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A history of the Conference
of Mennonites in Canada

Adolf Ens

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Conference of Mennonites in Canada

by

Adolf Ens

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Adolf Ens
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Foreword

By the end of the nineteenth century, Mennonites settling on the prairies of western Canada were becoming aware of a need to build connections beyond their local communities. In 1902, two German-speaking church groups, one in Manitoba and one in Saskatchewan, joined to form a fledgling conference that would undergo a century of immense change and challenge marked by spiritual as well as numerical growth. Within several decades this affiliation had expanded to the five western Canadian provinces and had taken an enlarged identity and name, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC). At the end of the twentieth century this national church was dramatically different from what it had been at its inception.

In this history of the Conference, Adolf Ens shows how this church body was shaped and reshaped. Institutions were created and flourished. Relationships between formerly separate Mennonite groups were formed and greater cooperation ensued. Boundaries of geography (dedicated reserves), culture and language (German and Low German) broke down, and new connections developed with other Christian churches and with Canadian society generally. These changes evolved in a context of changing and contradictory expectations, and under the creative leadership of many dedicated and gifted people.

In the last two decades of the twentieth century two developments dramatically reshaped the Conference. The first was the merging of two older branches of the Canadian Mennonite church—the "Swiss" or "Pennsylvania Dutch" Mennonites and the Amish Mennonites in Ontario—with the "Russian" branches that initially formed the CMC. This integration progressed over a period of fifteen years and reached full cooperation and participation by 1995.[1] Parallel integration between these strands of the faith family also took place in the United States.

The second major development was the movement into the Conference of individuals and whole congregations of non-Germanic ethnicity. Mission activity already begun in mid-century in Quebec resulted in the establishment of several congregations of French-Canadians. Work among First Nations people in Manitoba brought

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some of them into the Mennonite circle. Later, because of immigration, international mission activities and church planting in Canada, more than half a dozen different Asian cultures and several Spanish-speaking groups initiated Mennonite churches that affiliated with the Conference. Significant numbers of individuals from other cultures also joined new or established congregations.

Always in the background throughout the CMC history was the bi-national (U.S. and Canada) body called General Conference Mennonite Church. At the very end of the twentieth century this institution, its sister body—the bi-national Mennonite Church—and the CMC were succeeded by two national church bodies: Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada.

The history of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada is the story of a church that has been transformed. It is an account of a people of God supporting each other and working together to accomplish the mission to which God has called them. It not only recalls the past and explains present realities; it also identifies trajectories that anticipate the future. Readers will find much in this book that will lead them to gratitude and confidence in God's leadership, and will stimulate their imagination of what faithfulness might demand of the church in the twenty-first century.

Dan Nighswander
General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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[1] One segment of the "Swiss" or "Pennsylvania Dutch" Mennonite family, the Northwest Mennonite Conference, was for a time an observer participant in CMC and subsequently a provisional member of Mennonite Church Canada for several years, but did not join either body.

Preface

At its 97th annual session in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1999, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC) changed its name to Mennonite Church Canada. When delegates gathered in Lethbridge, Alberta, a year later it was as the 1st Assembly of Mennonite Church Canada. This book presents an overview of the formation and development of the CMC from its two German-speaking founding partners in 1902 to the 238 congregations that together crossed the threshold to become a full-fledged Canadian church at the end of that century.

From the very beginning of Mennonite settlement in Canada, close ties existed between Canadian Mennonites and their U.S. counterparts. It was natural for Ontario congregations to associate with the U.S. Mennonite groups in Pennsylvania and elsewhere from which many of their families had come. In the 1870s immigration from Russia, immediate and ongoing assistance from U.S. Mennonite groups made it natural for the immigrant congregations, including most CMC congregations, to join the General Conference. Many congregations founded by subsequent immigrant groups followed this pattern.

The steady movement toward becoming an independent Canadian church was not, for the most part, motivated by an overt nationalism. Rather, as the Canadian bodies grew in size and developed programs and structures they deemed necessary to minister adequately in their context, they found it increasingly awkward and frustrating to be (and be treated as) "district" or "area" conferences of North American bodies, dominated by agenda set in the U.S. and for the U.S. context.

In the 1980s the United Mennonite Conference of Ontario, founded by Russian Mennonites, merged with two conferences of Swiss Mennonite and former Amish congregations. When the latter joined the CMC, the Conference experienced both a stronger sense of being a Canadian church and a more complicated set of bi-national conference relations with U.S.- based "parent" bodies. The move toward replacing two bi-national conferences with two national church bodies seemed to present the best way to faithful ministry in both Canada and the United States.

In 1999 the Heritage Committee of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada moved into action on three history projects that had been on the back burner for some time. The biographies of two long-time leaders of the Conference, J.J. Thiessen and David Toews, were published in 2001 and 2002. The present volume is the third in that series.

The Heritage Committee, with input from an editorial committee appointed for this project, decided at the outset that this story should be as much about the congregations that make up the Conference as about the Conference as institution. With some 240 congregations it is obviously not possible to tell their story in any amount of detail. The decision, as a minimum, was to identify every member church when it joined the Conference. This resulted in a table for each chapter, listing in chronological order each congregation as it joined. Additional information about most is found in the footnotes of those tables.

There was no shortage of source material for compiling this story. A complete set of minutes of Conference sessions is available, printed in annual yearbooks since 1928, and for the ministers conference from 1928 through 1980. Johann G. Rempel's two-volume 50th anniversary history is good at filling in some gaps that official minutes often omit. Provincial and area conference histories for Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario were very helpful, as were the large number of published congregational histories. A wealth of information is also available in numerous unpublished shorter congregational studies in the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives.

Centrally compiled congregational statistics were first published in 1929. Since then they have appeared virtually every year, with a gradually increasing range of information. A comprehensive list of ministers serving in Conference congregations was published annually with these statistics. Additionally, J.G. Rempel includes more than 200 brief biographies of ministers, missionaries and other leaders in his two-volume history. Gerhard I. Peters continued this task with a volume of over 250 ministers who died prior to 1979.

Except for a few brief periods, the Conference did not own and publish its own comprehensive periodical. Rather, from time to time it designated existing periodicals as Conference "organs." Some, like *Christlicher Bundesbote* (to 1947) and *The Mennonite*, were published by the General Conference from a U.S. location. Others, like *Der Mitarbeiter* (1906–1934) and *Der Bote* (since 1924), were edited and published by persons active in Canadian Conference

leadership. Boards or committees of the Conference at various times produced limited circulation periodicals dedicated to a specific area of work: *Intotemok* (Native Ministries), *Mennonite Historian* (Heritage Committee), *CMYO Messenger* (Youth Organization). All of these, as well as independent papers like *The Canadian Mennonite* (1953–1970) and the *Mennonite Reporter* (1971–1995) contain accounts of events as they happened and sometimes provide helpful additional editorial interpretation.

Terms of address for ordained persons in a church that stresses the essential equality of all believers become a sensitive issue. I decided to use bishop rather than elder for *Ältesten,* who served as leaders of multi-local *Gemeinden.* While elder is a more literal translation, bishop more closely describes the function of this position. I have refrained from any honorific title for ordained persons, using only their name or a descriptive "minister" or "deacon" modifier where that seemed necessary.

I regret that space constraints meant that many persons, events and developments have not been treated as fully as they deserved. Readers familiar with significant portions of this history may justifiably have chosen to discuss other aspects of the development of the Conference and its *Gemeinden*-congregations than the ones I have covered. My hope is that this survey, nevertheless, will provide both a broader understanding and a deeper appreciation for our Church and its attempt to live in faithful discipleship of Jesus Christ, its acknowledged Head.

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Beginnings

Settling in Canada

When four eastern British colonies became the Dominion of Canada in 1867, the young nation soon cast its eyes westward to the huge territory loosely under the control of the British-based Hudson's Bay Company. With the expiry of the Company's charter in 1870 this "Northwest Territory" was transferred to Canada, and the province of Manitoba was created out of a tiny portion of the newly acquired area. The Canadian government immediately began negotiations with the First Nations whose ancestral lands had now come under its jurisdiction. With the signing of Treaty Number 1 with representatives of the Cree and Ojibwa nations in 1871, the passing of the Dominion Lands Act the following year, and the creation of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police in 1873, Canada had prepared the way for a campaign of inviting European settlers to form settled communities in Manitoba and regions west.

Meanwhile, Mennonites who had settled in southern Russia beginning in 1788 had prospered and spread out in a number of relatively closed colonies with considerable control over their own affairs. During the 1860s their freedoms began to erode as the Russian empire gave more rights to its indigenous population and reduced some of the special privileges extended to west European immigrant settlers in the 18th century. Mennonites felt particularly anxious about the loss of complete exemption from state service and full control of their education system. Because of that and an increasingly acute shortage of land in their colonies, the opportunity to emigrate to newly opened territories in North America appealed to many of them.

Mennonites to Manitoba

From 1874 to 1880 some seven thousand Mennonites from Russia settled in southern Manitoba, recreating villages, settlements, and church and community organizations after the model they had

developed in the old country. Among these immigrants was virtually the entire Bergthal Colony, the oldest "daughter" colony founded by the original Mennonite settlements in Russia when, in 1836, Chortitza Colony had relocated many of its landless families to a new area some 200 kilometres to the southeast.[1] Bergthal's relative isolation from the older and larger Chortitza and Molotschna colonies inhibited its full participation both in the new developments in education and in the innovations in church practice that swept through their villages in the decades following Bergthal's founding. However, its leaders held firmly to Anabaptist-Mennonite teachings transmitted through the Catechism and Articles of Faith. They were accordingly alarmed when in the 1860s the government warned of the pending cessation of their exemption from military service. Bishop (*Ältester*) Gerhard Wiebe and Colony Administrator (*Vorsteher*) Jacob Peters soon concluded that emigration would be necessary, even though alternative service under civilian administration would likely be permitted in place of military service.

Peters and the Bishop's brother, Rev. Heinrich Wiebe, were thus among the delegates who travelled to North America in 1873 to explore settlement conditions in Canada and the United States. After comparing land, climate, and assurances of freedom to practise their religious convictions in the U.S. and Canada, the Bergthal delegates recommended the latter. It assured them of the opportunity of block settlement, exemption from military service and the swearing of oaths, and the right to conduct their own schools. Those freedoms seemed to them to offset the drawbacks that Manitoba offered: harsh weather in winter, mosquitoes in summer, and an underdeveloped infrastructure.

Bishop Wiebe and *Vorsteher* Peters were able to convince virtually everyone in the colony to sell their property and relocate to Manitoba as an intact community. Even though by 1874 almost two-thirds of the families were landless, the *Gemeinde* (church)[2] persuaded its wealthier members to assist the poorer ones to be able to make the move. The Canadian government's setting aside a block of land east of the Red River for exclusive settlement by Mennonites made it possible to reassemble the colony in Manitoba, laying out 28 Russian-style villages from 1874 to 1876 to accommodate the approximately 2,800 people who came to Canada from Bergthal Colony. The congregation, complete with bishop and ministers, made the move with minimal disruption of its ministry. Since Bishop

Gerhard Wiebe settled in the village of Chortitz, the church was soon known as the Chortitzer Gemeinde.

A second group of immigrants, from Chortitza and several of its newer western daughter colonies, settled on a block of land west of the Red River. From 1875 to 1880 they founded some 30 villages for the approximately 3,400 immigrants. Bishop Johann Wiebe united them into one *Gemeinde* shortly after he arrived in 1875. Many of the families of this Reinländer Gemeinde had experienced significant change in church and community life in Russia in the decades since their relatives had founded Bergthal Colony in 1836. Some of them were reluctant to return to practices of an earlier era, which their leaders were attempting to reintroduce. Indeed, influential individuals and groups among the Reinländer advocated better teacher training and promoted a greater emphasis on experiential faith.

The Bergthaler Gemeinde of Manitoba

A few years after their arrival, the Bergthal immigrants realized that much of the land assigned to them in eastern Manitoba was not fit for agriculture without significant improvements to the drainage. Since plenty of better land was still available in the block set aside for Mennonite settlement west of the Red River, many of them relocated to that area. It soon became obvious that one bishop could not adequately serve both halves of the community, separated by at least a two-day journey. He was, after all, a full-time farmer as well as a bishop, and the five villages that had vacated Bergthal Colony in Russia had now increased to at least forty. Accordingly, Bishop David Stoesz, Gerhard Wiebe's successor, assisted the western section of the *Gemeinde* to elect its own bishop in 1882.

Johann Funk[3] (1836–1917), the man chosen for this leadership position, was a son-in-law of Jacob Braun, the first bishop of the Bergthal Gemeinde in Russia. Funk had been ordained as a minister shortly after settling in Manitoba. As new leader of the western section of the Bergthal church, he had to deal with a community that had physically uprooted and resettled twice within six years. While preserving religious convictions had been a strong motivation for choosing Canada over remaining in Russia, many families also anticipated change in the new setting. These made common cause with like-minded innovators of the Reinländer Gemeinde. Funk was soon perceived to side with this group in his own openness to new ideas and approaches to church and community practice and education.

As a result, many of Funk's original Bergthal members began to lose confidence in him, and those members who had joined his church as dissidents from the Reinländer were pushing him in new directions. By the end of the decade a break seemed inevitable. The last straw was the founding in 1889 of a secondary school for training Mennonite teachers despite the objections of most of the Bergthal leadership, including Bishop Stoesz of the eastern section of the *Gemeinde* and a number of Funk's Bergthal ministerial colleagues in the western section.

After one year of operation it became clear that there was no one among Manitoba Mennonites with the necessary training to run a teacher training institution. That led to the recruiting of Heinrich H. Ewert, principal of Halstead Academy in Kansas, to head the new school in Gretna, Manitoba. The arrival of Ewert, an ordained minister in the General Conference, a well-educated and very capable teacher, and an energetic and articulate leader, turned the tide decisively in the direction of change. He was soon joined by his brother Benjamin, who took a teaching position in the village school of Edenburg, near Gretna.

By 1893 Bishop Stoesz recognized that the majority of western Bergthal members had lost confidence in Funk's leadership and helped the Gemeinde elect a new bishop. When Abraham Doerksen of Sommerfeld village was chosen, the church took the name Sommerfelder Gemeinde. Funk was now left with about one-seventh of his former membership. Although a majority of them came as dissidents from the Reinländer Gemeinde, this group took the name Bergthaler Gemeinde.[4] Funk's ministerial colleagues included Heinrich Wiebe (1839–1897), ordained in Bergthal Colony, Russia, in 1865; the Prussian-born teacher Heinrich H. Ewert (1855–1934), ordained in Halstead, Kansas in 1884; and two ministers from Hoffnungsfeld, the major centre of religious reform and renewal in the Reinländer Gemeinde.[5] Jacob Hoeppner (1850–1935) was a descendant of the Jacob Hoeppner who had negotiated the initial terms of Mennonite settlement in Russia in 1788. Already before Funk ordained him in 1887, Hoeppner had shown the leadership skills and drive that would lead to his choice to succeed Funk as bishop in 1903. Even younger was Franz Sawatzky (1853–1931), likewise ordained in 1887. Like Hoeppner, he had leadership ability and was later chosen as bishop in Herbert, Saskatchewan, in 1908.[6]

This singing and social group in Gretna, Manitoba, in 1893 includes three persons who later played leading roles in the Conference. Back row, left: *Benjamin Ewert;* third row, left: *David Toews;* centre, *Heinrich H. Ewert*
Photo: Clifford Shink, MHC Archives

Westward Expansion

The completion of Canada's first transcontinental railway in 1885, and the subsequent construction of spur lines running north and south of it, greatly improved settlement conditions in large parts of the Northwest Territories. By 1890 small groups of Mennonites were joining the movement of Canadians into the area that would become the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Mennonite immigration from Russia, largely dormant during the early 1880s, resumed more strongly in the 1890s. Many of these immigrants homesteaded in the Northwest, some after spending a year or more in Manitoba.

Unlike the large group migration to Manitoba in the 1870s, these settlers arrived in small groups or as individual families. They came from a variety of colonies in Russia, directly from Prussia, or after a short period of living in Manitoba or the United States. Clusters of Mennonite communities sprang up north of Saskatoon and farther south in the vicinity of Swift Current.

The Rosenorter Gemeinde of Saskatchewan

Among these later immigrants was the Peter Regier family, which came to Canada in 1893. Born into a family that had already produced a long line of ministers in the Mennonite church in Poland-Prussia, Regier had been elected as minister in the Rosenorter Gemeinde in 1879 and as bishop in the Flemish Fuerstenwerder Gemeinde in West Prussia in 1888. When controversy over how to deal with members who served in the military and economic hardship in his own family drove him to seek a livelihood elsewhere, the 52-year-old farmer decided to move to Canada.[7] Warmly received in Manitoba, Regier nevertheless visited the scattered Mennonite families in the Rosthern area. Their petition for him to settle in their midst and become their spiritual shepherd became a call for Regier to move his family to Saskatchewan. Almost immediately on arriving at their homestead at Tiefengrund in 1894, Regier gathered the surrounding settlers together and invited them to form a *Gemeinde*. The name *Rosenorter* was carried over from Regier's home church in Prussia.

As a Mennonite bishop, Regier was expected to take this kind of leadership, and he accepted the settlers' plea as "the voice of the Lord."[8] His first colleague was Gerhard Epp, Eigenheim, who had been ordained as a deacon in the Neu-Chortitzer Gemeinde in the Baratov-Shlakhtin Colony in Russia. In 1895 the *Gemeinde* chose Epp as minister and elected Johann Dueck, also from Eigenheim, as deacon. Dueck came from Zagradovka Colony in Russia and later
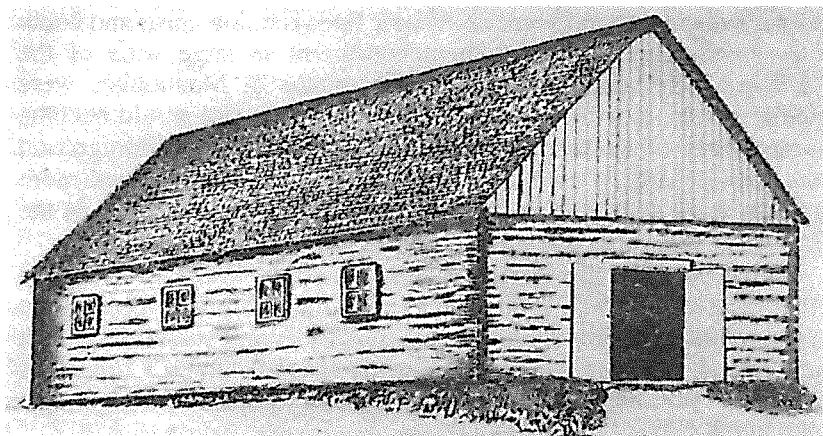
The first Rosenorter church building, erected at Eigenheim 1896. Photo: MHC Archives
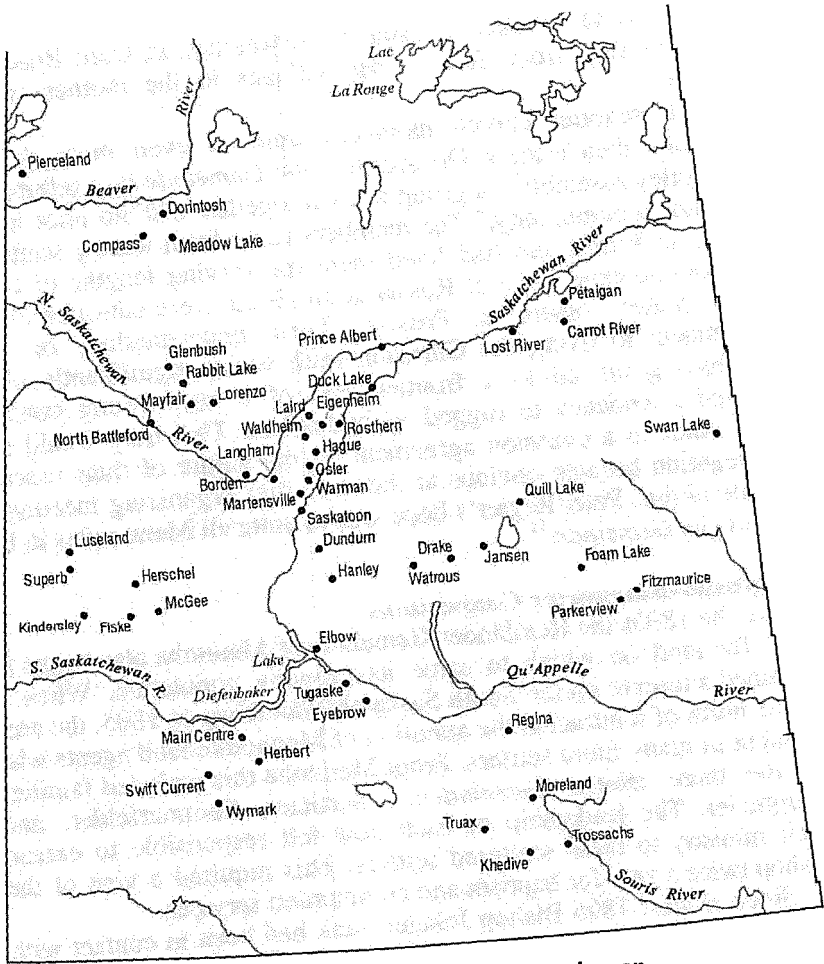
Mennonite Congregations in Saskatchewan

(1899) was elected as minister. Three others, David Toews of Tiefengrund, and Heinrich Warkentin and David Epp of Laird, were ordained by Regier in 1901, the latter as deacon. Toews' parents moved from Prussia to the new colony of Am Trakt near the Volga in 1869, and then trekked eastward to Turkestan before immigrating to Kansas in 1884. Warkentin came to Saskatchewan from Rosenthal and David Epp from Schoenberg, villages in the mother colony Chortitza.

The Rosenorter church members were of even more diverse origins than their leaders. On occasion the *Gemeinde* was referred to as "a motley assembly," a group thrown together with no prior intent of forming a community.[9] The members came from widely scattered colonies in Russia and had lived there for varying lengths of time. Some had no experience of Russia at all. Some were educated in the United States, others in Prussia. Their understanding of and commitment to living the Christian faith varied significantly. And their having moved to a frontier area of a very young country reflected a tendency to rugged individualism. That they would not easily come to a common agreement on the nature of their nascent congregation became obvious at the very first organizing meeting.[10] In spite of this, Peter Regier's hope was to unite all Mennonites in the area in one *Gemeinde*.[11]

Bergthaler-Rosenorter Connections

By the 1890s the Reinländer Gemeinde of Manitoba also began to look for land on which to settle its growing population. When it obtained a reserve on the South Saskatchewan River in 1895, the area to the north of it attracted the attention of Mennonite land agents who brought in many more settlers. From Manitoba this included families of the three related *Gemeinden*: Chortitzer, Sommerfelder, and Bergthaler. The leadership of each now felt responsible to extend their ministry to these scattered settlers. This required a visit of the bishop twice a year for baptism and communion services.

Since at least 1896 Bishop Johann Funk had been in contact with Johann Bartel, leader of a Bergthal Mennonite community at Langdon, North Dakota, which requested ministry assistance.[12] In the same year formal contacts with the Rosenorter of Saskatchewan were also recorded. Efforts were made to have Bergthaler moving to the Rosthern area to seek membership in the Rosenorter Gemeinde, and Rosenorter relocating to southern Manitoba to join the Bergthaler. To facilitate ministry cooperation among the three groups, the Bergthaler
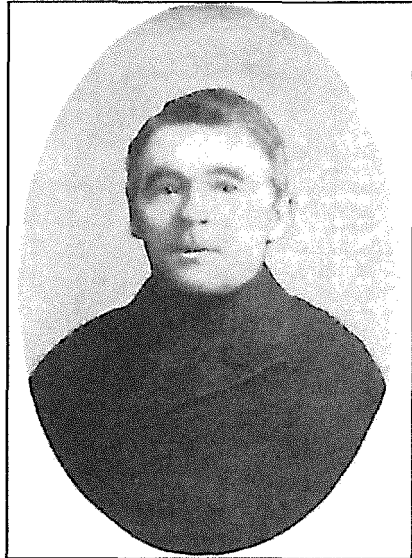
Left: *Peter Regier (1851-1925), bishop of the Rosenorter Mennoniten Gemeinde, Saskatchewan, 1894–1913;* right: *Johann Funk (1836-1917), bishop of the Bergthaler Mennoniten Gemeinde, Manitoba, 1882–1911.* Photos: MHC Archives

in 1897 discussed holding a joint conference. Two years later they extended a formal invitation to Bartel in Langdon and Bishop Regier in Saskatchewan to such a meeting. They also decided to expand this invitation to all Mennonite *Gemeinden* in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and North Dakota as soon as it would become clear that the first two invitees would agree to hold a conference. The event did not materialize.[13]

In December 1901 Bishop Funk and Minister Jacob Hoeppner were commissioned to go to Saskatchewan with two objectives. First, they were to persuade their members living in the Rosthern area to join the Rosenorter. Secondly, they were to initiate a more formal relationship with the Rosenorter Gemeinde.[14] This visit seems to have been fruitful. Six months later the Bergthaler ministerial sent Benjamin Ewert and Johann M. Friesen to Rosthern on church expense. Both men had been ordained as ministers in the Bergthaler Gemeinde by Bishop Funk in 1895. Ewert had just retired from teaching and had moved to Gretna to assist his brother Heinrich at the Mennonite Educational Institute. Friesen was still active as a teacher. On their return the minutes record only that the ministerial approved

The nine men at the 1902 planning sessions at Tiefengrund, Saskatchewan. Front (l-r): *Benjamin Ewert, Bergthaler minister, Gretna, Manitoba; Peter Regier, Rosenorter bishop, Tiefengrund; Johann M. Friesen, Bergthaler minister, Altona, Manitoba; and J.E. Sprunger, General Conference Home Missions worker, Berne, Indiana.* Back: *David Epp, Laird, Saskatchewan; Johann Dueck, Eigenheim, Saskatchewan; Heinrich Warkentin, Laird; David Toews, Tiefengrund; and Gerhard Epp, Eigenheim.* Photo: MHC Archives

of the work done by Friesen and Ewert in Saskatchewan in the interests of the Gemeinde.[15]

A Conference of Mennonites in Central Canada Conceived

On July 18, 1902 Bishop Peter Regier invited the ministerial of the Rosenorter Gemeinde and the General Conference home missions worker in Saskatchewan to his home in Tiefengrund to meet with Friesen and Ewert, the Manitoba visitors. These nine discussed how to minister more effectively to the scattered and expanding Mennonite communities under their spiritual care in the relatively new settlements in central Canada. They agreed that closer fraternal relations between the two ministerial bodies and pulpit exchanges between the two *Gemeinden* would help. The proposal of Ewert and Friesen, that in addition a regular annual gathering of representatives in a conference be held, was readily agreed to by the Rosenorter. Manitoba was chosen for the first meeting the following year.[16]

What might account for the idea being readily acceptable now, when it seemingly went nowhere in 1899? At the meeting of the two bishops the previous year, Funk must have discovered that Regier too welcomed closer ties among Canadian Mennonites, and indeed hoped to unite all the Mennonites in the area in one *Gemeinde*.[17] The presence of itinerant minister James E. Sprunger, representative of the General Conference whose goal was to unite all Mennonites in North America, also will have helped.

The General Conference

The General Conference Mennonite Church was born in 1860 in the coming together of "New" Mennonites from Pennsylvania and other eastern areas where the earliest immigrants to North America settled, and newer immigrants who had arrived from South Germany in the 19th century and located in the mid-western states. Both groups had already shed some aspects of traditional Mennonite practices and adopted some "new" emphases, hence no longer fit into the "Old" Mennonite conferences.

Foremost among the new initiatives was evangelism or mission, which had characterized 16th-century Anabaptists but had gone dormant in their becoming the quiet in the land. That led to an active support of mission workers. By 1899 the Conference had sent out seven "home mission" workers, essentially travelling ministers who served scattered Mennonites in areas where no Mennonite congregation had as yet been organized, and 15 missionaries who worked among American Indians.[18] A second 16th-century concern recovered by these groups was the desire for unity among all sections of the denomination. The first point of the "Union Plan" discussed at the 1860 founding meeting of the General Conference invited "all divisions of the Mennonite denomination in North America" to "extend to each other the hand of fellowship."[19] S.F. Pannabecker, author of the General Conference history, expresses surprise that the "almost incidental invitation" to the 1860 meeting should have led to the formation of the Conference. "There was little premeditation," he wrote, "but there was a strong sense of compulsion to meet the needs of unorganized and isolated Mennonites."[20]

While seven thousand Mennonites from Russia were relocating to Canada from 1874 to 1880, another ten thousand settled on the American plains from Kansas north to Minnesota and South Dakota. Groups that had separated from the main body of Mennonites in Russia—the Kleine Gemeinde, Mennonite Brethren, Krimmer

The train was the most common means of transportation for longer distances and much used by itinerant ministers in visiting scattered groups of Mennonites. Photo: MHC Archives

Mennonite Brethren—remained in their own organizations in both Canada and the United States. Many of the others, largely from the Molotschna Colony, the Hutterite community, and from Polish Russia, gradually joined the General Conference. By 1900 members from this northern European background outnumbered—5,500 to 4,500—the founding groups of Swiss and South German background.[21]

Itinerant ministers like James E. Sprunger were "sent" by the Home Mission Board of the General Conference to the scattered groups of Mennonites in the U.S. as well as in Canada, but they were also welcomed and even invited by Canadian leaders of the Rosenorter and Bergthaler Gemeinden. At crucial points in the development of Canadian congregations a General Conference representative seemed to be present. John B. Baer, Pennsylvania, home mission and field secretary of the Conference, was present at the dedication of the first church building of the Rosenorter at Eigenheim in 1896.[22] J.E. Sprunger, riding the train from Winnipeg to Rosthern in 1902, found himself in the company of a party of some 65 land-seekers from the Altona, Winkler and Plum Coulee areas of Manitoba.[23] As mentioned earlier, he was present later that year at the Tiefengrund meeting and again at the first session of the Canadian Conference in 1903, where he was joined by J.W. Kliewer from Wadsworth Ohio.[24]

Divergent Groups–Common Heritage

The Bergthaler of Manitoba and Rosenorter of Saskatchewan were not only different from each other. In 1902 both were also still in the process of moulding together quite diverse elements into a cohesive *Gemeinde*. Neither had any experience in a "Conference" form of affiliation that Sprunger represented. And yet, there were enough strong common historical and theological elements in the three groups to engender confidence that the proposed uniting would succeed.

All groups grew out of the radical wing of the 16th century Reformation in Europe. The Swiss and South German founders of the General Conference could trace their origins to the first Anabaptist baptism in 1525 in Zurich. Anabaptists stressed that faithfulness to Jesus' invitation to follow him required a personal decision of an adult believer; hence, adult, believers baptism. Their commitment to a radical obedience to the teaching of the Jesus as reflected in the New Testament led them also to an ethic of love and nonresistance. Since the state used coercive methods inappropriate for a Christian, they held that the church ought to sever its close ties to the state.

Putting these convictions into practice drew persecution from the authorities of the state and the state churches. Under increasingly relentless pressure Anabaptist groups accepted refuge wherever authorities were prepared to grant them special status in return for their quiet industriousness. Some found a safe haven in the new colonies founded by the British in North America. Between 1707 and the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in 1756, some three to five thousand from the Palatinate and Switzerland founded communities in the Franconia and Lancaster areas of Pennsylvania. Some of their descendants moved to Canada beginning in 1786, following British recognition of American independence. After the Napoleonic wars ended in Europe in 1815, new waves of Mennonite immigrants, some four thousand strong, settled farther west in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, as well as in Ontario. Many came from Alsace, Bavaria and Hesse, with smaller numbers from Switzerland and the Palatinate.

The Bergthaler and Rosenorter Gemeinden shared the basic convictions of the Swiss-South German Mennonite groups. Their members descended largely from Dutch and north German Anabaptists among whom Menno Simons was one of the most influential leaders. A decade after the first Anabaptist baptism in Zurich, Menno left the security of the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church and accepted believers baptism in the radical wing of the Dutch Reformation. Here he used his considerable pastoral,

teaching and writing skills to call for spiritual regeneration, discipleship, nonresistance and the centrality of Scriptures. He became so influential in this movement that the persecuting state authorities referred to Dutch Anabaptists as "Mennists."

Persecution drove many of them to seek refuge in the Vistula River delta of Poland, near the city of Danzig (now Gdansk). The Rosenorter Gemeinde in Prussia, from which Peter Regier came to Saskatchewan in 1894, traced its origins back to the Tiegenhof settlement begun in that region in 1562. Successive agreements with Polish rulers enabled the Mennonite community to grow and prosper there while maintaining its Anabaptist faith. When Frederick the Great of Prussia took over the area from Poland in 1772, the thirteen thousand Mennonites were able to negotiate a continuation of their freedom of religion. However, restrictions were placed on their acquisition of more land because they were exempt from military service.

The invitation of Russia under Tsarina Catherine the Great to western European farmer immigrants thus found sympathetic hearers among Polish and Prussian Mennonites. Just when the first "Swiss" Mennonites moved from Pennsylvania to Canada in 1786, representatives of the Prussian churches were sent to Russia to investigate its lands for potential settlement and to negotiate terms of entry. Two years later the first contingent of Mennonites made the move from the lowlands of Prussia to the steppes of southern Russia. With some interruptions, that movement continued until almost a century later. The Bergthaler and most of the other Mennonites who settled in Manitoba in the 1870s were descendants of these immigrants from Prussia.

Within the Anabaptist-Mennonite church there was a growing sense of this common faith heritage. In addition, most Mennonite communities shared a Germanic culture and used High German as their language of worship. Thus, despite historical diversity, groups in North America were able to come together in the formation of larger associations. A conference, such as the one now contemplated, could serve to underline the basic sense of unity of the Mennonite church and express itself in a more effective ministry.

Forms of Ministry and Ordinances

The Anabaptist understanding of the nature of the church emphasizes the importance of the community of believers rather than the authority of the clerical hierarchy. But even as Anabaptist cells emerged during the Reformation ferment of the 16th century in

various parts of Europe, their structures and practices varied. Their subsequent development differed from place to place, depending somewhat on the local context. Nevertheless, in 1902 in most Mennonite groups in North America only an *Ältester*, or bishop, was authorized to officiate at the ordinances of baptism, communion and ordination. Since there was normally only one bishop per *Gemeinde*, its size was somewhat determined by the number of members and the geographic extent that could be served by one person. The *Gemeinde* was considered to be autonomous, although absolute autonomy was modified by formal or even informal associations with other Mennonite *Gemeinden*. Among them was an unwritten understanding about the extent of deviation permitted from accepted beliefs and practices. The versions of the catechism and articles of faith used by the various groups did not vary a great deal from each other.

Within the Prussian-Russian Mennonite *Gemeinden* the system of calling ministers from within the ranks of the congregation continued in Canada. Wherever a large enough settlement was formed, the group invited a nearby bishop to guide in the election of ministerial leadership. Often the group affiliated with the *Gemeinde* led by that bishop. Its ministers were then part of the *Lehrdienst* (ministerial leadership group: bishop, ministers and deacons in a kind of hierarchy) that made many of the decisions regarding congregational practices. All were ordained for life and generally served without remuneration.

Refusal to participate in war played a significant role in the decision of all three groups to move to North America. The earliest Swiss and South German immigrants chose William Penn's Quaker colony in the 1700s. The seven thousand who came to Manitoba from Russia in the 1870s did so in part because the Russian government was withdrawing their exemption from military service. They chose Canada because it assured them of that exemption. Peter Regier had served in the cavalry branch of the military in his youth, but prior to his ordination as a minister he made sure that as a reservist he was transferred to the non-combatant medical corps.[25] The other families from Prussia who settled in Saskatchewan in the 1890s seem to have agreed that nonresistance constituted for them a basic Mennonite position, even when their home church in Prussia was losing this conviction.

A Larger Union
The 1860 founders of the General Conference extended the *Gemeinde* concept by envisioning an umbrella organization under

which all Mennonites in North America could unite by agreeing on a basic confession of commonly held beliefs while retaining a large degree of congregational autonomy. Many of the Russian Mennonite *Gemeinden* settling in the United States in the 1870s thus saw no barriers to joining the General Conference founded by Swiss and South German Mennonites.

Both Bergthaler and Rosenorter leaders, as indicated earlier, had already contemplated a larger Mennonite union in Canada. But the meeting in 1902 in Tiefengrund was not occasioned as much by a concern for the principle of union as it was by a concern for a more adequate ministry to scattered families and small groups of Mennonite settlers. The General Conference called this ministry "home missions." Its organization included a Committee for Home Mission that employed seasonal or year-round *Reiseprediger* (travelling ministers) to serve these groups. Several times a year a *Reiseprediger* would visit the scattered members and serve them by preaching, marrying, baptizing and celebrating communion.

