but it had been hard to get.
- 10 x. Our culture is changing fast. The post-Christendom shift could result in changes to things
11 like charitable status. There is a lack of awareness at the congregational level and some
12 confusion about the proposal. There is less interest from the younger generation. When
13 we are not feeling connected it doesn't matter what the structure is.
- 14 xi. Our table struggled to find resonance. We do have affirmation for a national gathering
15 for all levels of leadership and laity. Missional programs and outreach is also critical.
- 16 xii. Many were encouraged to hear the emphasis on the church starting with love. We
17 would like to see more interaction at the congregational level; resourcing and
18 consultation. It is important to have meetings with a purpose.

19 **f. Looking at the recommendation:**

20 After reviewing the recommendations found on page 11 of the Discernment Guide, the
21 moderator invited Area Church moderators to respond to the question: What is meant by
22 "approval in principle"?

23 Responses include the following:

- 24 i. If the recommendation is accepted there will be a transition time of up to two years.
- 25 ii. During this time we will prepare and finalise a covenant binding our regional bodies to a
26 common vision, naming common regional priorities, recognising regional differences,
27 identifying shared national priorities and outlining a funding formula.
- 28 iii. We will prepare and implement a work plan. To do this we will review current practices,
29 consider alternatives, and gather input for "stakeholders".
- 30 iv. This will be negotiated among an Interim Council of the moderators, led by a transition
31 team. Senior staff will conduct the necessary research and prepare proposals for
32 consideration. Some research may be done by constituent groups as well. A project
33 manager would be hired to coordinate the work.
- 34 v. A Listening group of diverse voices from the constituency to review draft proposals and
35 reports, to provide input and advice.
- 36 vi. Research groups may be created for specific topics.
- 37 vii. Policy implications would be referred to the delegate assemblies.
- 38 viii. In approving the motion in principle it is understood that there will be opportunity for
39 input and a delegate assembly will vote on the final proposal no later than July 2018.
- 40 ix. Though much detail needs to be worked out approval in principle is not a blank cheque.

41 **g. Second Table discussion:** Delegates were asked to consider the question: Is there anything else
42 still needed before you are ready to respond to the recommendation?

43 **h. Second Table feedback:**

44 Tables were chosen at random.

45 Included the following comments:

- 1 i. How are the gaps currently created by changes in the system going to be filled? What
- 2 remains in the transition? Issues that need to be handled at a national level need a
- 3 consistent presence to guide them.
- 4 ii. There is a gap in looking at funding of educational institutions.
- 5 iii. How will smaller area churches be heard and supported? How will listening groups and
- 6 working groups get together? How will this be paid for? Who is doing this?— we are
- 7 tired.
- 8 iv. It would be helpful to see what the proposed structure looked like alongside the current
- 9 structure.
- 10 v. The presentation this morning was helpful.
- 11 vi. It is good to see that a project manager is included, to see that things don't fall through
- 12 the cracks. Where will this person would be hired from?
- 13 vii. Could we have more clarity on what will continue and what will change over next two
- 14 years?
- 15 viii. The listening group should have representation from Emerging Voices and new
- 16 Canadian churches.
- 17 ix. Is there a way to involve the people who are part of our current ministries in the
- 18 transition decisions?
- 19 x. Changing structures does not address issues of trust
- 20 xi. How do we maintain our national identity? How do we maintain a meaningful
- 21 Mennonite identity in our local area? How do we ensure this doesn't turn into another
- 22 “unwieldy web of bureaucracy”?
- 23 xii. We would like it stated that we are concerned for and sympathise with those who will
- 24 lose jobs.
- 25 xiii. How have other denominations handled change? We are not the only ones experiencing
- 26 this.
- 27 i. **Task Force and Moderators respond**
- 28 Included the following:
- 29 i. A loss of national presence is the last thing task force envisioned. The proposal may
- 30 change who will be at the front of that presence—change to area churches. The new
- 31 structure is not inherently a weaker national presence.
- 32 ii. The structure envisioned encourages area churches that now operate independently to
- 33 get together and talk about what we want to corporately own coast to coast. We
- 34 probably have more in common than in difference. A common dream and vision will
- 35 encourage funding.
- 36 iii. We already have the energy and ideas, area churches have to trust each other and
- 37 expect to be trustworthy. We will have to work at making links between churches
- 38 strong but also making links between area churches.
- 39 iv. Proposal will be shaped by what resources can be anticipated. The plan can
- 40 implemented in expensive or inexpensive ways. We have not talked about costs yet.
- 41 v. Smaller area churches we are working tougher. We are talking to each other more than
- 42 we have talked before.
- 43 vi. We are excited by young people being involved.
- 44 vii. If you feel you haven't been heard, contact us.
- 45 viii. The possibilities are exciting.

