

Board of Faith and Life Report

Over the course of this year the board has been involved in the following:

- Prayer for the churches and church leaders within our province.
- Assisting and advising Ralph Gliege in his role as Director of Church Ministries.
- The development of an improved orientation and integration process for new pastors and pastors new to our denomination.
- Assisting in the creation of a pastoral staff covenant that raises the level of accountability and awareness of the standards expected of people in public ministry.
- Conversations with Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan regarding issues of mutual concern (see letter below).
- Participating in church decision-making and advising on conflict situations as requested by pastoral staff or church leadership.
- Attending to requests from pastors and churches for licensing.
- Responding to Canadian conference discussions on the issue of the relationship between baptism and membership.

As a board we are very thankful for Ralph and Grace Gliege's ministry. Ralph initiated a proposal to bless pastors who have reached certain milestones in their ministry to a specific congregation.

Given the nature of our pluralistic society, and the public expectations of those employed by the church, we felt it was important to have all pastors sign a covenant expressing their commitment to a biblical lifestyle, as we understand it. We expect that this would be re-affirmed on a periodic basis.

The board's conversations with MCC covered the areas of the uniqueness of Christ, approach to native ministry, political statements made by MCC, staff supervision and editorial policies. As we began this discussion, we recognized that a number of areas were best suited to discussion at the national level. These included: MCC's Christology, the editorial policy of MCC, MCC's human relations policies, and the politicization of MCC. Our ongoing conversation with MCC Saskatchewan is outlined in the letter below. We look forward to continued dialogue as well as better connections between MCC staff and pastors in the province.

For the Saskatchewan Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches

Greetings in the name of our risen Lord!

The mission of the Saskatchewan MB churches is "to fulfill the mandate of Jesus Christ to make disciples throughout our province and around the world (Matthew 28:18-20)." In recent months a number of questions have arisen on the Canadian MB Conference scene and elsewhere which questioned whether Mennonite Central Committee continues to have legitimate role in assisting our M.B. churches to fulfill this mission.

The Saskatchewan conference executive requested that the Board of Faith and Life investigate these issues and bring recommendations for response. On that basis, meetings were arranged between MCC Saskatchewan's director and members of the leadership of both MCC Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan MB Conference. At the second meeting the director for MCC Canada was also present. Topics discussed included the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only path to God, the role of the church and church agencies in political discussions and public statements regarding social issues, and MCC Saskatchewan's position on aboriginal spirituality.

The conversations were frank and helpful. The foundation for the conversation was the recognition that we are part of the same faith family and that furthering the kingdom of God was our joint goal. We affirmed together that the church is in the business of doing good, whether that good is linked to verbal evangelism or not. We also affirmed that all people are in need of a relationship with Jesus Christ, and that all Christians are called to witness to their faith by action and speech.

We believe that MCC Saskatchewan should remain very much a part of our corporate witness. We are committed to supporting MCC as well as participating in the leadership of MCC in setting direction for the future. We also believe that frank conversations between members of the same faith family help the whole family remain faithful to our mission. We anticipate further conversation in future. We hope to cooperate on further discussions regarding understanding how disciples of Jesus relate to those who practice aboriginal spirituality. We hope to cooperate further on discussion regarding how disciples of Jesus relate to issues of oppression, whether they be overseas or at our doorstep.

We want to thank the leadership of MCC Saskatchewan and MCC Canada for participating with us in these conversations. We believe we are both richer for it.

On behalf of the Board of Faith and Life
Rick Schellenberg