
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Over the past 12 months, I have had the privilege of meeting with pastors and leaders from across Canada. A consistent message I received was the call for Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (CCMBC) to organize around the mission of reaching Canadians with the Gospel. Leaders encouraged me and the executive board to focus our countrywide efforts on those things we can only accomplish if we work together. God seems to be raising up leaders who have both a holy discontent with the status quo and a willingness to work together for the sake of reaching Canadians with the gospel of Jesus Christ; leaders who recognize that we are called to be faithful stewards of God's gifts for his glory to bless the Canadian and global church as we work together to reach those who do not yet have a personal experience with Jesus Christ.

I believe MBs are positioned to make a significant contribution for Christ at this time in history. Even though MBs today come from a great variety of backgrounds, the legacy of those who shaped our theological, relational, and missional foundations still reverberates throughout our churches. Our history is filled with spiritual pioneers who were Spirit-led, filled with faith and courage, risking life and limb for the sake of spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. Our calling is not to relive our past, but to gather strength from the stories of leaders who obeyed the promptings of the Spirit to bring glory to God and bring good news to people by introducing them to the transforming reality of Jesus Christ.

Mennonite Brethren have an increasing sense of urgency that now is the time to act; now is the time to partner, to put aside the things that divide us and focus on the major things that unite us: our core beliefs, our missional hearts, and our shared resources. We serve one Lord, we are one church, and we have one mission.

Jesus knew that the greatest obstacle to the bride of Christ fulfilling the mission of Christ would be the unity of the bride. His prayer for us as recorded in John 17 articulates Jesus' concern for his church: "I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one – as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me" John 17:21 (NLT).

Jesus prays that his followers would be so united in him, so obedient to the Father, so relationally healthy that people would look at them and say, "Obviously Jesus did what these followers of his claim." Jesus prayed that the very way we do life and mission together would be proof of Jesus' life and ministry on earth. When we work together for the cause of Christ and for His glory, we reflect the truth of the transforming power of the Gospel. We have a tremendous opportunity; God is on the move and inviting us to work together as churches and provinces for the sake of the Gospel.

As I connect with pastors and leaders from across Canada, I am increasingly convinced that we are living in a time of great spiritual opportunity. Their desire to partner with like-minded leaders and churches to fulfil the Great Commission and Great Commandment is strong and increasing.

Over the past two years, God has been at work among MB leaders to move us beyond our current ministry mindset. The desire to be effective, community-transforming Christ followers burns bright in our pastors and leaders. They repeatedly and passionately express a hope that our churches will be agents of personal and community transformation. Leaders have expressed a growing urgency and restlessness – a "Holy Spirit discontent." This restlessness has led to the beginnings of change on multiple levels. We are lowering interprovincial ministry barriers and developing new partnership – and slowly historic mistrust is dissipating as we move forward in ministry for the glory of God and sake of the millions of Canadians who do not know Jesus.

In an effort to gain a better understanding of the issues, needs, and opportunities that exist within our constituency, we commissioned a national ministry effectiveness project to review the work of the CCMBC national office. The project identified nine "burning platforms" standing in the way of CCMBC fully realizing our God-given calling and mission. While it was not easy to hear the ways in which CCMBC has struggled to accomplish our mission, the clarity of feedback from Canadian MB leaders has been very helpful in charting the way forward.

These nine challenges are:

AWARENESS

CCMBC lacks an intimate awareness of who the lost are in Canada.

MISSION

CCMBC has not clearly communicated what it is that we do together as churches.

UNIFYING CENTRE

CCMBC is lacking a theological and missional centre that unites churches in collective mission.

INSTITUTIONALISM

CCMBC is seen to be program-driven versus mission-driven.

MISTRUST

There are multiple areas of mistrust throughout the denomination – between local churches, and between all levels of leadership bodies.

SILOS

National office, provincial conferences, and churches function independently of one another.

STRUCTURE

the current national structure has developed independent of the mission; and is complex, costly, and competitive. CCMBC lacks skilled resources at multiple levels.

CULTURE

CCMBC is perceived to have a DNA of wanting to reclaim roots and inward-looking distinctives versus a missional DNA of reaching out to the lost.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Financial resources are not collectively deployed to critical ministries. Leaders perceive CCMBC to be hoarding resources at multiple levels resulting in wastage and duplication.