- 1 **ix.** Some of the questions raised will be studied by working groups. A conversation on
2 schools is already underway. These groups will be run in similar ways as the Climate
3 Change working group that was able to bring a report tabled this week.
- 4 **j. Open microphone**
- 5 Included the following comments:
- 6 i. There has been a disconnect in the process. There were no minutes at our consultation.
7 Now the task force is presenting but the moderators do the responding to our
8 comments. It is not clear whose agenda this is, is it area church or national agenda?
9 *Reply:* MCEC: The moderators are trusting that we are able to speak truthfully
10 and speak on behalf of our area churches. The role of the moderator is to bring the
11 voice of their area church people to that table. We are trusting that staff are working at
12 the goals we have directed. MCM: We are becoming a different kind of national church,
13 one shaped by area churches. There is some awkwardness when representing two
14 things on board, both area and national but we are speaking with concern for both.
15 FDTF: The new structure will be created and accountable to both national and area
16 church. It is our hope that the new model will force area churches to think nationally
17 and not arrogate.
- 18 ii. I am concerned for how the uncertain change process is affecting staff. Is there
19 something in place to support staff so that they can work confidently in this position?
20 *Reply:* ED: Thank you for concern for us. Staff have been in this process for a number of
21 years. I am very proud of how staff has functioned with energy even though things are
22 uncertain. We have a fair severance policy. Released staff is treated very fairly
23 financially. It can be emotionally tough when decisions need to be made quickly. It is
24 critical for the transition that we receive strong financial support.
- 25 iii. The remainder of the answers will be shared during the seminar in the afternoon.
- 26 iv. We need a vision, a rousing statement. I am not really hearing that.
- 27 v. The Witness workers gave a wonderful presentation. It is good to hear what we are
28 doing internationally.
- 29 vi. What is a majority vote? 50% plus 1 doesn't feel right.
- 30 vii. What happens if vote is "no"?
- 31 viii. The addendum is very good. Thank you for that. It is bewildering though as it seems to
32 open a radical rethinking of the Final Report. One can't quite tell what the role of the
33 Addendum is.
- 34 ix. Many questions needing to be processed in next two years should have been processed
35 in the period leading up to this point.
- 36 x. It is still not clear what "in principle" means.
- 37 xi. The report can be supported for two reasons. 1) The status quo not working, we need
38 something new, and 2) because leaders who are part of planning, are part of our
39 Mennonite churches. I lament how some of the leaders have been mistrusted.
- 40 xii. Some are frustrated with voting process. Amendments and changes raised here make it
41 hard to vote on behalf of our congregation. It is different from what we discussed at
42 home.
- 43 xiii. To vote against this resolution isn't necessarily a vote for the status quo. There were
44 other models. We are a small denomination, we could have been truly national if we
45 had reduced the area churches. The covenant will need to be as iron clad as possible.

1 The binational split created a covenant to meet together on a regular basis but we have
2 gone to the U.S. once and the U.S. has never come here. There was also an agreement
3 to publish joint theological articles a certain number of times a year—never happened.
4 Area agendas out-weighed the whole. So we will need firm commitments to the whole.
5 xiv. The releasing package may be fair but are those being released treated with the
6 compassion of Jesus and not as a corporation?
7

8 ***Friday July 8, 4:00 p.m.***
9

10 **15. Plenary Speaker:** Safwat Marzouk
11 Theme: Covenants for Today
12

13 **16. Nominations Committee:** Closing of Nominations
14 Norm Dyck has stepped down as Chair of Witness Council
15 The Nominations committee nominates Don Rempel Boschman
16 Nominations are now closed.
17
18

19 **17. Listening Committee Report**

20 We learned that while there are many signs that this is a safe place it is not so for all. Words were
21 spoken that hurt, made us uncomfortable and brought some of us to lament.
22 We were invited to reflect on how a safe place might not be possible but we could strive for a brave
23 space, were we can share with respect and humility.
24 We heard a love for this church. This love manifests itself in many ways: in frustrations, confusion,
25 lament and loss, concerns about finance, and sentiment that we are tired.
26 We heard hope and excitement for what might lie ahead. We heard dreams of what the church might
27 become.
28 There was a sentiment of the necessity for change. We are not comfortable with the status quo.
29 There is gratitude for the work that has been done and a desire to trust God and each other.
30 Conversations about discernment happened at meal tables, during breaks and on the way to seminars,
31 showing that this is important work and we care about it.
32 We heard people telling stories, laughter, singing, gratitude for the wonderful spread of food, and
33 people sneaking off for a power nap.
34 We were encouraged to think of what it means to be a covenant community. We were given the image
35 of a salad bowl not a melting pot. Diversity is needed and leads us to transformation.
36 Being the church is a process that has its challenges but also its gifts.
37

38 ***Saturday July 9, 9:00 a.m.***
39

40 **18. BFC Final Decision**

41 The Moderator opened with a few announcements.
42 Permission was given to sit with fellow congregation members for vote.