The Bergthaler and Rosenorter *Gemeinden* also recognized this obligation but felt they could not afford to hire their own travelling minister. However, they encouraged their own ministers to serve nearby Mennonite groups, and sometimes reimbursed them for expenses incurred in such ministry. But for Manitoba Bergthaler leaders, a trip to Saskatchewan itself was already a major undertaking; local travel to visit its scattered members there meant additional time and expense. That prompted the wish to develop closer ties with the Rosenorter Gemeinde, once Peter Regier had established it. Bergthaler members' reluctance to transfer their membership after moving to Saskatchewan stemmed in part from a deeply ingrained loyalty to their own *Gemeinde*, maintained in both Russia and Prussia. One way to overcome this reluctance, the nine gathered in Tiefengrund in 1902 decided, was for the two *Gemeinden* to unite in a larger body. Hence, they decided to convene in Manitoba the following summer with "official" delegates to organize such a conference.

2

A Conference Is Born
1903–1924

A conference is born. Its final form is not known in advance. It is not like a building, from whose architectural drawings one can visualize the end product. But as with a newborn infant, its genetic input will go a long way in determining the subsequent development of the organism. Of course, the external environment will affect that development. What air will it breathe? How well will it be nurtured? What will be the external threats to its existence or to the realization of its genetic character?

The first conference session opened in Manitoba on a day when farmers were busy making hay for the winter and voters trudged to the polls to determine whether the Conservatives under Rodmond P. Roblin would continue to govern Manitoba. Mennonite voters in the Rhineland constituency (where the Conference convened) helped to determine whether the Liberal Valentine Winkler would continue to represent them.

The First Session: 1903

The small group which gathered on July 20–21, 1903 for two days of deliberation in the new Bergthaler church building at Hochstadt (near Altona, Manitoba) included representatives of the host Bergthaler Church and their discussion partners, the Rosenorter of Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, only Rev. Gerhard Epp had come from the Rosenorter Gemeinde. Bishop Peter Regier had gone to West Prussia to make arrangements for his aging parents to immigrate to Canada.[1] David Toews cancelled his plans to attend because of illness in the family.[2] Two General Conference representatives were present, J.W. Kliewer of Wadsworth, Ohio, joining James E. Sprunger. These three partners—the Rosenorter, Bergthaler and General Conference— who had planned the meeting a year earlier, were delighted at the presence of several representatives of the local Sommerfeld Menno-

The 20–25 persons attending the first meeting of the Konferenz der Mennoniten im mittleren Kanada in 1902 were accommodated in the Hochstadt Bergthaler Church, Manitoba. Photo: MHC Archives

niten Gemeinde. The very first decision of this body was to extend full speaking and voting privileges to all present.[3]

These first sessions both reflected and helped to shape the character of the fledgling Conference. Delegates saw themselves as representatively the church. Sessions were begun with worship. The newly ordained Bergthaler bishop, Jacob Hoeppner, used the story of the Jerusalem "conference" described in Acts 15 as his text for the tone-setting conference sermon. The balance of the morning session of July 20 was devoted to hearing reports about what was happening in the churches, especially in the newer settlements in Saskatchewan.[4]

Papers Presented (*Referate*)

Position papers (*Referate*) followed by discussion took most of the rest of the two days of meetings. At this first session the topics of these papers fell into three broad areas. The Ewert brothers addressed organizational matters. Heinrich H. followed up on Hoeppner's sermon and indicated from Anabaptist history in Europe and more recent Mennonite experience in North America the value of larger church associations beyond the local *Gemeinde*. Benjamin addressed the usefulness of written congregational "rules," or "constitution."

Two papers spoke to the ministry of the church. David Toews' paper (read by J.E. Sprunger) addressed the recurring theme of home missions: how best to serve the scattered members on the settlement

frontier. Johann M. Friesen's assigned topic was "social evils," including specifically drinking, dancing and gambling.

The third category focused on participation in Canadian public life. Jacob Hoeppner confessed that he could not find explicit biblical grounds for opposing participation in public office, whether by voting or by standing for election. Still, he believed, Mennonite separation from the world, or their peculiar stance within the world, and even within Christendom, argued against such participation.[5] One exception was at the municipal level in areas where its inhabitants were exclusively Mennonite and where "the law of the land did not have to be applied." Vigorous debate revealed that even among the almost exclusively ordained delegate body there was not clear agreement with Hoeppner's position. After more informal discussions during the lunch hour, delegates agreed that on this issue congregations and even individuals were free to follow their own convictions and conscience. Gerhard Epp had less difficulty in finding scriptural basis for not taking disputes to court, and the discussion strongly supported that position.

Although the Conference did not yet have a formal constitution, it operated somewhat along the lines of the General Conference motto: "In essentials unity; in nonessentials liberty; in all things charity." Disagreement did not imply disunity. Uniformity was not necessary.[6]

Business Session

When the conclusion emerging from the discussion of a paper indicated the need for action, a task force was immediately named. Two requirements for the nascent Conference to survive and to fulfil its purpose were a guiding framework and a means of ongoing communication. Task forces were appointed to prepare proposals for consideration at the next Conference sessions: a committee of five to draft a constitution, and of three to plan for a Conference periodical. That all members of these two committees were ordained ministers is understandable, given that there was only one lay person in the delegate body. However, this continued to be the pattern for the next 50 years.

At this stage the Conference had no budget and no programs. Delegates agreed, however, to recommend to the congregations to hold an offering to support the work of the General Conference Home Mission worker, J.E. Sprunger, and another one for the church building project in Rosthern.

A Constitutional Framework

The five ministers assigned to prepare a constitution apparently did their task well, since their draft document was accepted at the 1904 session in Eigenheim, seemingly without any changes.[7] But then, it had been prepared by a broadly representative committee. Bishop Peter Regier represented the Prussians. H.H. Ewert shared that background but was raised and educated in the United States in the context of the General Conference. Gerhard Epp and Franz Sawatzky represented the Chortitza Mennonites in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and Johann M. Friesen those who came from Bergthal Colony. The committee seems to have used the General Conference constitution as a model.

The motivation for creating the Conference was two-fold: God's desire that the unity of Christians should manifest itself in outward structures, and the desire of the churches to cultivate communion in the Spirit and encourage each other in Kingdom work. Membership requirements were, as in the General Conference, that congregations were to accept a common Christian confession and not tolerate membership in secret societies.[8]

However, in place of the one-paragraph confession in the General Conference Constitution, the Canadian draft prescribed adherence to the "Articles of Faith of the Mennonites in Prussia and Russia."[9] Presumably both Rosenorter and Bergthaler were using them already in their catechetical instruction of baptismal candidates. However, a number of the 18 articles in the confession used by the Reinländer and Sommerfelder *Gemeinden* in Manitoba differed significantly from the 20 articles of the Prussia-Russia confession.[10] Fourteen articles are substantially the same in both confessions. But while the first articles of the Manitoba confession followed the classical theological sequence of God the Creator, Son of God, Holy Spirit, Trinity, Incarnation, the opening sequence in the Prussia-Russia articles focused more on sin and salvation. Its first eight articles were on God the Creator, Holy Scriptures, Image of God and the Fall, Salvation through Christ, Grace and Free Will, Faith in Christ, New Birth and Good Works, and Justification by Faith.

Membership in lodges or other secret societies was a concern of the General Conference and possibly also of the Bergthaler.[11] Nevertheless, it seems an odd condition to be inserted into the Constitution as a parallel to the Articles of Faith.

The Conference structure was simple. Planning an annual session would be the responsibility of a chair and a secretary. Committees

could be created to lead or carry out tasks deemed important by the Conference and were to report in writing to the annual sessions. The name chosen was *Konferenz der Mennoniten im Mittleren Canada* (Conference of Mennonites in Central Canada). The adjective "central" indicated their awareness of Mennonites in Ontario, a region they considered "eastern."

The important character-giving principles were found in Articles 3 and 4. First, this was not to be a conference of ministers but of congregations. Hence, delegates were to be chosen at properly convened congregational meetings at the rate of one per every 30 members. Secondly, it recognized the primary autonomy of the member *Gemeinden*. Article 4 explicitly specified that the Conference not interfere in the internal affairs of a congregation unless requested to do so. It was to be a consultative rather than a legislative body. The unity it sought consisted not so much in outward forms and practices as in love, faith and hope.

Within this broad framework the member congregations hoped to be able to work toward the goals set in Article 1: to cultivate fellowship of the Spirit among the various Mennonite congregations and encourage and strengthen one another in the work of God's Kingdom.

Early Growth

In 1896 the Liberals gained power in Ottawa and began a major drive to settle the West. To achieve this goal the government undertook a number of new initiatives: vigorous promotion of immigration, further development of transcontinental railway transportation, and the granting of provincial status to Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1905. These contributed to a rapid growth of the Mennonite communities in Saskatchewan and to the expansion of the Conference beyond its two founding *Gemeinden*.

By the mid-nineties the lands reserved in Manitoba for exclusive settlement by Mennonites in the 1870s were becoming too crowded for the creation of new villages. The "pull" of Ottawa's promotion of the West thus coincided with the "push" of rapid expansion of the Mennonite communities in Manitoba. The centrally organized Reinländer community negotiated new reserves in the Saskatchewan territory near Hague in 1895 and in the Swift Current area in 1904, and proceeded to settle them with its surplus population from Manitoba in organized migrations. Numerous smaller parties and

Mennonite entrepreneurs were actively involved in buying and selling lands in "the great Canadian west," as these ads by the Manitoba and Western Canada Land Company and other agencies show. The Herbert, Rosthern and Quill Plains regions of Saskatchewan and the Renata fruit land in British Columbia were growing Mennonite centres. From *Der Mitarbeiter* 1906–1907

individual families from other Manitoba Mennonite groups formed smaller communities in the same general areas.

Railway companies, eager to sell their lands to settlers and increase the clientele served by their trains, supplemented the government promotion of immigration. Mennonite entrepreneurs recognized the opportunities this program offered, both to help their co-religionists and to provide economic opportunities for themselves. Klaas Peters, a farmer and teacher from the Gretna area in Manitoba, had begun to dabble in settlement promotion in 1888, when some of his friends wanted to explore possible settlement in Oregon. Two years later he made a trip to Russia as special agent of the Canadian Pacific Railway to recruit Mennonite immigrants. In 1891 he became involved with the Qu'appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway to help settle the Rosthern area. In 1893 he recruited among Mennonites in Kansas and Nebraska on behalf of the Canadian government.

When the Liberals began their vigorous promotion of western settlement in 1896, Gerhard Ens of Rosthern, himself an immigrant of 1890, sought a government appointment to recruit Mennonites in

Russia for settlement in Saskatchewan. While this application did not succeed, Ens received a number of contracts to recruit Mennonites in the United States before being appointed as "land guide and interpreter" by the Immigration Department in 1899.[12] As a result of his work and that of agents subsequently appointed for special assignments among U.S. Mennonites, by 1914 some 24 new communities were founded in Saskatchewan and Alberta.[13]

Many of the new congregations founded in Saskatchewan maintained connections with their former branch of the Mennonite church: (Old) Mennonite, Church of God in Christ Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren, Krimmer Mennonite Brethren.[14] A number, however, affiliated with the new Conference of Mennonites in Central Canada. The first to do so was the Herbert church. Beginning in 1903 the Herbert area became an attractive place for Mennonites from Manitoba to settle. Two years later Franz Sawatzky moved there with his family and gathered together a congregation in affiliation with the Bergthaler Church in which he was a minister. In 1906 he was joined by Jacob M. Wiens, who had been present at the first session in Hochstadt and been ordained as minister in the Bergthaler Church in Manitoba the previous year in anticipation of his moving to Herbert.[15] As part of the Manitoba Bergthaler Gemeinde, the Herbert congregation was considered to be automatically part of the Conference without formal action to accept it.[16]

Joining the Conference was less to be taken for granted for the next five groups in Table 2.1. Most of their members were immigrants from the United States. The Nordstern (North Star) congregation of Drake applied and was received in 1907. Its leading minister, Johann Gerbrandt, had already served on the Resolutions Committee at the previous year's Conference sessions. Gerbrandt had settled in Drake in 1905, leading a group of settlers from Kansas and Oklahoma. While Gerbrandt's roots went back to West Prussia, he and a number of the Drake settlers came from the Wymischle congregation in Poland.[17] Four years later two more Saskatchewan congregations founded by immigrants from the U.S. joined. One of them, Bethesda at Langham, included a significant number of members of Hutterite background, adding another dimension to the diversity of the Conference.[18]

During these years of Conference growth, the Rosenorter Gemeinde continued to add members and preaching places. Its delegates alone now outnumbered those of the Bergthaler. In a short period of time the Conference, founded at the initiative of a Manitoba

congregation, most of whose members were of 1870s Russian immigrant descent, had become substantially outnumbered by congregations whose members had come from Russia during the 1890s, from Prussia, or from the United States. Nevertheless, the spirit of working together did not appear to have suffered. For these smaller new congregations, affiliation with a larger Mennonite body must have appeared advantageous, as most joined the Conference shortly after their founding. The larger Reinländer and Sommerfelder *Gemeinden* were almost conferences themselves. The latter, once it had large branches in the Hague-Osler and Swift Current areas of Saskatchewan, indeed functioned in some ways as a conference. While open to cooperation with other Mennonite groups on some issues, both were quite deliberate in choosing where they could do so without compromising their convictions.

Concerns of Congregation and Conference: *Referate*

The pattern of annual Conference sessions was set at the first meeting in Hochstadt, Manitoba. The "meat" of each meeting would consist of presenting and discussing *Referate*, papers on assigned topics. The Program Committee chose topics that were live issues in the congregations. A wide range of issues was dealt with in the 85 papers presented in the first 12 sessions.[19] Only four dealt directly with the Conference itself: two in the first two years clarifying its purpose and value, and two at the end of this period assessing its failure and success in attaining its goals. Three further papers explored larger unity among Mennonite groups, including an analysis of the advantages of membership in the General Conference Mennonite Church, which many Mennonite congregations of Prussian-Russian background in the U.S. were joining.[20]

Ministry and Ordinances. The theme most often addressed in the *Referate* was that of ministry in the congregation. The common practice at the time was to elect ministers from the membership of the congregation and ordain them for a lifetime of service without remuneration. In this system no formal training was expected and the pattern of testing the candidate's suitability for ministry was uneven. In some groups, only elected deacons were eligible for the next "level" of ministry. In other groups, several candidates would be chosen in the first round of ministerial elections. They would then be given opportunity to preach a number of times before the final choice was made. Several papers addressed the calling of ministers by the congregation. In some groups a shortage of qualified members raised

Table 2.1 Member Congregations Admitted 1903–1924

A=Amalgamated C=Closed D=Decentralized W=Withdrew

Name[1]	Location	Admit-ted	Estab-lished	Votes 1924[2]	Mem-bers 1952	Mem-bers 1999
Rosenorter[3]	Eigenheim SK	Charter	1895	32	1365	D
Bergthaler[4]	Altbergthal MB	Charter	1893	34	1848	D
Herbert[5]	Herbert SK	1906	1905	8	196	W
Nordstern	Drake SK	1907	1906	6	261	252
Bethesda[6]	Langham SK	1911	1908	3	C	–
Drake[7]	Drake SK	1911	–	–	A	–
Zoar[8]	Langham SK	1914	1910	4	195	153
Zoar	Waldheim SK	1914	1913	4	191	187
Bethel	Great Deer SK	1917	1910	2[9]	24	C
Bethania[10]	Lost River SK	1917	1916	2	162	W
Herold[11]	Morden MB	1920	1919	1	A	–

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, the congregation's complete name includes "Mennonite Church."

[2] Number of delegate votes at one per 30 members; congregational membership statistics were not available until 1930.

[3] Decentralized in 1964.

[4] Decentralized in 1969.

[5] Withdrew in 1996.

[6] Dissolved in 1948 with a membership of 48. Jacob H. Peters, "Bethesda Mennonite Church," *Mennonite Encyclopedia* I: 317; Bethesda Congregational Minutes. MHCA, Vol. 4240–3.

[7] Amalgamated with Nordstern, ca. 1916.

[8] Zoar was admitted as one *Gemeinde;* Conference approved the division into two independent congregations in 1913.

[9] Delegate votes in 1918. Never a large congregation, Bethel, in the Borden area, eventually faded out. Closed in 1977.

[10] Following visits by J. Gerbrandt and Gerhard Epp, the Bethania Mennonite Church was organized in 1917 with A. Doerksen as minister. MHCA, Vol. 525, Minute Book 2:80; Ens, *Church, Family and Village*, 170–172. Withdrew in 1971.

[11] The Bishop Michael Klaassen family moved to Canada after their son died in a U.S. military prison for refusing to wear the uniform. Additional families from Herold, Oklahoma, followed Klaassen and founded the Herold congregation. It joined Morden Bergthaler in 1939. Anna Ens, *In Search of Unity: Story of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1996), 28–29.

the question of recruiting ministers from outside of the home congregation.

In part the shortage of ministers was due to the large demands placed on them and the absence of remuneration. The latter issue was addressed specifically, as was the question of which occupations were compatible with ministry. What could the minister expect of a congregation? What could the congregation expect of its ministers? In the absence of an employer-employee relationship, these important questions were dealt with several times.

Many of the papers addressed practical issues of pastoral ministry: home visits; church discipline; ministry to youth, to the sick, to disgruntled members; how to further spiritual life in the congregation; how to promote regular church attendance. These occasions provided opportunity for younger and newer ministers to learn from their more experienced, more gifted or more educated colleagues.

Other papers addressed specific "policy" issues. Gerhard Epp found agreement in 1908 in upholding the position that persons baptized as infants could not be received as transfer members without first receiving believers baptism. The following year, in response to another paper, the Conference passed a formal resolution opposing re-baptism by immersion of anyone who had already received believers baptism, even if the person requested it. Bishop Jacob Hoeppner's 1910 paper maintaining that members not be allowed to marry outside of the Mennonite church was warmly debated but no formal decision was made.

Social and Political Issues. Eighteen papers addressed questions of church and state or social and ethical issues. Since Jacob Hoeppner had warned against political participation at the 1903 Conference sessions, the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta had held their first elections for the Legislature. The Rosthern constituency had elected Gerhard Ens of the Liberal Party while the Rosebud constituency in Alberta had chosen a Bergthal Mennonite, Cornelius Hiebert of Didsbury, running as a Conservative. Ens had already joined the Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian).[21] In response to Johann Gerbrandt's paper in 1907, a Conference resolution warned in strong tones against corrupt political practices such as being swayed by bribes or liquor in voting, but not against participating in the electoral process. Engaging in lawsuits, holding membership in lodges or secret societies, and serving as Justice of the Peace were strongly discouraged or forbidden, but entering the law profession was tolerated. In the Saskatchewan communities of

Cornelius Hiebert (1862–1919), member of the Bergthal Mennonite Church of Didsbury, was elected to the first legislative Assembly of Alberta for the Rosebud Constituency, 1905–1909. Photo: *Echoes of an Era: History of Didsbury and District* (1969)

Herbert, Rosthern and Hague, Mennonites found it convenient to have professions and offices like Reeve, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Justice of the Peace, and many business enterprises held by "Mennonites" who had joined the Church of the New Jerusalem.[22]

If the number of papers on social issues is an indication of the extent of certain problems in the congregations, then alcohol use seems to have been a serious concern. Five papers in 12 years addressed it directly and both papers on political participation identified drinking as a related issue. Some examined the temperance movement, which advocated prohibition legislation, as a possible ally in combating this problem.[23] Other papers were less focused, addressing the Conference stance on a range of "adiaphora," such as dancing, smoking, going to the theatre (or cinema), and generally exploring how to protect members from worldliness or falling victim to the spirit of the times (*Zeitgeist*). At least two warned against materialism and speculation on the markets.

Two papers explored the value of written "rules" in educating members and clarifying church expectations. However, while affirming a stance of nonconformity to the world and a rejection of certain activities for Christians, a formal resolution of the Conference confessed that it did not consider it possible "to regulate the life of Christians through prescriptions or prevent conformity to the world

Left: *Heinrich H. Ewert (1855–1934), educator and Bergthaler minister, presented 13* Referate *(papers) at annual Conference sessions, 1903– 1924. As principal of the teacher training school in Gretna and editor of* Der Mitarbeiter, *he exerted a powerful influence on the character of the Conference during its formative years.*

Right: *David Toews (1870–1947), Rosenorter minister and bishop (1913–1946) and lifetime board member of Rosthern Junior College, played a leading role in the development of Mennonite life in Saskatchewan. His broader involvements, while chair of the Conference from 1914–1940, shaped its role on the Canadian scene.* Photos: MHC Archives

through the creation of rules because this lies in the attitude of the heart and not in external appearance."[24] On the whole, more papers dealt with a positive approach of cultivating virtues—promoting family devotions, mutual aid, and spiritual life generally—than on forbidding vices.

Education. Bergthaler had been involved in secondary education since 1890, including the founding of Mennonite Educational Institute; Saskatchewan Mennonites established a German-English Academy in Rosthern in 1905. With the principals of both schools— H.H. Ewert and David Toews, respectively—being prominent in Conference leadership, it is not surprising that education was frequently discussed at the annual sessions. The themes dealt with in

formal papers did not restrict themselves to "higher" education, however. In both Saskatchewan and Manitoba other Mennonite groups still firmly opposed enrolling their children in public elementary schools. A discussion of education was not complete without raising the question of purpose and goals, and of how formal education and its institutions related to the church.

These two teachers [Ewert and Toews] would have made a good team if it were not the case that two such strong personalities all too often do not make a compatible one. But God found a field for each. Just as parents sometimes guide their children at play, giving toys to each and directing them to their play areas, so God directed his two children—both were children of God—to their respective places and each has been able, in his own sphere, to render great service to our people. Johann G. Rempel in *Fünfzig Jahre Konferenzbestrebungen*

Catechism instruction and Sunday school were also addressed. Manitoba Bergthaler had Sunday schools since the early 1890s and a Sunday school convention as early as 1895.[25] In Saskatchewan Gerhard Epp began a Sunday school in 1901 when the Mennonite school at Rosenort was replaced by a district school.[26] Both *Gemeinden* gave this ministry more focused attention in 1902.[27] In a *Referat* in 1904 Benjamin Ewert invoked developmental psychology in explaining "why we do not sing chorale melodies in Sunday School."[28]

In comparison to the themes above, there were relatively few papers on doctrine or on exegetical expositions of particular Scripture passages. In addition to *Referate*, a sermon was part of each conference day, but biblical and theological teaching happened more intentionally in the *Gemeinden*.

Program Development: A Periodical

At the very first Conference sessions in 1903 a task force of three was assigned to develop a proposal for a *Gemeinschaftsblatt*, a periodical to create a sense of fellowship among the scattered members of the Conference. A year later this committee reported difficulties that it had not yet been able to overcome. After a further year of no progress, a proposal for a monthly Conference paper was

Der Mitarbeiter.

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Die Mennonitische Bildungs-anstalt zu Gretna, Man.

hat sich zur Aufgabe gestellt, Lehrer für die Schulen in unseren deutschen Ansiedlungen auszubilden und sonstigen lernbegierigen jungen Leuten Gelegenheit zur Vervollständigung ihrer Bildung zu geben.

Wegen näherer Auskunft wende man sich an

H. H. Ewert,
Prinzipal der Anstalt.

Deutsch - engl. Fortbildungs-schule zu Rosthern, Sask.

empfiehlt sich allen lernbegierigen jungen Leuten Saskatchewans die sich eine gründliche Bildung in deutscher und englischer Sprache anzueignen wünschen.

Mündliche oder schriftliche Auskunft erteilt gern zu jeder Zeit der Prinzipal der Anstalt,

David Töws,   oder   H. W. Penner,
Lehrer,   Vereinschreiber,
Rosthern, Saskatchewan.

The first periodical of the Conference was to be financially self-supporting. For editor Ewert and assistant editor Toews the paid ads in the first issue thus covered three goals: to promote secondary education, support the Conference paper, and advertise the schools of which they were principals. Successors to both the Mennonitische Bildungsanstalt *(Mennonite Educational Institute) and* Deutsch-englische Fortbildungs-schule *(German-English Academy) continue as Mennonite Collegiate Institute, Gretna, Manitoba, and Rosthern Junior College, Rosthern, Saskatchewan.*

presented in 1906. While it was to be an organ of the Conference, its focus was to be on connecting the scattered congregations and building up the local church. Contents should include congregational membership statistics, reports of organizations such as the *Waisenamt* (orphans' bureau) and *Brandordnung* (mutual fire insurance), and decisions of ministerial meetings and annual Conference sessions.

In accepting this proposal, the Conference adopted its first project; that is, it approved its first task without really taking responsibility for the paper. The advertising revenue was expected to cover a good part of the annual budget of $150 to produce a press run of 400 monthly copies. The congregations were to raise the balance so that every member family would receive a free copy. When ordered in bulk for local distribution the cost was 10¢ per year; individual subscriptions were 40¢. Furthermore, the Rosenorter and Bergthaler congregations should each name an editor. These two, together with a third person named by the Conference chair, would serve as Publications Commit-

Bishop Franz Sawatzky with baptismal candidates at Herbert, Saskatch-wan in 1913. Photo: MHC Archives

tee. This new paper was in no way to be seen as making *Christlicher Bundesbote* (Christian Messenger—official paper of the General Conference) superfluous.

The first issue of *Der Mitarbeiter* (The Co-worker) was published in Gretna in October 1906 with H.H. Ewert, principal of the Mennonite Educational Institute, as editor in chief; David Toews, principal of the German-English Academy in Rosthern, as assistant editor; and Benjamin Ewert, bookseller and printer in Gretna, as business manager. Its masthead motto was "For the equipment of the saints" (Ephesians 4:12).

Home Missions

A second project, adopted in 1906, was Home Missions. Until then some of the work of serving scattered Mennonite groups had been done by ministers of Conference congregations and by travelling ministers of the General Conference. Now Peter Regier of the Rosenorter, Benjamin Ewert of the Manitoba Bergthaler, and Johann Gerbrandt of Quill Lake, Saskatchewan, were named to a *Reisepredigerkomitee* (Itinerant Minister Committee) that immediately renamed itself Home Missions Committee. The congregation at Quill Lake was not yet part of the Conference. Indeed, it might have been considered part of the "field" of home

missions. At the 1907 session the committee reported having already placed two workers—in Great Deer and Aberdeen, Saskatchewan—but was looking for more since Winnipeg, among other places, needed attention. Its treasury had a balance of $211.15.[29] In the next few years the Committee identified more needs than it was able to meet. Finances and workers were difficult to obtain. But by 1910 its work was quite extensive, including various kinds of ministry among scattered Hutterites, Kleine Gemeinde, Old Colony and Lutheran settlers at Lanigan, Saskatchewan, and small groups of Mennonites in Renata, British Columbia, and Didsbury, Alberta. That still left a treasury balance of $417.61 on income of $739.64. Women's groups such as the Rosthern Mission Society (1917) and the Drake women (1915) met regularly to pray for overseas missions and to raise funds to support particularly the General Conference work in India.[30]

World War I (1914–1918)

Papers presented at the annual sessions from 1903 through 1914 did not include any on the topic of peace or nonresistance. That changed abruptly with the beginning of World War I. During the following two years presentations explored means of preserving and promoting the church's peace teaching. The 1916 session sent a letter to the government in Ottawa, thanking it for its considerate treatment of Mennonites to date and reminding it of the 1873 promise of complete exemption from military service.[31] As the War neared its end, the themes dealt with shifted to exploring service to the country as nonresistant Christians (1918) and responsibility to the country after the War (1919). Conference endorsed supporting the work of the Red Cross and even the buying of Victory Bonds, provided the government gave the assurance that such funds from the Mennonite constituency would not be used for military purposes.[32]

Der Mitarbeiter, as Conference periodical, provided a second vehicle for congregations to inform and encourage each other. An early editorial deplored that nations of European "Christendom" would resort to war to resolve their differences, and regretted that children of the Prince of Peace had done so little to promote Christ's way.[33] In response to the government's announcement of a universal registration, *Der Mitarbeiter* reported on the Mennonite delegation to Ottawa, January 2–13, 1917, and reproduced the related documents. David Toews and Benjamin Ewert were part of the delegation that represented most of the Mennonite groups of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. *Der Mitarbeiter* printed the response of R.B. Rennett,

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                                                       No7930
  M S A. 39.                          CANADA.

                         MILITARY SERVICE ACT, 1917.

                       EXEMPTION   CERTIFICATE.

  This is to certify that......David G. Epp..........................
  whose post office address is        Rosthern,Sask.

  and whose occupation is..    Farm-hand.............................
  is exempted from being called up for duty as a soldier:— on account of his

       religous belief.


                                          Per K. ..............
                                    Registrar under the Military Service Act, 1917.

  Date:.......Feb.17th, 1918.               REGINA, SASK.
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*World War I Exemption
Certificate of David G. Epp.*
MHC Archives

Director General of National Service, which assured Mennonites of
their exemption from military service and urged them to work
energetically at agricultural production.[34] The paper promoted a
voluntary "thank offering" to be sent to the government to help the
cause of widows, orphans and disabled produced by the War, and
reported on the funds raised.[35] After the government introduced
conscription, it advised Mennonites how to respond and reported on
local difficulties in gaining exemption.[36]

 Der Mitarbeiter also kept Conference members informed on what
other nonresistant groups were doing in Canada and the U.S. in
response to the war situation. Of special interest were the actions of
the Ontario Mennonites, for whom S.F. Coffman, secretary of the
Non-Resistant Relief Organization, was the articulate government
negotiator.[37]

 Leaders, especially David Toews and Benjamin Ewert, were active
far beyond Conference circles in helping the Mennonite constituency
deal with the various war issues. Ewert compiled and published a
collection of documents related to Mennonite exemption from
military service.[38] When all draft-aged Mennonites were asked to
carry a military exemption certificate, Toews was requested to
counter-sign all Saskatchewan certificates to validate them. He
declined but was overwhelmingly elected to do so for the Rosthern
and Drake areas.[39] These intimate working contacts with leaders of
other Mennonite branches, including Coffman of the (Old)
Mennonites in Ontario, were unprecedented.

 Toward the end of the War, anti-German feelings in both
government and Canadian society made things more difficult for
German-speaking, pacifist Mennonites. The official Press Censor shut
down *Der Mitarbeiter*, along with other German-language

publications, from October 1918 to the end of 1919. In Rosthern local patriots "celebrated" the Allied victory on Armistice Day and then stormed the Mennonite church where they mutilated the large pulpit Bible and committed other acts of vandalism when a cow, which they tried to lead into the building, refused to go up the steps.[40]

Immigration

A question from the floor in 1915 raised the issue of organizing an immigration committee. The following year Benjamin Ewert promoted the idea in an assigned paper, arguing for it in part as a means of extending a helping hand to co-religionists in Russia.[41] A Settlement Committee reported in 1917 that it had obtained a reserve of four townships in the Meadow Lake area for Mennonite colonization.[42] After that the War interfered with its work by creating an atmosphere hostile to settlement of German-speaking immigrants. When the government cut off further immigration of Mennonites in June 1919, the committee ceased functioning.[43]

By 1924 the new Conference had clearly survived its infancy years. It had grown significantly in numbers and diversity while retaining its Anabaptist-Mennonite character. While its service "outreach" was still primarily to members of the household of Menno, a sense of "foreign" mission was awakening. The war years had tested both its concept of separation, in its intense contacts with high state officials, and its position of nonresistance. Its hopes of uniting all Mennonites in central Canada showed some promise in the groups that joined. But the limits of this success were also becoming obvious: neither the larger *Gemeinden* of Russian background (Sommerfelder and Reinländer) nor the Swiss-South German (Old) Mennonite congregations locating in Saskatchewan and Alberta had joined.

3

Immigration and the Depression
1924–1939

In 1924 total membership of the ten *Gemeinden* of the Conference was approaching three thousand. Most members were part of rural farm communities enjoying unprecedented prosperity during the first part of this period. In congregational worship, Sunday school and at Conference sessions, German was still exclusively used. This relative economic prosperity and fluency in German helped them host the refugee immigrants that had begun to arrive from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) the year before. But the economic Depression and the prairie drought of the 1930s brought an unexpected strain on what would have been an enormous undertaking even in normal times.

New Immigrants
World War I had a much larger impact on Mennonites in Russia than it did on those in Canada. For the former, complete exemption from military service had been replaced by a system of alternative service, mostly in forestry camps, in the 1870s. Decades of rendering this kind of state service had contributed to a significant degree of Mennonite acculturation into Russian society. Schools and extensive business involvement had added to a sense of belonging to and responsibility for the homeland. When Russia entered the War in 1914, about half of Mennonite service men chose the medical corps (*Sanitätsdienst*), identified by the Red Cross symbol, rather than the usual forestry service.

The strain of the War on many aspects of Russian society had precipitated the Revolution of 1917 that ended the tsarist era and eventually ushered in the USSR under a communist regime. During the years of civil war between the Red and White armies and the resulting anarchy, some Mennonites participated in paramilitary self-defence units (*Selbstschutz*). War, civic instability, drought, disease,

epidemic, and mismanagement by the communists led to serious economic hardships. The avowed atheistic intentions of the new regime and its hostility toward Mennonites were additional reasons for anxiety. By the early 1920s many Mennonites saw no future in the new USSR and looked for opportunities to emigrate.

In Canada the Conference worked actively to persuade the Canadian government to lift its 1919 ban on Mennonite immigration. David Toews and H.H. Ewert mounted a powerful lobbying effort. In this they were helped by the Ottawa contacts and experience in negotiating with government officials of S.F. Coffman of the Ontario Swiss Mennonites; the political connections and experience in immigration matters of Gerhard Ens, former Member of the Legislative Assembly for Rosthern; and the sense of the immediacy . of the Mennonite crisis in the USSR brought by A.A. Friesen of the Russian Mennonite Study Commission. There was a sigh of relief and great rejoicing when the newly elected Liberal government of William Lyon Mackenzie King acted on his pre-election promise and on June 2, 1922 rescinded the ban on Hutterite and Mennonite immigration.[1]

The Conference also facilitated the work of the Russian Study Commission looking at settlement possibilities in Canada and Mexico. In 1923 it reconstituted its Settlement Committee (officially dissolved in 1920) under a new name, Colonization Committee, and expended an enormous amount of time and energy over the next decade and more in helping some 20,000 Mennonite refugees from the USSR to settle in Canada. David Toews, Conference chair during these years, served as chair of the inter-Mennonite Board of Colonization and became almost synonymous with its work.[2] As in the immigration from Russia in the 1870s, Ontario Swiss Mennonites were again deeply involved in helping the new wave of immigrants.

Many of these new arrivals settled in or near Mennonite communities on the Prairies. Some joined existing Conference congregations; others founded new ones. More than a dozen of the latter applied for Conference affiliation during the next decade. These newcomers had experienced significant changes during the 50 years since the first immigration from Russia to Canada. Their coming added once more to the diversity of the Conference and their integration did not come without tensions. However, each side made efforts to accommodate the other. The first Conference attended by the *Russländer*, as the new immigrants would be called for many years, met in 1924 in Drake, Saskatchewan. In preparation for their

coming, the women of the host congregation decided among themselves that they would dress modestly so as not to embarrass their immigrant sisters.[3]

Russländer Issues

In the next year, two of the new Saskatchewan congregations applied for Conference membership: the Ebenfelder Gemeinde centred in Herschel, and the Nordheimer around Dundurn. The lengthy discussion that preceded their acceptance dealt primarily with the issue of nonresistance. The minutes do not indicate whether this focused on Russian Mennonite acceptance of and widespread participation in the medical corps during the War or on the participation of some in the self-defence units (*Selbstschutz*). After the discussion the delegates of the immigrant congregations asked that the minutes note their full agreement with the Conference position on nonresistance.

In 1926 five more congregations applied for membership in the Conference. Rather than have the entire delegate body deal with these applications, a committee of five was appointed to process them and bring a recommendation. All were then accepted. The following summer the Elim (Grunthal) and Whitewater Gemeinden in Manitoba and the Bergthal congregation of Didsbury, Alberta, applied. The members of the former two were almost exclusively new immigrants from the USSR, while the older congregation at Didsbury had a greater variety of members. However, its recent ministerial leadership also came from new immigrants. The membership committee held off recommending their acceptance because of the question of infant baptism that had intensified since the 1926 sessions.

