

The MENNONITE CHURCH BRITISH COLUMBIA (MCBC) Story for 2018 **Submitted by Garry Janzen**

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13*

MCBC has had several key undertakings in 2018. As a result of significant research and work, a new curriculum was rolled out at our LEAD Conference, called “Made in the Image of God: Engaging Prejudice, Power and Privilege.” This was done in collaboration with Betty Pries of Credence & Co., including some good work by Chris Lenshyn and Joon Park of MCBC. Venues for our people to benefit from the curriculum continue to be developed.

The MCBC Leadership Board was planning to do a review of our Executive Minister (myself) in the spring of 2018. As the result of conversations at the MCBC Annual Gathering, it was determined that it would be best to bring in Arrow Leadership to do an external review of the Executive Minister. This also became a review of work of the Leadership Board. The result was an affirmation of the Executive Minister, with some actions identified for growth in best practices. Details of this will be in my report in the MCBC Report Book for the 2019 Annual Gathering in February.

An affirmation of the authority of Scripture has been called for by some of our MCBC leaders. In response, MCBC put on the “Reading the Bible Together” conference on April 14th with Tim Geddert as the speaker. This was well-attended, well-received and appreciated. Tim Geddert was invited to return to be the speaker at the Pastor/Spouse Retreat in November. He lead us on the topic, “Reading the Bible Together: Gaining Insights through Life’s Transitions.” Again, this event and Tim’s input was very much appreciated.

Building trust within MCBC, becoming equipped to deal well with conflict, and finding good ways to have difficult conversations have been expressed as desired outcomes in the evaluation. Building trust happens through developing relationships that have integrity. Some ways we have been building trust in 2018 include: a Leadership Board Retreat in May, the #ChurchToo Conference at CBC in June (which served as MCBC’s annual Relationships with Integrity course), and the Pastor/Spouse Retreat.

On the Saturday morning of our Annual Gathering in February, Betty Pries lead us in a conversation and prayer time regarding discord in MCBC. As training for our pastors and the Leadership Board, John Radford was brought in to teach and facilitate a conversation on “Using Conflict to Facilitate Growth.” A trusted mediator, Wayne Plenert, was also brought in to help MCBC successfully navigate a difficult conversation.

MCBC sadly said goodbye to two congregations that felt they could no longer stay with us. We are also continuing to discern with other congregations who are finding their way through significant challenges in our relationship together. Lastly, I have recently had two conversations with congregations who are considering joining MCBC as their church family.

Another helpful outcome of the evaluation was for me to be reminded to prioritise MCBC concerns over other involvement. I have made it a point to look at all of my work with this in mind. When MCBC congregational needs arise, they are first priority. For example, there have been a number of pastors seeking credentialing and ordination; these processes have received much of my attention. This fall I have also worked with several congregations and their pastors who have been going through some significant challenges. In the area of nationwide and global opportunities; I have focused on the opportunities that best serve the interests of the MCBC congregations.

MCBC and the CBC Travelling Ministry Team had two wonderful connections with two very different congregational settings in the fall – Chinatown Peace Church and Crossroads Community Church.

We have been continuing to research and develop a plan for the property of the former Clearbrook Mennonite Church. Details of this will be coming to the MCBC 2019 Annual Gathering.

We thank Sarah Symons for an excellent half a year of work as MCBC Communications Coordinator and Administrative Assistant. We welcomed Kevin Barkowsky to this role in April, 2018. We also welcomed Kevin as Interim Church Engagement Minister in June. Kevin has been doing excellent work in all of these portfolios. Brander McDonald concluded his time as MCBC Indigenous Relations Coordinator at the end of February. An Indigenous Relations Group was established to continue to move this work forward, and to discern best practices for the future.

In our fundraising efforts, we conducted our third annual Symphony of Hymns celebration with Calvin Dyck. We expanded by adding a service in Vancouver. These have proven to be a good experience for making connections with our MCBC family and providing opportunity for our people to bring their individual donations in support of MCBC.

During the last few years, MCBC has been on a journey of reimagining who we are. We have discerned three key themes: To Define and Engage Anabaptist Identity, To Be a Missional Community, and To Build Connections and Trust between and within Congregations. In 2019 we are looking to redeveloping our structures in order to best live into these themes.

I want to end by thanking you for your participation in this partnership of MCBC. You have prayed. You have sent delegates. You have provided volunteers. You have given generously. We have served together. This ministry is work that we can only do together; kingdom work that could not be done without each other. We are thankful for what God has done in 2018 and we look forward to what is in store for us in 2019 as we continue to seek to follow Jesus together.