1 Delegates were reminded to speak to the delegate body not individuals from the microphone,
2 and to be respectful, keeping comments to under 3 min.

3 Delegates were asked not to applaud to identify preference.
4

5 The Moderator thanked the BFC task force for their work and dedication to a challenging task.

- 6 a. **Revised Recommendation:** The resolutions committee presented the revised recommendation
7 (distributed as a handout on the tables) brought forward by the delegation from MCBC. They
8 reviewed the changes: in point 2, “assumed” was changed to “understood”, in point 3
9 “prophetic nudging” has become “a nudging” and point four remains but “monitor” is changed
10 to “hear and listen” language.

11 Garry Janzen (ED MCBC) and Lee Dyck (Moderator, MCBC) spoke to the changes. **They have**
12 **softened the original changes to keep the theological intent of the BFC’s original**
13 **recommendation.** In practice, the implementation of the recommendation now moves to the
14 pastoral sphere but this document is to conclude a more theological process.

15 The BFC task force stated through co-chair Rudy Baergen that they are satisfied with the
16 changes. They do not change the essence of what was intended by the task force.

17 Moved by the resolutions committee.

- 18 b. **Open mic discussion**

19 Included the following comments:

- 20 i. Have we heard from Jesus? We have heard from the people. We are called to
21 repentance; called to follow Jesus.
- 22 ii. Appreciation for the work done on the recommendation. It has invited us to talk about
23 something more important than homosexuality; whether or not we believe that the
24 spirit of God can work in different places and lead to different things. The spirit of God
25 is beyond my understanding and can work in paradoxical and uncomprehensive means.
- 26 iii. Let us acknowledge the presence of youth who have joined us this morning. They are
27 welcome to speak if they are moved to share.
- 28 iv. I have wrestled a great deal and am changing my vote. I have not changed my
29 interpretation but my willingness to see another’s lens of understanding; to see that
30 these are valid.
- 31 v. A call to hold our pastors in prayer.
- 32 vi. On behalf of the youth: we did have fun on the canoe trip. Thank you for welcoming us
33 to this assembly and we hope we come to consensus.
- 34 vii. A call for prayers for bullet 4 as we develop ways. Expressed sorrow that they are not
35 already developed. We need a lot of prayer.
- 36 viii. In a study of study methods used for this issue, both conventional and inclusionary
37 conclusions fall short. One trajectory leads to harm of persons of same sex attractions.
38 The other falls short because scripture speaks only to union not orientation.
- 39 ix. Our decisions will affect our relationships with other groups
- 40 x. Point of order/clarification: Are we discussing amendments or motions? *Reply:*
41 Parliamentarian: The amended motion has replaced the original. The movers accepted
42 the changes. As the original had not been entered for a vote it was withdrawn and
43 replaced. The amended motion has been moved. We are discussing it.
- 44 xi. What is a majority on this vote? *Reply:* Our by-laws say it is a simple majority: 50% plus
45 1.