H.H. Ewert's editorial in the March *Der Mitarbeiter* had laid out the issue in clear terms. "It is known around the world that Mennonites reject infant baptism. Our Confession is clear and precise on this and the Conference Constitution requires member congregations to adhere to this article of faith." In the 16th century, Anabaptists accepted martyrdom rather than deviate from this principle. But now, out of a "desire to please (*Menschengefälligkeit*) or an unbiblical sense of tolerance," some Gemeinden accepted as members those who had been baptized as infants. Ewert's example was taken from South Germany, but it is clear that his concern was about the congregations of new immigrants from the USSR. Accepting churches with this practice could lead to serious complications. In his view anyone seeking membership in a

Mennonite congregation out of conviction would request believers baptism. By enforcing the Conference position only such persons who joined out of convenience, such as those having married a Mennonite, would be excluded.[4]

At the 1927 sessions the Program Committee had assigned two papers to deal with the nature of the church. The first clarified why Mennonites hold to believers baptism. In the second, Bishop Gerhard Buhler of Waldheim, Saskatchewan, addressed the question: "Who may be accepted as member in a congregation?" The discussion following this paper, which included baptism on confession of faith as a key requirement, did not reach a consensus, so the issue was tabled for a year. The minutes do not record an action to accept the new applicants. However, Ewert's report in *Der Mitarbeiter* noted that, with the acceptance of these new member congregations, the Conference had almost doubled in size in recent years. While he reported rejoicing over all the new workers gained from these immigrant congregations, he also noted a measure of concern about the unity of spirit in the Conference, "since the stance of some of the immigrants with respect to child baptism and the acceptance of members is one which the local [Canadian] congregations do not share."[5]

At the 1928 conference, a special delegate session during the noon break resumed the discussion, then passed a resolution opposing in principle the acceptance by transfer of persons baptized as infants. However, even with the compromise phrase, "in principle," the issue was not finally resolved. H.H. Ewert's editorial in the final issue of *Der Mitarbeiter* argued that it was inconsistent for a church that held infant baptism as unbiblical to accept anyone without believers baptism. The editorial was the last in a series on "Foxes That Destroy the Vineyard," entitled "Recognition of Infant Baptism."[6] A paper on receiving persons baptized as infants into membership was vigorously discussed at the ministers conference in 1935. All agreed that the biblical position was baptism of believers, but many held that in exceptional cases a person baptized as infant could be received by transfer.[7] It appears that most of those defending the exception were from the new (Russländer) congregations whose delegate votes were by then about the same as those of the older congregations.[8] By 1954 this "problem" was no longer limited to immigrant congregations, said Bergthaler D.D. Klassen of Homewood, Manitoba, in a paper at the ministers conference. Persons baptized as infants were frequently received by transfer after marrying a member of a CMC congregation.[9]

Conference Growth

With the acceptance of the *Immigranten-Flüchtlings Gemeinde* (Immigrant-Refugee Congregation) of Ontario in 1926 and the Bergthal congregation of Didsbury, Alberta, in 1927, the Conference experienced a dramatic increase in its east-west expanse. Distance was becoming a factor. Even before the first congregation in British Columbia was received in 1932, a commission was named to consider dividing the Conference at the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border, with periodic joint meetings of the two portions. The commission—H.H. Ewert, Johann Gerbrandt and Johann G. Rempel—recommended not a division but a name change that would recognize that the Conference had grown beyond its "Central Canada" beginnings. The new name was *Allgemeine Konferenz der Mennoniten in Canada* (General Conference of Mennonites in Canada.)[10]

The Depression and the prairie drought of the 1930s are only occasionally mentioned in the proceedings of the Conference. However, their influence was very significant. Up to half of the immigrant Mennonite families lost their farms as did a large number of the descendants of the earlier immigration.[11] Many of them relocated to British Columbia or Ontario. In B.C. this meant establishing a series of new congregations. Women's organizations were instrumental in helping these groups obtain church buildings at a time when finances were very tight.[12]

Among the over 20 new congregations received into the Conference during the 1930s was the B.C. Conference, which was accepted after some floor discussion about this unusual "mode of accepting new member congregations."[13] If the prairie pioneers of the Conference considered the enormous east-west spread and the Rocky Mountains a barrier to holding the growing network of congregations together, the first sessions in British Columbia—at Greendale in 1949—dispelled those fears when a record-breaking 52 congregations were represented.

Conference Periodical

Since its founding in 1926 *Der Mitarbeiter* operated on a shoe-string budget. Like all other projects of the Conference at that time, it was expected to generate or raise its own operating funds. The Publishing Committee reported on finances regularly, generally showing only a slight deficit if subscriptions in arrears were calculated as assets, and both editor and business manager worked without remuneration. An aggressive campaign of selling

subscriptions and collecting back fees in 1913 resulted in a total subscriber list of 510 and a small year-end balance.[14] However, this was short lived. Despite relatively prosperous times, by 1925 the deficit was growing and the Conference decided to cease publishing the paper.[15] The Publications Committee was instructed to look for alternative ways "to meet needs of our congregations."

1937 Drought
Toward evening on Wednesday, July 14, we took leave of our many, many dear friends and set out on our journey home. On our way to Rosemary we were depressed by the widespread drought with its disastrous consequences which stared us in the face all the way through Saskatchewan and into Alberta. On our way home we drove in the rain and ahead of us heavy rains had fallen. In low-lying areas the scenery was already a bit greener. But by and large, many of our brothers and sisters in the west will have to lament with the prophet: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" [Jer. 8:20]. Our nation, thank God, is Christian enough that it tries to prevent any of its citizens from dying of starvation. But the bread of government relief is bitter nonetheless. Conference delegate, John H. Enns, Winnipeg, in *Der Bote* 4 August 1937

H.H. Ewert's editorial in the final issue of 1925 hoped for a "resurrection" of *Der Mitarbeiter* and, in the January 1926 issue, he was happy to report that a "Mitarbeiter Publishing Society" was going to underwrite the paper so that it could continue.[16] Meanwhile, the Conference's Publication Committee could only report that it still owed Ewert $241.23 and was trying to raise this amount by collecting outstanding subscription fees. By 1930 it had barely managed to pay the annual interest and as a result turned the task over to the Conference officers. John G. Rempel, secretary of the Conference, eventually persuaded the two founding congregations, Bergthaler of Manitoba and Rosenorter of Saskatchewan, to raise the bulk of the money owed; he then delivered it to a daughter of Ewert, who had since died.[17]

Because Ewert continued to publish *Der Mitarbeiter* until his death in 1934, the Conference had no pressing need to look for an alternative. *Christlicher Bundesbote*, official organ of the General Conference, was still available and, in fact, "belonged" to them since

Table 3.1 Member Congregations Admitted 1925–1939[1]
A=Amalgamated,   D=Decentralized, C=Closed, W=Withdrew

* Unless otherwise indicated, the congregation's complete name includes "Mennonite Church."

Name*	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership		
				Adm.	1952	1999
Ebenfelder[2]	Herschel SK	1925	1925	270	255	75
Nordheimer[3]	Dundurn SK	1925	1925	270	251	68
Blumenorter	Blumenort MB	1926	1925	150	347	215
Lichtenauer[4]	Arnaud MB	1926	1926	210	143	C
Schoenwieser[5]	Starbuck MB	1926	1926	240	1236	1306
Meadows[6]	Marquette MB	1926	–	–	A	–
United Mennonite[7]	Ontario	1926	1925	510	D	
Elim	Grunthal MB	1927	1927	180	243	186
Whitewater	Whitewater MB	1927	1927	180	494	D

[1] The earliest available membership statistics are from 1928. Membership at the time of admission to the Conference prior to that year is calculated from the number of delegate votes (one vote per 30 members); actual membership may have been slightly higher than the figure given.

[2] Immigrants from Russia organized in 1925 under the leadership of Bishop Jacob B. Wiens, with meeting places also in Fiske, Glidden-Kindersley, and Superb-Luseland.

[3] The Nordheimer Gemeinde at Dundurn was organized by Bishop Johann J. Klassen with additional meeting places at Hanley and Pleasant Point. When the Gemeinde decentralized, the three congregations became independent. Dundurn dissolved in 2003.

[4] Admitted as Arnaud Mennonite Church, the name was changed to Lichtenauer Mennonite when the first church building was erected in St. Elizabeth in 1929. Closed 1989. Anna Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 179.

[5] When Johann P. Klassen, former bishop of the Kronsweider Gemeinde in Russia, moved to Starbuck the local group organized as Schoenwieser Mennoniten Gemeinde in honour of Klassen's home village, Schoenwiese, Zaporozhye. In 1927 Klassen moved to Winnipeg to lead the local Schoenwieser group and to serve its widely scattered rural groups as bishop. In 1934 membership of the Winnipeg congregation (254) was given separately for the first time; the combined membership of 20 additional affiliates was 500. Beginning in 1962 it is identified as First Mennonite, Winnipeg; the 1999 membership is for Winnipeg only. Is. Klassen, *Dem Herrn die Ehre: Schönwieser Mennoniten Gemeinde von Manitoba* (Winnipeg: von der Gemeinde herausgesetzten Komitee, 1969), 1–4, 67–68; Ernst Enns, et al, eds., *Jubilate: 60 Years First Mennonite Church* (Winnipeg: First Mennonite Church, 1991), 55–56. See note 36 below.

[6] Meadows and Marquette joined the Schoenwieser Gemeinde in 1928.

[7] See notes 16, 17 and 18 below.

Name*	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership		
				Adm.	1952	1999
Bergthal[8]	Didsbury AB	1927	1910	150	164	156
Zoar[9]	Osler SK	1928	1928	60	A	180
Neukirchner[10]	Chinook AB	1928	1927	120	C	–
Hoffnungstal[11]	Grand Prairie AB	1928	–	45	C	–
Coaldale	Coaldale AB	1929	1929	32	254	318
Rosedale[12]	Rosedale AB	1929	1929	20	C	–
Eigenheim[13]	Eigenheim SK	1929	1895	130	192	133
Eyebrow[14]	Eyebrow SK	1929	1928	94	55	C

[8] A group of Bergthal Mennonites from Manitoba settled at Didsbury in 1901 and promptly organized a congregation, affiliated with the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church of Manitoba to which its only minister, Isaak Giesbrecht, belonged. GC Home Missions first visited the group in 1902, but primary oversight was by the Sommerfelder bishop who came annually through 1910 and less regularly until 1916. Beginning in 1910 Home Missions ministers of the CMC visited regularly. Bergthal Mennonite joined the GCMC in 1938. C.L. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta: A History of Its Churches and Institutions* (Edmonton: Mennonite Conference of Alberta, 1981), 11; *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 29 August 1902, 5; Ens, *Church, Family and Village*, 114–115, 159; Pannabecker, *Open Doors*, 152.

[9] The Zoar congregation seems to have become part of the Rosenorter Gemeinde in the early 1930s. Statistics for it are given in *Jahrbuch 1931* (60 members) but not in *Jahrbuch 1935*. See also Jacob G. Guenter, "The Osler Mennonite Church," in Jacob Guenter, Leonard Doell, et al, *Hague Osler Mennonite Reserve, 1895–1995* (Hague: Hague-Osler Book Committee, 1995), 615–617.

[10] Closed in 1937. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 112. Membership dropped from 120 in 1936 to 39 in 1937 with Coaldale and Rosemary memberships increasing significantly during that time.

[11] The Hoffnungstal congregation does not seem to have survived very long. *Jahrbuch 1931* and subsequent editions have no statistics on it. *Jahrbuch 1950*, 18, notes that the group at Peace River had ceased to function as a congregation. The current Hillcrest Mennonite Church in Grand Prairie resulted from a new start in the 1950s. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 97–98.

[12] According to Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 111–112, gradual disintegration of the congregation began about 1942. However, the minutes note no representation at annual Conference sessions after 1930, and the *Jahrbuch* has no membership statistics in 1931 or subsequently.

[13] Eigenheim became a charter Conference member as part of the Rosenorter Gemeinde; it became an independent congregation when the Rosenorter gave that option in 1928. Rempel, *Rosenorter Gemeinde*, 25.

[14] Worship services began in 1926; the congregation organized under the leadership of Bishop Johann Martens in 1929; the first church building was dedicated in 1946. A split in 1954 left two small groups; Eyebrow Mennonite led by Gerhard Fehdrau dissolved in 1969. See Table 5.3 for First Mennonite Eyebrow. S. Martens, "Founding of the Eyebrow-Tugaske General Conference Mennonite Church," unpublished paper, 1952. MHCA, Vertical File.

Name*	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership		
				Adm.	1952	1999
Westheimer	Rosemary AB	1930	1930	111	338	187
Landskroner[15]	Namaka AB	1930	1927	34	A	–
W-Kitchener UM[16]	Waterloo ON	1926	1929	393	366	430
Essex County [17]	Leamington ON	1926	1929	358	875	739
Northern Ontario [18]	Reesor ON	1926	1925	88	C	–
Blumenthal[19]	Spring Ridge AB	1931	1931	56	60	56
Hoffnungsfelder[20]	Rabbit Lake SK	1931	1928	96	114	21
Kidron[21]	Kidron SK	1931	1930	58	C	–
First Mennonite[22]	Sardis BC	1932	1931	246	246	162
Emmaus[23]	Wymark SK	1932	1928	144	362	51
Bethania[24]	Watrous SK	1932	1932	21	84	23
Nordheimer	Winnipegosis MB	1933	1931	52	109	105

[15] Membership declined from 27 (1936) to 15 (1937) as members joined Westheimer, Rosemary; Landskrone closed in 1938. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 116.

[16] Admitted as United Mennonites of Ontario in 1926. The Waterloo group organized as a congregation in 1929 and sent its own delegates beginning in 1932. Membership numbers from *Jahrbuch 1931*.

[17] Admitted as United Mennonites of Ontario in 1926. The congregation organized in 1929 (statistics from *Jahrbuch 1931*); it sent its own delegates as Leamington UM Church beginning in 1932; 1999 membership is for Leamington UM. See Table 6.1 for North Leamington.

[18] Admitted as United Mennonites of Ontario in 1926. It identified as a separate congregation with its own delegates beginning in 1932. Two groups (founded 1925 and 1930) are listed in the membership statistics in 1931. *Jahrbuch 1931*. The congregation closed in 1947 or early 1948; last membership was 13 in 1946.

[19] Organized as a formal group by Bishop C.D. Harder in 1928, the Spring Ridge congregation near Pincher Creek became independent in 1932 when David Janzen was ordained as bishop. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 51–57.

[20] A.A. Friesen, "Dankfest der Hoffnungsfelder Gemeinde," *Der Bote*, 1 December 1948, 3; 8 December 1948, 3; English translation in *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian* IX (September 2003) and IX (December 2003). See note 29 below.

[21] No statistical data are given in the *Jahrbuch* after 1936 when Kidron had 37 members. Some may have joined the Nordstern congregation at Drake after dissolution of Kidron. The congregation does not appear to have been independently represented at Conference sessions after its acceptance in 1931.

[22] When the Sardis area name changed to Greendale, the congregation followed suit. G.I. Peters, *A History of the First Mennonite Church, Greendale, B.C.* (Greendale: First Mennonite Church, 1976).

[23] The Emmaus Gemeinde had worship places in Wymark and Swift Current. When each group became an independent congregation about 1960, the latter took the name Zion. See Table 5.3.

[24] Known later as Bethany. *Through 50 Years at Bethany Mennonite Church, 1932–1982* (Watrous: Anniversary Committee, 1982).

Name*	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership		
				Adm.	1952	1999
Eben-Ezer[25]	Truax/Khedive SK	1933	1931	29	24	C
Hoffnungsfeld	Carrot River SK	1934	1929	78	107	147
Immanuel[26]	Barnes Crossing SK	1934	1929	48	86	W
Jansen[27]	Saskatchewan	1934	1928	24	15	C
Hebron[28]	Sand Beach SK	1936	1928	81	28	A
Bethel[29]	Mayfair SK	1936	1933	42	A	–
Hoffnungsfeld[30]	Petaigan SK	1936	–	35	31	C
Ebenezer[31]	Fitzmaurice SK	1936	1935	56	28	C
Neu-Schoensee[32]	Tofield AB	1937	–	74	164	124
Pat Burns Ranch[33]	Alberta	1937	–	25	A	–

[25] A congregation of 75 members led by Johann A. Wiebe was reported at Moreland and Khedive west of Weyburn in *Jahrbuch 1931*, 90. Led by Isaak H. Thiessen and Abram G. Enns, members also lived at Truax and Trossachs. Beginning in 1950, *Jahrbuch* gives the statistics under the latter name; no data after 1954.

[26] This congregation at Meadow Lake included members at Pierceland, Compass and Dorintosh. Compass Immanuel, Rapid View, Saskatchewan, withdrew in 1993.

[27] Always a small congregation, Jansen did not report membership statistics every year; dissolved in 1962.

[28] Home Mission activity was begun about 1915 in the Lorenzo area by C.F. Sawatzky of Laird. The Hebron congregation was led by C.K. Ens of Mayfair when it was accepted in 1936. Statistics were reported from Sand Beach until 1951 when it shifted to Mayfair. Eventually it seems to have joined the Hoffnungsfelder Gemeinde. Frank Ens, 1960 questionnaire. MHCA, Vol. 1939–1. See also *Der Mitarbeiter* 12 (September 1918), 5.

[29] In 1928 immigrants at Mayfair first met to plan a church. Worship and Sunday school were held in homes until a building was erected in 1933. Although part of the Hoffnungsfelder Gemeinde, the group took the name Bethel to register its church property. In 1940 it joined the Rabbit Lake congregation, but the *Jahrbuch* continued membership entries until 1945 when it had 10 members. Marlene O. Martens, ed., *Returning Thanks to God: Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite 75th Anniversary, 1928–2003* (by the author, 2003).

[30] The Hoffnungsfelder Gemeinde formed in 1928 with locals at Rabbit Lake, Glenbush, Petaigan, Mayfair and Carrot River. *Jahrbuch 1936*, 95, first reports statistics for this group. There is no Conference action to accept it as a separate congregation. The Petaigan congregation closed in 1957.

[31] Over half of the Eyebrow Mennonite families relocated to the Parkerview area west of Yorkton in 1933–1934. The group is first listed separately in the statistical summary in *Jahrbuch 1935*, 101, as Parkerview-Fitzmaurice with 57 members. *Jahrbuch 1947*, 118, first identifies the congregation as Ebenezer, Fitzmaurice. Closed 1968.

[32] Organized as Schoenwieser Mennonite Church of Tofield in 1936 by immigrants from Russia who had settled near the Salem (Old) Mennonite Church; now Tofield Mennonite Church. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 63–69.

[33] Closed in 1951, members joining Bergthal, Didsbury. Ibid., 23–25.

Name*	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership		
				Adm.	1952	1999
Vineland	Vineland ON	1937	–	192	286	355
B.C. Conference[34]	British Columbia	1937	1936	300	D	–
First Mennonite[35]	Saskatoon SK	1938	1938	115	297	224
Niagara UM	Niag.-o-t-Lake ON	1938	–	110	450	634
Springstein[36]	Springstein MB	1939	1938	75	190	177
Schoenfelder[37]	Pigeon Lake MB	1939	1928	98	152	125
Abbotsford Group[38]	West Abbotsford BC	1939	1936	52	328	120
United Mennonite[39]	Black Creek BC	1939	1937	27	77	103
Coghlan Group[40]	Aldergrove BC	1939	1936	38	195	274
Yarrow[41]	Yarrow BC	1939	1928	44	160	94
Vancouver UM[42]	Vancouver BC	1939	1935	51	185	345

[34] The Sardis congregation had joined the Conference in 1932. When the Konferenz der Vereinigten Mennoniten in Britisch Columbien (Conference of United Mennonite Churches in B.C.) was organized in 1936, it applied for membership in the Canadian Conference the following year and was accepted after some discussion. See Cornelia Lehn, *Frontier Challenge,* 31–35. Beginning in 1939, additional "Gemeinden" (congregations) and "Gruppen" (groups) and their membership are listed individually in the statistical section of *Jahrbuch.* These are entered in the table the first time they are so listed.

[35] Worship services began in 1928. In 1932 a congregation was organized as part of the Rosenorter Gemeinde. First Mennonite became an independent congregation in 1938.

[36] Worship services as part of the Schoenwieser Gemeinde began in 1924; organized as a congregation in 1938.

[37] Worship services began in 1925. In 1928 a larger circle of groups joined the Schoenwieser Gemeinde as Salem-Friedens-Kirche (Salem Peace Church). In 1939 the congregation voted to become independent and took the name Schoenfelder Mennonite Church. Klassen, *Dem Herrn die Ehre,* 18–24.

[38] Part of the B.C. Conference accepted in 1937; later became West Abbotsford Mennonite Church.

[39] Part of the B.C. Conference accepted in 1937; built its first church building in 1937.

[40] The Mennonite settlement there began in 1934. The congregation was renamed Bethel Mennonite Church of Aldergrove in 1951; now Bethel Mennonite, Langley. Mary Warkentin, "The Bethel Mennonite Church, Aldergrove, B.C.," unpublished paper, 1958. MHCA, Vertical File. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge,* 16–18.

[41] Began as one congregation with the Sardis members; formally organized as Yarrow Mennonite Church in 1938.

[42] Vancouver Mennonite Mission grew out of the General Conference Home Mission Board-operated *Mädchenheim* (home for working Mennonite immigrant women). A congregation organized in 1935; now First Mennonite Church.

Mennonite Congregations in Ontario

Sudbury

Ottawa

Georgian

Bay

Lake

McArthur
Mills

Lake

Simcoe

Kingston

Chesley • Hanover

Markham

Brussells Listowel • Drayton
Wallenstein Elmira • Elora
Huron Milverton • Hawkesville Scarborough
Millbank St. Jacobs Downsview
Waterloo • Guelph Toronto
Wellesey • Kitchener Mississauga
Zurich Petersburg • Baden Cambridge Niagara-on-
Stratford • New Hamburg Vingil the-Lake
Alisa Craig Tavistock Hamilton St. Catharines
London • Vineland
Dorchester Dunnville
Port Rowan Selkirk
Erie View

Lake Ontario

Lake Erie

Windsor
Harrow • Leamington

Mennonite Congregations in Manitoba

Mennonite Congregations in Alberta

Cecil Lake
Granisle
Burns Lake
Camp
Squeah
Kelowna
Vernon
Olive
Black
Creek

Vancouver
Fraser
Mission
Strait
Richmond
Langley
Surrey
Aldergrove
River
Sardis
Chilliwack
of
Clearbrook
Abbotsford
Georgia
Boundary
Bay
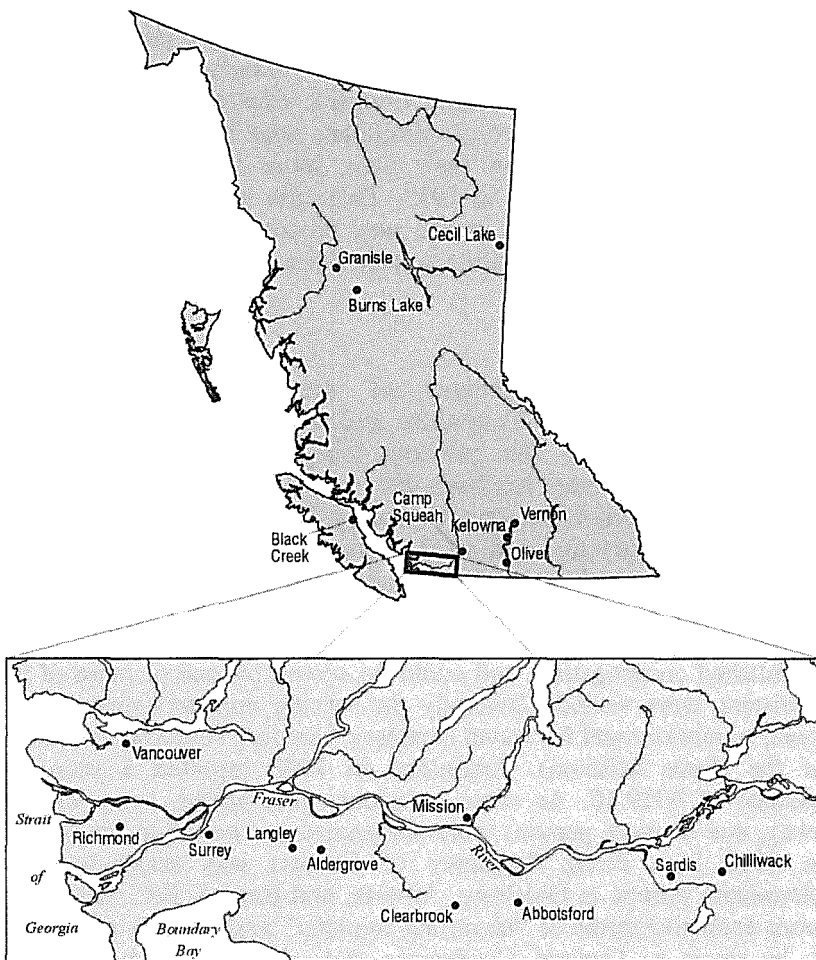
Mennonite Congregations in British Columbia

most Canadian Conference congregations had joined the GC. Many of the new immigrants subscribed to *Der Bote* (The Messenger), published in Rosthern by Dietrich H. Epp. Conference chair, David Toews, had written a warm endorsement for its first issue in January 1924. Editor Epp ensured its significance to the Conference by publishing reports and even papers given at the annual sessions. After the demise of *Der Mitarbeiter* in 1934, the Conference agreed in 1935 to consider *Der Bote* as its organ alongside *Christlicher Bundesbote* of the GC. The Bergthaler of Manitoba, who had not joined the General Conference, began their own, more modest paper, *Das Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt*, in 1935. Thus, the needs of its member congregations were served in one way or another, but the specific needs of the Canadian Conference itself were less clearly met in this fragmented fashion.

Home Missions

Three working committees of the Conference—Program Committee, Publications Committee and Home Missions Committee —were identified in the previous chapter. The work of the Publications Committee has been discussed above. The main task of the Home Missions Committee (formerly *Reisepredigerkomitee*) was to provide ministry to small settlements that had no resident church leadership. Serving these scattered Mennonite groups became the first major program of the Conference.

Initially, mostly those that were in the general vicinity of an established congregation, and could be served by one or more of its ministers, were visited. Generally the serving ministers received, at most, reimbursement for travel expenses. The first financial statement of the Home Missions Committee in 1908 reported a year-end balance of $319.10. As more locations were added, some farther away, one or more persons were designated as "travelling minister." In 1910 Rev. Franz Sawatzky of Herbert was asked to visit Mennonite groups at Didsbury, Alberta, and Renata, B.C. However, more extensive terms of "travelling minister" assignments continued to be given to General Conference *Reiseprediger*, such as N.W. Bahnmann and H.R. Voth in 1910. Voth received $2 per day and Bahnmann $1 plus travel expenses. The report for 1910 is the first to give financial details, showing a net balance of $417.61 on revenue of $739.64.

By 1924 the list of places served included the communities of Jansen, Watson, Lorenzo, Guernsey, Wymark, Neville, Swift Current,

Nicolai W. (1879–1945) and Meta (Regier) Bahnmann served the Con-ference as Reiseprediger *in Sask-atchewan, and helped to organize the first CMC congregations at Yarrow and Sardis in British Co-lumbia. Educated in mission studies at the Moravian Brethren school in Basel, Switzerland, and at Bethel College in Kansas, Bahnmann taught at the Coghlan Bible school and was bishop of that congregation at the time of his death.* Photo: C. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*

Carnduff and Lost River in Saskatchewan; and Morden, Haskett, Wakeham and Winnipeg in Manitoba. The Committee's budget had peaked at an income of over $3000 in 1922, but even then it reported a deficit of $600. In 1924 income dropped below $2000 and, while expenses were kept in check, the cumulative debt had climbed to over $1200.

The Committee's field of work was greatly enlarged with the arrival in the 1920s of the new immigrants from the USSR. As Table 3.1 shows, a dozen of the new congregations admitted had fewer than 50 members. Many of them did not have a bishop and thus were

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Reiseprediger *Services among scattered families were often held in homes.* Reiseprediger *(itinerant minister) Benjamin Ewert once held a service in a warm living room in Manitoba. In the gathered congregation were Gerhard and Bernhard who had been hauling home hay in the frigid winter weather. During the evening service the comfortable warmth and Ewert's mellifluous, slow, thoughtful—and long—sermon proved very relaxing for the tired men. When Ewert was finished and asked Gerhard to lead in a closing prayer, there was no response. Gerhard was sound asleep. "Naah ja, auch das noch," said the old* Ohm, *and made the closing himself. Later Gerhard took his friend Bernhard to task: "Why didn't you wake me in time?" To which Bernhard sheepishly replied: "I was asleep myself!"*
Klassen, *Dem Herrn Die Ehre*

While most new congregations joining the Conference during this time were rural, the first city churches were emerging. A large crowd came for the dedication of the new building of First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, on October 18, 1936. Photo: MHC Archives

dependent on outside leadership for baptism and communion services. To alleviate this situation, the Conference decided in 1926 to ordain *Reiseprediger* in a way that would authorize them to officiate at these ordinances without giving them full bishop status. The financial burden of serving the many scattered new immigrant groups was borne in part by the Home Missions Board of the General Conference, which employed a number of itinerant ministers. Bishop Franz F. Enns of the Whitewater congregation in Manitoba served in this capacity from 1926 to 1939.[18] Benjamin Ewert, serving under the Canadian Conference, reflects the extent of work done by the Committee. For example, in 1927 Ewert visited 50 groups and baptized 25 candidates. By then the Committee's finances showed a net surplus, allowing it to share financial responsibility for the *Mädchenheim* (Home for Women) opened in Winnipeg by the General Conference to serve single immigrant women working in the city.

The crash of world market prices in 1929, which ushered in the Depression, decreased almost everyone's income. For many of the new immigrants, still saddled with travel debts and mortgage payments, times were difficult. From a high of over $3000, in 1934 the Committee's income dropped to under $1000. Already in a deficit situation since 1930, it ended the year owing Benjamin Ewert $420 of his $720 annual salary. Receipts for Home Missions did not climb

1937 Conference in Rosemary
The Alberta Conference decided that all congregations were to share in the expenses of hosting the CMC delegates. Each member was to be assessed for 25 to 50 cents, to be collected in advance by each local congregation. It was also decided that there would be a ten cent meal charge at the Conference. The main course was fried bologna. The sessions were held in a large tent.   Ralph Dahl in Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*

back to $2000 until 1942, severely limiting the work that the immigration of the 1920s had caused to grow by leaps and bounds.

Women's sewing circles significantly supplemented the ministry provided by visiting ministers in many of the small settlements served by Home Missions. Because distances were great, travel with horse and buggy cumbersome, and babysitters hard to come by, entire families would often gather for the sewing circle meetings. While the agenda of the women was more serious—helping the needy and supporting missions—the men visiting in an adjoining room and the children playing together were also building community.[19]

B.C. women's sewing circles were the first to organize a provincial Women's Conference. The organizational meeting was held February 28, 1939 at the Yarrow Mennonite Church. Photo: Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*

Program Committee

Since a major aspect of the Conference in these years was the annual meeting of congregational representatives to consult with each other on matters arising in their church work, the Program Committee was very important.[20] It discerned what the current issues in the life of the congregations were, and assigned these as topics to be addressed in papers at the next meeting of Conference. It also explored areas in which co-operation among congregations was necessary to do those things which no one congregation was able to do by itself. Despite increasing amounts of time spent discussing activity reports of various standing committees of the Conference, the annual sessions continued to take time to hear and discuss, on average, at least four papers a year.

The majority of these papers dealt directly with the nature and work of the church. Papers on catechism, for example, dealt not so much with how to teach it as with its content and value. The discussion of baptism and the prerequisites and importance of membership focused on biblical teaching. Presentations on discipleship considered such aspects as service, peace, nonconformity and honesty, drawing on both the Bible and the writings of 16th-century Anabaptist writers. Papers on the nature of the church sought to emphasize both understanding of and loyalty to the body of Christ. With many families living in scattered communities it took deliberate effort to foster in them a sense of belonging to and identification with the church (*Gemeindebewusstsein*). Four papers on music and singing in the congregation reflected on their importance in the overall nurture of church members. Two papers (1937) discussed the relative merits of the single pastor and the multiple minister systems of church leadership. At this stage these discussions did not yet move toward dismantling the large *Gemeinden*, or moving away from the leadership of bishops.

Papers on the church also reflected a sense of the interconnect-edness of congregations within the Conference family. Papers on marriage examined not only the biblical ideal, but also discussed family breakdown and helpful pastoral response in such situations. The role of ministers continued to receive attention. What could unpaid ministers expect from their congregations? What was their responsibility to them? How could congregations combat the problem of the shortage of ministers? On two occasions the importance of church discipline and ways of administering it were discussed.

Overtly theological issues and biblical studies, common in papers

given at the ministers conferences, were still rarely assigned as topics for the delegate sessions. Between 1925 and 1935, three dealt with eschatology, using language like "end times" and "second coming." Both Jacob H. Janzen, Waterloo, and Johann G. Rempel, Langham, rejected the constructing of timetables and human systems, which "ensnare the Word of God and obscure rather than clarify," then proceeded to an interpretation of Jesus' teaching and parts of Revelation.[21] One paper (1931) addressed the dangers of modernism; another (1935) was christological in focus. Presentations on our vocation and the Christian faith, the importance of witness, the blessings of stewardship and systematic giving, truthfulness and the oath, prayer and revival meetings show the range of topics covered. A relative absence of papers on home missions reflects the fact that the annual reports of the standing committee in this area ensured that the topic was always before the delegates.

The transition from German to English had not yet become a major issue for the Conference or its congregations. However, most papers that dealt with providing suitable reading material for ministers and members alike, stressed the importance of German materials. At the same time, half a dozen papers on various aspects of youth ministry indicated a new awareness of this resource for the church and an anticipation of changes to come. All youth work was still done at the congregational level; no provincial or national organizations yet existed. Two papers explored the role of women. One was entitled "Woman in the light of Scripture;" the other explored women's service in the congregation.

As the Conference modestly celebrated its 30th anniversary in 1932, three papers reviewed what had been done to help the congregations and looked toward future challenges. They pointed to areas in which the goals of the Conference had guided its activities and achieved positive results: creating a sense of belonging together; helping congregations in their local ministries; promoting education of children, youth and adults; nurturing scattered groups of Mennonite families into congregations active in the mission of the Conference. At the same time, one paper pointed out that often the high aims of particular resolutions had not been fulfilled.

Committee on Faith and Life

There was a certain haphazardness about the way in which new committees came into being. A particularly compelling paper at a session of Conference could result in a motion from the floor to

explore an issue farther or to bring a concrete plan of action to the
gathered delegates. The status of such a new committee was not
always clear. In some cases its assigned task was quickly done and
the committee disbanded. In other cases it functioned for a while as a
standing committee. For example, a Committee for Congregational
Concerns (*Gemeindeangelegenheiten*) operated for a few years after
its creation in 1916 and re-emerged in 1931 after a decade of silence
as a new, narrowly focused Committee on Lodges. Two years later it
reported that there were no lodge members in any congregation of the
Conference and recommended that it be renamed Committee on Faith
and Life (*Lehre und Wandel*).

Before this Committee came into being, the ministers conference
often took the initiative on faith content issues. Indeed, in 1927 the
first regular annual ministers conference was called by the Program
Committee and the conference executive to discuss questions relating
to church discipline and the reception of members. In particular it
focused on the issue of receiving members who had been baptized as
infants.[22] In 1930 the Committee initiated a revision of the articles of
faith used by congregations in connection with catechism instruction
and membership preparation classes.[23]

A paper at the 1930 sessions explored how a greater interest in and
understanding of the Mennonite community could be promoted
among outsiders. In it Johann G. Rempel recommended the creation
of an *Aufklärungskomitee* (a kind of public relations committee). It
was to dispel misunderstandings and prejudices among the
neighbours of Mennonite communities through appropriate pamphlets
or letters to public newspapers. H.H. Ewert's address on "The
Mennonites" to the Manitoba Historical and Scientific Society in
1932 was in part a result of this committee's work.[24] The address was
published in pamphlet form in both English and German. In 1935 this
committee was absorbed by the Committee on Faith and Life.

Christian Education

Reporting on schools and education at Conference sessions was
inevitable, given that two of its prominent leaders, David Toews and
H.H. Ewert, were centrally involved in Mennonite secondary schools.
But in 1929 this emphasis was sharpened through the ideas sparked
by papers on CMC responsibility toward children and the care of
youth. An ad hoc committee proposed the creation of a commission to
plan a "portable" short course for ministers, Sunday school teachers,
choir conductors, and other leaders, that could travel from community

to community, and to search for suitable school teachers to recommend to Mennonite communities.[25]

In 1930 the reports on schools from the various provinces led to another ad hoc committee to formulate a Conference position on church schools. It recommended that a standing committee on schools be organized, which would work toward shifting the support and control of Mennonite schools from the "School Society" form to more direct ownership by the church. The aim would be to organize a Board consisting of church representatives from all Mennonite groups.[26] After reporting some progress on this ambitious goal in 1933, both the Gretna and Rosthern schools struggled with survival as the worst of the Depression hit them. With the death of H.H. Ewert in 1934, the most ardent proponent of an inter-church school Board, the idea lost its momentum. However, the School Committee continued to promote various Mennonite educational initiatives by inviting each province to report at the annual sessions, but it did not move to bring the secondary schools under direct Conference sponsorship or direction.

Bible Schools. At the 1935 sessions John H. Enns gave a paper on Bible schools. Enns had taught at the first Bible school founded by Conference congregations in Gretna from 1929 until it closed in 1931. He recommended that each province should have at least one Bible school and that the Conference should develop a suitable curriculum that these schools could use. Both points were endorsed, but it was deemed the task of provincial ministers conferences to establish such schools. However, a Committee for Bible Schools was elected to develop a common program of studies. Conference leaders were aware that non-Conference-related schools also attracted students from its congregations, but felt it important that future congregational leaders should be nurtured within their faith tradition.

In 1935 the Alberta Conference decided to open a provincial Bible school. Since the Rosemary congregation already had a local school in operation since 1932, it was decided to support it and work toward moving it to a more central location. Two years later arrangements with the Bergthal Mennonite congregation in Didsbury allowed the move to take place. In November 1937 Menno Bible Institute began as the provincial Bible school with eight students.[27] By then local winter Bible schools had opened in Wembley in 1934 and in Springridge and Coaldale in 1935.[28]

The organizational meeting of the Conference of United Mennonite Churches in British Columbia in November 1936 decided

Menno Bible Institute, the consolidated Bible school of the Alberta Conference, initially used the Bergthal church building for classroom, dormitory and recreational space. Photo: Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*

to pursue energetically the founding of a provincial Bible school. That did not seem possible, but by 1940 Bible school courses were offered in Coghlan, Sardis, Yarrow and Abbotsford.[29]

In the other provinces too, the initiative to open Bible schools came from local congregations. The larger *Gemeinden*, with a pool of ordained ministers to draw on, were able to provide courses in Bible knowledge, church history and basic theology in addition to some language and literature. Generally these schools were conducted during the winter months, when farm work did not occupy the full day. Space was usually available in the local church or school building.