It is vitally important that we stare reality in the face and tackle these challenges. Left unaddressed, they will hinder our ability to maximise the ministry opportunities before us. The executive board embraced the reality of these challenges as well as the opportunities expressed by leaders who are asking CCMBC to be a rallying force for national mission. As a result of consultant Terry Mochar's work, we heard clearly that CCMBC should be a voice calling us to do together what no church can do alone. Leaders expressed a desire and expectation that CCMBC:

- 01.** Create an awakening to the needs within Canada that inspires people to mission.
- 02.** Cast a vision and mission about what we can do together as churches to transform Canada with the good news of Jesus Christ.
- 03.** Bringing unifying clarity to our theological and missional centre that results in common confession and demonstration of the gospel.
- 04.** Provide support for development of pastors, first as disciples, then as effective leaders, so that they can live balanced lives and lead healthy churches.
- 05.** Develop financial services that release congregations and denominational staff to do ministry and release stewardship funds to ministry priorities.
- 06.** Facilitate ministry collaboration across churches and provincial conferences.
- 07.** Develop, broker, and facilitate programs, networks, and affiliations through a bottom-up development process delivered through provincial conferences and aligned to our missional goals.
- 08.** Lead the way in the denomination for 21st-century communication that reaches the broadest constituent base possible, inspiring people to mission and to celebrate what God is doing.
- 09.** Be the main catalysts of a national unifying prayer movement that calls us to dependency upon God. Create an excitement and expectancy that God will do abundantly above what we ask or think.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT CONTINUED

The consultant also provided the executive board with numerous recommendations to move us toward becoming a missional movement of Canadian churches. At a moderators summit, participants (executive board, 3-4 representatives of each provincial leadership team) approved recommendations in principle, guiding the steps toward the new reality into which we believe God is calling us. The following outlines the key leadership action steps that have been initiated:

- Ron Toews was hired as CCMBC director of leadership development.
- CCMBC is interviewing candidates for director of human resources. This position will not only serve CCMBC staff but also resource Canadian MB churches.
- The search continues for a CCMBC director of communications to lead the way in 21st century media. The director will give leadership to all CCMBC communication efforts and serve as a resource and support for provincial/regional needs.
- CCMBC continues to search for national prayer movement leader.
- The finance team of the executive board is reviewing all CCMBC financial policies relating to CCMBC deposit funds. This work is being done as part of the ongoing work of the executive board as well as in preparation for new finance staffing as John Wiebe retires in 2013 and a new finance team leader is hired.
- As a result of the moderators summit, provincial conference ministers and/or provincial executive directors are joining the national senior staff team meetings to unify ministry development.
- Prairie leaders have been meeting to discern how they can work together more effectively and efficiently as a prairie region.
- In addition to the steps taken to develop a staff team for the future God is leading us into, we are also reviewing the allocation of financial and human resources to aligned with God's direction for us. We will explore the consultant's recommendation to devise a single source financial support for ministry, rather than giving to both provincial and national bodies
- As we work to increasingly behave as a mission with organization rather than an organization with a mission, we are locating staff that serve our national family of churches across Canada. C2C Network director Gord Fleming and leadership development director Ron Toews will work out of the B.C. office, HR, finance and communications will be based in Winnipeg, and I continue to work out of the Calgary office.

Why should we put so much energy and resources into a national movement of churches at this time in history? I believe that God is raising up the church for just "such a time as this" (Esther 4:14).

The Canadian religious landscape is changing rapidly. The world is coming to our doorsteps. Younger people who were raised in the church are looking for dynamic expressions of faith community in which to live, serve, and be disciplined. Canadians are looking for hope in the face of global economic uncertainty. They are looking to find who they are in community amid systemic family breakdown. They are searching for spiritual meaning and truth in the wake of postmodernity's deconstructionism.

Now is the time for the church to move beyond the status quo to give a true picture of what it means to follow Jesus in life and mission. Now is the time for the church to demonstrate the power and reality of Jesus Christ through a unified declaration and demonstration of the power and truth of the Gospel. Now is the time for the church to think and serve beyond our personal agendas.

We must demonstrate the obvious message of Christ through our self-sacrificing service for others. As Canadians grope for truth, the church must be absolutely clear on what we believe, how we live out our faith, and the implications for every Canadian. The answer is found in Jesus. He is our hope, our salvation, our rock, and our example. In the words of Paul, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have - Jesus Christ" 1 Corinthians 3:11 (NLT). Canadians are trying to build other foundations to the detriment of their souls and our country.

Finally, we need a unified national prayer movement. Now is the time to press into our relationship with Jesus passion and intimacy. Now is the time to get on our knees and repent of our selfishness, our self-absorption, and our preoccupation with our own desires for comfort, security, and independence. Now is the time to pray as Isaiah, "here I am, send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

I cannot conclude this report without thanking those who walk with me in this ministry. I could not do this ministry without the support and sacrifice of my wife, Gwen and my boys Joshua, Carter, and Matthew. They have been very gracious and flexible, as I have travelled extensively this past year. We recognise that even though I have the title of ED, the calling to this ministry is a family calling.

My home church SunWest Christian Fellowship has been very supportive in sending me to serve a broader constituency. I am blessed to be part of such a great faith community for the past 18 years. Thank you to the congregation, staff, and leadership team of SunWest.

Thank you to CCMBC staff who are enduring a season of great change with grace and patience. Your hearts for Canadian MB church is so evident. I am also grateful for the partnership of Randy Friesen of MB Mission and Bruce Guenther of MBBS Canada. I truly feel like we are one team, serving Jesus for His glory.

Finally, I am privileged to work a great Canadian executive board. The men and women of the board love Jesus, love the church, and have a deep desire for Canadians to come to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Thank you for your guidance, support, and partnership.