- 1 xii. I will support this motion but do so with tears; for those dear to me who feel it does not
2 go far enough to being welcoming and for those dear to me who feel that it takes
3 church in direction they cannot support.
- 4 xiii. A prayer as we step beyond this, that we will choose to focus on our core identity; to
5 pay attention to who is Jesus and who are we in relation to him.
- 6 xiv. A quote about regarding Christ’s ministry as the renewal and transforming all things.
- 7 xv. Some of us think that we or “those people” can change. We need to talk about more
8 than Bible verses but also about our make-up. Call on those with self-awareness and/or
9 special training to speak to if it is possible to change one’s sexual orientation.
- 10 xvi. This conversation has being going on a long time. Our seeking to be unified is important.
11 It scares me to be a part of a church that isn’t unified, but at what cost?
- 12 xvii. Pearl four has gotten confused in the changes. If we are talking about hearing one
13 another, congregations and individuals need to be included not just area and national
14 churches?
- 15 xviii. My question is why? We accept other religions. I have had friends come out to me but I
16 cannot tell them whole heartedly that the church will accept them. Why are they
17 different? The church should be a place that loves and accepts.
- 18 xix. Humans want to have everything in writing and in boxes to find it easily. Jesus said he
19 came to fulfill the law and abolish the law. I feel I have to be an advocate for those
20 whom society deems different. It is not ours to judge, or change the rules. I am learning
21 how to be an advocate.
- 22 xx. Our congregation is widely spread over the spectrum. We have made no statement of
23 what kind of congregation we would be except that relationships trump everything. It
24 is crucial that we create space for all kinds of diversity within our church.
- 25 xxi. It was said that a “yes” would affect our relationships with other persons, groups and
26 organizations. So will a “no”.
- 27 xxii. We probably will still be talking in 10 years, our job today is to make that conversation
28 as healthy and positive as possible.
- 29 xxiii. I would insert “also” in front of “a nudging” in pearl 3.
- 30 xxiv. Our lives and our futures are bound together, whatever we decide, even if we disagree,
31 because we have a covenant with each other and God has a covenant with his people.
32 I’m not sure how helpful a vote is. We need to be committed to a process.
- 33 xxv. What do we mean when we say “we want to create space”? Space for people who
34 come to us or for the idea?
- 35 xxvi. It is a nudging of spirit that we are facing this kind of resolution. It is an exercise in unity
36 of the spirit. People who were strangers and enemies trying to be in unity together is
37 the essence of the church. In Acts Paul talks about “the chains of peace”. We only need
38 chains when we don’t want to be together. Tension filled and conflict filled unity is the
39 unity of the Spirit. The challenge going forward is to have the patience and long
40 suffering to stick with this, chaining ourselves to each other even when it hurts. That
41 requires the spirit.
- 42 xxvii. The word compromise hasn’t come up yet, but the vote is a compromise in that it pulls
43 two sides together. Jesus wouldn’t want us to pick sides but to do it together because of
44 our love for him.

- 1 xxviii. All we are doing is naming a reality that exists. Bothered that we are voting on this.
2 There is something to learn from the Quakers and what they do.
3 xxix. Request for a ballot vote.
4 xxx. The spirit of God is hovering here. You are all somebodies, baby, and we are all the
5 children of God.
6 xxxi. Why are we voting? We have had some wonderful discussions. A vote creates disunity.
7 My sense is we are voting to bring this to a close. There are other ways to bring a close
8 to formal discussion.
9 xxxii. There has been very little talk about being accountable to the institution of marriage as
10 God made it prior to there being sin in the world.
11 xxxiii. We need art, spaces to laugh and to cry. Issued an invite to *"This will lead to dancing"*
12 play tonight.
13 xxxiv. This conversation affirms what congregations are already doing; moving forward,
14 listening to spirit. Why would we let this divide us?
15 xxxv. There is heterosexual sin too. Last night at the play in Rosthern we saw this sin and we
16 laughed.
17 **xxxvi.** Called the vote—show of hands confirmed.
18 **c. Instructions for the vote:** Delegates have ballots in your packet. To abstain write "abstain" on
19 your ballot. These will be recorded but not counted in vote.
20 **d. Preparation:** Before voting delegates were asked to take a moment to place this before God.
21 Singing *Rain Down*
22 **e. Vote.** Ballots were collected.
23

24 **19. FDTF Final Decision**

- 25 **a.** Resolutions Committee: Thanked the task force for the work that has been done. The addendum
26 shows listening. The recommendation can be found on page 11 of the Discernment Guide.
27 **b.** No amendments have been brought forward.
28 **c.** The resolution was read by the Resolutions committee and moved by the General Board.
29 **d.** The task force reminded delegates that the Final Report identified in the resolution includes the
30 addendum.
31 Discussion included the following comments:
32 **i.** The addendum has helped with some concerns but there is still a need for more clarity
33 on what we are accepting if we vote "yes". What are the changes in finances and will
34 there be delegate involvement or will that all come through the area church? *Reply:* We
35 are working in the direction of having these come through area church but it would not
36 change until there is by-law change. We would be approving moving in that direction.
37 We are approving establishing a covenant and work plan, an interim council and a
38 transition team. By-law changes would need to come back to the delegate body. Having
39 the funding move through area churches and whether there would be congregational
40 delegates are by-law issues. Little is said in the report about the two schools in which
41 MC Canada has ownership, CMU and AMBS. There was a meeting in June that was a
42 helpful sharing of ideas and direction. Leadership development, in which our schools
43 play a major role, is key.