In Saskatchewan, schools in Rosthern (1932), Swift Current (1936) and Drake (1939) served three of the settlement areas.[30] In Manitoba the Gretna school was reopened by the Bergthaler and Blumenorter in 1936. Meanwhile, the Schoenwieser had begun a school in Winnipeg (1932), which they hoped would become the provincial Bible school, since many of its students were working young people from rural congregations. As in the other provinces, it seemed too early for one central school. Whitewater (1936) in the west and Lichtenauer, St. Elizabeth (1937) in the eastern part of the province also opened local schools.[31] In Ontario two were begun in 1937 in Vineland and Leamington.[32]

By 1938 delegates realized the significance of local Bible schools in offering adult education and preparing workers because of their broad accessibility and affordability. The goal of the Conference now envisioned that these local schools would provide students for a provincial Bible school with a regular four-year curriculum. Their graduates would, in turn, become candidates for a Canadian Conference "ministers school," which by now was deemed essential.[33]

Sunday School. However, Christian education was also addressed at a much more basic level. Three papers in 1933 on ministry to children and youth led to a more concerted effort to promote Sunday schools and youth work in the congregations. An ad hoc committee brought a detailed list of recommendations to the 1934 sessions. It included suggestions for age groupings in Sunday school, materials to be used at each level, literature helps for teachers, and even recommendations for singing. The ad hoc Committee for Sunday School and Youth functioned through sub-committees in Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan, and by 1936 also in Alberta and British Columbia. Each reported separately to the annual Conference sessions. However, common concerns moved them increasingly to function as one committee.

Initially the Committee was unable to recommend suitable Bible story books by Mennonite authors. It was concerned that both teachers and children would miss an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective and absorb a Calvinist or Lutheran one by using only Protestant books. By 1937 Jacob H. Janzen, the most gifted writer in the Conference and a well-educated minister, had completed the first part of a collection of Bible stories designed as lessons. The Committee encouraged him to complete the second part. In 1939 it was able to recommend this collection of *Biblische Geschichten* for use in Sunday schools.[34] By then it was also promoting an annual Sunday school convention in each province, as well as Sunday school teacher conferences and courses.

Youth work was promoted largely through the vehicles of choirs and religious-literary "programs" at which the choirs performed; Christian poetry was recited; edifying readings, and usually a sermonette, were presented. These *Jugendverein* presentations, mostly on Sunday nights, have sometimes been identified in English as Christian Endeavour. However, much of the material presented was generated by the various levels of Conference and had a distinct Mennonite flavour.

Another War?

When the Conference met on July 1–4, 1939 in Morden, Manitoba, David Toews was elected as chair for the 24th time in the past 25 years, and Johann G. Rempel was completing his first decade as Conference secretary-treasurer. No doubt, the stable leadership in the executive had been a major factor in the growth and stability of the Conference during the huge influx of new congregations of immigrants and the critical limitations that the drought and Depression of the 1930s brought. The early tensions of 1925 between the arrivals from the USSR and the Conference that accepted them had largely disappeared. Committee memberships and the roster of persons presenting papers came almost equally from the two groups. A worthy successor to H.H. Ewert of Gretna and Johann J. Klassen of Dundurn as frequent presenters of papers was Jacob H. Janzen. Along with Toews and Rempel, these men were very influential in shaping the theology and the sense of "being church" of their generation and beyond.

For Chairman Toews and the Conference, the huge transportation debt incurred in the immigration that followed World War I, while diminished, was still a pressing burden. But his brief report on the broad inter-Mennonite consultation on nonresistance, held in Winkler on May 15, 1939 hinted at the challenges that an impending new war would likely bring.

4

The Work Expands
1939–1953

Barely two months after the 1939 annual Conference sessions in Morden, Manitoba, Canadians learned that as of Sunday, September 10, their country was at war with Germany. *Der Bote*, official organ of the Conference, announced this in the September 13 issue as a brief note in its regular world news column, "Aus Welt und Zeit." During the following months that column regularly carried news of the war. Otherwise, the outbreak of the war—soon to be known as World War II—made no noticeable impact on the paper.

In the September 24 issue, for example, the front page featured the usual devotional column, "Oberlicht," and continued with instalments of two serialized historical accounts: archivist Bernhard Schellenberg's history of 150 years of Chortitza Colony and Heinrich Goerz's story of the Schoensee congregation of the Molotschna Colony in Russia. *Der Bote* did not run any editorials at that time, but in this issue the following quotation appeared in a box on page 2, where an editorial might normally be found: "War does not shrink back even from a tender child in the cradle—war devours the best" (Friedrich Schiller). But for the rest of the year no major article commented on the War.

The churches, however, did engage the topic. The Saskatchewan ministers conference on October 27 included two presentations by Bishop Johann J. Klassen of Dundurn: "Our stance in the current situation," and a more pointed and practical question, "What special work do we ministers have in our congregations during this war time?" At the Manitoba ministers conference November 9–11, Bishop J.P. Bueckert of the Blumenorter church addressed the topic, "The Christian stance toward the current unrest in the world."[1]

Wartime Agenda

At the annual Canadian Conference sessions in Waldheim in July 1940 the War made its presence felt as well. The ministers conference held only an evening session instead of its usual full day of meetings. The delegate session squeezed its normal three-day agenda into one day—9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.[2] To save time the Program Committee suggested that the incumbent Conference executive remain in office for this one day without an election. The 78 delegates—the number had not been this low during the entire decade of the thirties—agreed to forego the reading of some reports to allow more time for the most important ones. The usual *Referate* were not read, but were printed in the *Yearbook* together with the reports and minutes.

A key paper not presented was Johann J. Klassen's on "How Is God's Seriousness Manifested in the Present Situation?" Klassen, an immigrant of 1923, was ordained bishop of the Nordheimer congregation at Dundurn in 1925. Having studied theology at Basel for five years after graduating from the Chortitza teacher-training course, his breadth of knowledge soon ranked him with H.H. Ewert in his ability to address difficult themes. Klassen interpreted the War as a form of God's judgement. The world has not yet seen peace in this century, he said. "Whenever open fighting ceases for a while, the economic battle resumes; but peace and quiet and benevolence toward one another remain elusive."[3] Not only the warring parties but Christendom itself stands under God's judgement. God does not want to harm us in this judgement, but wants to teach us and help us toward greater fruit-bearing.

Then Klassen turned to the delegates. We are grateful that we live in peace and quiet far from the theatre of the War, he said. But we must remember that thousands, who are no more responsible for this War than we are, directly suffer its terrible consequences. May God give us hearts to serve and sacrifice for the relief of the multitude of widows and orphans, of wounded and maimed produced by the War.

Not all Mennonite communities lived "in peace and quiet" during the first year of the War. Many immigrants of the 1920s still maintained strong German cultural, linguistic and social traits; some of them were attracted to the anti-communist stance of Hitler's National Socialist government. In the growing war hysteria anti-German feelings against German-speaking, pacifist Mennonites could quickly run high. Church leaders warned their people against getting mixed up with politics. At the same time they tried to get the public to recognize that, while their church communities were culturally

German by heritage, they were not sympathizers with Germany's military aggression and political stance. Nevertheless, police investigated accusations that the Ebenfelder Mennonite Church in Herschel, Saskatchewan, was an arms depot for German subversives; the Leamington (Ontario) Mennonite Church was ransacked; two Mennonite churches in Vauxhall, Alberta, were burned to the ground in 1940. These and other hostile acts tested Mennonite ability to refrain from retaliation and find ways to become reconciled to their communities.[4]

The abbreviated 1940 Conference sessions, the last ones led by David Toews, closed with the singing of the wistful "Ach mein Herr Jesu, wenn ich dich nicht hätte" (O my Lord Jesus, if I did not have you). Benjamin Ewert had the difficult task of chairing the Conference during the next two tension-filled years. They appear to be the only years in which the Conference closed the annual sessions with singing "God save the King." When J.J. Thiessen began his lengthy tenure as chair in 1943, he chose the hopeful "Jesu geh' voran" (Jesus still lead on) as the closing song.

The work of the Conference during the next decade reflected a strong degree of involvement with numerous other issues raised by the War.

Relief Work. At the 1940 session Bishop David Toews reported on a spring meeting of representatives of the various Mennonite groups of North America in Chicago to discuss co-ordination of relief efforts. Mennonite relief workers were already on site in England and France, and financial giving far surpassed the targets set. As the War progressed it became clear that relief work would be carried out by several inter-Mennonite organizations co-ordinated by Mennonite Central Committee. The Conference as such was not directly involved in this area, leaving its member congregations to participate in the work of the inter-Mennonite group most appropriate to its area and historical background.

Youth Work. Throughout the 1930s the primary vehicles of ministry to youth were the *Jugendverein* (Christian Endeavour program), local and regional choir work, and the annual catechism instruction. Some congregations had Sunday school classes for youth, but many did not. Bible schools were a further avenue for Christian education of young people, but they served a relatively small portion of the total youth of the Conference. These schools were endorsed and promoted in the report of the Sunday School and *Jugendverein* Committee to the 1938 annual sessions in Saskatoon, although the

*The Manitoba Bergthaler partic-
ipated in the Canadian Mennonite
Relief Committee. Mary J.
Loewen served in a convent in
Italy.* Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*

need for "material for our youth meetings" was also identified.

Two things triggered the move toward a more focused youth ministry.[5] Immediately after the CMC sessions in 1938, the General Conference (North America) also met in Saskatoon for its triennial sessions. There the emerging GC Young People's Union had an inspiring program and presence, stimulating several Saskatchewan leaders to action. The War that began a year later raised many apprehensions about whether the youth of the Conference were adequately grounded in the Christian faith, especially the biblical teaching of nonresistance. In 1939 itinerant youth workers were recommended with the notation that presentations in the area of peace and nonresistance be included. The Committee on Faith and Life began in 1939 with a concerted effort to find, produce and disseminate peace-teaching literature.

By 1941 a Conference-related Saskatchewan youth organization was a welcome reality, and a resolution at the annual CMC sessions recommended that the other provinces follow this example.[6] The following year the Conference suggested that each province organize annual youth retreats. It also promoted pamphlet literature on peace teaching and encouraged congregations to use books by Peter A. Rempel, Paul J. Schaefer and D.P. Esau for teaching Mennonite and church history.[7] In 1943 the Conference approved the initiative of the Saskatchewan Youth Organization to purchase the government Experimental Farm at Rosthern—soon to be the Saskatchewan Youth Farm—to further welfare and youth projects. By 1945 a youth

periodical was under consideration.

At the 1946 annual meeting of the Conference, the evening session of the first day was designated a youth evening. Reports from the provinces revealed that the earlier calls for creating youth organizations to plan specific youth activities had been heeded. Indeed, representatives of the provincial youth organizations proposed to the Conference the publishing of a bilingual youth quarterly and setting aside half a day at future annual Conference sessions for youth agenda. The youth programs of the other provinces were not of the magnitude of Saskatchewan's, whose Youth Farm now included a Children's Home and an Invalid Home, but youth work was clearly a significant Conference program.

Alternative Service. At the 1940 sessions Toews reported on his meeting with Prime Minister McKenzie King in Ottawa regarding options for conscientious objectors to war. That a unified Canadian Mennonite position on acceptable services during the War would not come easily was already evident at the inter-Mennonite meeting in Winkler in May 1939. The main division—between the descendants of 1870s immigrants from Russia, who wanted total exemption from all obligation such as they had enjoyed in World War I, and the 1920s immigrants from the USSR, who were prepared to offer alternative service under civilian auspices such as they had rendered in Russia—cut across the Conference membership.[8] The older Conference congregations in Saskatchewan included significant numbers of immigrants from Russia of the 1890s and from the United States, both of which were more open to alternative service than the 1870s group, which claimed total exemption. Since the Manitoba Bergthaler Church firmly sided with the 1870s group of non-Conference *Gemeinden* on this issue, the Manitoba Conference, which had postponed its 1940 sessions, did not resume meetings until after the War.[9] As a result of this difference in approach between the two groups of Russian Mennonites, the Conference worked more closely with the Ontario Swiss Mennonite conferences than with the western non-Conference *Gemeinden* during the War.

The National Resources Mobilization Act passed in June 1940 made it clear that complete exemption from service would not be available. By the following summer alternative service under civilian direction began. Most of the work connected with ministry to the young men in service was done on an inter-Mennonite basis. However, the Conference was now the largest body among the various groups in Canada, and the stature of David Toews meant that

Conscientious Objectors planting trees on Vancouver Island, 1941. Photo:
MHC Archives

much additional time and energy for this ministry would be required of Conference leaders and congregations.

Active Military Service. Persons in good standing in one of the historic peace churches were generally accepted as conscientious objectors (COs) with little difficulty. A few were denied this status and served brief periods of time in prison. Others chose or accepted non-combatant roles, especially in the medical corps. Still others, against the teaching and wish of the church, entered active military service. At the 1946 sessions the Conference approved a motion to thank the COs for their service. At the same time, another resolution counselled a reconciling approach to those who had engaged in military service, calling both them and their congregations, the church, to repentance. A third resolution indicated that the Conference would not in future endorse even non-combatant service

Although under civilian administration, the lives of alternative service workers were strictly regulated. Clayton Burkholder of Breslau, Ontario, was posted to Camp Langford on Vancouver Island. Credit: Conrad Grebel College Archives

Identification No 82 30

B.C. FOREST SERVICE
A.S.W. PROJECTS

Bearer... Clayton Burkholder

Project ... Camp C-4, Langford

HAS BEEN GRANTED LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM CAMP

To ... Victorie

FROM

Time ... 4 P.M.   Date ... June 27, 1943.

TO

Time ... 12 P.M.   Date ... June 27, 1943

A.S.W. 2—3M-243-3204 (2)   Foreman or Supervisor

in the medical corps as long as it was under direct military supervision.[10] However, the Conference recognized that decisions of this kind would be negotiated by a broadly representative inter-Mennonite group so that it would not make a unilateral final decision.

Refugee Immigration. Even as these various extra war-related activities taxed the resources of congregations and the Conference, leaders already anticipated new work for the Board of Colonization as soon as hostilities would cease. Therefore, it became a matter of increasing urgency to pay off the remaining debt still owed to the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) for transporting needy immigrants on credit in the 1920s. In 1944 the Conference recommended a $1 per member levy toward this transportation debt. The following year it resolved to pay off the remaining debt by year-end and to invite the Mennonite Brethren Conference to join them in this resolve. With some incentives from the CPR, the debt was finally retired in 1946, not long before the death of David Toews.[11]

As in the 1920s, the major work connected with the immigration of refugees from Europe fell to the inter-Mennonite Board of Colonization. However, since J.J. Thiessen of the CMC had succeeded the 76-year-old David Toews, who resigned as Colonization Board chair in 1946, the Conference remained heavily involved. With the six thousand refugees who came to Canada during 1947–1949 and the further 2,500 during the 1950s, the post-World War II Mennonite immigration movement was larger than that of the 1870s.[12] Included in this total were over a thousand German Mennonites from the Danzig and Prussian areas.[13]

Not nearly all of these immigrants joined congregations of the CMC, and the impact of those who did could not match that of the much larger group of the 1920s. Nevertheless, their influence was strongly felt, especially in some urban congregations. In Winnipeg the Home Missions Committee in 1948 appointed Rev. Jacob Toews to work primarily among the new refugee immigrants in Winnipeg. Two years later the group he had gathered joined the Conference as the Winnipeg Mission congregation (see Table 4.1). Other Canadian cities with a pre-War Russian Mennonite population base also experienced a large influx. Between the 1941 and 1951 federal censuses, Winnipeg, Vancouver, St. Catharines, Saskatoon and Calgary all more than doubled their Mennonite population.[14] However, the impact of that increase on CMC congregations and on the Conference itself was not immediately felt.

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Table 4.1
Member Congregations Admitted 1940–1953
A=Amalgamated, C=Closed

* The Conference of United Mennonite Churches in B.C. was accepted as a member of the CMC in 1937. Individual "Gemeinden" (congregations) and "Gruppen" (groups) are listed here the first time they are identified in the statistical section of the *Jahrbuch*.

**Unless otherwise indicated, the congregation's complete name includes "Mennonite Church."

Name**	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership Adm.	1952	1999
Mission[1]	Mission City BC	1939*	1940	21	107	260
Vauxhall[2]	Vauxhall AB	1940	1938	39	55	36
Oliver[3]	Oliver BC	1940*	1938	15	52	C
Steinbach[4]	Steinbach MB	1942	1942	55	155	434
Lacombe[5]	Lacombe AB	1942	1941	36	C	–
Capeland[6]	Main Centre SK	1943	–	56	29	C
Renata[7]	Renata BC	1944*	–	13	C	–

[1] Services began in 1938; formal organization and application for membership in the Conference of United Mennonite Churches in B.C. in 1940; name changed to Cedar Valley Mennonite Church after relocating to Cedar Valley Road. Dick Rempel, "United Mennonite Church, Mission City, British Columbia," unpublished paper, 1956. MHCA, Vertical File. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 40, 113–114.
[2] Harder, *The Vauxhall Mennonite Church*.
[3] Mennonite settlement began in 1933; an informal worshipping group organized as a congregation in 1938; closed in 1987. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 16, 23–24; 111.
[4] Since the Schoenwieser Bruderschaft meeting had opposed the Steinbach request for independence, its delegates opposed Steinbach's application for Conference membership. After some lobbying by influential bishops, the opposition was withdrawn. *Jahrbuch 1942*, 17, 24; Eugene Derksen, Abram Berg and Evelyn Peters-Rojas, "Early Beginnings," in *Steinbach Mennonite Church 1942–1992*, ed. Elizabeth Abrams, et al (Steinbach: Steinbach Mennonite Church, 1992), 3; Enns, *Jubilate*, 56.
[5] Dissolved in 1945. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 113. *Jahrbuch 1950*, 18, notes that the Lacombe group no longer functioned as a congregation.
[6] First applied in 1941, but action was postponed because Capeland practised immersion baptism alongside of sprinkling; accepted in 1943 without changing baptismal practice, because the congregation had been admitted as a member by the GCMC. Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 326, 346. *Jahrbuch* has no data after 1955.
[7] The first Mennonite settlement in B.C. was founded in Renata in 1907. The "group" is listed only in *Jahrbuch 1944* and *1945* with 11 members. In 1969 the entire community was flooded out of existence under the Columbia River Treaty. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 38–39.

Name**	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership Adm.	1952	1999
Glenlea[8]	Glenlea MB	1945	1926	44	55	134
Niverville[9]	Niverville MB	1945	1924	61	125	157
Arnaud[10]	Arnaud MB	1945	1944	82	112	93
St. Catharines UM	St. Catharines ON	1946	–	63	289	547
Bethel Mission[11]	Winnipeg MB	1946	1937	75	175	584
Scarboro[12]	Calgary AB	1946	1946	28	55	247
Chilliwack[13]	Chilliwack BC	1947*	1945	47	162	303
Rutland[14]	Rutland BC	1947*	1947	24	A	–

[8] Informal worship services of a new immigrants began in 1925; in 1928 they affiliated with the Schoenwieser Gemeinde; became an independent congregation in 1945. John Friesen, *The Glenlea Mennonite Church History* (Winnipeg: Fortress Software Incorporated, 2002).

[9] Began in 1924 as an affiliate of the Schoenwieser Gemeinde; became independent in 1945. Otto Loeppky, "Niverville Mennonite Church," unpublished paper, 1965. MHCA, Vertical File.

[10] Originally part of the Lichtenauer Gemeinde (accepted 1926); became an independent congregation because of the distance to St. Elizabeth. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 179.

[11] Worship services began in 1921, when Benjamin Ewert moved to Winnipeg as *Reiseprediger* of the Conference. Immigrants from Russia joining the group in the 1920s organized as Schoenwieser Gemeinde, of which the Winnipeg group later became First Mennonite Church. Ewert began a new group of non-immigrants in 1937, supported by the GC Home Mission Committee; became Bethel Mennonite Church on becoming self-sustaining. Betty Dyck, *Bethel: Pioneering in Faith* (Winnipeg: Bethel Mennonite Church, 1988); Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 191–192.

[12] Occasional worship services in private homes began in 1931, mostly for single women working in Calgary. In 1944 the Alberta Mennonite Conference began to provide regular ministerial services. At the formal organization in 1946 the congregation chose Scarboro as its name, as it was then meeting in the Scarboro United Church building; later became First Mennonite. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 75–81.

[13] Mennonites from the prairie provinces in East Chilliwack organized in 1945 as Westheimer Mennonitengemeinde. The name changed to Eden Mennonite Church in 1961 when a new building was erected. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 114–116.

[14] Rutland was the home community of Bishop Jacob A. Janzen, the first leader. Worship services began in 1946 in homes. Formal organization with 34 charter members took place in 1947. It became First Mennonite Church of Kelowna and appears as Rutland only in the statistical reports in *Jahrbuch 1947*. Bev and Ernie Redekop, "First Mennonite Church, Kelowna," unpublished paper, 1989. MHCA, Vertical File.

Name**	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership Adm.	1952	1999
Arden-Austin[15]	Manitoba	1947	–	200	122	–
Erie View UM	Erie View ON	1947	–	30	43	47
Toronto UM[16]	Toronto ON	1948	–	25	19	184
First Mennonite[17]	Chilliwack BC	1949	1947	55	78	C
Dunnville UM	Dunnville ON	1949	–	48	50	18
First Mennonite[18]	Kelowna BC	1949	1947	49	58	77
United Mennonite[19]	Swan Plain SK	1949	–	29	19	C
South Westminster	Surrey BC[20]	1950	1946	29	40	50
Winnipeg Mission[21]	Winnipeg MB	1950	1950	45	98	443
Austin-MacGregor	Manitoba MB[22]	1950	–	60	55	174

[15] Since 1932 various Manitoba ministers served the Mennonites in the Arden-MacGregor area. In 1946 Bishop David Schulz baptized 11 persons, "after which the group claimed Bergthaler affiliation." Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 170, 172. Hence there was no formal application for membership in the Conference. The statistical table in *Jahrbuch 1947* lists Arden-Austin with 200 members, dropping to 180 the next year. *Jahrbuch 1950* lists Arden-Gladstone with 180 members; *Jahrbuch 1951* has Arden-Gladstone with 112 members and Austin-MacGregor with 60. *Jahrbuch 1952* has Gladstone Mission with 122 and MacGregor Mission with 55 members. The next two years they are lumped together as Bergthaler Northwest. After that their membership is listed under the main Bergthaler entry until 1973 when Gladstone Bergthaler and MacGregor Bergthaler appear as independent congregations. See Table 5.6 for 1999 membership.

[16] Toronto is first included in the statistical report of *Jahrbuch 1948* with 25 members even though there is no record of a formal action to receive this congregation.

[17] Emerged as a split from Chilliwack Mennonite in 1947 over theological differences; dissolved in 1978. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 114–115.

[18] See Rutland Mennonite above.

[19] Julius H. Thiessen was leader of the United Mennonite Church of Swan Plain until 1963; the last reported membership was 13 in 1966.

[20] Services began in 1939; the first church building was completed in 1943 with help from three levels of Conference; the congregation, now Cedar Hills Mennonite Church, joined the B.C. Conference in 1946. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 40, 117.

[21] The Winnipeg mission was begun in 1948 by the Manitoba Conference as a ministry to post-World War II immigrants. The name "Winnipeg Mennonite Mission Church," chosen by the 43 charter members in 1950, was changed in 1955 to Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church. *25 Jahre Sargent Avenue Mennonitengemeinde, 1950 – 1975*.

[22] See note for Arden-Austin above. The 1999 membership is for MacGregor.

Name**	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership		
				Adm.	1952	1999
Carman Mission[23]	Carman MB	1950	–	90	95	126
Mayfair[24]	Saskatoon SK	1952	–	66	66	284
United Mennonite	Harrow ON	1952	–	47	47	81
Clearbrook[25]	Clearbrook BC	1952	1952	119	119	133

A Bible College

The ministers conference in 1937 explored styles of ministry in the congregation: the multiple lay-minister system long used in Mennonite churches and the one-person pastor system common in most Protestant denominations and increasingly in General Conference congregations in the United States. In a further paper David Toews addressed a related question: Has the time come for us to consider organizing a *Predigerschule* (school for ministers)? The mood of the assembled ministers was affirmative, both because of the current state of society with its materialism, false teachings and unfaith; and because of the higher level of education of many church members.[15]

The next year this concern came to the floor of the delegate conference in a resolution following the report on Bible schools. While strongly endorsing local, often congregationally-based, Bible schools, the unanimously adopted resolution recommended a "genuine 4-year Bible school" in which "graduates" of local schools could prepare for entrance into a school for ministers which had become "essential."[16] The idea was kept alive in subsequent years, but

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[23] In 1945 Benjamin Ewert reported that the Mennonite group at Carman was comprised of persons from 10 different Mennonite backgrounds. The congregation, reported in *Jahrbuch 1951*, was led by Henry Funk, a Home Missions Committee worker. From 1954 to 1969 the congregation was part of the Bergthaler Church; now Carman Mennonite Church. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 169.

[24] Begun in 1949 as a mission to rural Mennonites moving to Saskatoon who did not feel comfortable in First Mennonite; no Conference action was taken to accept Mayfair as a member; first included in the delegate list in 1952. In 1988 the name was changed to Cornerstone Church (Mennonite).

[25] A daughter congregation of West Abbotsford, whose membership had mushroomed from 145 in 1947 to 432, and outgrown two building expansions in three years. In 1953 West Abbotsford had 328 members. David F. Loewen, *Living Stones: A History of the West Abbotsford Mennonite Church 1936–1986* (Abbotsford: West Abbotsford Mennonite Church, 1987), 21–22.

no action was taken. At the 1941 sessions a motion to place this on the agenda for the following year was defeated. The urgency had suddenly become too great! A committee of five was immediately elected to take action and mandated to raise funds directly in the congregations to begin such a school.[17]

The committee recommended concrete action to the 1942 sessions. The "extended Bible school" (*erweiterte Bibelschule*), as it was now referred to, was to begin modestly by having the Conference appoint one faculty member to the existing Rosthern Bible School to offer advanced courses to students who had the equivalent of a four-year Bible school preparation.[18] Perhaps the most significant action of the committee, however, was to elect J.J. Thiessen of Saskatoon as its chair.[19] Thiessen became the driving force behind the efforts of the Conference to begin an institution of higher biblical education. However, 1943 brought discouragement. Even the modest existing Bible schools, especially in Ontario and British Columbia, were struggling for their existence, lacking students, teachers and funding. In view of this Thiessen recommended that the idea of a "higher school" be dropped and the committee dissolved.[20] The Conference disagreed.

The unexpectedly high rate of Canadian Mennonite enlistment in active military service, estimated at 4,500 compared to 7,500 in alternative service,[21] was attributed in part to a failure of the congregations to teach biblical nonresistance effectively. Most lay ministers had little or no formal theological education to help them in this task. The congregationally-based Bible schools for the most part had "lay" teachers and no textbooks apart from the catechism to teach Mennonite history and doctrine.[22] Those who attended evangelical Bible schools in preparation for congregational ministry were more likely to have been exposed to the concept of patriotism than to the teaching of nonresistance. In general, the formal preparation of ministers had not kept up with the rise in general educational level of young people in the church.

When the Mennonite Brethren succeeded in starting a Bible College in 1944, Conference leaders explored making it a joint venture. B.B. Janz of Coaldale, the prime promoter of Mennonite Brethren Bible College, was a close colleague of J.J. Thiessen in colonization work and the inter-Mennonite work arising from the War. But the time was not ripe for such cooperation.[23]

In July 1945 a consultation just prior to the Conference session recommended the following plan. A higher Bible school was to be

opened in Rosthern under the direction of a committee of 12 representing all five provinces of the Conference. Entrance requirements would be grade 12, not completion of a four-year Bible school program as suggested previously. Two generous scholarships per province would ensure a minimum student body. The Conference approved and elected 12 members to the largest committee in its history to undertake this project.[24] From the Committee's report to the Conference in 1946 it is clear that a major obstacle to implementing the resolution was the lack of a qualified leading teacher for what was now referred to as a Bible college. Not finding anyone within the Conference with the needed academic qualifications, it was looking in the United States.[25]

The 1947 Conference session finally heard a definitive recommendation: the higher Bible school would begin in the Bethel Mission church building in Winnipeg with Arnold J. Regier as president. The 35-year-old Regier, born in Elbing, Kansas, was a graduate of Bethel College in Newton and Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Chicago. Since 1944 he had been teaching at the Bible

Henry Wall teaching in the temporary CMBC classroom in the basement of Bethel Mission Church, 1948. Photo: MHC Archives

The first graduating class of CMBC took its final year on the more spacious premises of the stately mansion at 515 Wellington Crescent, Winnipeg, acquired in time for the fall term, 1949. Photo: MHC Archives

Academy of Bethel College. The minutes do not elaborate on the "lengthy discussion" that preceded approval of the proposal, except to indicate that the Committee be empowered to purchase an appropriate building to house the college, provided that a debt of no more than $15,000 would be incurred.[26] Delegates may well have questioned whether an American-born president would or could provide the kind of leadership needed to train ministers for German-speaking congregations and asked for an explanation for the unexpected shift from Rosthern, the only previously indicated location, to Winnipeg. At least two factors motivated the Committee, especially its chair, to choose this site. The marginalization experienced by the large Manitoba Bergthaler congregation, co-founder of the Conference, because of its identification with the non-Conference 1870s immigrant groups during the War, should be reversed. Secondly, the accusation that Saskatchewan had disproportionate influence in Conference affairs and leadership would be addressed by this move.[27]

Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) opened in October 1947 in the renovated basement of Bethel Mission Church with a staff of five and a student body of thirty-three. The first graduates of the three-year program were not expected until 1950, and their influence in the Conference awaited the future. However, locating the school in

Winnipeg marked the beginning of a shift of the Conference "centre" from Saskatchewan to Manitoba. And the co-ed program already signalled that women would have a much higher visibility in the future leadership pool of the Conference. While only two of the first 12 graduates in 1950 were women, half of the first-year class that year was female.[28]

The Schoenwieser Controversy

At its founding the Conference had included adherence to a widely used Mennonite confession of faith as one of the prerequisites for a congregation to receive membership. In many congregations the members heard the *Glaubensartikel* (articles of faith) annually in the course of catechism instruction. Through this regular teaching, more than through their being enshrined in the Constitution, these articles came to define orthodox faith for many members and lay leaders alike.

The papers regularly presented at annual delegate sessions and the discussion they generated aimed at clarifying the practical application or reinforcing the teaching of one or another of the articles. Even when the theme of an assigned paper did not fit any specific article of the Confession, it was assumed that the presenter's conclusions would be in keeping with the articles as a whole. The ministers conference provided a context in which theological issues could be explored somewhat more freely, among teaching colleagues as it were. But even in that setting there was a strong expectation that on most issues a consensus would be reached, or at least that divergent positions should be compatible with the Confession as a whole.

At a regional ministers conference in September 1944 in Springstein that expectation was put to the test. Bishop Johann Enns of the Schoenwieser Gemeinde presented a paper on the 16th-century Anabaptist, Hans Denk.[29] Enns followed the interpretation given by Ludwig Keller and concluded with an eight-point summary of Denk's theology. In the original manuscript the final point of this summary identifies "the absolute necessity of following Jesus in holy living in order to be saved." However, the last five points had been renumbered in the manuscript, and in his presentation Enns may well have ended with the new #8, which read: "an eventual pardon for all."[30]

Concern about his latter point became an issue, apparently after the Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization (MMYO) engaged Enns as a worker to give leadership in its emerging program.[31] In his response

to those who criticized the MMYO for employing him, Enns explained why he was personally sympathetic to Denk's biblical exegesis of supporting God's desire for an eventual salvation for all and the ability of an almighty God to achieve this.[32] For a variety of reasons this sincerely motivated exploration of the thought of an important Anabaptist exponent of discipleship developed into a crisis, at first at the provincial level,[33] and quickly also at the Canadian Conference, since the Manitoba Conference had not met since 1939.[34]

In earlier times a Mennonite minister seeming to hold an unorthodox theological position would be counselled and admonished by ministerial colleagues in his *Gemeinde* under the leadership of the Bishop (*Ältester*). If an *Ältester* held such views, the process could, at the initiative of the *Gemeinde*, involve *Ältesten* of sister *Gemeinden* in the vicinity. Such an invitation did not come from the Schoenwieser. Nevertheless, several delegations of fellow *Ältesten* met with Enns at the initiative of regional ministers meetings. The Manitoba Conference had, in a sense, taken the place of such less formal consultation among *Ältesten*, at least since its official organization in 1936. But in the context of the War its 1940 session had been postponed, effectively ending its existence until reorganization in 1947. Manitoba ministers conferences continued during these years in various configurations, some of which included representatives from *Gemeinden* outside of the CMC.[35]

One group of Manitoba church leaders decided to ask the 1945 CMC ministers conference at Eigenheim to address the theological issue of eventual universal salvation in principle, apart from any specific case.[36] For various reasons this did not happen. In fact, Enns was elected as chair of that ministers conference and led its sessions. But on July 4, the final day of the regular Conference sessions, the Conference executive called a special in-camera, noon-hour meeting, inviting members of the Program Committee (whose membership included Enns) and all *Ältesten* present. On very short notice Enns explained his position. There was some discussion; then a resolution, prepared on request by Bishops J.J. Nickel, Langham, and J.J. Wichert, Vineland, was approved. The resolution forthrightly rejected universalism as unbiblical, but did not name persons or congregations holding such views.[37] The issue was not resolved by this action.

The ministers of one group of Manitoba congregations met with Enns and the rest of the Schoenwieser leaders later in July. They were satisfied that Enns did not teach or preach universal salvation, but spoke about it in closed circles because it was a serious personal

concern for him. Since he also reiterated his faith in the inspiration of the Bible and in miracles, the group affirmed him as standing on a positive biblical basis and expressed their wish to remain in full fellowship with him.[38] A second regional meeting of ministers in Altona a month later rejected the teaching of universal salvation but accepted the defence by P.J. Schaefer of the Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization for still employing Enns, since he was still recognized as a Conference worker.[39]

This process of mediation might well have continued to an acceptable resolution but it was derailed when J.G. Rempel as Conference secretary chose to respond publicly and officially—via a letter in *Der Bote*—to a privately communicated resolution of the Schoenwieser ministerial, criticizing the closed meeting at the July conference in Eigenheim. In the letter Rempel named the Schoenwieser Gemeinde and warned that Enns would teach and preach this doctrine and lead youth astray, even though Enns had consistently said that he did not do this and would not do so.[40]

The issue was now public and personal. A thick file of letters accumulated in the Conference executive files, some sober and thoughtful, many more polemic and polarizing. The scholarly Jacob H. Janzen of Waterloo confessed his unease about all this intemperate language to Conference chair, J.J. Thiessen: "If it were not so sad, I would laugh myself crooked about it." Each side had now become odious to the other.[41] The issue had taken on the character of a heresy trial. In this atmosphere a special meeting took place on the "neutral" ground of Bethel Mission in Winnipeg; its ministers, Benjamin Ewert and I.I. Friesen, had consistently tried to take a mediating role. On June 24, 1946 the meeting formulated a resolution to present at the coming Conference sessions in Beamsville. The four-point statement condemned the position of universalism as unbiblical and noted that only congregations that were in agreement and whose leadership supported this statement could be members of the Conference.[42] When the Conference approved this resolution, it in effect excluded the Schoenwieser congregation.[43]The Conference Yearbooks reflect this reality. Its membership statistics for 1946 note that no report was received from the Schoenwieser congregation; in 1947 and 1948 Schoenwieser was omitted from the table.

With the congregation effectively out of the CMC and the Manitoba Conference not functioning, the process of reconciliation came to a standstill. The Church Unity Committee of the General Conference then stepped into the breach and began a new round of

mediation. The occasion was the gathering of the Mennonite World Conference in Newton, Kansas, in the summer of 1948. W.F. Unruh invited leaders of the CMC and of the Schoenwieser congregation to meet with the executive of the General Conference and its Church Unity Committee, of which he was secretary, to see what process might begin to resolve the standoff.