For His glory,

Willy Reimer

Executive Director

Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches

MWC REPORT

Canadian Mennonite Brethren are an important voice in the global family

May 20-25 in Switzerland, Paul Loewen and Willy Reimer served as delegates to the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) General Council, as representatives of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Church—one of the 101 member and associate member churches of MWC.

MWC is called to be a communion of Anabaptist-related churches linked to one another in a worldwide community of faith for fellowship, worship, service and witness.

Highlights from the MWC General Council meeting in May include:

- A gathering of 105 delegates from 48 countries—with about 80% of the delegates from the Global South.
- An overall theme of “Revisiting our Vision”—with major presentations on the Biblical meaning of “koinonia” and on the meaning of the “Anabaptist tradition.”
- Expansion of the MWC Mission

Commission mandate to serve as an umbrella not only for the Global Mission Fellowship, but also for the newly formed Global Anabaptist Service Network.

- Energy and vision emerging from other commissions—Faith and Life; Deacons, Peace—and from continental caucuses.
- Plans to increase the frequency and the reach of global communications, to build relationships across cultures and to help equip member churches for their life and witness.
- Selection of J. Nelson Kraybill of Elkhart, Indiana, as MWC President-elect, to begin as President in 2015.

People gifts

David Wiebe (below left), former Executive Director of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches and now Executive Secretary of the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB), provided leadership and support for the conference’s relationship with Mennonite World Conference. César García (below right), a Mennonite



Brethren leader from Bogotá, Colombia, is the MWC General Secretary.

Monetary gifts

Contributions to MWC: \$32,625 in 2010; \$36,000 in 2011; \$9,000 in 2012 (as of May).

Mennonite World Conference
A Community of Anabaptist related Churches

Congreso Mundial Menonita
Una Comunidad de Iglesias Anabaptistas

Conférence Mennonite Mondiale
Une Communauté d'Églises Anabaptistes

EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT

Since our last convention, we have witnessed the leading hand of God in the Canadian MB Conference. No one could have envisioned the convergence of good will, collaboration, commitment to mission, nor the resources God has brought together “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). From “the ground up,” we are seeing the Holy Spirit inspire and equip us anew to bring the transforming good news of Jesus Christ.

At Gathering 2010 in Langley, B.C., we gave our thanks to David Wiebe as we bid him farewell after his close to 10 years’ service as executive director. In January of 2011, the executive board’s search team was pleased to announce Willy Reimer had agreed to provide leadership for the conference, beginning in a part-time capacity, moving to full-time in August. God has brought us a Spirit-filled leader with strong gifts of vision and oversight capacity.

In 2010, the executive board also embarked on a vision review with consultant Terry Walling. In December, national and provincial denominational leaders from across Canada assembled at Columbia Bible College to determine better ways to collaborate in their respective ministries to build the health and effectiveness of MBs in Canada. Out of this emerged a strong desire to function as one entity. The executive board intentionally and strategically began to move into this direction, with input from provincial boards and leaders.

A renewed mission began to formulate: “together reaching Canada for Christ.” Willy initiated a national office review to determine priorities and ministry alignment for this purpose. The message was clear throughout the country: there is a “holy discontent.” We cannot remain where we are; at the local level, God has birthed a desire across the country that together we can do more to reach Canadians with the gospel. We believe that God wills us as MBs in Canada to build on past efforts and move forward in a focused and purposeful way with increased mission to the millions of Canadians who have not yet responded to the saving work of Jesus Christ. Across the country, provincial leadership is coming together to provide direction and insight into how we can do this. Church planting (C2C) is one ministry expression of how all provinces across Canada are uniting to reach Canadians.

Here at Gathering 2012 in Winnipeg, we ask you to share your insights into how we as a whole conference can do more together for the cause of Christ than any individual church or provincial conference can do. We will share findings of the national office review that will help us move forward together; we ask you to share your insights and suggestions so that the executive board can be more effective in making good long-term decisions.

You will be asked review the budget for the next two years. This visionary budget reflects the mission of reaching Canadians through church planting. A significant overall increase is a reflection of both gracious resources available and some changes in staffing alignment between national and provincial entities. The board has considered implications to long-term deposit fund reserves and will be reviewing guiding fund policies and strategic financial management of the Stewardship Fund in the coming year.

Finally, we are pleased to announce the creation of a new seminary: MB Biblical Seminary Canada. Bruce Guenther, president, is providing leadership with delivery centres at ACTS (Trinity Western University, Langley, B.C.) and Canadian Mennonite University (Winnipeg). The creation and development of MBBS Canada is significant for the training of pastoral leaders for mission of the church in Canada.

We invite your input. We are providing you with the opportunity to share both within large group context and in smaller breakout sessions. Thank you for coming prepared to contribute, advise, correct if necessary, and to vote in a spirit that will lead us to “it seemed good to us and to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 15:28) conclusion. Thanks for your prayers and participation.

May God grant us the wisdom to move us forward together in bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of Canada. Together we can do more.

“Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.”—Philippians 2:1-2 NLT

Paul J Loewen