- 1 ii. Clarification: It says there will be opportunity to vote on a more detailed proposal no
2 later than 2018. Some understand that the transition team is creating a proposal and no
3 changes will be made until it is voted on. Others are saying that there will be some
4 implementation during the two years. *Reply:* There will be no change in the structure
5 until the proposal is approved. There may be some program changes made according to
6 what function and finances dictate.
- 7 iii. There has been some confusion around possibility of suspending by-laws and the role of
8 the interim council. *Reply:* Some of your questions can be made as statements of what
9 you want. Do you want the interim council to take over the function of the General
10 Board, do you want the General Board to stay the same for the next two years? At
11 present the Board maintains its function.
- 12 iv. The congregations now send delegates so we can work together, there is concern that
13 we may lose that. We don't want to lose direct input into the national agenda. If we are
14 moving to a model to energize the local church how will it support and engage in strong
15 way? *Reply:* The flip side of that concern is if a congregation is actively involved at an
16 area church meeting to decide on a concern, why do they have to go to a national
17 meeting to discuss it again? Can we trust our leadership to represent our concerns as
18 wrestled with at the area level? A congregation may have more say in the proposed
19 model as not every congregation is here. More can attend area gatherings.
- 20 v. The church has been restructuring itself my whole 32 year career. It has been frustrating
21 but also instructive. As a church we must always be shifting and adapting. We ought to
22 hold our structure loosely, to give God space to do what God wants to do with us.
- 23 vi. I am concerned that young voices are not being heard. Emerging Voices are a specific
24 group. There are other young adults and youth. We need to be intentional to seek them
25 out.
- 26 vii. Leaders are not super human and are just another voice in the conversation. They are
27 not the only ones making decisions. Leaders are just people.
- 28 viii. A lot depends on what happens in the next two years. It helps to look back at how we
29 have gotten to this place. There have been some lost opportunities. At Assembly 2014
30 delegates were not asked to respond. At some of listening gatherings, no notes were
31 taken. Will we learn from these missed opportunities? *Reply:* (MCEC) I apologise for the
32 opportunities I have missed in my role. I see my role as being the best reflection of the
33 voices of the people I represent. You will have a chance to vote in 2018. If we have not
34 been listening you have the opportunity to say you have not been heard.
- 35 ix. The transition team needs to have diverse voices. *Reply:* We are aware of the need to
36 engage a variety of voices. Working groups are one place we can include these.
- 37 x. Thank you for the diligent work. Structures should support lay initiatives. MDS might be
38 a model to look at.
- 39 xi. It has been frustrating sometimes, asking questions but not getting direct answers. The
40 addendum does show that we are being listened too.
- 41 xii. Many of our churches are small. Pastors work other jobs, or money is tight and
42 congregations can't always support a delegate to come to these meetings. It is easier to
43 get to Area gatherings. I am grateful for the support from MC Can to help get me and
44 others here.
- 45 xiii. The interim Council seems like a new task force.

- 1 xiv. We've gotten too big and need to pare down but the general structure is sound. We
2 need a vision and a way to get people to opt into the vision.
- 3 xv. Encourage to strengthen relations with other denominations and organisations,
4 regardless of what happens in the vote.
- 5 xvi. Voting in principle means we accept that there will not be a delegate body and finances
6 won't go direct but through regional offices.
- 7 xvii. Many in the congregations don't know, nor are they interested in structure. The real
8 concern is process. There is anxiety and uncertainty. I hope as we go through the
9 changes with a lot of love and compassion and thank people for working so hard when
10 they do not know the future.
- 11 xviii. It is too early to say there will not be delegates at all. Specifics have not been tested as
12 ideas yet. Even if delegate assemblies are made up of area church delegates they will be
13 drawn from congregations. There is a commitment in the recommendation for
14 gatherings for discernment (not voting) worship and learning. Discernment is an
15 opportunity to speak into issues.
- 16 xix. We could use intense efforts to get women involved in leadership. Our stage of
17 moderators is mostly male.
- 18 xx. Moderators are voted in by area delegates. Nominating committees try to get a variety,
19 but many say "no". There are opportunities to say "yes," and to recommend people to
20 positions. Currently have 6 delegate bodies working independently, if we go forward we
21 work together as six delegate bodies.
- 22 xxi. 25 yrs ago a task force looking at funding for the national church, recommended more
23 communication. There is now more, letters, appeals and information about ministries
24 but there isn't more funding.
- 25 xxii. An important role of the national church is to be intentional at relating with other
26 Anabaptist denominations globally.
- 27 xxiii. There is a lot of "yes, but" being said. How do we help those making the proposal hear
28 our conditions and work together to have a working proposal? *Reply:* We do look back
29 at minutes.
- 30 xxiv. A challenge to delegates: to continue to remain engaged, not just wait and see. We can
31 send letters, thoughts and comments. We have seen that this makes a difference with
32 the addendum.
- 33 xxv. It has been good to hear all the ways churches are involved in their neighbourhoods. If
34 mission is what we are all about, local initiatives work best if we put focus on area, not
35 national, bodies. This proposal is catching up with how we are doing mission now.
- 36 xxvi. While there may have been some miscommunication we have opportunity to do better.
37 We are all responsible for what happens next; keep engaged.
- 38 xxvii. Who do I contact? Please send a dedicated email with the appropriate way to contact.
- 39 xxviii. There will need to be someone during the transition process to hold up a vision.
- 40 e. **Vote:** The question was called, confirmed by show of hands. Ballots were cast and collected.
- 41 f. **Prayer:**
- 42