This initiative led to two meetings at Bethel Mission Church in Winnipeg. The first, in August 1948, involved the CMC executive and the Committee on Faith and Life together with the Schoenwieser ministerial under the leadership of the GC Church Unity Committee. Both sides confessed mistakes they had made, asked for forgiveness and indicated a willingness to forgive.[44] The second meeting in March 1949 extended the circle to include the ministers of the Manitoba congregations, again under Church Unity Committee leadership. After considerable discussion and clarification of positions, the body of ministers was satisfied that Bishop Enns and the Schoenwieser congregation could accept the four-point resolution the Conference had adopted at Beamsville in 1946. A motion declaring the group's full confidence in Enns and his congregation was passed unanimously.[45]

This mediation and reconciliation process was brought to its formal conclusion in July 1949 at the Conference sessions in Greendale, B.C. The ministers conference first affirmed the resolution of the March meeting, with four dissenting votes, then recommended it to the delegate session where it was approved with a vote of 267 to 38.[46] With that the "restoration of brotherly relations with the Schoenwieser Gemeinde" had been effected at the Canadian Conference level. In Manitoba neither side took the initiative to reunite until 1968, and that only after Enns had retired as bishop in 1965.[47]

In seeking to interpret this sorry event, various suggestions, all with some merit but none fully convincing, have emerged: that this was a rural-urban struggle, that it was fed by Manitoba-Saskatchewan rivalry in Canadian Conference matters, that the controversy had more to do with lifestyle than doctrine. None of these interpretations takes seriously enough the formal issue that lay at the heart of the accusations, namely, that the teaching of universalism represented a serious threat to the Conference. Curiously, no evidence was ever presented that Enns taught this doctrine, nor did those who argued that it was a present danger offer any data or even anecdotal proof that it was a threat.
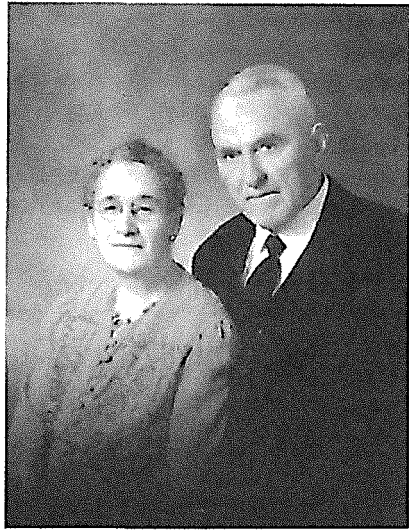
Benjamin (1870–1958) and Emilie Ruth (1873–1949) Ewert. Photo: MHC Archives

This event illustrated two church polity issues. First, the Conference Constitution clearly affirmed congregational autonomy. What were its limits? Secondly, what was the authority of *Ältesten* now that a "conference" model of association of *Gemeinden* had been adopted? A third, different point that the controversy illustrated is that, just as the Conference was moving toward a "higher Bible school"—because the general educational level of church members could no longer be served satisfactorily by lay ministers without some formal biblical studies—it showed how fearful many of these lay ministers were of exploring "dangerous" but unavoidable questions arising from a concerted study of the Bible and of Anabaptist history and theology.

The First Fifty Years in Retrospect

In 1952 the Conference met in the auditorium of Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna for its fiftieth annual sessions. Under the "overcast political skies" caused by the Korean War, delegates reflected on the past and pondered new directions for the future of the church.

They could look back on growth in a number of areas. The Conference had expanded from two *Gemeinden* in two provinces, to 68 congregations spread from Ontario to British Columbia, with 136 worship locations and 128 Sunday schools. Combined congregational

membership had grown from approximately 800 to over 15,000. Secondary schools in Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan helped to prepare teachers for Mennonite communities. Each province had at least one Bible school to equip workers for various ministries in the congregation. The Canadian Mennonite Youth Organization was beginning to provide a new focus for youth ministry. A degree-granting Bible College was graduating candidates for pastoral ministry.

More than anyone else, Benjamin Ewert symbolizes the first 50 years of the Conference. From the Tiefengrund meeting in 1902 through 1952, he attended every annual session except one; served on numerous committees, including 19 years on the executive; and kept his finger on the pulse of all congregations as statistician, archivist, reporter and 21 years as Reiseprediger. *David Toews said of him: "Ewert knows Canada better than anyone else. He knows about every district in which our members live, and knows how to get there." John Thiessen, executive secretary of the GC Mission Board added: "He knew them all, he loved them all."* Der Bote, 20 August 1958

Judging by the high percentage of *Gemeinden* represented at most annual sessions, the Conference had become a family of congregations with a strong sense of belonging together. For 25 years David Toews had both symbolized and worked at creating this family sense from his position as Conference chair. As chair of the inter-Mennonite Board of Colonization his influence extended far beyond the Conference; as bishop of the Rosenorter Gemeinde and principal and later board chair of Rosthern Junior College he had added significance for Saskatchewan. As Conference chair since 1943, J.J. Thiessen continued his mentor's direction, but as a 1920s immigrant and urban bishop, differences in approach were natural. The practice of celebrating communion at annual sessions, for example, seems to have begun in 1948.[48]

Congregations remained largely rural and agricultural, but irrigation farming in Alberta and fruit growing in Ontario and British Columbia added diversity to an earlier era dominated by grain growing and mixed farming. The common language for church life was still High German. The division between descendants of 1870s

and 1920s immigrants that still loomed large in the 1940s had become largely irrelevant to the younger generation by the 1950s. The post-War immigrants were integrating very rapidly.

New Developments

A number of recent developments pointed to the arrival of a new era in the life of the Conference. While the "central Canada" designation had been removed from its name in 1932, its Saskatchewan-Manitoba character lingered. Only once before the end of the War had the annual sessions been held outside of these "central" provinces—in Rosemary, Alberta, in 1937. When both Ontario and British Columbia extended invitations to hold the 1940 sessions in their province, the executive was concerned that a meeting "on the periphery" would seriously decrease attendance and decided instead on Waldheim, Saskatchewan. The United Mennonites of British Columbia sent one delegate to the abbreviated one-day session, but Ontario did not send anyone.[49]

This changed rapidly after the War. At Beamsville, Ontario, in 1946, four Ontario congregations sent a total of 52 delegates. At Coaldale the following year, seven Alberta congregations were represented by 29 delegates, while five Ontario congregations sent seven and the B.C. churches eleven. The first Conference meeting in B.C.—at Greendale (Sardis) in 1949—drew a record number of delegates, including 50 B.C. representatives from 12 congregations and nine from seven Ontario congregations at the other "periphery." By 1951 a broader rotation schedule for annual sessions was well on the way to becoming established when the Conference met at Leamington. Ontario's 72 representatives from eight congregations demonstrated that it was no longer a marginal part of the Conference. And the distances were no longer as formidable. Nine trekked across the Rockies, the Prairies and the Canadian Shield to give B.C. a significant presence.

Sociologist Jacob Peters characterized the period from 1903 to 1954 as "the committee era" in which the ongoing work of the Conference between annual sessions was carried out by functional committees struck on the basis of perceived need.[50] At the 1952 sessions ten committees functioned. The Conference executive and several other committees (Program, Sunday School and Jugendverein, Faith and Life, and the long-standing Poor-Relief) had three members. Rather than running a program of its own, the four-member Relief Committee functioned more as a co-ordinating body to

facilitate channelling aid through inter-Mennonite organizations. Home and Foreign Missions had five members each, one per province; Education also had five, but not representing provinces or institutions. The Bible College Committee was the largest with 12 members.

This system, with its proliferation of committees, each accountable directly to the delegate body, was showing signs of strain. Piecemeal response to the overlap in committee function did not solve the problem in the long run.

Each committee was expected to generate its own funds and find suitable workers as required or possible. The elected Conference secretary-treasurer oversaw the finances of the Conference, but each committee managed its own funds. One cannot properly speak of a Conference budget in 1952. The approximately $110,000 in available funds for the year was spread over seven committees. The lion's share of this income (approximately $80,000) went directly to the General Conference in Kansas and to CMBC. As Table 4.2 shows, all committees had a slight surplus at year-end. In his statistical summary in the 1951 *Yearbook*, however, secretary-treasurer Johann G. Rempel did not use the total from Table 4.2 in assessing the stewardship of the Conference, but rather $448,823.27, the total income reported by all the member congregations of the CMC. That, he implied, was where the main work of the Conference took place. Nevertheless, the proliferation of conference treasuries was becoming problematic.

Table 4.2
CMC 1952 Financial Reports

Committee	Income	Expenses	Balance
Foreign Mission*	$44,405.25	$44,405.25	0.00
Poor-Relief (*Armenpflege*)	4,708.15	2,810.15	1,897.21
Home Mission	14,082.26	12,392.88	1,689.38
Sunday School & Jugendverein	2,179.91	2,173.27	6.19
Executive Committee	7,225.14	6,152.78	1,072.36
Can. Menn. Bible College	35,502.45	33,370.50	2,131.95
Can. Menn. Youth Organization	1,619.92	604.42	1,015.50
Totals	109,723.08	101,909.15	ca.7,813**

* Monies flowing through the treasury of the Committee to the Foreign Missions Committee of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

** Figures above are as reported by each committee; since in a few cases income less expenses does not yield the indicated balance, a "reconciled" balance does not result.

Johann G. Rempel (1890–1963) gained broad administrative experience in Russia during WWI and the revolutionary years. In Canada he served as minister in Langham, 1923–1935, Bible school teacher in Rosthern for 16 years, and succeeded David Toews as bishop of the Rosenorter Gemeinde, 1946–1954. Among his many services to the CMC were 18 years as secretary of the executive. Photo: Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*

Committee members continued to be predominantly ordained men (92 percent in 1952). Since there was no limit on the number of consecutive years one could remain on a committee, or on the number of committees on which one could serve simultaneously, this allowed for a concentration of "power" in a relatively small group of people. In 1952, the 54 committee positions were held by 36 persons; 17 bishops held 57 percent of the seats, ministers and deacons another 37 percent, leaving only three positions (6 percent) for laymen. Women were still entirely absent from formal Conference positions.

"Gift discernment" in those early years of Conference life meant that once someone had been found to do well in a particular office, there was no reason for change until the incumbent declined further service. Thus, David Toews chaired the Conference for 26 of the first 50 years; Benjamin Ewert and Johann G. Rempel were on the executive a total of 18 years each, Rempel as secretary in an unbroken stretch from 1930 to 1947. Many others served similarly long terms on less demanding committees. While this produced what Peters calls an "ecclesiastical elite,"[51] the men elected to these positions saw them not as more power, but more work—for no pay! Most of them also had a strong sense of calling and responsibility to serve when asked. The records do not show any attempt to unseat long-time incumbents—but then, official records seldom note incipient revolts.

Widening the Fellowship

Among the ideals of the founders of the Conference was the hope that it could become an umbrella for all Mennonite groups in Canada to unite. In the early decades, Conference sessions regularly had visiting observers from other Mennonite groups, who were given full "delegate" privileges. Numerous congregations, formed by Mennonite and Hutterite immigrants from the United States and by the 1920s immigrants from the USSR, joined the Conference and were integrated into it. Many refugee immigrants from Prussia and the USSR after World War II likewise found a home in the Conference. However, the older Swiss-South German congregations in Ontario and the west, as well as the Mennonite Brethren, Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, Kleine Gemeinde, Church of God in Christ Mennonite, and Bruderthaler, had connections with their own larger North American conference organizations and did not need or want the CMC umbrella. Sommerfelder, Chortitzer and Reinländer in Manitoba and Saskatchewan had much in common with Bergthaler and Rosenorter. Yet, they did not join either; nor did the Rudnerweider, who emerged in 1937 through a renewal movement in Manitoba, stimulated by the evangelism services of I.P. Friesen, a minister in the Conference. The Conference worked extensively with all of these groups in relief, immigration and alternative service work, but this did not lead to further uniting of denominations. In this area, there was work left to do, if the original vision was to be fulfilled.

Anniversary Projects

A significant outcome of the 50th anniversary was the first writing of a comprehensive history of the Conference. Johann G. Rempel had developed a large constituency of readers through his editing of the annual yearbook of Conference proceedings during his 18 years as Conference secretary, and especially through his writing of the four volumes of *Biblische Geschichten*—Sunday school lessons in the form of Bible stories for teachers and workbooks for Sunday school children. A significant feature of his two-volume *Fünfzig Jahre Konferenzbestrebungen* (Fifty Years of Conference Endeavours) were the 200-plus biographical sketches of congregational and conference leaders. A companion volume, *Jubiläum-Album der Konferenz der Mennoniten in Canada 1902–1952* (Jubilee Album of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada), provided a pictorial supplement to the written history.

Johann G. Rempel contributed much to the Christian education of children through his four volumes of Bible stories and his editing of the General Conference children's paper, Der Kinderbote *for 18 years.*

Two other actions had a less immediate impact. First, the Conference resolved to clarify its position on archival holdings and to establish a Mennonite historical library at CMBC. In 1949 the College had acquired its own campus, a stately old mansion on Wellington Crescent just across the Assiniboine River from the crowded Bethel Mission church basement in which it began. In 1952 Gerhard Lohrenz joined the faculty. With the publishing of his history of the Russian Mennonite colony of Zagradovka in 1947, Lohrenz had already gained some recognition as an historian who could give leadership in shaping an archival policy for the Conference and in establishing the desired historical library.

Secondly, to honour and remember its founders the Conference approved building an "Ebenezer Auditorium" on the College campus. It is not clear what kind of building this motion anticipated. When the College acquired a 24-acre campus in Tuxedo shortly afterward, the first classroom-administration building erected in 1955 included a spacious chapel. At the dedication of the building in January 1956, the first choir song in the new chapel, "Wie heilig ist diese Stätte," (How holy is this place!), expressed the gratitude of the constituency for this "Ebenezer"—"hitherto the Lord has helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12).

5

Internal Shifts and External Witness
1954–1971

When the Conference celebrated its first half century in 1952, it was a very different group from that first delegate gathering in 1903. Manitoba and Saskatchewan congregations still dominated numerically, as Table 5.1 shows, but the almost five thousand members in Ontario and British Columbia assured that the Conference would no longer be a prairie community. Indeed, at the 1954 sessions delegates agreed to respect the desire of the provincial conferences of British Columbia and Ontario to nominate their own candidates for election to CMC boards.[1]

Congregations were becoming larger. Alberta and Manitoba had only two congregations each with fewer than a hundred members; Ontario and British Columbia only four each.

Table 5.1
Conference Membership in 1954*

Province	No. of Congregations	Members	Average
Ontario	10	2,777	278
Manitoba	16	6,664	403[2]
Saskatchewan	27	3,690	137
Alberta	9	1,289	143
British Columbia	14	2,104	150
Total	75	16,317	218

*Based on statistical report in *Jahrbuch 1955*, with data for five missing Saskatchewan congregations added from earlier yearbooks.

With the consolidation of Conference members into viable congregational units—no province reported more than 50 "scattered members"—the home missions work of itinerant ministers (*Reiseprediger*) was coming to an end. They had been the earliest

salaried ministers in the Conference. At the same time the rapid growth of many congregations to large memberships—29 had over 200 members—increased local demands, straining the capacity of the lay ministry system and beginning a trend toward salaried pastors. A new home missions task emerged in gathering together the "scattered" members from various rural Mennonite congregations who had gone to the cities for employment or study.

As ministry patterns and structures in the congregations felt pressure to change, so did the organization and ministries of the Conference. Since its first session in 1903 the basic pattern of work had changed little. At or between annual sessions, congregational leaders identified local needs to each other. Once a particular one was widely perceived, the Conference created a committee to deal with the matter. These committees were thus task oriented and tended to work largely independently of each other. As activities proliferated and the Conference grew in numbers and geographic expanse, this system became increasingly inadequate. Some kind of review and rationalization of structures seemed to be called for.

Organizational Change

Occasional earlier attempts at consolidation had not been very effective. A Board of Education was created in 1947, for example, but without a clear mandate. As a result, a committee on Sunday school and youth work continued alongside of it; the secondary and Bible schools reported separately from the Board's presentation. In 1952 the Sunday School Committee asked that its mandate to relate to youth work be removed, since a separate Youth Organization was now responsible for this work. At the same Conference sessions, the Education Board proposed a meeting of the committees relating to Faith and Life, Sunday Schools and Youth Work, and representatives of the Conference-related schools to consider possible amalgamation. This resulted the following year in a new 12-member Board of Education and Publication, absorbing the above committees and their tasks and expanding the mandate to include publication, church music and visual aids.[3]

A different attempt at consolidation was a 1950 resolution to create a central treasury for the Conference. Nothing came of this when the executive committee failed to implement it. As a result, the 1954 Conference sessions at Abbotsford, B.C., heard separate financial reports from the Board of Education (*Jahrbuch 1954*, 111),[4] Canadian Mennonite Bible College (Winnipeg office: 128; Saskatoon

office: 131), *Armenkasse* (142), Foreign Mission (157), Home Mission (171), Church Building Fund (172) and Canadian Mennonite Youth Organization (199). The final report, entitled "Statement of Receipts and Expenditures of the General Conference of Mennonites of Canada," showed receipts of $5,860.29 for the year and a balance of $1,364.82 (184). Obviously, these latter amounts represented only a very small fraction of total Conference expenditures.

This system made it difficult for members and congregations to see the whole picture of Conference work. It also meant that donors had to keep track of half a dozen or more treasurers' addresses, and congregations had to find their own ways of deciding how to distribute their financial support of the Conference. On the other side it meant that numerous committees faced the continual task of raising funds for their work. The discussion of the report of the Board of Education and Publication in 1954 generated a new request for co-ordination of all Conference treasuries.[5]

The Service Committee, which had been created in 1950 on a recommendation of the ministers conference in the context of Korean "war clouds towering in the political skies," had as its initial focus the question of alternatives to military service.[6] The following year it had joined a broadly representative delegation of historic peace churches to the government in Ottawa, attempting to work out a plan for alternative service. Now the Committee was focusing internally, seeking to cultivate an understanding of and commitment to nonresistance within the Conference membership.[7] By 1954 it was struggling with the overlap of its peace promotion work with that of the Youth Organization, the provincial conferences, the peace committee of the Mennonite Brethren Conference, and some inter-Mennonite relief and peace organizations. To remedy this problem, it recommended a thorough reorganization of the peace and voluntary service work of the Conference.[8]

When both resolutions were approved, Conference secretary H.T. Klaassen of Eigenheim suggested that it would make sense to go a step further and undertake a thorough review of the entire structure and work of the Conference. No action on this suggestion was taken at the 1954 session. However, at a subsequent meeting of the executive, a Revision Committee was appointed to explore such a review. This led to a proposal for a substantial reorganization, submitted to the Conference in 1955.[9]

The proposed changes were significant in three areas. First, the activities of the Conference were to be concentrated under three

program boards in the manner in which the Board of Education had already absorbed the work of several committees. A new Board of Missions was to take over the work of the committees for Home and Foreign Mission as well as Evangelism and Church Unity. A new Board of Christian Service was to be assigned the areas of foreign relief work, charity and relief services in Canada, alternative and voluntary service, peace promotion, and relating to the Board of Colonization. These three, and the Board of CMBC, were to have 12 members each.

Secondly, a five-member Finance Committee was to be placed in charge of amalgamating all of the treasuries of the Conference, creating and administering a central office, monitoring expenditures, and setting annual budgets. The latter role would give the Committee considerable influence in future program development.

Thirdly, terms were proposed for all elective positions, and members would no longer be able to serve simultaneously on more than one board. This was perhaps the most "radical departure from the earlier years."[10] Many committees already had introduced terms of office, but thus far none had imposed a limit on the number of re-elections permitted, and many committees had overlap of membership. Now the Conference officers (chair, vice-chair and secretary) would be limited to three one-year terms, and all board members to three three-year terms. Since the proposed new Executive Committee included the chair of each of the three program boards (Mission, Education and Christian Service) and the Finance Committee, it was quite possible that in a few years several of these members could have considerably more seniority on the Executive Committee than the chair of the Conference.

The 1955 proposal was a "notice of motion," recommending that action on it be postponed to the next annual session, and that it be considered as changes to the By-laws and not a revision of the Constitution. Following a point-by-point discussion of the proposal at the 1956 sessions in Niagara-on-the-Lake, delegates approved, by an overwhelming majority, the changes as presented.[11] Even a motion to increase the term of Conference chair from one to two years was defeated.[12]

J.J. Thiessen recognized that an era was coming to a close. For the past 14 years he had been Conference chair. At the same time he was also chair of the College Board, member of the Relief Committee, and chair of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization. Now he appealed to the delegates not to nominate him for a further term as

Organizational Chart

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│           Conference of Mennonites in Canada              │
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                              │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                   Conference Officers                     │
│ Executive: The officers (chair, vice-chair, secretary)    │
│ and one member from each of: Missions, Education, and     │
│ Service Boards and the Finance Committee.                 │
│                      7 members                            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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| Board of Missions 12 members | Education-Publication 12 members | Service Board 12 members | Finance Committee 5 members |

| College Board 12 members | Program Committee 3 members |

Areas of work of each board:

1. **Board of Missions**: foreign and home mission, evangelization, church unity
2. **Board of Education and Publication**: Sunday school, higher schools, home and congregation, Daily Vacation Bible School, music and singing, visual aids
3. **Board of Christian Service**: relief assistance, care of the poor, service concerns, peace matters, charity, Board of Colonization
4. **Finance Committee**: the budget, raising budget funds, office administration, keeping the books

Translated from *Jahrbuch 1958*

Conference chair. However, when Gerhard Lohrenz, the other nominee for chair, pleaded with him to remain at least one more year, Thiessen relented and was elected by acclamation.[13]

The proposed central office of the Conference was to be located in Winnipeg, if possible at Canadian Mennonite Bible College. The Finance Committee was authorized to fix a per member levy to raise the first "unified budget" of the Conference. This levy would be binding for only one year, "after which a more suitable method may be adopted."[14]

A revision of the Constitution of the Conference as a follow-up on this major organizational change had been anticipated by the Revision Committee. A draft was presented to the 1958 annual sessions and distributed to the congregations for study. With minor amendments it was adopted in 1959, at the last Conference sessions chaired by J.J. Thiessen.

Like the By-law changes made earlier, the revised Constitution was modelled after the 1950 revisions of the General Conference constitution. Its prescribing of board mandates was a shift from the earlier era in which committees followed unwritten policies or precedents. Its clearly stated electoral procedures, limiting of terms in office, and enlarging of boards provided opportunity for broader participation. A more democratic Conference with more formalized procedures produced some initial tensions. Yet the transition went fairly smoothly.

A Central Office

At the 1957 annual sessions the Finance Committee reported that as of February 1 all previous board and committee accounts had been dissolved and their balances consolidated in a central Conference treasury. That treasury was located in an office on the CMBC campus in Tuxedo (Winnipeg) with Victor Schroeder as "cashier." The first "unified budget" was presented near the conclusion of the sessions.[15] Thus, just when the new By-laws decentralized the power formerly held by a handful of long-term chairs of elected committees by limiting terms in office, the seeds were planted for a new and different centralization in an office complex staffed by long-term executives.

In January 1961 the Council of Boards agreed to recommend the appointment of a Conference executive secretary. Approval at that year's annual sessions led to an expansion of the central office with the appointment of D.P. Neufeld.[16] Neufeld doubled as executive

J.J. Thiessen (1893–1977) (left) attended every Conference session except one since his arrival in Canada in 1926 and was its chair 1943– 1959. As pastor of First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, founding chair of Canadian Mennonite Bible College, chair of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and member of several other Conference committees prior to the 1955 Constitutional revision, Thiessen had an immeasurable influence on shaping the life of the CMC. (1950 photo)

David P. Neufeld (1919–1982)(right), elected as minister in Rosemary Mennonite Church at age 21, served on a number of CMC and GC committees and boards. His appointment as the first Executive Secretary in 1961 marked the beginning of a shift in CMC leadership from elected personnel to appointed staff. As the first chair of MCC Canada (1963– 1972) he continued the legacy of David Toews and J.J. Thiessen in promoting inter-Mennonite relief and service work. Photos: MHC Archives

secretary of the Board of Missions until 1964, when Menno Wiebe was appointed to a full-time position in that role.[17] In 1966 Henry H. Epp joined the central office as a full-time replacement for H.T. Klassen, who had served the Board of Education and Publication as part-time executive secretary for a number of years. The following year Jake Letkemann succeeded Neufeld as Conference executive secretary and also took over part-time duties with the Board of Christian Service. Together with the necessary support staff, an office group had become the new centre of administration that directed Conference programs. A shift in power away from the former CMC executive and, to some extent, from the elected boards had begun.[18]

Asked to assess the 1966 annual sessions, Bishop J.B. Wiens, First United Mennonite Church, Vancouver, raised the question: "Are we as a Conference in danger of becoming a 'computer' through over-organization?

"A computer has no soul, no matter how amazingly smooth and efficient its operation. All a computer requires is that someone feeds it appropriate materials, then presses the right buttons, and out comes a beautiful resolution. However, such a mechanical approach to issues easily damages the soul.

"I am reminded of an elderly man who lived in an Old Folks Home and whose children sent him a lovely Christmas gift. When asked why the children's thoughtful gift did not make him happy, he answered: 'It is a lovely package, but there is no love enclosed.'

"Truly, we require fewer computers and more love." CMC Bulletin, 16 August 1966

Urbanization

The Second World War profoundly influenced many aspects of Canadian life. Rapid industrialization created more urban jobs while mechanization of agriculture reduced the need for rural farm labour. Demobilization after the War created a sharp influx of persons entering post-secondary professional and academic education and an increase in the labour force seeking employment. The cities were magnets for both. Mennonites were part of that trend.

Prior to the War more than 90 percent of Canadian Mennonites lived in rural areas. The 1951 census reported 64 percent still in rural farm settings and the total rural population more than 80 percent. Twenty years later that portion had dropped to just under 53 percent, with only 30 percent "rural farm."[19] During those two decades the Mennonite population in cities with more than 100,000 people increased more than five-fold, going from 9,888 in 1951 to 53,462 in 1971.[20] Not all of this urban growth resulted from the move of rural Mennonites to the cities; many of the post-War immigrants immediately settled in metropolitan areas where they could find employment. By 1971 eight cities (population over 100,000) had more than a thousand Mennonites each, ranging from Edmonton (1,590) to Winnipeg (17,850) as seen in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2
Urban Mennonite Growth Compared with
CMC Membership Growth 1951–1971

City	Mennonite Population[21]			CMC Members[22]			# Cong
	1951	1971	%Incr.	1951	1971	% Incr.	1971
Winnipeg	3,460	17,850	460	1,509[23]	2,910	93	8
Vancouver	1,624	8,880	447	135	981	627	3
St. Catharines	510	5,955	1,087	285	834	193	2
Saskatoon	1,663	5,697	243	298	1,020	242	5
K-Waterloo	1,646	5,235	218	366	417	14	1
Calgary	233	2,650	993	55	382	151	2
Toronto	267	2,540	851	19	100	426	1
Edmonton	85	1,590	1,771	–	106	–	1

Only in Vancouver and Saskatoon did the increase in CMC membership keep pace with or exceed the growth in Mennonite population. In the other cities it lagged considerably behind. While some of this difference may be accounted for by other Mennonite groups urbanizing more rapidly, much of the lag appeared to be because CMC members that moved to the cities were so loyal to their home congregations. Already in 1960 this tendency was addressed in a paper by H.T. Klaassen at the Conference sessions in Steinbach. He noted that only a relatively small portion of members moving to the cities transferred their membership to an urban congregation fairly promptly. A fairly large segment participated as guests in their adopted urban congregation for years while leaving their official

Hamilton Mennonite Church building dedicated in 1965. Until this building was erected, the congregation of urban Mennonites met in a "heavily churched" area of the city with no member closer than a half-hour bus ride in 1959. The Welcome Inn voluntary service project, begun in 1966, provided a focus on local ministries. Photo: MHC Archives
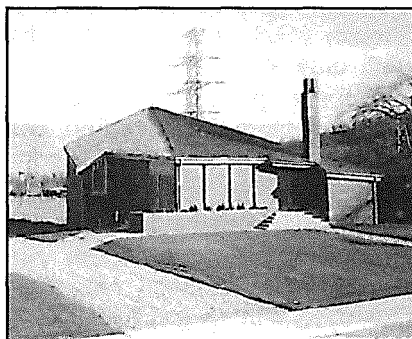
membership in the rural "home" church which they rarely attended any more. But Klaassen also pointed out that some joined other denominations in the city or lost their church connection entirely.[24]

Ministry in the growing urban congregations was demanding and time consuming. Most members were scattered throughout the city and only met once or twice a week. "Community," which in rural settings largely "happened" because most members lived relatively close to each other and had frequent contact during the week, needed to be cultivated in the urban context. This extra demand on leaders meant that urban ministers were almost invariably salaried pastors. Increasingly persons hired for such ministry were also expected to have some formal theological training.

Urban membership growth frequently coincided with rural membership decline. In a paper at the 1964 sessions in Eigenheim, Saskatchewan, John Siemens identified some of the problems this created in rural communities: loss of Sunday school teachers and other workers, difficulty in retaining ministers and replacing those who retired, and the financial hardship of paying Conference levies on behalf of members who had moved to the city but remained on the rural home church register.[25]

The pace of acculturation had increased significantly during the war years and continued to do so in its aftermath. Those involved in CO duties or other war-related employment away from home had enlarged their horizons. Increased involvement in higher education and the work force often resulted in more contact with Anglo-Canadians and accelerated the rate of acculturation. Urban Mennonites were often more affected by these trends than rural ones, creating a cultural gap between city and rural congregations.

Three quarters of the 36 congregations joining the Conference during this period were in urban settings, 15 in major metropolitan areas (population 100,000 or more) and a dozen more in smaller cities, like Brandon, Manitoba, and Richmond, B.C., or larger towns like Leamington, Ontario, Martensville, Saskatchewan, and Abbotsford, B.C. Thirty of these new congregations were still numerically small, with fewer than a hundred members each. The founding of some of them coincided with a significant decrease in the membership of the "parent" congregation (see footnotes of Table 5.3).

Many of the new congregations reflected geographic movement of CMC members. Since most were also members of their provincial conference and the General Conference, a fledgling group might appeal for support to all three levels of conference. The Home

Table 5.3 Member Congregations Admitted 1954–1971
C=Closed, W=Withdrew

*Unless otherwise indicated, the congregation's complete name includes "Mennonite Church."
**Membership at time of admission as a Conference member.

Name*	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership		
				Adm**	1971	1999
First Mennonite[1]	Eyebrow SK	1955	1954	27	29	25
Rosthern UM[2]	Rosthern SK	1902	1955	761	381	300
Rosenorter[3]	Laird SK	1902	1955	599	132	142
North Kildonan[4]	Winnipeg MB	1957	1956	335	446	445
Vancouver Mission[5]	Vancouver BC	1957	1951	72	172	C
Gem[6]	Gem AB	1958	1948	46	C	–
Grace[7]	St. Catharines ON	1958	1955	74	230	220
Sterling Avenue[8]	Winnipeg MB	1959	1947	18	36	122
North Battleford[9]	Saskatchewan	1959	1952	28	38	19

[1] The 52-member Eyebrow Mennonite Church, accepted in 1929, split in 1954. The portion accepted in 1955 took the name First Mennonite and used it until 1982 when it reverted back to Eyebrow Mennonite Church.

[2] On the retirement of Bishop J.G. Rempel in 1954, the Rosenorter Gemeinde (Table 2.1) divided into two groups, centred in Rosthern and Laird. In 1963 both groups decentralized, giving rise to a series of independent congregations. The 1971 and 1999 figures are for Rosthern Mennonite.

[3] See note 4 above. The admission membership entry is from *Yearbook 1957*; the 1971 and 1999 figures are for Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite Church, Laird.

[4] Services began in 1929 as a branch of the Schoenwieser Gemeinde. Its membership dropped by 241 (to 1249 from 1490) in 1956 when North Kildonan became independent.

[5] Organized in 1951 at the initiative of First Mennonite Church of Vancouver; it later became Mountainview Mennonite Church; closed in 1996. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 101, 122.

[6] A local of the Westheimer Gemeinde of Rosemary since its founding in 1940, Gem became an independent congregation in two stages, 1948 and 1957; dissolved in 1967. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 30, 32, 39–40.

[7] Begun in 1955 at the initiative of the United Mennonite Church of St. Catharines and the Ontario Conference. Wanda Dyck "History of Grace Mennonite Church of St. Catharines," unpublished paper, 1977. MHCA, Vertical File.

[8] Nurtured since 1947 by a series of CMBC students, the congregation formally organized in 1956; became Sterling Mennonite Fellowship after relocating to Dakota Street in 1980. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 102–103.

[9] Services began in 1949 with the Home Missions Committee beginning support in 1951. A building was acquired in 1954 and formal organization took place in 1959; became Hope Mennonite Fellowship in 1986. Cindy Zacharias, "A History of North Battleford Mennonite Church," unpublished paper, 1973. MHCA, Vertical File.

Name*	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership Adm**	1971	1999
First Mennonite[10]	Edmonton AB	1959	1951	24	100	184
Waters[11]	Copper Cliff ON	1960	1955	21	42	46
Grace[12]	Regina SK	1960	1955	70	131	213
Pleasant Hill[13]	Saskatoon SK	1960	1953	68	109	76
Grace[14]	Prince Albert SK	1961	1942	23	39	85
Zion[15]	Swift Current SK	1961	1960	167	277	207
Grace[16]	Brandon MB	1961	1959	20	95	68
Olivet[17]	Clearbrook BC	1961	1960	65	176	217
Peardonville[18]	Aldergrove BC	1961	1959	45	C	–
Kelowna Mission[19]	Kelowna BC	1962	1960	32	65	177
Faith[20]	Leamington ON	1962	1961	57	106	243

[10] Began meeting in 1949 under the leadership of Professor John Unrau of the University of Alberta; building acquired in 1954; formal organization in 1959. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 83–90.

[11] Begun in 1948 as a Sunday school outpost supported by the Ontario (Old) Mennonite Conference until about 1956. Then Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church (GC) took over; organized as a congregation in 1959. Karen Salo, "A History of the Waters Mennonite Congregation," unpublished paper, 1976. MHCA, Vertical File.

[12] Began from joint worship meetings with Mennonite Brethren in 1941; the CMC portion obtained its own building in 1955; identified as Victoria Avenue Mennonite Church until formal organization as Grace in 1960.

[13] Outreach of First Mennonite, Saskatoon, beginning in 1928; dedication of a meeting place in 1953 led to organization as an independent congregation in 1958.

[14] Hoffnungsfelder began services in Prince Albert in 1942; responsibility shifted to the Conference in 1946; dedicated its own building in 1955 and became independent in 1961.

[15] The Emmaus Mennonite (Table 3.1, 1932) groups meeting in Wymark and Swift Current separated in 1960. The combined Emmaus congregation had 166 members in 1959 and Emmaus, Wymark, had 35 in 1964.

[16] Meetings began in 1954 with leadership from the Whitewater and Schoenwieser Gemeinden; support from both Manitoba and Canadian Conferences led to acquiring a building and organizing formally in 1959.

[17] Less than a decade after Clearbrook Mennonite Church was founded, 52 people left it to start an English-speaking congregation. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 125, 120.

[18] First application, *Jahrbuch 1952*, 67, was not accepted because of internal dissention. Some time after its dissolution the group reorganized in 1959; dissolved in 1968, with the Evangelical Mennonite Conference taking over the work. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 120–122.

[19] Founded in 1960 as an English-language split from First Mennonite whose membership dropped from 72 in 1960 to 33 in 1963; became Kelowna Gospel Fellowship in 1966. Bev and Ernie Redekop, "A Congregational Research History of the Kelowna Gospel Fellowship," unpublished paper, 1989. MHCA, Vertical File.

[20] Separated in 1961 from Leamington United Mennonite to use English in Sunday school and worship services. Dave Feick, "The History of Faith Mennonite Church," unpublished paper, 1982. MHCA, Vertical File.

Name*	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership Adm**	1971	1999
Elmwood Bethel[21]	Winnipeg MB	1962	1961	66	130	C
Martensville Mission[22]	Martensville SK	1962	1960	10	58	W
Altona[23]	Altona MB	1963	1962	39	79	114
Grace[24]	Steinbach MB	1963	1959	91	140	234
Grace	Winkler MB	1963	1961	40	117	391
Hamilton[25]	Hamilton ON	1963	1952	34	53	93
North Hill Mission[26]	Calgary AB	1963	1956	53	137	274
Aberdeen[27]	Aberdeen SK	1902	1963	103	86	102
Hague[27]	Hague SK	–	1963	169	150	151
Neuanlage[27]	Hague SK	–	1963	75	73	251
Horse Lake[28]	Duck Lake SK	1902	1963	35	14	18
Laird[28]	Laird SK	–	1963	150	68	83
Osler Ch[28]	Osler SK	–	1963	165	159	Table 3.1
Charleswood Bethel[29]	Winnipeg MB	1964	1963	37	149	208
Eben-Ezer[30]	Abbotsford BC	1964	1963	105	309	495

[21] Begun by Bethel Mennonite as a church plant; the name changed to Burrows Bethel after relocating to Burrows Avenue in 1972. After relocating again in 1996 it became Bethel Community Church (Mennonite); closed in 1997. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 192, 203.

[22] CMC Home Missions Committee work led to formal organization of Martensville Mennonite Mission Church in 1960; withdrew 1990.

[23] Begun in 1962 by persons representing 10 Mennonite congregations and one non-Mennonite denomination when the Altona Bergthaler church did not agree to begin an English-speaking congregation. Ted E. Friesen, ed., *Altona Mennonite Church: 25th Anniversary 1962–1987* (Altona: Altona Mennonite Church, 1988).

[24] Leland Harder, *Steinbach and Its Churches* (Elkhart: Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 1970), 68–70.

[25] Ontario Conference Missions Committee gathered Mennonites living in Hamilton and began services in 1952, led by G. Peters from St. Catharines.