43 **20. Being Faithful Church Results**

- 44 a. Delegates were invited to receive the result on the BFC vote in silence.

Recommendation: Based on what the BFC Task Force has heard in our discernment process concerning same-sex committed relationships, and in the spirit of the church speaking again, the General Board has approved for consideration at the 2016 Delegate Assembly the following BFC task force recommendation:

- One of our foundations of unity has been the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective. We recommend that it continue to serve the church in the ways suggested in the Introduction of the Confession itself.
- We call upon our family of Christ to respectfully acknowledge that there are those among us (congregations and individuals) whose careful study of Scripture and prayerful journey of discernment lead them to a different understanding on committed same-sex relationships than is commonly understood by readings of Article 19 in our Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective.
- We recommend that we create space/leave room within our Body to test alternative understanding from that of the larger Body to see if they are a nudging of the Spirit of God.
- Since continued discernment will be required after Assembly 2016, we recommend that Mennonite Church Canada and Area Churches develop ways to hear one another around the implementation of this recommendation.

Moved by the Resolutions committee on behalf of the GB

Result: 23 abstained
50 “no”
277 “yes”
4 spoiled
Carried

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- b. Rudy Baergen led a silent prayer of lament, thanks, hopes and fears. Ephesians 3: 14ff was read as words of assurance.
- c. Resolutions committee: Recognizing that BFC process has reached its end, the Resolutions Committee presented the following motion.

Motion: whereas the BFC has produced a tool for careful discernment and led us through a discernment process and thus have completed their mandate:
Be it resolved that the delegate body of Mennonite Church Canada thank the BFC task Force for their diligent work, and relieve the members of the Being a Faithful Church task force, and dissolve the task force

Carried

7
8
9

1 **Saturday July 9, 6:45 p.m.**
2

3 **21.** The chair of the nominating committee, Renata Klassen, moved the acceptance of the slate as
4 modified by the addition of Don Rempel Boschman. Approved by show of hands.

5 The Slate:

6 General Board:

7 Moderator:	Calvin Quan	
8 Vice Moderator	Aldred Neufeldt	<i>Continuing</i>
9 Secretary	Harold Peters Fransen	
10 Treasurer	Allan Hiebert	
11 Member at large	Laura Loewen	<i>Continuing</i>

12

13 Faith and Life

14 Chair	Doug Klassen	<i>continuing</i>
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15 Church Engagement Council

16 Chair	Vince Friesen	<i>continuing</i>
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17 General Board rep	Dori Zerbe Cornelsen	<i>continuing</i>
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18 Christian Formation Council

19 Chair	Lisa Carr-Pries	<i>Continuing</i>
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20 General Board rep	David Driedger	<i>continuing</i>
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21 Christian Witness Council

22 Chair	Don Rempel Boschman	
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23 General Board rep	Lynell Bergen	<i>continuing</i>
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24 Finance, Policy and Audit Committee (FPAC)

25 Chair	Allan Hiebert	
26	Ewald Boschman	
27	Ed Heide	

28

Motion: to accept the nomination slate as presented with the addition of Don Rempel Boschman as added last night.

Moved:

Carried

29

30

31 **22. FDTF Results**

32 Delegates were invited to receive the results of the vote in silence.

33

Recommendation: that Mennonite Church Canada approve in principle the direction proposed by the Future Directions Task Force Final Report, and collaborate with the five Area Churches (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Eastern Canada) in developing a more integrated nation-wide church body along the lines envisioned to better resource all levels of our church in responding to God's call to live out and share

the peace of Jesus Christ with local through global neighbours.

In approving this motion, it is understood that:

- Prior to implementation there will be opportunity to vote on a more fully developed proposal no later than July 2018, with ongoing consultation with congregations in between
- The final proposal will incorporate some form of area church delegate involvement in the governance of national agenda and priorities
- The final proposal will include provision or national gatherings for study, fellowship, worship and discernment
- Formal conversation will be undertaken (e.g. via working group, conference or other means) to review our future vision and strategy for international relationships and witness, addressing questions in the Addendum and related ones , to be completed by 2017.

Moved: by the General Board

21 "no"

318 "yes"

4 spoiled

Carried

1

2 Supplemental resolution (Discernment Guide page 12)

3 It was originally thought that we might have need of a supplemental resolution. This was printed for
4 delegates to review. However, on further study of the by-laws it was determined to be of no material
5 advantage. The by-laws state that council membership can be "up to "a certain number. There are no
6 minimums. Faith and life may need to have full numbers. So we withdraw the supplemental resolution.
7 With the motion adopted, next steps are get the Interim Council together as soon as possible, to form
8 the transition team, a time line, a budget and job description for project manager. Hopefully these will
9 begin in the next week.

10 In response to a question raised previously for a contact to send feedback. For now Willard Metzger is
11 the most obvious person to contact or your area church moderator.

12 Resolutions committee: Recognizing that, with the vote on the FDTF report completed the resolutions
13 committee moves that:

Motion: whereas the FDTF has provided us with a report which offers us insights for the future of the Church and offers wisdom and recommendations to the Transition Team and has thus completed their mandate:

Be it resolved that the delegate body of Mennonite Church Canada thanks the FDTF members for their work, release them and dissolve the task force.

Carried.

1 **23. Resolutions Committee cont.**

- 2 a. Early the Resolutions committee presented a resolution sent for consideration at Assembly.
3 They now presented the second, the resolution on Palestine and Israel (Discernment Guide page
4 29), which had been delayed as the General Board received two responses from outside the
5 constituency asking us to reconsider. There was a meeting with some of the people who had
6 written one of the letters. As result the Resolution Committee and the General Board Executive
7 met with the mover and seconder to discuss the motion.
- 8 b. Resolution committee presented the revised motion, distributed on tables. It is to be noted that
9 anywhere the document says "Israel" it is referring to the State of Israel.
- 10 c. The mover and seconder spoke to the motion. Byron Rempel-Burkholder shared that while he
11 was in Israel/Palestine he asked Palestinian Christians what message they would like to send
12 Canadian Mennonites. He was asked why Mennonites have not taken a public stand against the
13 occupation of Palestine and injustice Palestinians are suffering? We speak of a Biblical vision of
14 shalom, it needs to be an action. Palmer Becker stated that he has chosen to second the motion
15 because it is a way to promote peace. The motion is about not taking sides but supports the
16 need for a safe place to live for the Palestinian and the Israeli. We cannot work for peace
17 without working for justice.

18 Discussion included the following comments:

- 19 a. "Jews" has sometimes had a pejorative implication. Is Jewish people more respectful?
20 b. It is a good thing to do but we cannot forget our other relationships in our communities,
21 including Jewish brothers and sister and our aboriginal neighbours,
22 c. It is important to respect other points of view. These are complex issues. We need help
23 to better understand these complexities and the issues.
24 d. The separation wall has been promoted for safety but is really for economic and political
25 reasons. It is easy to talk about it from a safe distance but different when you sit down
26 and talk directly to those effected and hear their stories. This is one way of saying we
27 will join with our brothers and sisters in seeking a peaceful solution.
28 e. The Moderator shared a small exert of the letter she received from the Canadian
29 Rabbinic Caucus who state that if the recommended boycott does not go ahead they
30 would be more than happy to partner with us in looking at peaceful solutions.
31 f. What companies are we being asked to divest from? *Reply:* Caterpillar equipment is
32 used in the destruction of homes and farms. Remax has already stopped selling houses
33 in the occupied areas. The idea is not to develop a hatred for Israelis, it is about working
34 toward justice. There is a quote that says the war would end in a day if the Palestinians
35 were given justice.
36 g. There are voices in the Jewish community that would welcome this resolution as well.
37 h. The resolutions selectivity is a concern. How many other international conflicts have
38 raised a resolution from the floor? Why do we speak to one and not others?
39 i. Two amendments were added to the motion.

Motion: to amend the motion on the floor by changing "Jews" to "Jewish
people" and changing "the Jews and Palestinians in Canada" to "the
Canadian Jewish and Palestinian communities"
Carried.