[26] Evening services were begun by Scarboro Mennonite members in 1955, partly to introduce more English; Alberta Conference support beginning in 1956 facilitated growth and acquisition of a building in 1959; relocation to University Heights district led to renaming in 1966 to Foothills Mennonite Church. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 103–108.

[27] When the Rosenorter Mennonite Church, Laird, decentralized in 1963, the Aberdeen, Hague and Neuanlage groups became independent congregations.

[28] When the United Mennonite Church, Rosthern, decentralized in 1963, the Horse Lake, Laird and Osler groups became independent congregations.

[29] A second church plant by Bethel Mennonite shortly after starting Elmwood Bethel to serve its members and other Mennonites in the Charleswood area. Carol Reimer, "The History of the Charleswood Mennonite Church," unpublished paper, 1987. MHCA, Vertical File.

[30] Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 127–128.

Name*	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership Adm**	1971	1999
Bethany[31]	Virgil ON	1965	–	175	234	295
Prince of Peace[32]	Richmond BC	1965	1962	28	38	Table 6.1
Mount Royal[33]	Saskatoon SK	1965	1963	78	108	225
Nutana Park[34]	Saskatoon SK	1966	1965	125	201	284
Ottawa[35]	Ottawa ON	1967	1959	39	77	164
First Mennonite[36]	Burns Lake BC	1967	1958	58	81	123
Sherbrooke Menn[37]	Vancouver BC	1968	1968	178	277	264
Fort Garry Menn Fell[38]	Winnipeg MB	1969	1967	33	67	170
Taber[39]	Taber AB	1971	1951	66	62	53
Crystal City[40]	Crystal City MB	1971	1927	142	142	199

[31] A daughter congregation of Niagara United Mennonite; its membership dropped by 170 (from 704 to 534) in the process.

[32] Begun in 1961 as a Sunday school outreach of First Mennonite, Vancouver, led by John Sawatzky; organized in 1963; relocated together with members from Sherbrooke Mennonite and re-admitted in 1981 as Peace Mennonite Church. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 102, 128–129.

[33] Services began in 1963 as an outreach of Mayfair Mennonite Mission, with formal organization in 1965.

[34] The fluctuation in membership of First Mennonite in Saskatoon during the emergence of Mount Royal and Nutana Park is reflected in its membership figures from 1964 to 1967: 474, 500, 400, 434.

[35] Ottawa Mennonite Fellowship organized in 1959 at the suggestion of the Missions Committee of the Ontario Conference. Paul Berg Dick et al, *Ottawa Mennonite Church 35th Anniversary* (Ottawa: Ottawa Mennonite Church, 1994).

[36] Home Mission work by the B.C. Conference began in 1953 among Mennonites of various backgrounds. After the Old Colony Church had moved to Fort St. John in 1958, First Mennonite was formally organized. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 123–124.

[37] Daughter congregation of First Mennonite, Vancouver, whose membership dropped by 139 (from 625 to 486) in the process. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 130–131.

[38] In 1966 Winnipeg Bergthaler Mennonite Church convened a meeting of its members in the Fort Garry area to consider a new congregation. Bethel, Sargent and Sterling supported the move, leading to formal organization in 1967. Ruth Loeppky, "An Attempt to Understand Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship," unpublished paper, 1977. MHCA, Vertical File.

[39] Services began in the 1940s by ministers from Coaldale Mennonite, invited by Old Colony families who had moved to the Taber area after the Depression. Alberta Mennonite Conference took responsibility in 1951. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 91–93.

[40] When the Whitewater Gemeinde decentralized, a number of its local groups became independent congregations, first listed separately in *Yearbook 1971*.

Name*	Location	Adm.	Est.	Membership Adm**	1971	1999
Mather[41]	Mather MB	1971	1958	82	82	C
Rivers[42]	Rivers MB	1971	1928	29	29	C
Oak Lake[43]	Oak Lake MB	1971	1929	65	65	45

Missions report to the 1971 CMC sessions illustrated the administrative problems that arose from such a situation. In 1961, for example, the pastor in Burns Lake, B.C., received $50 per month from the congregation, $75 from the provincial conference, $50 from the CMC, and $60 from the GC for an annual "salary" of $2,820. Who was "responsible" in this situation? How could the four sources of funding co-ordinate their support? Eventually, the CMC assumed this role, writing one monthly cheque for the recipient and collecting block support from the other levels of conference.[26]

Some congregations emerged as a result of cultural changes coming to the forefront as younger new leaders emerged. One of the most obvious aspects of acculturation was the switch from German to English as the primary mode of communication in congregations and the Conference.

Language Transition

All the congregations that joined the Conference in its first half century used German as their language of worship. Families that had emigrated from Prussia generally also spoke High German at home. Many families of Dutch-Russian background spoke Low German in their daily conversation while those of Hutterite background used a High German dialect sometimes known as *Hutterisch*. It seemed perfectly natural that, besides the Luther Bible, congregations continued to use both the *Gesangbuch* (hymnal) and catechism with which they were familiar from the old country. Visiting ministers

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[41] The Mather group separated from Crystal City in 1958, both portions remaining in the Whitewater Gemeinde. As an independent congregation after Whitewater decentralized, Mather was plagued by internal dissention and closed shortly after a group left to found Trinity Mennonite Church in 1980. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 174.

[42] Mennonite families from several Gemeinden joined the Schoenwieser as a group in 1928, transferring its affiliation to the closer Whitewater Gemeinde in 1939. When the latter decentralized, Rivers became an independent congregation. Most members joined Grace Mennonite in Brandon when Rivers closed in 1989. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 175.

[43] Oak Lake was the last rural group to gain independence from the Schoenwieser Gemeinde, officially in 1974, but listed independently in the *Yearbook* statistics since 1971. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 186.

from the General Conference, whether they came from Pennsylvania, Ohio or Kansas, also had no difficulty in serving the Canadian congregations in High German. The church periodicals—*Der Mitarbeiter* of the CMC and *Christlicher Bundesbote* of the GC—were also in German.

Dutch-Russian Mennonites had shown themselves to be tenacious in retaining two languages. In the Poland-Prussia era many thoroughly adopted Low German as the language of daily speech but continued to use Dutch in church services for over two centuries, until the 1750s when High German replaced it. Those who emigrated to Russia beginning in 1789 retained this bilingual pattern. Several generations later this was still the case among immigrants to Canada from the 1870s through the 1920s. In Canada the use of English came in gradually, initially among those who needed it for business and official contacts.

World War I increased the pace of language change. In the context of heightened nationalism during the War, Mennonites, as Germans, drew animosity from segments of Canadian society. Indeed, schools in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan were pushed to be English and patriotic, and German periodicals were banned from publishing for a period of time. The arrival of 20,000 Mennonites from the USSR during the 1920s slowed the process of language transition for a while. At the same time, most of these immigrants were not able to form large block settlements but scattered in smaller groups within Canadian society. The pace of learning and adopting English was faster among them than it had been among the 19th-century immigrants.

In congregational life the shift to English was generally fairly gradual. At first it might be used in a more public community service like a funeral. Because of English schooling, children and youth made the transition sooner than their parents. During the 1950s Sunday school and youth meetings were shifting to English. By 1966 about 70 percent of Sunday school classes were in English, compared to 30 percent a decade earlier.[27] It was more difficult to change the language of worship. To make an abrupt transition could leave behind a significant segment of the older generation in the congregation. To retain German often meant that many youth and children understood very little. Marriages of members with partners who did not speak German brought in another group of persons who needed English services. Many congregations were too small to have two services, one in German and one in English. In some settings a compromise of

using both languages in the same service proved acceptable, even though most older ministers at first felt uncomfortable using English and many of the younger ones found it difficult to preach in German.

Already in the 1950s a growing number of members from several 1920s congregations in the Niagara Peninsula wished for English services. Rather than press for bilingual or split services, which might leave members in all three congregations dissatisfied, establishing a new English-language congregation seemed a better solution. The St. Catharines United Mennonite Church decided in 1955 that this was the best way to address the situation. Accordingly it requested the provincial Conference to endorse the project and to take it to the Mission Board of the CMC for support. The following year the St. Catharines Mission Church requested Ontario Conference-support for its proposed building program. By 1957 the group had organized as an independent congregation known as Grace Mennonite Church and had already begun a building program. In 1958 it was accepted as a member of the CMC with 74 members.[28]

In Eigenheim, Saskatchewan, formerly part of the Rosenorter Gemeinde founded in 1894, Bishop Gerhard Epp first used English in a baptism service in 1959, signalling a turning point in the language transition which had begun at least ten years earlier.[29] In the Blumenorter Gemeinde, founded in 1925 by new immigrants from the USSR, the change began about two decades later than in Eigenheim. In 1970 brief English meditations began to precede German sermons with formal authorization by a congregational meeting. Bilingual services continued beyond the 1980s with English gradually taking the primary role.[30] Older members preferred this to dividing families by having separate German and English services.

Congregational Divisions

Most congregations in the Conference experienced some variation of this pattern of gradual language change. In a few, however, the transition was not as smooth. The Abbotsford urban area attracted many new Mennonites after World War II. Immigrants from Europe or South America looked for a German-speaking congregation. Earlier members and some moving in from the Prairies saw the need for English services. When some members from the rural West Abbotsford congregation began Clearbrook Mennonite Church as a "town" church in 1952, it remained German speaking. Only eight years later a group of 52 left Clearbrook Mennonite to found Olivet, an English-speaking congregation.[31]

In 1963 a group of newer immigrants from South America and Europe felt that too much English was being used in the West Abbotsford congregation and left it to found Eben-Ezer Mennonite in the town of Clearbrook.[32] In the transition West Abbotsford lost 133 members and did not report an increase until 1967, by which time Eben-Ezer had grown to 206 members. Relations between the two groups were strained by this separation, although formally cordial. The impact on West Abbotsford of losing this departing group was more long-lasting than the formation of Clearbrook Mennonite had been. The 110 members who left in that planned move were quickly replaced by newcomers. To date West Abbotsford has not recovered numerically from the loss of the Eben-Ezer group.[33] In the Fraser Valley, as elsewhere in Canada, use of German continues in a number of congregations due to ongoing immigration of German-speaking Mennonites.

The Leamington United Mennonite Church worked toward language transition more gradually. It had operated a German-language school right from its beginning in the 1920s. In 1972 the Friday evening school still had an enrolment of 150 children out of a church membership of just over 1,200. Bishop N.N. Driedger estimated in 1972 that the "town" congregation was about at the mid-point in the shift to English and the rural "North" church was already giving more weight to English.[34] While the majority of members favoured this gradual transition—English began to be used in the late 1950s—a small group found the pace much too slow. Forty members withdrew in 1961 to found Faith Mennonite Church.[35]

Three new congregations emerged in Manitoba with language as one common issue. In 1961 "festering discontent with language and with the controls in the church" came to a head in the Altona Bergthaler congregation.[36] The group that separated to form the English-speaking Altona Mennonite Church included a number of very active participants and leaders. While some of them had moved to Altona for professional reasons and had not officially joined the Bergthaler, their departure nevertheless left deeply hurt feelings. The nearby Rosenfeld Bergthaler church, also struggling with the language issue at this time, lost a number of members to Altona Mennonite.[37]

During the same time, a group in the Winkler Bergthaler Church led by Deacon Donald Loewen requested permission to begin an English-speaking unit within the larger congregation. The central ministerial leadership of the Manitoba Bergthaler Gemeinde did not
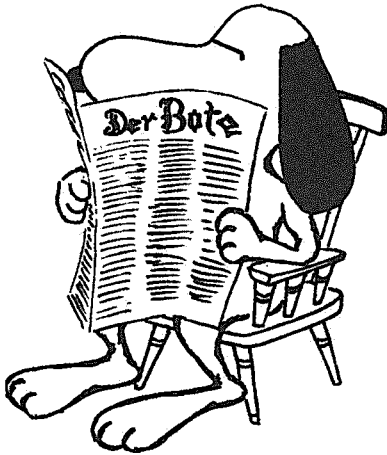
Success of the Every Home Plan? or Der Bote going to the dogs? The negative response to this cartoon submitted by an anonymous Bote-reader from Didsbury, Alberta, suggested that the German-speaking generation that read the paper was not familiar with the lovable Snoopy of Charles Schutz's "Peanuts" comic strip. Photo: Der Bote, 8 January 1974

give leave to its ministers to serve them. The group then reluctantly separated to become Grace Mennonite Church.[38] Strong tensions and hard feelings resulted. With the help of several outside ministers a service of reconciliation between the two groups in 1963 began a healing process.[39] The gap between them was closed in an Advent joint communion service in 1986. Four years later Grace finally joined the Manitoba Conference.[40]

The establishment of Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach in 1959 was more complex. Its founding members came from the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, Steinbach Mennonite Church and the Bergthaler congregation in Steinbach. They were dissatisfied with their home congregations for a variety of reasons among which language was a factor, although not the most crucial one for most. Nevertheless, the congregation's use of primarily English in worship and Sunday school contributed significantly to its relatively rapid growth. Despite the mixed origins of its members, Grace Mennonite Church cultivated ties with the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba and the CMC from the outset and formally joined the Conference in 1963.[41]

In British Columbia, Kelowna Mennonite Mission began to separate from First Mennonite in 1959 because they "wanted to do more outreach and for this they felt they needed the English language, a different approach and different forms of worship."[42] Initially the new group retained strong ties with the CMC.[43] After changing the name to Kelowna Gospel Fellowship in 1966, feeling that the word "Mennonite" in their name impeded church growth, they moved in

The banner at the 1971 Women's Missionary Society session was still bilingual, but the session itself was conducted in English only. Photo: Fred Rehan, MHC Archives

the direction of what Pastor Malvin Braun called "small 'm' Mennonites; mainstream evangelicals."[44] For First Mennonite the departure of half the congregation was a hard blow, leaving it with only 33 members.

Preserving the German

Various efforts to prolong the viability of German were supported by the Conference. Bible schools and later the Bible College were to be part of this effort. In 1947 there was extensive lobbying to ensure that a significant part, up to 75 percent, of the CMBC curriculum would be taught in German.[45] One of the reasons for replacing Arnold Regier as president of the College in 1951 was his failure to satisfy the German-speaking part of the constituency. Beginning in 1953, a newly founded Mennonite association to preserve the German mother tongue (Mennonitischer Verein "Deutsche Muttersprache") reported regularly at annual Conference sessions. In 1956, for example, its recommendation that "teachers in our Sunday schools, if possible, instruct in the German language" was approved by the Conference.[46]

The Conference also continued to provide the congregations with updated German-language materials for worship and instruction. In

1959 it published a bilingual revised edition of the Elbing catechism, familiar to many congregations from earlier use in Russia.[47] At the request of the CMC, in 1965 the General Conference published a German-English edition of *My Christian Faith*, its latest revision of the Elbing catechism.[48] That same year a new German hymnal was produced by the CMC together with the General Conference.[49] The 12,000 pre-publication orders indicate how widespread German still was in congregational worship.[50] Usage of *Light for the Day*, the Conference booklet for family devotions published in both German and English, confirms this. In 1965 about 58 percent of Conference families used this material, almost evenly split between the two languages. Only in Saskatchewan and Alberta did the majority choose English.[51]

In the work of the Conference, the move to a board structure in 1956 brought a considerable number of new, younger members into official positions. Most of them were more comfortable in English than in German. That speeded up a transition to English as the preferred language of operation at most levels of meeting.

The *Yearbook*, published after each summer's annual delegate sessions, was a good reflection of the nature and pace of the shift. In 1956 a formal decision was made to print the *Jahrbuch* in Latin instead of Gothic type face. Conference secretary, P.R. Harder, also included for the first time an English version of the delegate session minutes. A few reports—Mennonite Biblical Seminary, several of the provincial youth reports, and some financial reports—were given in English only. That pattern continued, with incremental changes, for the next decade. In the mid-1960s the shift to English was rapidly completed. Paul Schroeder's 1964 Conference "Chairman's Report" was the first one presented in English. The following year the cover title of the *Yearbook* was in English for the first time, although the inside title page continued in German. Several Board reports were in English and the "primary" set of minutes was in English with a German translation added. In 1966 the entire *Yearbook* appeared in English only. The transition was virtually complete, although a German translation of the annual Conference minutes returned to the *Yearbook* from 1971 through 1978.[52]

At the ministers conference, which had been held on the day before the delegate sessions since 1927, German was used almost exclusively until 1965. That year the German report included an English resumé. The following year the minutes were published in English only. A younger set of ministers had largely taken over the

leadership in the Conference. Many of the older ministers were uncomfortable and self-conscious when speaking extemporaneously in English and very seldom participated in floor discussions at the delegate sessions.

At the 1967 sessions in Leamington, Gerhard Ens of Gretna presented the Centennial message. Ens was of the generation fluent in both German and English. Commenting on the passing of the German language he observed that a loss could be used by God to become a benefit. He encouraged the assembly to come to feel at home in Canada, to get involved, to "seek the welfare of the nation" in the spirit of his text from Jeremiah 29:4. Become social workers, teachers, politicians—professions for which English is essential—but remember that we are God's people. We can address society prophetically.[53]

Changing Forms of Ministry

The 1966 *Yearbook* marked the completion of the language transition at Conference level. Also, for the first time the minutes of the delegate sessions preceded the minutes of the ministers conference. It was a symbolic recognition that decisions of the larger church were made by the membership as a whole, not by the ministerial body. This shift of authority was also running its course in the local congregations and *Gemeinden*.

The Anabaptist view of the church as a people, rather than as hierarchy or institution, and the understanding that the priesthood of all believers made all members essentially equal within the body had always remained alive, even in those *Gemeinden* where the *Lehrdienst* (clergy) had come to make many important decisions on its own. In the democratic context of Canada the role of non-ministerial members in the congregation steadily increased. Committees began to lead and oversee certain aspects of church work. In congregations with a paid pastor, frequently hired from outside the local congregation, church councils under lay leadership started to appear. In congregations that still exclusively relied on ministers and bishops called from *within*, ordained for life, and serving without remuneration, it was a more sensitive matter to move areas of ministerial authority to committees or councils with lay leadership.

Discontent with the old system arose from a number of directions, especially with respect to the powers reserved exclusively for bishops, such as officiating at baptism and communion. In 1960 the issue was raised within the ministers conference, with the suggestion

that all ministers should be given the right to administer the sacraments. Discussion of the idea was forestalled by an announcement that the Missions Committee would speak to this question in the delegate session. There, however, the "problem" was confined to mission workers and the solution, that they be "installed or authorized" to perform these ordinances for a specified time and place only, was adopted.[54] This resolution tacitly agreed that officiating at baptism and communion was not a power that derived intrinsically from the double ordination of bishops but that authority to do so could be conferred by the church on other "ministers."

Immediately after this resolution was passed, a male quartet sang "Lead kindly Light, amid th' encircling gloom." While purely coincidental, the song reflected a growing sense among some of the older generation of leaders that they were being sidelined. Two years later, H.T. Klaassen of Eigenheim, Saskatchewan, was asked to present a systematic study of the office of bishop to the ministers conference. He argued persuasively, that understanding the church as a community among whom a concept of the priesthood of all believers removed the distinction between laity and clergy, one could not properly speak of an "office." While functional distinctions were a necessary part of good order, a hierarchy should not exist in the community of faith. Accordingly, he suggested, local ministers who served a congregation faithfully throughout the year should not have to import a bishop from the "outside" to baptize those whom they had prepared for church membership, or to officiate at communion. Rather, the local minister should have the right to do this.[55] The ministers conference recognized that some congregations had already implemented this approach by designating a leading minister with authority to function as a bishop. At the same time it preferred that such persons be ordained as full bishops.

Klaassen's paper resulted in the Conference Executive Committee appointing a commission to study "The Calling, Ordination and Functions of Ministers and Ältesten." The 15 ministers appointed to the commission in 1962 included 11 bishops and two additional leading ministers. Nine were members of Conference boards or committees, including the Conference chair, and three others of the Executive Committee.[56] The commission recommended retaining the multiple ministry with a bishop as leader.[57] While it also allowed congregations to authorize a leading minister to function in this capacity without a second ordination, it recommended that every church should, if possible, call and ordain its own bishop. Although

the report "gave strong support to the status quo," the commission realized that the old order was passing and recommended the creation of a Committee on the Ministry to guide the Conference in arriving at a new uniform practice.[58]

How quickly the changes took place, especially in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, is shown in Table 5.4. In 1972 the number of active bishops was just 10, down from a high of 44 a decade earlier, and on its way to just one in 1982.

Table 5.4
Number of Active CMC Bishops by Province 1952–1972[59]

Year	Ontario	Manitoba	Sask.	Alberta	British Columbia
1952	3	10	10	6	5
1962	5	12	12	7	8
1972	2	1	1	2	4

The work of the Committee on the Ministry hastened this process. One of its first projects was to convene another study conference, this time with a more broadly representative group of 30. While the focus was on ordination, the question of church polity remained close to the surface. At its two days of studied input, consultation and discussion in late 1965, the group agreed that the Bible does not offer one clear-cut pattern of ministry. This meant that congregations and Conference would need to cooperate in discerning new patterns appropriate for changing times. Congregational autonomy meant that the Conference could not dictate one type of ordination and ministry. On the other hand, the one-salaried-pastor arrangement, to which congregations were rapidly moving, meant that a person being ordained for life by one congregation might well become pastor in another one in a few years. Some agreement on a "transferable" ordination within the Conference was necessary. The Committee on the Ministry worked gradually, reporting the study conference findings to the 1966 Conference sessions and getting the Executive Committee to recommend two years later that all future ordinations be considered "full ordinations." Finally, in 1969 the Conference voted by a large majority that all future ordinations should confer "all the rights pertaining to ministry, including serving with communion and baptism and ordaining others."[60]

As Table 5.5 shows, the multiple ministry system was apparently not as closely tied to the bishop system as some apparently thought it to be. In 1982 the number of active ministers was still almost at 1962
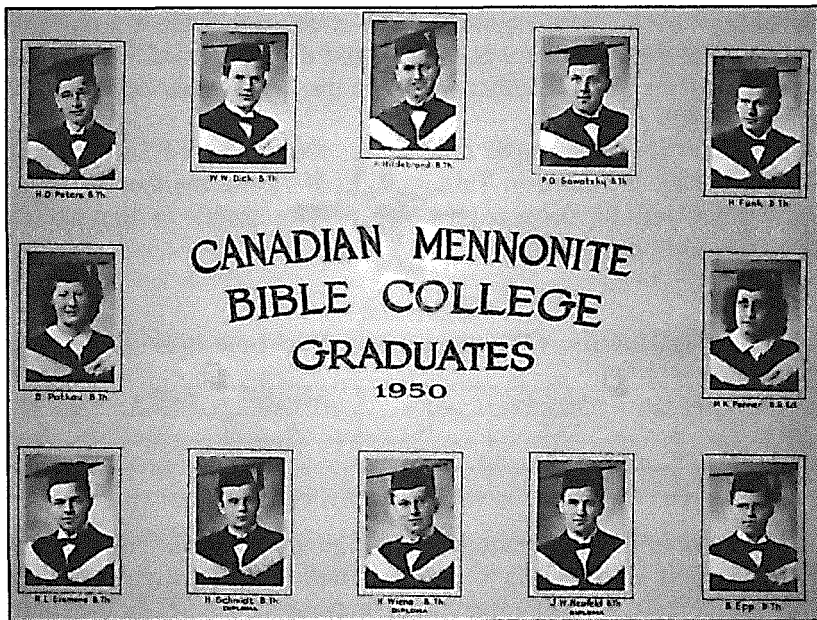
CMBC graduating class of 1950. Top (l-r): *H.D. Peters, W.W. Dick, H. Hildebrand, P.G. Sawatzky, H. Funk;* Middle (l-r): *E. Patkau, M.K. Penner;* Bottom (l-r): *R.L. Siemens, H. Schmidt, H. Wiens, J.W. Neufeld, B. Epp. From its first graduating class on, CMBC prepared a steady stream of candidates for ministry. At least ten of the first graduates served as minister, minister's wife, pastor, bishop or missionary, several of them in more than one of these roles.* Photo: Lynnette Wiebe, Canadian Mennonite University collection

levels, although the average number of active ministers per congregation decreased from 4.3 to 2.2. Bishops ceased to have an active role in the congregations, with 11 reported as retired by 1972.

Table 5.5
Ministers Serving CMC Congregations 1952–1982[61]

Year	Churches	Active Ministers	Retired Ministers	Active Bishops
1952	68	290	0	34
1962	90	323	4	44
1972	126	261	69	10
1982	145	313	51	1

Break-up of the *Gemeinden*

While these changes in ministerial leadership were underway, a number of the large multi-local *Gemeinden*, which had grown out of the bishop system, were also on the way to restructuring. Some had largely completed the process before the turbulent sixties. The United Mennonite Church of Ontario and the United Mennonite Church of British Columbia, founded by immigrants of the 1920s, were more loosely tied together and developed local independence fairly early. In Manitoba most of the 39 scattered settlements of 1920s immigrants that made up the Schoenwieser Gemeinde had either died out or developed into independent congregations (Springstein, Pigeon Lake, Steinbach, Niverville, Glenlea) during the World War II years.[62] The largest group, absorbing many members of small rural groups that closed, became First Mennonite Church of Winnipeg.

The two founding *Gemeinden* of the Conference, the Rosenorter of Saskatchewan and the Bergthaler of Manitoba, however, seemed to be much more closely knit. An early tentative move toward decentralization in the Rosenorter Gemeinde led to the separation, under considerable tension, of only the Eigenheim congregation, the central meeting place, in 1929.[63] With new headquarters in Rosthern, the Rosenorter Gemeinde continued to grow under the leadership of Bishop David Toews and his successor, Johann G. Rempel. When the latter took over in 1946 he had 13 congregations to serve. By 1953 the *Gemeinde* had almost 1,400 members and was considered too large to be served by one bishop. After a serious illness Rempel announced his decision to retire the following year. In his review of the history of the church, he made a plea that it not divide. Earlier departures of the Eigenheim and Saskatoon congregations had been "good and necessary." Should one or another of the smaller groups now decide to leave, that would probably meet with little resistance. But if Rosthern, the largest congregation, should choose to do so, that could be catastrophic for the smaller locals. Furthermore, for the Rosenorter Gemeinde to dissolve would create an abnormal situation in the CMC—unless the much larger Bergthaler Gemeinde of Manitoba also decentralized.[64]

At the 1954 annual meeting it became clear that neither of the two candidates to succeed Rempel as bishop was prepared to serve such a large group. It was then agreed to ordain both and divide the *Gemeinde* according to the choice of leader of each district. The Rosenorter Gemeinde of Saskatchewan, led by Bishop Arthur Regier, retained some 650 members in the centres of Tiefengrund, Garthland,

Capasin, Hague, Hochfeld, Neuanlage and Aberdeen; and the new United Mennonite Church of Rosthern, with Bishop Jacob C. Schmidt, had about 700 members in Rosthern, Osler, Horse Lake and Laird.[65] But even this attempt to retain the *Gemeinde* concept was short-lived. In 1961 Tiefengrund reported to the Rosenorter annual meeting its wish to become independent. The "animated discussion" which followed seemed unable to find a formula for staying together. Each centre was asked to hold a vote on the issue.

At the annual meeting in 1962 it was reported that all except Hague favoured independence. On recommendation of the ministerial leadership, the *Gemeinde* decided to divide into independent congregations that summer.[66] The United Mennonite Church decentralized the same year.[67]

In the much larger Bergthaler Gemeinde in Manitoba the trend toward local independence found much more resistance.[68] Proposals during the 1940s to allow local groups to set their own membership levy according to local needs or to have their own membership registers were defeated at brotherhood meetings.[69] But by 1951 the widely scattered church of 1,700 members became too much for one leader to serve. Accordingly, Bishop David Schulz requested the election of an assistant. The candidate, J.M. Pauls of Morden, wondered about the meaning and validity of an assistant bishop. As alternative he considered the election of a leader for each local group with full responsibility under one central bishop. But that seemed to him too much like the Old Testament model recommended to Moses by the Midianite priest, Jethro. A New Testament ideal would have each local congregation with its own *Ältester*, subordinate as pastor to the Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ and co-pastor with all other *Ältesten*.[70]

Once ordained, Pauls moved to the more central location of Winkler where he vigorously promoted the local congregation along with his work for the larger Bergthaler Gemeinde.[71] A decade later the Bergthaler elected three additional bishops, but even then many locals wanted their own minister to officiate at baptisms and at communion services. Finally, in 1967 a special meeting of the central brotherhood authorized all local leaders to be ordained for this purpose. Just as the results of this vote were announced, an electrical storm knocked out the lights in the church. "For many this was a foreboding omen," wrote Henry J. Gerbrandt.[72] In 1968 the Manitoba Bergthaler Gemeinde had 3,302 members and 39 active ministers. With its own periodical and radio program it was still like a mini-

conference, even after giving up its mission program to the CMC. That would end. By 1969 the Conference *Yearbook* no longer listed the Bergthaler Gemeinde of Manitoba but only its former "locals," now as individual congregations.

Table 5.6
Manitoba Bergthaler Congregations 1969

Location	Minister-in-charge	Membership	
		1969	1999
Altona	H.J. Gerbrandt	626	640
Winkler	Peter J. Froese	623	819
Morden	Abram G. Neufeld	366	360
Plum Coulee	Lawrence Siemens	244	208
Winnipeg[73]	Clarence Epp	218	142
Gretna	Edwin Plett	158	120
Steinbach[74]	Abe W. Hiebert	145	Withdrew 1976
Lowe Farm	Peter G. Dueck	130	93
Rosenfeld	Peter D. Penner	109	86
Winkler (Bethel)	Otto J. Hamm	103	274
MacGregor	A.J. Regier	101	174
Spencer[75]	Peter A. Dyck	83	Withdrew 1971
Halbstadt	Walter Braun	80	Withdrew 1994
Carman	Henry Isaak	79	126
Graysville	Frank K. Letkeman	70	47
Homewood	Edward Cornelson	60	46
Gladstone	Jacob Friesen	40	Withdrew 1994
Kane	–	30	Closed 1973

The Blumenorter of Manitoba had taken the opposite approach during the latter 1950s. They erected a new church building in Rosenort (now Rosetown) and centralized all congregational activity while gradually closing down the other local meeting places.[76] The Whitewater Gemeinde in Manitoba gave full local independence to its constituent groups in the late 1960s, first reflected in the annual statistical reports in the 1968 *Jahrbuch*.

This rapid change in forms of ministry and structure of the congregation brought a number of consequences. In many congregations there was relief that the local leading minister was finally authorized to minister fully, that its members need no longer depend on a bishop from another locality to officiate at high points in the church life, such as baptism and communion. On the other hand, some smaller locals of large Gemeinden and their leaders felt almost orphaned, dependent now on their own local resources for funds and

personnel. Many realized that in a few years they would no longer be able to depend on a lay ministry but would have to adopt the "pastor system." Some bishops took the decentralization of "their" *Gemeinde* personally and were deeply hurt by the loss.[77]

Congregational polity quite rapidly took on a different significance. The "autonomous" congregation was now a relatively small group and lacked the experience in leadership that many of the bishops had provided. Hired pastors and their employer congregations found out that the theological education symbolized by a seminary degree did not automatically convey an authority equivalent to that of the trust built through years of service and the symbol of ordination as a bishop.[78] Ministers ordained for life by their home congregation in the former system were now frequently unsure of their status, as were the congregations in which they resided. Some wondered about their calling on the basis of which they had accepted ordination.

Peace and Social Concerns

One of the most significant transformations experienced by the Conference during the 1940s and early 1950s was a turning outward. A large number of young men had worked outside of their home communities for the first time during alternative service as conscientious objectors. Many, mostly younger, families and individuals went to the cities for jobs or higher education. Canadian Mennonite Bible College graduated its first class in 1950. By 1955 some 65 graduates were actively setting new directions for the church. At least a dozen served as ministers, another dozen became involved in mission work, and an equal number in various professions such as medicine, social work, post-elementary teaching and journalism. An earlier generation had worked hard to consolidate scattered Mennonites into communities with a Christian character. Now the whole area of service and witness to the outside was added to this focus on inner nurture.

The impetus for creating the new Board of Christian Service in 1956 had come from the former Service Committee, whose initial mandate was fairly narrowly focused on alternative service in wartime. However, the Board's mandate almost immediately broadened to include developing a new stance toward surrounding society and the more distant world. The initially elected Board was fairly balanced regionally (four Manitobans and two from each of the other provinces) but still dominated by ordained men (four bishops and six additional ministers). However, its chair, D.P. Neufeld, had

alternative service experience and its secretary, Frank H. Epp, was a new graduate of CMBC and editor of *The Canadian Mennonite*, a recently founded independent English-language weekly.

The Board's first report reflected a strong preoccupation with peace issues. Its initial list of recommendations was strongly pro-active: peace conferences to be held in every province, peace workshops on a more local basis, a designated representative for service and peace in each congregation, developing a registry of youth ages 15–25, a plan for regular mailing of peace literature to selected age groups, designating the Sunday nearest Remembrance Day (November 11) as "Conference Peace Sunday," having the Conference join the all-Canadian inter-Mennonite peace organization. The focus was on a united witness and a positive service to society. The stance was proactive. Only in recommending that each province organize a "Mennonite Disaster Service" chapter (on an inter-Mennonite basis, if possible) did the recommendation warn against something, namely, joining the newly emerging civil defence units.

Some of these recommendations were clearly modelled on existing programs of the Board of Christian Service of the General Conference, of which D.P. Neufeld was a member. That connection probably also gave rise to two recommendations to the Canadian Conference in 1957: one, that larger congregations create "Men's Brotherhood" groups relating to the GC "Mennonite Men" organization; and two, that the Conference support the 1956 GC

Kaethe Hooge (1903–2001) began work as secretary of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization two months after her family arrived in Canada in 1923 and remained in that post until MCC Canada took over the Board's work in 1964. Her efficiency, precision, proficiency in German, Russian and English, and dedication to her work immensely aided the work of Board chairs David Toews and J.J. Thiessen. Photo: *CMC Bulletin,* 13 September 1966

decision to organize a "forum of ministry for women within the church" which resulted in an organization, "Women in Church Vocations."[79]

A study conference on "The Witness of the Church in Society" in 1959 reflected the new outreach stance of the Board. Promotion of voluntary service as a witness for peace in peacetime was bearing fruit. That year 110 persons from CMC congregations were in regular and summer voluntary service assignments with MCC or the General Conference, well over half of them in longer term positions.[80] Many were significantly affected by their service term and contributed to change in their home congregations.

In the 1960s other issues in society pushed themselves into the churches' agenda. The congregation from Rosemary, Alberta, asked for guidance on how and where to express its opposition to Canada's acquisition of nuclear weapons.[81] A Vancouver congregation had concerns regarding the Vietnam War.[82] The Board's presentations to the delegate sessions or Council of Boards meetings included papers on Mennonites and political involvement, the church's witness to the state, capital punishment,[83] welfare, civil disobedience and nonviolence, divorce and remarriage, the Middle East, communism and east-west relations, and other topics. On the one hand, delegates endorsed this challenge "to take a more realistic look and approach to the world in which we live" and "to make our witness for Christ more relevant" and "apply our faith practically by stronger emphasis on social concerns." On the other hand, they cautioned the Board to seek ways and means of presenting these controversial issues "in a manner which will lead to resolving of differences rather than creating cleavages."[84]

On issues suggesting representation to government or addressing the larger society, the Board agreed to seek action through more broadly representative bodies in which the Conference was represented, such as the Historic Peace Church Council of Canada or Mennonite Central Committee Canada.

Divorce and Remarriage

Other matters were considered more internal to the Conference and its congregations. During the 1950s discussion of them began, and sometimes remained, in the ministers and deacons conference. For example, in 1953 D.D. Klassen presented a paper to that group on "A Christian Wedding." A year later the ministers discussed the remarriage of persons whose spouse had vanished in Soviet prison

camps, but who might still be alive. In 1956 they asked under what conditions a "church wedding" was permitted in the case of a premarital pregnancy. That year they also opened the issue of divorce.

When in the mid-sixties the federal government began a study of divorce with a view to introducing new legislation, the Board of Education and Publication appointed a committee to prepare a brief. Its progress report to the 1967 sessions considered the biblical position, analyzed the legal situation, and looked at social implications and the responsibility of the church.[85] By the 1968 sessions, the new government legislation was in place. The Board of Christian Service was asked to comment on it, and then mandated to make a thorough study "of this entire problem and come to the next conference with specific proposals for guidance and practical application in our churches."[86]

One part of the Board's study was a survey to assess the extent of marriage breakdown in member congregations of the CMC. With returns representing 88 percent of total Conference membership, they found 18 divorces, 60 separations, and an additional 71 couples with serious marriage problems. While this incidence was still relatively small, even in comparison to the low Canadian rate of 55 divorces per 100,000 population, the Board noted that the rate for urban congregations was considerably higher than for rural ones. This did not bode well for the Conference, given the rapid rate of urbanization already underway. Furthermore, the study showed another 28 divorced among "former members," suggesting that it was awkward, even difficult, for divorced people to remain in the church. Delegates appeared surprised at the extent of the problem.

As a basis for its practical suggestions, the Board used the affirmations of the 1967 committee's report: the sanctity of the home and of monogamous marriage, the need to work toward prevention of breakdown and divorce, and the concrete implications of Christian forgiveness. It stressed that while it forthrightly "spoke exactly to the borderline cases or the problem areas," it was offering "guidelines for redemptive action" which should not be used in a legalistic way. "The local congregation will have to evaluate each situation in the light of the particular circumstances as well as in the light of any adopted guidelines," it added.[87] Even with those cautions, the Conference was unable to take decisive action on the recommendations and could only ask the Board to continue to work at the issue.[88] The mood in the constituency in the late 1960s had clearly moved in the direction of greater congregational autonomy in action, while valuing the

discussion of issues at Conference level. The problem of divorce and remarriage would only intensify in the coming years. The Canadian divorce rate jumped significantly after the new legislation took effect (from 55 per 100,000 in 1968 to 124 in 1969) and continued to climb more rapidly than at any earlier time.[89]
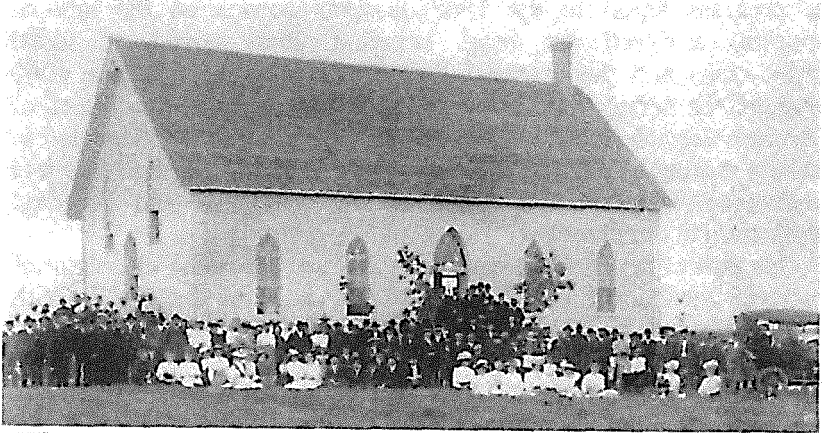
The first mission festival of the Conference was held at Eigenheim prior to the delegate sessions in 1910. Before women's groups made this an annual feature of the Conference gathering in the 1940s, mission festivals were held occasionally. Photo: *Jubiläum-Album der Konferenz der Mennoniten in Canada*

Beyond Mennonite Borders: Mission

Ever since David Toews, as chair of the Conference, had invited local women to prepare an inspirational evening program at the 1941 annual sessions in Laird, promotion of overseas mission by the women's groups had become an annual feature of Conference. Mrs. B.A. Friesen of Eigenheim had prepared a *Referat* (paper) on "The Activity of the Sewing Circle as a Branch of Congregational Ministry" for that first program, and Missionary William Voth spoke about the GC mission in China.[90] Two years later the Saskatchewan women organized a provincial conference. By the early 1950s the other four provinces had followed suit and in 1952 the Canadian Women's Conference was organized at Gretna. Many congregational groups, known as sewing circles, mission associations, women's auxiliaries, and by other titles, annually presented mission programs in their communities, often in conjunction with an auction sale or other fund-raising event.[91]
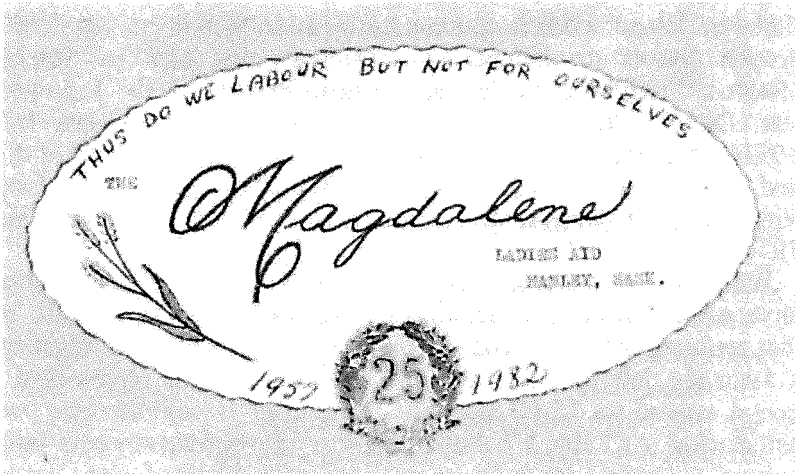
At the 25th anniversary of the Magdalene Mennonite Ladies Aid, Hanley, Saskatchewan, "several men showed their culinary skills in serving the 83 guests." The report does not say, however, whether the salads and baked goods at the barbeque meal were also prepared by the men. Credit: *Der Bote,* 25 August 1982

Promotion of mission interest and support was given a boost by the wartime alternative service experience of the COs and the educational experience at CMBC. Both contributed significantly to an outward-facing desire to serve and witness in general. This spawned the first "foreign mission" initiative in Canada and to some extent gave it shape.

The large Bergthaler Gemeinde of Manitoba, unlike most of the other CMC congregations, had not joined the General Conference. When one of its members, a graduate of the non-denominational Winnipeg Bible Institute, wanted to enter mission work among the Tarahumara Indians of Mexico in 1939, a mission committee was struck. In 1945 an agreement between the Bergthaler mission committee, renamed Mennonite Pioneer Mission (MPM), and the GC Board of Missions cleared the way for the work in Mexico. Late that year Henry and Susan Gerbrandt left Manitoba to give leadership to this pioneer venture. Visa and personnel difficulties terminated the Mexico venture before it was properly established, forcing them to return in 1948.[92]

Meanwhile, contacts and experiences gained by COs serving in northern Manitoba schools during the War led to a new field of opportunity for MPM. In 1948 Jake and Trudie Unrau began work at

Matheson Island, a Métis community on Lake Winnipeg. The CMC, through one of its member congregations, was now in "foreign missions."[93] MPM expanded into nearby Pine Dock the following year. Other Lake Winnipeg communities followed: Anama Bay (1953), Loon Straits (1955) and Manigotogan (1957). As word of this kind of ministry spread, work also began to the east of Lake Winnipeg at Pauingassi (1955)[94] and to the north at Cross Lake (1956). (See map below.)

While this development proceeded, another Bergthaler member, nurse Anne Penner of Rosenfeld, was ordained to mission work by joint action of the GC Board of Missions and her home congregation. In 1946 she left for India as a GC missionary. This represented a second avenue for CMC members to minister outside of their own membership. As Table 5.7 shows, she was followed shortly by a large group of volunteers for overseas mission, many attracted to the "new" fields of Japan and Taiwan. In his 1999 Showalter Address at St. Louis, Robert Kreider observed: "After the war, from Canada flowed into the [General] Conference the greatest stream of pastoral, missionary and institutional leadership in its history."[95]

By 1971 CMC missionaries were present in Mexico, India, Japan, Congo, Taiwan, Brazil and Paraguay, as well as in a number of First Nations communities in Canada and the United States. Long-term (minimum of one year) voluntary service workers under Mennonite Central Committee added significantly to the range of locations.

The combined number of persons going out in these three modes during the 1950s took the Conference by surprise. In the decade of the 1950s, 84 entered mission service with one of the agencies indicated in Table 5.7, and an additional 59 were in long-term MCC assignments in 1959. Since 1949 the CMC had a "Foreign Missions Committee" but it had no program of its own to accommodate this outpouring of service motivation. In 1953
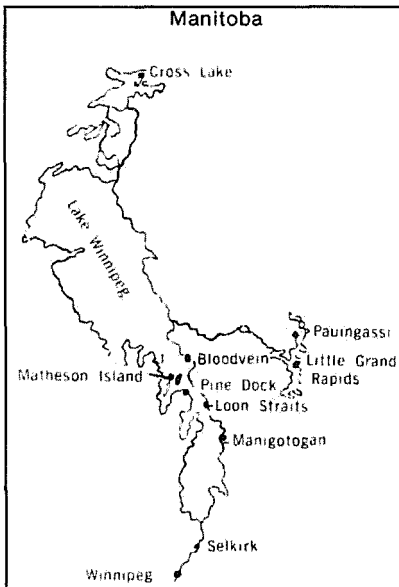
<p style="text-align: center;">**Table 5.7**</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">**CMC Members Entering Service Terms through 1959 with MPM and the GC Board of Missions**[44]</p>

Name	Congregation[45]	Field	Date
Benno & Catherine Toews	Rosenorter, Rosthern SK	Okla., Ariz.	38–40; 54–56
Henry* & Susan Gerbrandt	Bergthaler, Lowe Farm MB	Mexico	1945–1948
Anne Penner	Bergthaler, Plum Coulee MB	India	1946–1981
Helen Kornelson	Bethany, Watrous SK	India	1948–1984
Jake* & Trudie Unrau	Bergthaler, Gretna MB	MPM, CHM	1948–1985
Cornie Boldt	Osler , SK	Mexico	1948–1949
Jake W. & Frieda Nickel	Zoar, Langham SK	Paraguay	1948–1950
George Andres	Nordheimer, Winnipegosis MB	MPM	1949–1956
Esther Patkau*	Nordheimer, Hanley SK	Japan	1951–1976
Dorothy Andres	Hoffnungsfelder, Meadow Lake, SK	India	1951–1977
Paul & LaVerne Boschman	Hoffnungsfelder, Petaigan SK	Japan	1951–71
Rudolph & Elvina Martens	Kitchener-Waterloo, ON	Congo	52–60; 70–80
Peter* & Annie* Falk	Bergthaler, Morden MB	Congo	52–74; 82–88
Jacob Giesbrecht*	Zoar, Waldheim, SK	India	1952–1977
Herb* & Justina Peters	Bergthal, Didsbury AB	Arizona	1953–1969
Ferd & Viola Ediger	North Star, Drake SK	Japan	1952–1983

* attended CMBC

[44] Compiled from James C. Juhnke, *A People of Mission: A History of General Conference Overseas Missions* (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1979); Tina Block Ediger, *Window to the World: Extraordinary Stories from a Century of Overseas Mission, 1900–2000* (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1999); COM Complete Personnel List CD (MC Canada Witness, electronic file); Chris Franz, unpublished paper, 1990. MHCA, Vertical File.

[45] Unless otherwise indicated, the congregation's complete name includes "Mennonite Church."

Name	Congregation[45]	Field	Date
Frank* & Anne Dyck	Whitewater, Lena MB	Paraguay	1953–1968
Anna Dyck*	North Star, Drake SK	Japan	1953–1992
Martha Giesbrecht*	Zoar, Waldheim SK	Japan	53–80; 90–94
Mary Epp	Kitchener-Waterloo, ON	Paraguay	1953–1956
Peter & Mary Derksen	W. Abbotsford BC	Japan	1954–2000
Bruno* & Elizabeth Epp	W. Abbotsford BC & Eigenheim, Laird SK	Paraguay	1954–1964
John* & Mary Friesen	Schoenfelder, Marquette MB	Mexico	1954–1960
Norman* & Mary* Bartel	Zoar, Waldheim SK	Mexico	1954–1955
Martha Boschman*	Hoffnungsfelder, Petaigan SK	Taiwan	1955–1993
Lena Peters*	Nordheimer, Winnipegosis MB	Taiwan	1955–1971
Helen Ens	Blumenorter, Reinland MB	Mexico	1955–1993
Aaron Klassen*	Bergthaler, Homewood MB	Mexico	1955–1957
Henry* & Elna Neufeld	Bergthaler, Homewood MB	MPM	1955–1996
Henry P.* & Hilda Epp	Kitchener-Waterloo, ON	Parag-Urug	1956–1958
Henry H. & Mary Epp	Kitchener-Waterloo, ON	Paraguay	1956–1958
Paul* & Lois Dyck	Bergthal, Didsbury AB & North Star, Drake SK	India	1956–1970
Daniel* & Elma Peters	Blumenorter, Gretna MB	Mexico	1956–1985
Menno* & Esther Bergen	Aberdeen, SK	Mexico	1956–1969
Sarah Dyck*	Westheimer, Rosemary AB	Congo	1956–1958
Lawrence* & Laverna Klippenstein	Bergthaler, Altona MB & EMC, Steinbach MB	MPM	1956–1958
Otto* & Margaret Hamm	Bergthaler, MacGregor MB	MPM	1956–1966
Henry T.* & Helga* Dueck	Bethel, Aldergrove BC	Paraguay	1956–1968
Margaret Warkentin	Elim, Grunthal MB	Mexico	1957–1958
Isaac* & Margaret* Froese	Bergthaler, Winkler MB	Arizona	57–60; 63–67

Name	Congregation[45]	Field	Date
Katie Kehler*	Yarrow UM, BC	Arizona	1957–1960
Helen Friesen	Osler, SK	Mexico	1957–1960
Helen Willms*	Coaldale, AB	Taiwan	1957–1991
Alvin Friesen	Immanuel, Meadow Lake SK	Taiwan	1957–1976
Ray & Phyllis Reimer	Steinbach, MB	Japan	1957–1969
Sue Martens*	First Mennonite, Eyebrow SK	Taiwan	57–81; 91–93
Mary Neufeld	Leamington UM, Wheatley ON	Mexico	1957–1959
Edwin & Marg Brandt	Bergthaler, Winkler MB	MPM	1957–1962
Larry* & Jessie* Kehler	Bergthaler, Altona MB	MPM	1958–1966
Erna Dirks	Niagara UM, Virgil ON	Arizona	1957–1959
Martha Harms	Blumenorter, Gretna MB	Mexico	1957–1959
Mary Warkentin	Vauxhall, Acme AB	Paraguay	1958–1962
Mary Epp*	Nordheimer, Hanley SK	Congo	1958–1988
Eleanor Mathies	Leamington UM, ON	Paraguay	1958–1981
Anna Isaac	Niagara UM, Niagara-on-the-Lake	Paraguay	1958–1961
John Pauls	Bergthaler, Morden, MB	India	1958–1977
Rita Baergen	Schoensee, Tofield AB	Mexico	1959–1961
Dennis Epp*	Rosthern, SK	Japan	1959–1962
Herman* & Alice Walde	Ebenfelder, Kindersley SK	Oklahoma	1959–1963
John Heese	Rosthern, SK	Congo	1959–1960
George Janzen*	Cedar Valley, Mission BC	Japan	59–80; 90–94
Homer & Gredi* Janzen	Zoar, Waldheim SK & Arnaud, MB	India	59–64; 69–74
Peter* & Lydia Kehler	Mountainview, Vancouver BC	Taiwan	59–75; 91–93
Rita Klassen*	Blumenorter, Gnadenthal MB	Mexico	1959–1960
B.Theodore & Marg Friesen	Rosthern, SK	Paraguay	1959–1964
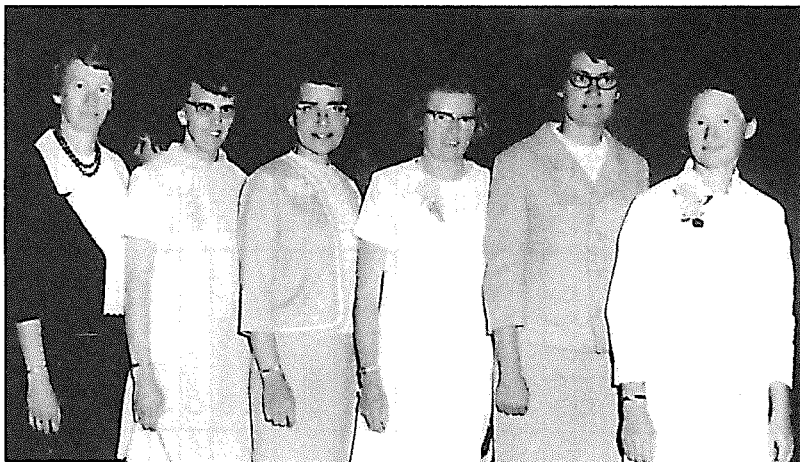
Canadian missionaries ca. 1970. From left: Marie Wiebe Nussbaum, Watrous, Sask. to Arizona in 1966; Erna Fast Enns, Oak Lake, Man. to Bloodvein River, Man. in 1969; Margaret Thiessen, Fitzmaurice, Sask. to Arizona in 1961; Helen Kornelson, Watrous, Sask. to India in 1948; Shirley Hildebrand, Chilliwack, B.C. to Taiwan in 1962; Esther Patkau, Hanley, Sask. to Japan 1951. Photo: MHC Archives

the Conference placed one member on the MPM committee and encouraged financial support of this Bergthaler program. At the annual delegate sessions the "foreign mission" input consisted of reports of work done by MPM and the GC Mission Board. In 1957 an agreement was concluded by which MPM and the Foreign Mission section of the Board of Missions would merge over the next three years.[96]

The Board continued to expand the work as invitations came in from Bloodvein River on Lake Winnipeg (1960) and Little Grand Rapids near Pauingassi on the Berens River system (1969). Urban ministry to Native people was begun as Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) in Winnipeg (1965) and a congregation in Selkirk, Manitoba. When MPM celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1970, expansion beyond Manitoba had not yet occurred, although explorations with Blood Indians around Cardston, Alberta, had taken place.[97]

Student Services
Another venue in which an increasing number of Conference young people broadened their horizons beyond the local community and home church was in various post-secondary institutions. During and after the War, unprecedented numbers left for town or city for

Jeremiah and Fanny Ross and granddaughter, Cross Lake, Manitoba. Ross was called by the local congregation to become its minister and affirmed in 1968 through a joint ordination by MPM and the congregation. Photo: *CMC Bulletin*, 20 February 1968

Jeremiah Ross felt the call to ministry from the local community's affirmation, his reading and study of the Scriptures, and a clear confirmation given to him in a vision during a severe illness. Missionary Ernie Sawatsky urged the MPM Board: "If God has picked this man and we pass him by it may be a long time before God chooses another; or maybe God is just waiting until we and the Mission Board are ready." A church member, Mable McIvor, said: "Finally we have one of our own people who has entered the ministry. For years I have prayed that this might happen."

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academic or professional study. Unlike an earlier generation of students, who attended a nearby Bible school or went to Winnipeg to study and live in residence at CMBC, most of these students lived on their own for the first time. Their studies and the social contacts at their institutions opened new ways of thinking about and acting in

many situations. For some this came as a breath of fresh air. For others, the responsibility of having to develop new convictions in relative isolation from their home and faith community was daunting.

Many found Christian groups on their campus and affiliated with a Mennonite congregation in the town or city of their school. These contacts were much looser than those developed over years of growing up in their church. But in the home congregation there was often no one who understood the issues or the context of these students. The Board of Education responded to this growing need with a ministry geared specifically to these young people by appointing a high school teacher, Rudy Friesen of Rosthern, as student services secretary in 1968. His resignation after two years, together with funding problems, led the Board to pass on this ministry to "the provincial conferences and churches in proximity to universities."[98]

Finances

The consolidation of committees into boards in 1956 resulted in a rapid expansion of the work done collectively through the Conference and called for a sharp increase of funds. Growing affluence of the constituency and the enthusiasm generated in many congregations through the increasing number of new members now serving on various boards and committees spurred on new levels of giving. Table 5.8 shows the distribution of funds among the initial four Boards and how their expenses shifted in the first several years of transition.

Table 5.8
Conference Revenue by Board 1956–1960

Year	Missions[99]	Ed & Pub	Chr Serv	CMBC[100]	Office	Total
1956–57	$20,600	$2,700	$7,700	$23,900	$6,300	$61,200
1957–58	31,400	8,100	14,600	23,800	11,400	89,300
1958[101]	44,600	14,300	16,100	25,000	16,500	116,500
1959	57,500	12,900	21,100	35,000	26,400	152,900
1960	60,200[102]	16,000	24,500	36,700	26,000	163,400

Contributions to the foreign mission work of the General Conference are not included under the missions total in the table above. In 1958 this amounted to $124,500; by 1960 it was $160,900. On the other hand, funds transferred to the GC Board of Christian Service and to MCC are included in the above totals for Christian

Service. By 1960 these amounted to over $11,000. Similarly, over $14,000 of the "Office" amount in 1960 was money collected for other agencies.

In spite of the rapid growth of CMC expenditures, giving kept pace through the 1950s, with each board showing an adequate year-end balance in its operating fund. Of course, debts were incurred in building projects. However, the $146,500 debt on the new classroom building of CMBC in 1956 was reduced on a schedule that allowed the second phase to proceed a few years later. The $233,000 total resulting from building the residence in 1959 was paid down to $123,000 by 1963. Funds from CMC congregations flowing to the General Conference overtook total giving to CMC the following year. That gap continued to grow so that by 1967 CMC income from its congregations decreased to $299,000, while the General Conference received $382,000 from its Canadian constituency, the bulk of it for overseas missions and the seminary.[103] That placed a severe strain on the CMC treasury.

Stories like the following provided strong motivation for vicarious missionary work and gave concrete projects which mission sewing circles could adopt.

In the 1917 Russian-born GC missionaries Peter J. and Agnes (Harder) Wiens began work among what were then called the "Untouchable Group" in Janjgir, C.P. India. One program provided education for children of baptized members of this group. On one trip to the village of Gopal to collect young pupils, Agnes Wiens had made her selection and was on her way back to the school with the chosen pupils in her ox-cart. Ramo, deemed too small, ran after the cart and begged to be included. The "missionary mother" finally relented and took him. Here is S.T. Moyer's account:

And so Ramo left his village and went to school and there permanently took on the name of Timothy. And when he was finally enrolled in school this missionary mother down in hot India sent a plea to the mothers of the western world, "Who is willing to invest for the Lord Jesus the sum of twenty dollars per year in the life of little six-year-old Ramo? Who will water their investment by unceasing prayer unto Him whose eyes wander to and from throughout the whole earth to find those through whom He can work?" The sum equivalent to what any western farmer could earn in a week would have kept Timothy in school for a year.

And from the frozen fields of Saskatchewan, Canada, the women of a country church heard the call of the missionary woman and thrust

out their hearts and hands across the seas and continents and helped a little boy in hot India. And while their hearts reached out across the seven seas, their prayers ascended unto the throne of grace. Today, after twenty years, there is no village worker in those parts who can speak of the things of Jesus Christ, as Timothy, who was called Ramo." —S.T. Moyer, *With Christ on the Edge of the Jungles* (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1941) [The country church was North Star in Drake, Saskatchewan.]

With a debt of $300,000 at fiscal year end 1965, the Finance Committee presented a debt retirement proposal at the annual sessions. Delegates were not enthusiastic, pointing out that congregations also had debts at home, but passed the proposal with the slimmest of margins, 320–310. Data gathered annually by the General Conference showed that in CMC congregations giving for all causes in 1965 had decreased by 2.5 percent over the previous year. Nevertheless, after testing the mood in the churches following the narrow vote at the 1966 sessions, the executive created a Debt Retirement Committee and a National Fund Raising Committee. The former, representing the Conference program areas, sought to curb expenditures; the latter, consisting of leading businessmen, worked at raising new money. They were successful. By the end of 1967 the "effective debt" of the Conference had been reduced to $83,000.

Meanwhile, Boards had underspent their budgets wherever possible, sometimes wondering, "What does a board do when there is no money?" That was the question asked by the Board of Education and Publication when, by December 1966, it had received only $16,000 of its $28,000 budget allotment.[104] Action on urgent needs that came on board agendas was postponed until they could afford to do something. When income for CMC programs rose by almost 8 percent in 1968, an optimistic 12 percent increase was proposed for 1969. By then the constituency's uneasiness about the mood of the 1960s and about the perceived overly tolerant theological response of Conference and CMBC leadership was gaining momentum. As confidence lagged, giving decreased. Instead of receiving the budgeted $485,000, income dropped by 7 percent to $319,000, resulting in a $32,000 deficit and increasing the cumulative debt once more. Under constituency pressure and delegate directive, the projected budget income of $417,000 for 1971 was cut back by 26 percent to $310,000 (1970 actual income) by the Council of Boards.

Several factors contributed to this situation. Giving to the General Conference, as indicated above, was one; local spending was another. By the mid-1960s congregations were spending 55 percent of their income locally, and the trend to hire pastors was still continuing. The needs of provincial programs such as camps, and Bible and secondary schools, were more immediately apparent and with more tangible benefits than the more distant programs of the Conference. While total salaries of the Winnipeg office staff amounted to just over $40,000, about 14 percent of the 1971 budget, suspicion of a "central office bureaucracy" was emerging in the constituency.[105]

Even more important, probably, was a growing sense of unease with all the change that was happening in the Conference and in society. The Board of Christian Service responded to activists in the constituency by speaking to and involving the Conference in controversial issues. Not all constituents were convinced that the Board fairly represented their interests. The complaint voiced by one constituent expressed what an increasing number felt: "Sometimes the Board of Christian Service speaks its own opinion."[106] Feedback from youth and university student ministries under the Board of Education was increasingly unsettling. Mennonite Pioneer Mission work in northern Manitoba did not produce new congregations joining the Conference, still a widely held expectation. Instead, MPM increasingly became involved in social and economic ventures that some saw as secondary to "proclaiming the Gospel." CMBC students came home with an increasingly "anti-establishment" attitude, tending to question even long-held Mennonite and Christian positions. Constituents wanted assurance "that all is well with our theology," as executive secretary D.P. Neufeld put it in a 1967 Debt Retirement report.[107] Combined, these nagging concerns added up to a loss of confidence in the Conference as currently structured, which in turn led to decreased giving for its programs.[108]

In an effort to minimize overlap among the three levels of Conference, the 1970 annual session passed a resolution calling on the Executive Committee to initiate a study of the organizational structure of the CMC and of "the relationship between the provincial and Canadian Conferences" and report back to next year's sessions.[109] A new way of relating to the General Conference, off-loading programs to the provincial level, meeting only every second year, even dissolving the CMC were all part of the discussion. A serious identity crisis faced the Conference.

6

Joy and Strain of Increased Diversity
1971–1988

The 1960s brought enormous social and cultural change to North American society. The "Quiet Revolution" launched by the newly elected Liberal government in Quebec, the introduction of the birth control pill and the related "sexual revolution," the huge changes erupting in the Roman Catholic Church sparked by the Second Vatican Council, the civil rights movement in the United States, and growing opposition to the Vietnam War combined to create a climate in which nations, societies, institutions and individuals re-evaluated many long-held traditions and practices. The women's liberation movement, a new and broader ecumenism, and the irruption of charismatic movements within and across denominations were influenced by this new climate. The church could not avoid being caught up in the process of change and re-evaluation. The full impact of these changes did not reach Canadian Mennonites until the late 1960s and early 1970s.

At the 1969 Conference sessions a small group, related to the CMC Student Services ministry, depicted youth alienation so forcefully that an estimated 150 people walked out in protest during the two-hour multimedia presentation, later dubbed a "happening."[1] In his final report as chair of the CMBC Board in 1970, Henry J. Gerbrandt articulated a conviction held by many in the Conference and in its College. "During this period of cultural, economic and social revolution when almost everything we once held sacred is being challenged, uprooted and changed, we need a school that seriously attempts to retain the eternal Truths of the Scriptures in our Anabaptist traditions," he said. Young people left home to go to College "with shirt, tie and coat" or "dresses fastidiously sewn by their mothers" and came back "with shirts hanging loosely over their pants, shoe laces untied and long unkempt hair" or patched jeans, Gerbrandt observed.

In the early 1970s relief and mission ranked high in CMC outreach priorities. Images like this rice distribution scene at the Thai-Campuchean border prompted generous response. Photo: MCC Canada Collection, MHC Archives

Many constituents wanted the College and the Conference to stem the tide of change with legislation. The CMBC board and faculty advocated that, in dialogue with teachers and leaders, young people needed to work this out "under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the directives of the Word of God." Not all delegates agreed, and Gerbrandt recalls that he and CMBC president, Henry Poettcker, "were clobbered during the subsequent discussion."[2]

When the Conference met in Vancouver the following year, "guests from Ontario and the Prairies were uncertain about how they should respond" to the phenomena of "the charismatic movement and the Jesus People," believed to have substantial influence on the churches in the Fraser Valley.[3] At the sessions "the emphasis was heavy on pietistical, mystical experiences" and another group of delegates became rather uneasy,[4] although they did not walk out in protest. Instead, wrote the newly appointed editor of *The Mennonite*, "out of the midst of this diversity and uncertainty blossomed a

surprising spirit of unity and brotherliness."[5] The CMC identity crisis noted at the conclusion of the previous chapter seemed to have been overcome.

Conference Re-organization

The review of CMC structures called for by a resolution from the floor in 1970 took seriously the growing sense that, on the one hand, congregations wanted more program initiative to take place at the grass roots level and, on the other hand, were calling for more inter-Mennonite and even ecumenical cooperation. To test what the structural implications of these divergent concerns might be, the Review Committee looked at all three levels of conference (provincial, Canadian and North American) and at MCC Canada.[6] It polled CMC Board members, executives of the General Conference and the provincial conferences, and the congregations. The results reflected in some detail how the church was responding to the many demands of a changing society.

Congregations almost unanimously ranked relief work as the top priority among MCC's functions and social concerns the lowest. Its voluntary service program was considered more important than its peace witness.[7] In the CMC, the constituency considered the Mission Board as most important and the Board of Christian Service most dispensable. Relief and mission were comfortable ways of outreach; peace witness and dealing with social issues involved an uncomfortable interaction with society where grey areas abounded.[8] CMBC, despite all of the criticism it had received in recent years, was ranked as more important than Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. The College had established itself as the primary place for preparation for ministry in CMC congregations.

In ranking the organizations themselves, the national level came last for both MCC and the conferences. In the case of MCC, Akron, whose focus was international programs, ranked marginally above the provincial MCCs; in the case of the conferences, the provincial outranked the other two levels. However, the poll gave no strong indication that any one of the organizations should be eliminated. The survey of elected board and executive members affirmed this direction. As a result of the survey, the Review Committee proceeded with the most favoured option of retaining the present structure in a reduced and simplified form.[9]

A criticism of perceived overlap among boards of the CMC itself had been raised repeatedly in recent years, suggesting a merger of the

Christian Service and Mission Boards, or of the Education and CMBC Boards. The model proposed by the Review Committee reduced the five existing boards (Missions, Education and Publication, Christian Service, CMBC, Finance) to three: an inward-directed Congregational Resources Board (CRB), the College Board, and the outward-directed Mennonite Pioneer Mission Board (MPM), with Finance returning to committee status. Peace was relegated to a sub-category of the CRB "Education Resources" program; voluntary service was limited to a few MPM locations; the social concerns portfolio disappeared entirely.

At the 1971 Conference sessions this model was adopted on a three-year interim basis. Provincial representation on each Board, which had already been implemented in 1965, was retained. A new General Board, consisting of the three-person executive and the chairs of the three program boards and the finance committee, would co-ordinate programs and finances. As in the revision of the By-laws in the mid-fifties, formal changes to the Constitution were developed by a task force, presented in 1974 and adopted a year later. While the organization of the Conference structure had changed, its role as a servant of and co-worker with the congregation was reaffirmed.[10]

Henry Gerbrandt, who began a decade of service as executive secretary of the Conference in 1971, noted the growing tension between faith and social action that had been building during the years when the Board of Christian Service attracted attention to major ills in society, making delegates "rather ill at ease and insecure." Perhaps, he suggested, "burying" the Board of Christian Service reflected this mood of anxiety and a hope that it would now go away.[11] Sociologist Leo Driedger, reviewing this era some 30 years later, characterized it as "reorganization and the burial of peace," and argued that perhaps this change *had* made the issues go away, since into the mid-1990s the new Congregational Resources Board had expended very few financial or people resources on peace and social concerns.[12] As seen below, congregations and delegates continued to raise issues in this area and did not allow the concerns to disappear from the Conference agenda.

Congregational Developments

The urbanization trend continued. Again about three quarters of the 36 congregations joining the Conference during this period were in urban centres, including Montreal, the first one east of Ontario. As Table 6.1 shows, all but six congregations had a membership below a

Conference chair David P. Neufeld welcomes three new congregations into the CMC. Representing them are Bob Friesen, Calgary Mennonite Fellowship; Stephen Lee, Vancouver Chinese Mennonite Church; Francis Tung, Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Church. Seated: secretary Helen Rempel, Winnipeg, and assistant secretary Irene Klassen, Calgary. Photo: *Der Bote* Collection, MHC Archives

hundred. Nine of the new member groups called themselves "Fellowship" rather than "Church." For some, like the Pembina Mennonite Fellowship in southern Manitoba, the name reflected their house-church model and their greater emphasis on community and shared ministry. For others the name may simply have reflected the smallness of the initial group, or possibly grown out of the 1960s anti-establishment mood. Two congregations chose the descriptive "Covenant" as part of their name; two others the "high church" modifier "Trinity." One combined "Trinity" and "Fellowship."

What was new among the congregations joining in this period was that four included the ethnic designation "Chinese" in their name. The Winnipeg church began as a Bible study group of south-east Asian Mandarin-speaking immigrants meeting under the leadership of Elisha Woo. In 1975 it formally organized as the Winnipeg Mandarin Church but lacked adequate meeting facilities. While using the facilities of Bethel Mennonite on Sunday afternoons, the congregation

Table 6.1
Member Congregations Admitted 1972–1988
W=Withdrew; C=Closed

*Unless otherwise indicated, the congregation's complete name includes "Mennonite Church."
The 1988 membership data is from the *Yearbook 1989*.

Name	Location	Admitted	Members		
			Adm.	1988	1999
Grace Mission[1]	Meadow Lake SK	1972	52	101	W
United Mennonite[2]	Thompson MB	1973	25	33	37
Flatrock[3]	Cecil Lake BC	1973	18	42	39
Fiske[4]	Fiske SK	1973	37	33	38
Superb[6]	Superb SK	1973	45	55	50
Hillcrest[5]	Grande Prairie AB	1974	18	50	57
Northdale Fellowship[6]	Winnipeg MB	1975	43	42	Table 7.5
Springfield Heights[7]	Winnipeg MB	1975	549	575	513
Rockway[8]	Kitchener ON	1975	18 + 50	102	124
Hanley[11]	Hanley SK	1976	102	99	94

[1] The congregation in Meadow Lake was begun as a part of Immanuel Mennonite Church (admitted 1934; see Table 3.1); first identified as Grace in *Jahrbuch 1963*, 148; first listed as an independent congregation in *Yearbook 1972*. Withdrew in 1991.

[2] Began services in 1961 and formally organized in 1963. First applied in 1968, seeking dual conference (MB) membership and withdrew its application with CMC when that failed. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 192–193.

[3] Pioneered by five families in 1950; regular services at Flat Rock began with CMC and B.C. Conference support in 1954; the first building was dedicated in 1963. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 129–130.

[4] Through 1972 Fiske and Superb are listed under Ebenfeld Mennonite Church. When the Ebenfelder Gemeinde (Table 3.1) decentralized in 1973, the Herschel congregation retained the name.

[5] See Hoffnungstal 1928 in Table 3.1 for a Grande Prairie predecessor to Hillcrest.

[6] Formally organized in 1975 by a group mainly from the Springfield Heights Mennonite Church desiring more use of English; renamed Jubilee Mennonite Church in 1994 when it amalgamated with Valley Garden Mennonite Brethren and took membership in both conferences. *Yearbook 1975*, 43; *1995*, 67; Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 201–202.

[7] Founded with 194 charter members in 1964 by North Kildonan Mennonite to relieve crowding and allow the new group to use more German. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 200–201; *Yearbook 1975*, 44.

[8] Rockway was a member of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario (OM) since its founding by First Mennonite Church in Kitchener in 1960; 18 of its 68 members were of CMC background. *Yearbook 1975*, 44.

Name	Location	Admitted	Members Adm.	1988	1999
Nordheimer Pleasant Point[9]	Dundurn SK	1976	69	76	93
College Park[10]	Saskatoon SK	1977	27	112	120
Mennonite Fellowship	Lethbridge AB	1978	27	60	73
Trinity Mennonite Fellowship[11]	Mather MB	1978	46	68	60
Calgary Mennonite Fellowship[12]	Calgary AB	1979	30	60	100
Chinese	Winnipeg MB	1979	91	114	66
Chinese	Vancouver BC	1979	41	164	173
Douglas[13]	Winnipeg MB	1980	183	302	353
Montreal Menn Fellowship	Montreal PQ	1980	26	37	43
N. Leamington UM[14]	Leamington ON	1980	485	495	507
Peace[15]	Richmond BC	1981	135	233	181
Mennonite Church[16]	Vernon BC	1981	13	23	90
Faith[17]	Edmonton AB	1981	35	76	C
Covenant	Saskatoon SK	1981	10	14[18]	C
Pembina Mennonite Fellowship[19]	Morden MB	1981	20	37	36

[9] Through *Yearbook 1975* Pleasant Point and Hanley were listed under the Nordheim Mennonite Church (Table 3.1). When the Nordheimer Gemeinde decentralized, Pleasant Point retained the Nordheim designation.

[10] Became Wildwood Mennonite Church in 1980.

[11] Trinity began in 1976 out of a split from Mather Mennonite. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 174.

[12] Begun as an outreach project of First Mennonite and Foothills congregations; renamed Pineridge Christian Fellowship in 1990.

[13] Daughter congregation of Springfield Heights, whose membership dropped from 660 in 1979 to 468 in 1980.

[14] Growth of Leamington UM (Table 3.1) led to building a second meeting house north of Leamington in 1954; that group became independent as North Leamington UM in 1980.