- 1 There is also a need to call for Palestinians to recognize Israel's right to exist, and call to Hamas
2 and others to put down their arms. Motions like this pass quickly because we aren't really being
3 asked to do anything. It is high minded but not something we are engaged in.
- 4 j. The church has been complicit in anti-Semitism and also in Zionism both of which
5 contribute to this problem. That is why this specific conflict calls the church.
- 6 k. There is no real sense if these actions are not meaningful and helpful. What we would
7 specifically be willing to do? Like learning tours. *Reply:* This is a starting place. We would
8 need to do some research. We can borrow from others who have done so and have
9 guidelines for which companies to boycott. American Quakers have done a lot and you
10 can find it on their website. Some resources are at the table in the hall.
- 11 l. As we do the research there is a need to talk to living books, people with lived
12 experience, otherwise it will be hollow.
- 13 m. Are there other denominations in Canada that we would be joining in doing this? *Reply:*
14 The United Church, and a few others. In the U.S. there are many others.
- 15 d. Vote:

Motion: Whereas

- We are called to “follow Christ in the way of peace, doing justice, brining reconciliation and practicing nonresistance” (Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, article 22)
- We believe God calls us to speak truth to power, urging our governments, institutions and businesses to take peaceful and nonviolent action against injustice where it occurs
- We hear continued pleas from Palestinian Christians that Western Christians take notice of the suffering of all Palestinians under Israeli occupation: We also recognize and lament the suffering of Israeli citizens.
- We believe it is God's will that Israelis and Palestinians live with one another in peace, justice, freedom, and security
- We lament Israel's ongoing and increasingly entrenched military occupation and settlement of Palestinian lands in contravention of international law, including its violations of Palestinians' rights to movement and self-determination
- We hear Palestinian Christians urging us and fellow-believers around the world to exert economic pressure on Israel—through boycotts, divestment, and sanctions—as one of the few remaining options to end the occupations and facilitate a just peace with the Palestinian people
- We recognize the complexity of the conflict between the state of Israel and Palestine.
- Even as we address the situation in Palestine and Israel, we confess our own complicity in the colonization and oppression of the Indigenous peoples of Canada, as well as our history of racist attitudes and behaviours toward Jewish people

Be it resolved

- We look to the gospel of Jesus Christ for guidance and grace in our responses to the Palestinian and Israeli context
- We commit ourselves to ongoing prayer, searching and discernment concerning the ways in which we are congregations, communities and church members are impeding or facilitating, ignoring or promoting, the quest for a just peace between Palestinians and Israelis
- We affirm the efforts of Israelis and Palestinians who are committed to non-violent ways of overcoming the injustice in their region; we commit ourselves to working in partnership with the Canadian Jewish and Palestinian Communities.
- We urge our member congregations to deepen their understanding of the Palestine-Israel relationship through the study of educational material on the topic and through participation in learning tours to the

region

- We ask the Mennonite Church General Board, regional churches, congregations and members to avoid investing in or supporting companies that do business with Israeli settlements and the Israel Defense Forces and companies that are profiting from the occupation of the Palestinian territories; and
- We encourage the government of Canada to support measures that put pressure on Israel (including through economic sanctions) to end the occupation and work for a just peace, in accordance with international law.

Moved Byron Rempel-Burkholder

Seconded Palmer Becker

Carried

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2

3 **24. Listening committee**

4 Listening, a sacred exercise. Thank you for being bold, persisting with one another in faith. We have
5 heard beautiful music. We heard a deep love for church, a recognition of the weight of leadership and a
6 call for more diversity in leadership. We lamented those churches who could not be here. We have
7 heard the voices of youth call for care of the church. We have heard the cry and weeping of those for
8 whom this is not a safe space. Fear and anxiety and sadness for what may be lost. We have heard
9 passion for witness workers and our schools. There has been vulnerability and intense debate. We have
10 seen and heard that we are all very much human but in search of faith in Jesus Christ. There is a deep
11 desire to be a church together, and a commitment that we are in this together.

12

13 **25. Final Business**

14 a. Thank you resolutions: The Resolutions committee issued resolutions to thank the technical and
15 TCU staff, the facility and food providers, and MC Saskatchewan for hosting us. The delegates
16 responded with loud applause.

17

b.

c. Ballots **Motion:** that the ballots be
destroyed

Carried

18

19 d. Vice Moderator, Aldred Neufeld thanked the Moderator Hilda Hildebrand who has served two
20 terms and is now stepping down. He noted her attention to detail and hard work that went
21 beyond what one might normally expect. He also thanked her for her grace and sensitivity. On
22 behalf of the General Board and everyone here she was presented with a thank you gift and
23 applause.

24 e. Hilda responded saying that it has been a joy to serve the church, especially to get to know
25 people across the country who are passionate about serving God. She expressed appreciation
26 for Willard who has had a difficult role and called on the church to support him and the General
27 Board during this transitional time.

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1 **26. Worship**

2 Included a litany of commissioning for new and continuing volunteers and of gratitude for those whose
3 term has ended led by Karen Martens Zimmerly.

4

5 **27. Closing:** The new moderator, Calvin Quan declared Assembly 2016 closed.



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