[15] Begun in 1978 by representatives from Sherbrooke, Prince of Peace, Mountainview and First Mennonite. Among charter members in 1980, 40 percent were from Sherbrooke Mennonite.

[16] Begun in 1980 at the initiative of the B.C. Conference's Missions and Service Committee.

[17] A daughter congregation of First Mennonite in Edmonton. Closed in 1997.

[18] Membership in 1984; last reported in 1986 with 11 members. Closed in 1987.

[19] Begun by four couples in 1974 as a house church in the Winkler-Morden area of southern Manitoba.

Name	Location	Admitted	Members Adm.	1988	1999
Stirling Avenue[20]	Kitchener ON	1981	389	368	325
Toronto Chinese	Toronto ON	1981	20	80	93
Langley Mennonite Fellowship[21]	Langley BC	1981	35	68	90
Covenant[22]	Winkler MB	1982	25	46	27
Guelph	Guelph ON	1983	14	27	29
Portage[23]	Portage la Prairie MB	1983	26	28	23
Emmanuel[24]	Abbotsford BC	1984	118	160	152
Trinity	Calgary AB	1984	47	53	96
Mennonite Fellowship	Rosthern SK	1985	30	36	36
Jubilee[25]	Swift Current SK	1985	21	20	C
Petitcodiac	Petitcodiac NB	1986	19	29	29
Peace[26]	Regina SK	1986	20	23	22
Chinese	Saskatoon SK	1986	17	49	13
Peace[27]	Saskatoon SK	1986	16	21	42
Emmanuel[28]	Winkler MB	1988	125	139	206
Mississauga Mennonite Fellowship	Mississauga ON	1988	43	49	50

[20] Founded in 1924 and affiliated with the Eastern District of the General Conference since 1946, Stirling became an associate member in both the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and United Mennonite Churches in Ontario in 1970.

[21] With B.C. Conference encouragement, informal meetings of Mennonite families living in the area began in 1977; formal membership in the B.C. Conference followed in 1979. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 133–134.

[22] Began in 1981 out of Winkler Bergthaler with emphasis on covenant relationships and shared ministry. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 197.

[23] Begun in 1977 by a local initiative led by Henry and Tena Neufeld and a working relationship with Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 193.

[24] Begun in 1980 with the support of Eben-Ezer some of whose members were looking for an English-speaking congregation. Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 137–139. Membership at Eben-Ezer declined from a high of 506 in 1981 to a low of 392 in 1984 before beginning to increase again.

[25] Closed in 1991.

[26] Begun in 1984 as a church plant when Grace Mennonite was approaching a membership of 180, which it considered optimal. Shannon Neufeldt, "Peace Mennonite Church Regina," unpublished paper, 1993. MHCA, Vertical File.

[27] Begun in 1985 in the north part of Saskatoon at the initiative of some members of the Nutana Park congregation. Much of its outreach ministry was directed to refugee sponsorship and to service and witness in its area of the city. Christina Harder, "Peace Mennonite Church North Saskatoon: Community Outreach and Service," unpublished paper, 1995. MHCA, Vertical File.

[28] A 1986 daughter congregation of Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church, whose membership was reduced from a high of 961 in 1986 to 839 in 1989, before increasing once more. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 197–198.

decided to change its name to Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Church and to join the provincial and Canadian Conferences.[13] For a while Jonathan Chen, a Mennonite pastor from Taiwan, served the congregation.

The beginning of the Vancouver Chinese Mennonite Church was at once more deliberate and more "accidental." Stephen Lee, a third-generation Christian, fled China by swimming five miles across the channel to Hong Kong. Lee felt a call to ministry and wanted to prepare at a Bible school. A year earlier a Mennonite tourist couple from Oklahoma had left some money at the MCC office in Hong Kong for just such a purpose. Lee received the waiting money, went to Bible school, married and moved to Vancouver. In 1974, under the leadership of pastor Paul Boschman of Mountainview Mennonite Church, he began a ministry among the 80,000 Chinese who lived in the Vancouver area. Four years later a group organized as the Vancouver Chinese Mennonite Church.[14]

Evangelism and Church Planting

The reorganized CMC structures assumed that Canadian congregations would continue to channel their overseas mission efforts through the General Conference. The new Mennonite Pioneer Mission Board focused almost exclusively on Native ministries within Canada and was shortly renamed to reflect this reality. Former "home mission" programs, such as evangelism, local mission and church planting, were left to the congregations themselves, except as provincial conferences might have programming in this area. However, the new Congregational Resources Board inherited the Home Mission program of indirect support for outreach by providing financial assistance to "congregations in outlying areas, developing urban congregations," and to some new initiatives such as an ecumenical "industrial chaplaincy" at Kettle Rapids, a hydro-development site in Manitoba.

The first attempt of the CRB to motivate and equip congregations for evangelism was by promoting participation in Probe 72. This four-day all-Mennonite consultation brought over 2,000 participants to Minneapolis in April 1972 to promote a broadly based "evangelism that cares." Despite some tensions between peace and social activists and more traditional proclamation evangelists, David Schroeder of CMBC considered it an excellent start "to link the renewed emphasis on evangelism with the basic strength of Anabaptist and Mennonite theology and life."[15]

The Conference was less enthusiastic about Key 73, a broadly based evangelistic umbrella organization operating under the slogan "calling our continent to Christ." Not convinced that it gave adequate expression to the beginning made at Probe 72, CMBC organized a "theology-evangelism seminar" using CMC and GC staff in addition to College faculty for leadership. Many CMC congregations participated in aspects of the Key 73 initiatives, and some provincial conferences promoted it. The CMC made former missionary to Japan, Paul Boschman, available to congregations. He used modified materials from the "Evangelism-in-Depth" program.[16]

Meanwhile, a CRB task force assigned to give direction for the former "home missions" portfolio recommended that its priority areas should not depend on a high concentration of relocated Mennonites but rather on "the need of an Anabaptist evangelical witness in a particular community." It set a modest goal of beginning work in one such area per year for the next five years.[17] A Church Growth Seminar held in Calgary in the fall of 1975, while using Conference resource people like David Schroeder and Paul Boschman as speakers, also invited Donald McGavran and Wyn Arn, specialists in the American "Church Growth" movement.[18] Although there was positive response to this initiative, some constituents were uneasy with the emphasis on numbers which they saw in the church growth movement.

Strategy for church planting and evangelism thus remained diffuse. Initiative might "come from individuals, a regional group or congregation, a provincial conference or the Canadian Conference," reported General Secretary Gerbrandt in 1976.[19] The College Park congregation (now Wildwood Mennonite Church, see Table 6.1) was begun in a co-operative effort of the other Saskatoon congregations and the CMC. But on the whole, the cooperation strategy was not very effective, judging by the resulting number of new congregations. Dissatisfaction in some churches led to a 1979 resolution to test a structural change that would focus responsibility for this work more sharply. It called for the General Board to create a new commission on evangelism and missions and to develop its terms of reference. Delegates opposed this proposal, wary about enlarging a bureaucracy and careful about taking initiative away from provincial conferences.[20]

In his final report of the decade to the Conference, Gerbrandt pointed to a 21 percent growth in CMC membership from 1969 to 1979, compared to national population growth of only 11 percent. He

noted that over 60 percent of urban church growth still came from membership transfers, compared to one-third for rural congregations. But the most exciting phenomenon for him was the youth renewal. The widespread anti-establishment attitude and resistance to church membership of the late 1960s and early 1970s had waned, and a resurgence of conversions and baptisms had almost doubled the rate of membership growth in the second half of the decade. However, persons of non-Mennonite background still joined CMC congregations primarily through marriage.[21]

When Rudy Regehr became executive secretary of the Congregational Resources Board in 1984, he brought to the job years of experience as an administrator at CMBC and a broad knowledge of the CMC constituency. Recognizing evangelism and missions as clearly the largest portfolio in the CRB program, he led the Board to make this its focus for the next five years. The "Church Planting Strategy in Canada" proposal, which delegates to the 1984 annual sessions received in their packets, laid out an overall 10-year plan which delegates greeted with some enthusiasm.[22] This strategy did not alter the Board's assumption that the primary initiative for evangelism and church planting rested with congregations. The various levels of conference would coordinate local efforts and offer some resources. CRB cooperated with provincial mission committees in sponsoring a series of seminars and providing some financial and other resources.

As Table 6.1 shows, a significant area of new church planting was among immigrant Chinese populations. CRB cooperated with the General Conference in translating key Anabaptist-Mennonite materials to assist these emerging congregations in their Christian formation, and in forming a North American Chinese Mennonite Council.[23]

Refugee Sponsorship

In 1979, when the first two Chinese congregations joined the Conference, MCC was negotiating an agreement with Immigration Canada to sponsor refugee immigrants fleeing Indochina in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. This would result in a variety of ethnic congregations joining the Conference in future years. For many CMC congregations helping refugees became an exciting ministry. By 1990 Mennonite groups in British Columbia had sponsored over a thousand families under this program. Since many of them spoke Chinese, MCC together with Vancouver Chinese Mennonite and Stephen Lee set up a refugee resettlement centre.[24] Similar efforts were undertaken

Volunteers from many congregations got involved in assisting the resettlement of refugees. Sophin Chau, Winnipeg, brought her two children, Buntha, age 3, and Bunthuy, age 7, to her English language session with Esther Dick. Photo: Martha Janzen, MCC Canada, MHC Archives

by other CMC congregations. For example, the first meeting of the 77-member Ottawa Mennonite Church to consider sponsorship of a "boat people" family in 1979 produced generous pledges of over $10,000. When Ottawa Mennonite's Refugee Assistance Program celebrated its tenth anniversary it could reflect on 93 people from Asia, Africa, eastern Europe and Latin America who had enriched the life of the congregation.[25]

Some of these refugees joined the congregation that sponsored them. In a number of the larger cities many preferred to join or form congregations worshipping in their own language. By 1982 the Conference was relating to Chinese, Lao and Vietnamese congregations. Initially the formal link was through the Evangelism Committee of the CRB. But by 1985 the Resources Board was in discussion with the Native Ministries Board (until 1975 Mennonite Pioneer Mission) and the Committee on Ministerial Leadership (until 1982 Committee on the Ministry) about how to serve most effectively in this new area of ministry. At one point the question of perhaps needing a new "Outreach Ministries Board" was raised. Cross-

cultural ministry came to be a much more immediate issue for many congregations, now that these cultures were within, rather than on the "foreign mission field" or in a northern community of indigenous people.[26] Gradually some congregations and the Conference itself began to become multi-ethnic bodies.

Umsiedler Ministries

The Khruschev "thaw" in the USSR and the initiative of German Chancellor Adenauer in the late 1950s opened the way for the beginning of an immigration of culturally German people to West Germany. At first it was only a trickle but by the 1970s it had accelerated to a substantial flow of thousands per year. These immigrants, called *Umsiedler* in Germany, included an increasing number of Mennonites and Baptists of Mennonite descent. In 1973 *Der Bote* began to publish lists of these new arrivals as prepared by the Mennonite office in Neuwied, Germany. By 1976 they numbered well over five thousand, about a third of whom was estimated to have only marginal or even no church connection.[27]

Many CMC members had relatives among these *Umsiedler* and felt that the Conference should relate to them in some way. At the 1976 annual sessions, a resolution from the floor called for an exploratory delegation of two to be sent to Germany to meet with *Umsiedler* leaders and, in consultation with MCC, to assess existing needs and recommend appropriate action. The result of that exploratory visit led to a rapidly expanding ministry among the over three thousand who were of *kirchliche* background ("church" Mennonites as distinct from Mennonite Brethren). CMC personnel were involved in leadership development, Bible study, evangelistic and visitation work, Sunday school and children's ministries. Budgets to support this work and some bursary help for Bible school students ran between $80,000 and $100,000 a year until the mid-1980s. By then many of the *Umsiedler* groups were organized into more or less fully self-sustaining congregations and no CMC personnel remained in Germany.[28]

Pastoral Leadership

The shift from lay ministers, chosen from within the congregation, to pastors, frequently hired from outside, brought with it a whole new set of dynamics. In the former era, noted Henry Gerbrandt in 1975, "when a minister became ill, moved away or died," the congregation called an election. "Only rarely were such 'calls from the Lord' not heeded."[29] That year the ministers and deacons conference discussed

The first official meeting in Germany to explore work with Umsiedler *in 1978. From left: Hans and Anna-Marie Plett, pastor at Bechterdissen; Jake and Anne Harms, chair of the CMC European Ministries Committee; Johann and Mrs. Redekop, minister in Bechterdissen; Bernhard and Mrs. Harder, leading minister of the emerging Bielefeld congregation; Susan and Henry Gerbrandt, CMC general secretary.* Photo: Gerbrandt, *En Route*

three papers on recruiting, calling and preparing pastors, aware that during 1975 some 30 congregations had looked for a new pastor or were still looking. By 1984 the Committee on Ministerial Leadership (CML) anticipated a leadership crisis in the near future. Four years later Bill Block, director of CML, wondered whether having 10 to 15 percent of pastoral positions vacant at any given time should be considered "normal."

Recruitment was one problem. During the lay ministry era the call of God to the minister frequently came "through the still, small whisper of the congregational ballot."[30] Now the first call to pastoral ministry was more often an inward one, which might result in the person going to a Bible school, college, or seminary, in hopes that this call might be affirmed by the church somewhere along the way. The CML gave some general encouragement through the bursary program of its Company of 1000 and some specific help in facilitating the placement of college and seminary graduates in pastoral positions. However, the "call" extended by a congregation to such an "outside" pastoral candidate tended to be processed by both sides more as a job application than as a call from God to a lifetime vocation.

> *In the transition from Bishop to conference minister the role of the new position remained unclear for a while, as this 1986 interview of Bishop Henry H. Funk, Saskatchewan conference minister, by Menno Epp, secretary of the Committee on Ministerial Leadership, illustrates.*
>
> Epp: *Are you a bishop?*
>
> Funk: *Some understand my work in that light but I don't have the authority.*
>
> Epp: *How do congregations perceive your work?*
>
> Funk: *Listening to the introduction when I'm to speak helps me to see how I'm perceived by the churches. I'm called boss, pastor, problem solver, will find us a pastor, like a public health nurse. It's a mixed bag.*
>
> Epp: *To whom are you accountable?*
>
> Funk: *To the executive of the provincial conference.*
>
> Epp: *No one sees your work. How can you be accountable to the conference executive?*
>
> Funk: *It is frustrating. I get affirmation. Conference executive doesn't really know. It's lonely. Affirmation is not evaluation. One will need to wait and see. Yearbook 1986*

Conference delegates urged various ways of improving seminary study opportunities in Canada, such as a Conference-based program or a junior seminary at CMBC. The latter suggestion led to the approval of a four-year Bachelor of Ministry program at the College in 1986, but budget restraints prevented its implementation.[31] However, by 1988 several opportunities for Conference-related graduate theological study were available. CMBC offered seminary level courses through a newly organized consortium involving the University of Winnipeg and Canadian Nazarene College; and Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada guided students to various institutions through its Pastoral Leadership Training Commission. Many others studied at a variety of non-Mennonite seminaries.

Retention of ministers was another problem. The strongly congregational polity of the CMC did not lend itself readily to the pastor system. In a church with an episcopal polity a priest serves under a bishop who has authority in the entire diocese. Where problems arise between priest and parish the lines of authority for "church" intervention and mediation by the bishop are clear, and the

procedure for effecting a transfer to another parish within the diocese, should that be necessary, is in place. In the absence of any office comparable to such a bishop, the CMC's director of the Committee on Ministerial Leadership or a provincial conference minister was available to serve as a mediator in tensions between pastor and congregation and as a facilitator in finding a new placement, should a pastor's term not be renewed. But even where a struggling congregation or an aggrieved pastor invited such mediation, the location of authority and the lines of accountability remained unclear. Thus, in the early years of the paid professional ministry, each pastor basically operated "alone in an autonomous congregation."[32]

Neither side quite knew what it could legitimately expect from the other. Congregations had high expectations of their pastor in preaching, leading, counselling, pastoral care and administration. Weakness in any one area could lead to tensions which, if not addressed appropriately, might lead to the termination of the pastor's services. The pastor knew that a theological degree and ordination by some other congregation conferred some authority to lead, but knew also that trust had to be earned before authority could effectively be exercised. It is not surprising that in some cases the two parties did not "read" each other accurately and that hurtful separations occurred. What seemed to surprise Conference leaders was the frequency of such breakdowns between congregation and pastor. When Menno Epp became part-time conference minister of the Alberta Conference, he found that nine of its 14 member congregations had experienced the "involuntary termination" of a pastor. During the course of his study of the problem in the early 1980s, Epp discovered at least 40 additional CMC ministers who had been involuntarily terminated in the previous 25 years.[33]

At the 1983 annual sessions, the CML invited Professor Rodney Sawatsky of Conrad Grebel College to address this issue. His historical and sociological analysis of Mennonite church polity suggested that in replacing *Gemeinden* led by bishops with individual congregations led by pastors the Conference had moved into an exclusively congregational polity. Neither the CMC nor the provincial conferences nor the local congregations' church councils had replaced the role played by the *Lehrdienst* (bishop, ministers and deacons in council) of the former system.[34] Sawatsky identified the vacuum in the realm of faith and order. The discussion generated by this paper led to a study conference on leadership and authority,[35] a study guide on *Accountability in the Church* for congregational use,[36] and

intensive work in cooperation with provincial conferences and the General Conference on the calling and ordaining of ministers.[37] However, the slow process of polity adjustment was far from complete when congregations of the former Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec (Swiss Mennonite) and the Western Ontario Conference (Amish background) began the process of joining the CMC in 1988. Their conference structures and leadership styles would add another dimension to the discussion.

Social Issues

The former Board of Christian Service had kept concerns of the larger society before the Conference. It was more difficult for the new Congregational Resources Board, with its restricted mandate, to focus on that "outside" area. In the constituency, however, such concerns remained important, and delegates continued to bring issues to the floor of annual sessions. In 1973 the Board responded by creating a Committee for Peace Education and Social Concerns.[38]

Capital Punishment. In 1967, Canada's centennial year, Parliament suspended capital punishment and replaced it with life imprisonment for murder offences. As the five-year trial period of this law came up for review in 1972, delegates reaffirmed Conference support of the 1965 General Conference "Christian Declaration on Capital Punishment" and instructed that this be communicated to the government. They also mandated a task force to relate "redemptively and compassionately" to victims.[39] Conference again supported the move by Parliament to abolish capital punishment in the mid-1970s.[40] Although abolition was passed by Parliament by a narrow margin in 1976, the issue was by no means over in Canadian society. At the 1979 sessions an initiative from the floor asked the CRB to prepare a study guide on capital punishment and urged all congregations to educate their members by working through this material.[41] After a bill to restore capital punishment was defeated in Parliament, CMC thanked the three opposing party leaders and other relevant Members of Parliament.[42]

Abortion. Canada first liberalized its abortion law in 1969 by allowing abortions if a therapeutic abortion committee certified that continuing the pregnancy would endanger the life of the mother. Fearing that this "loophole" might be misused and that further liberalization might follow, delegates to the 1971 sessions requested the Board of Christian Service to prepare a proposal for a Conference position on abortion. To encourage congregations to study the issue
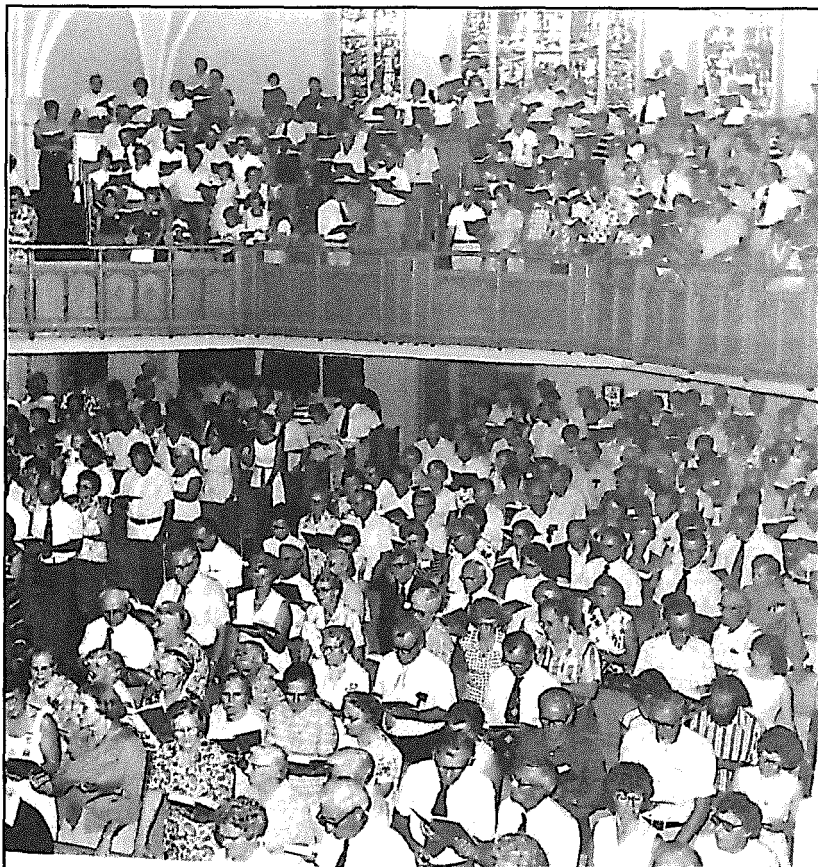
The 1977 annual sessions at Bloor Street United Church in Toronto. Daily worship during sessions fostered the sense of Conference as church. But grass roots input by delegates also continued to influence the agenda of the various boards. Photo: Rudy A. Regehr, MHC Archives

and draft their own resolution, the Board made available a packet of material compiled by the General Conference. The resolution presented at the 1972 sessions reflected broad input from the constituency, incorporating "the intent and content" of resolutions coming from the Manitoba, Saskatchewan and southwest Ontario Women's Conferences, the Alberta Mennonite Conference and the CRB. On the one hand, it upheld respect for life and cautioned the government against further liberalization of abortion laws until more comprehensive studies had been completed. On the other hand, it

Former students Violet Stoesz and William Froese promoting solar power during the 1980 interterm of Swift Current Bible Institute. Their presentation was part of week-long exploration of nuclear power and the Christian faith based at Nutana Park Mennonite church in Saskatoon. Photo: *Mennonite Reporter,* 3 March 1980
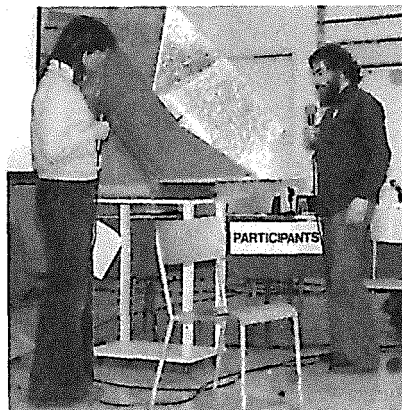
urged congregations to show compassion both to those carrying an unwanted pregnancy to completion and those who, unable to "find or face other options," had chosen abortion.[43]

Peace Concerns. The Congregational Resources Board struggled with discerning its role in the area of peace advocacy. In Canada an inter-Mennonite approach generally seemed preferable to a unilateral one, and MCC Canada the appropriate channel. Thus, a 1974 resolution calling for a study of Canada's policy on the manufacture and sale of war materials and nuclear reactors was tabled because MCC was already involved in such a study.[44] However, when Saskatchewan Mennonites were intensely involved in discussions with Eldorado Nuclear Ltd. in 1980, opposing its plans to construct a uranium refinery in the Warman area, and the Conference met in nearby Rosthern that summer, it readily adopted a resolution committing it to study and action in the area of nuclear energy.[45] It is less clear why a 1983 resolution opposing the testing of cruise missiles was not referred to an inter-Mennonite body.[46]

On international concerns it seemed appropriate to allow binational agencies such as MCC (Akron) and the General Conference, or even the multi-national Mennonite World Conference (MWC), to take the lead. Thus the CRB, in cooperation with the Committee on Home Missions of the GC, in 1975 sent to congregations a packet of Peace Sunday resources and in 1979 recommended that they study the MWC-MCC statement on "Militarism and Development" to prepare for a more effective peace witness. [47] At times the Board wondered whether the whole area of peace and social concerns should be left largely or entirely with these other agencies.[48] The most substantial peace education item produced during this era was written by Jon

Bonk—a Providence College professor and member of an Evangelical Mennonite Conference congregation—and published jointly with four other Canadian Mennonite conferences.[49]

Delegates, however, were reluctant to see this important portfolio dropped by the CMC and kept bringing new issues for Conference response. In 1981, for example, a resolution expressed concern that "our peace emphasis" was insufficiently aware of the extent of militarism and the threat of nuclear war, and instructed the general secretary to review, together with the CRB, the Conference mandate in the area of peace action and education.[50] Ironically, a survey of "primary concerns" in the congregations conducted by the CRB in January of that year had identified "attitudes to peace and peace teachings" as 14th among 19 issues, with "responsibility to Third World problems" and "attitudes to nuclear energy" at the bottom of the list.[51]

The various aspects of social justice and peace education in the CMBC program were much less directly affected by issues of the day brought to annual sessions by delegates. Beginning in 1973 the College regularly offered peace studies courses as part of its academic program. At first these focused on historical and theological perspectives; later on, courses were also offered in the Bible and Practical Theology departments. The peace studies program was supplemented in the academic area by courses in social ethics and third world theology. With assistance from MCC, the College also ensured that student representatives could participate in the annual Inter-collegiate Peace Conference, sponsored by the Council of Mennonite Colleges, and, since 1978, invited high school students from across the CMC to its annual peace conference (Peace-it-Together) on campus.

Other Social Concerns. The Congregational Resources Board responded to various initiatives brought forward at annual sessions, rather than search out issues to present to delegates for action, as the former Board of Christian Service had done more often. The Resources Board frequently assembled helpful information packages on issues arising at Conference sessions and asked congregations to study them in preparation for possible further action. On the issue of poverty, it went a step further, setting up a task force, together with the Native Ministries Board, and producing a study guide to educate congregations on biblical justice in the area of economics and to stimulate an examination of both personal lifestyle and local projects to alleviate poverty.[52] In 1984 and 1985, issues that directly affected

members of the Conference, such as jury duty, attracted widespread interest and substantial debate. Similarly, concerns that happened to be "hot" items in the news while Conference was in session, such as the 1986 demand to free Nelson Mandela, sparked long and vigorous debate.[53]

Native Ministries

As Afro-American self-consciousness blossomed during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, American Indians also began to express their identity with greater clarity and intensity. Howard Cardinal's *The Unjust Society* (1969)[54] was an articulation of his work as president of the Alberta Indian Association in affirming Indian culture, religion and traditions. Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins*,[55] published in the United States in the same year, was more theological than Cardinal's book. While expressing some hope in the Christian faith, Deloria deplored many of the actions of the Christian church. At its annual sessions in Saskatoon that year, Conference delegates heard Isaac Beaulieu, secretary-treasurer of the 55,000-member Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, reflect on government and church policy in relation to Indians. In 1971 that organization commemorated the centennial of Treaty No.1 with a broad range of events. In this context of Indian renaissance, the CMC's Mennonite Pioneer Mission Board recognized that both "pioneer" and "mission" had negative connotations for many of the people it sought to serve, implying "a superior sender speaking down to an inferior receiver." Accordingly, it proposed in 1972 that delegates vote at the next sessions to change the name to Native Ministries (NM).[56]

This is what the MPM looked like on the eve of this name change. Preparing local members to assume leadership of the emerging congregations had been its policy from the outset. Jeremiah Ross had been ordained as pastor at Cross Lake in 1968, chosen for this by the community and processed insightfully by missionaries Ernie and Gertrude Sawatzky. In 1972 four men were ordained as *animiokima* (praying leaders) in Pauingassi, the transition sensitively shepherded by Victor and Norma Funk. At other locations the Board's "missionary" personnel had diversified roles. The work of Neill and Edith Von Gunten exemplified the MPM goal of wholesome integration of word and deed. This was affirmed by a certificate of recognition from the Manitoba government for Neill's "outstanding services rendered in the promotion and development of the Co-operative and community at Manigotogan."[57] Peter Warkentin at
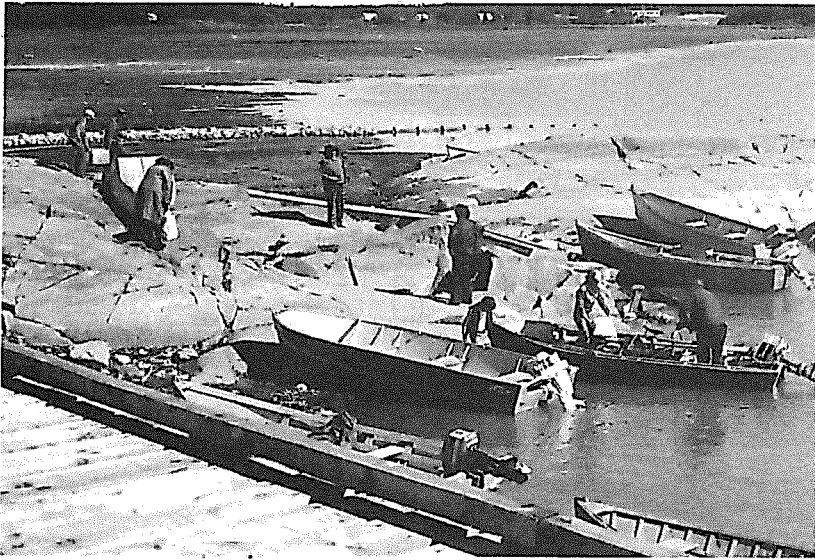
Urban dwelling wage earners and even prairie farmers and fruit growers have lost something of the sense of intimate dependence on God's bounty. The fishers of Cross Lake, who "harvest what they have not planted," know this from experience. Photo: CMC Collection, MHC Archives

Matheson Island and Jake Neufeld at Little Grand Rapids served as mechanics during the week and did some formal preaching and teaching on Sundays as they lived and taught the Christian faith in informal settings in their shops and elsewhere in the community. Like Abe and Ruth Hoeppner at Bloodvein River, they provided a stable Christian presence amid fluctuating Apostolic and other revivalistic movements.[58]

Meanwhile, the most senior MPM workers applied their experience of many years in new settings. Jake and Trudie Unrau worked with the Elim Christian Fellowship in the town of Selkirk, helping that courageous group of Christians to realize their high ideal of embodying three ethnic groups in one congregation. Henry and Elna Neufeld had "retired" to a pastoral position in Springstein in the "south," but Henry's fluency in Saulteaux and the rapport he and Elna had gained with "northern" people over the years could not lie dormant. Henry developed a new itinerant ministry in Pauingassi, Little Grand Rapids, Bloodvein River and Hole River.

In Winnipeg, sometimes dubbed "the largest Indian reserve in Manitoba," a diverse youth ministry was led by Elijah McKay and

The YOU sports activities provided opportunities for good recreation and new social contacts: the YOU Bearcats play the Swift Current Bible Institute hockey team. Photo: John Poettcker, MHC Archives

Roger Groening, assisted by volunteers Inge Schroeder, Mary Kithithee and others. Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) provided off-street activities such as sports (YOU Bucks), music (Manitou Singers, free guitar instruction), Club 12 and free-lance counselling by McKay. John Funk was seconded to Operation Native Handicrafts, an emerging new venture in Winnipeg.[59] Additional programming for children, using a lot of short-term volunteer help, included a week at Camp Assiniboia and Vacation Bible School at Matheson Island, Pine Dock, Bloodvein River and Pauingassi.[60]

Guiding, sometimes inspiring, always interpreting the MPM program was Menno Wiebe, executive secretary of the Board for a decade beginning in 1964. A CMBC graduate and an anthropologist by training, his theological thinking usually involved a poetic imagination and a certain philosophical bent. Deeply committed to the Christian faith and to the church, he was equally concerned about justice and respect for all. That combination helped him to provide a rationale for the unusual program that MPM developed during this decade.

In 1972 MPM was still basically a Manitoba program. But its horizons were expanding. While the Board proposed the name change, a resolution from the floor made one implication of it explicit. It called for a consultation or study conference "to come to terms with some of the issues of the religion and revelation of the

natives."[61] This had been hinted at here and there, but never tackled head on. Secondly, MCC (Manitoba) had begun work with Native people in the Altona area. There well over a thousand people of Indian ancestry were involved in migrant labour: hoeing beets! Included among the weekend celebrations planned during the summer of 1972 by MCC staff and volunteers was a powwow. At the same time, MCC (Canada) began a ministry to Indian and Métis around Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan.

The first response to the 1972 resolution for a name change was a three-day cross-cultural theological seminar the following year involving MPM staff and board members as well as Native and Conference leaders. It affirmed "the good of the Indian world view and respect [for] what is not yet understood."[62] While the seminar helped to clarify some directions for the work, it also raised new issues. A more comprehensive, independent study of the philosophy, program and approach of Native Ministries was called for in a 1976 resolution in view of "uncertainty as to the on-going nature and direction" of various NM programs.[63] Perhaps this resolution came in part in response to the paper on "New Trends in Native Ministries," presented at the Conference by Isaac Froese, who had succeeded Menno Wiebe as executive secretary a few years earlier. One of these trends was an increased emphasis on the personal initiative of the NM workers, who were "given the freedom to make their own decisions" and "encouraged to make personal investments."[64]

The study commission gathered information through three separate surveys. Questionnaires were sent to all Board members who had served in the previous decade, approximately a hundred current and former NM workers, and about 1,500 Conference members. The return rate was above 50 percent in each category. The Rev. Stan McKay, a Cree minister in the United Church of Canada and occasional consultant for NM, was engaged to gather and assess the response of Native people served by NM through interviews and personal visits. While all four groups surveyed affirmed the importance of the NM work, significant differences emerged.

One of these disparities was on the issue of church planting. MPM did not locate its workers in unchurched communities. Most of the people they served belonged to one or another of Canada's three largest communions: Roman Catholic, Anglican and United Church. Mennonite workers had been invited by communities whose parent denomination was no longer able to provide a resident priest or minister. MPM-NM policy therefore always was to serve with

sensitivity, on the one hand nurturing a strong local Christian congregation (in contrast to itinerant evangelists who had no intention of providing ongoing ministry); on the other hand respecting their members' affiliation with their own denomination. This resulted in an ambivalent relationship between NM communities and the Conference. Affirmed and emerging Native leaders frequently attended annual Conference sessions and participated in the reporting from time to time. However, their communities did not seek formal membership as congregations of the CMC. Over half of Board members responding to the survey identified this—not having established enough churches—as the most serious failure of the NM program. Only a third of workers and fewer than 7 percent of the constituents surveyed agreed.[65]

The study also identified a new area of ambiguity. A number of respondents in each category noted a shift in NM agenda to a greater involvement in Native rights issues and advocacy work. Some disagreed that this should be a priority; others saw it as an area for MCC involvement. The study commission noted that a more careful missiological study would be required to clarify policy in other areas as well.

At least three important priorities were identified by the study. First, a greater involvement by Native people should be fostered by adding representatives from their communities to the Board and strengthening the development and implementation of Native leadership. Secondly, the work being done was important: resident staff in current northern NM locations should be maintained, but priority for new work should be in urban areas. Thirdly, delegates asked for more emphasis on constituency education.[66]

In the ensuing decade, 1978–1988, characterized by Executive Secretary John Funk as "the era of new potential," NM was able to sustain most of its former programs while expanding into new ones. Native and Métis congregations were emerging in Winnipeg, work began in Saskatoon, the Rosemary congregation in Alberta formalized a relationship with the Sisika Fellowship on the Gleichen Reserve, a guest house in Winnipeg received northerners in the city for medical needs, Native Ministries was involved with other denominations in a chaplaincy training program. CMBC introduced a course in Native Studies into its regular program offerings as part of the broader constituency education program of NM. There were grounds for optimism.

Canadian Mennonite Bible College

As the College observed its 25th anniversary in 1972 the Conference recognized its worth. The school's 1,236 alumni served in many areas of the constituency as teachers (243), medical professionals (78), business people (50), social workers (39) and in agriculture (55), journalism (20) and music (44). Congregations and church agencies noticed their impact very directly; over 30 percent (258) were in church-related work, 109 of them as pastors.[67] The College faculty was in demand across the entire Conference and beyond as resources for the church in Bible, theology and ethics, music, and church and Mennonite history.

By 1975 the anti-establishment "sixties" mood among young people had subsided and President Poettcker reported a "decided shift to a wholesome, positive and optimistic stance."[68] Since 1970 students were able to complete two full years of University of Manitoba credit at the College. A substantial scholarship and bursary program as well as full eligibility of CMBC students for Canada Student Loans helped them with expenses. Enrolment climbed rapidly, straining the capacity of both physical plant and financial resources.

A much-needed building extension was completed in 1975 despite a 20 percent inflation rate in the building industry. New facilities included a chapel, office space for College administration and CMC staff, and some classroom space. The former chapel was converted to serve as a temporary make-shift gym. Areas vacated by Conference staff in the older section of the building gave more breathing space for the teaching program of the College. The erection of a new archives building in 1978 provided the College with adequate library space. Residence accommodation on campus still remained a problem. That was resolved in 1980 with the completion of a 24-suite apartment block funded by a donation of the Dr. David Friesen Family Foundation of Winnipeg.

With delegate approval, the possibility of receiving operating grants from the government was explored. That attempt was withdrawn in 1976 because accepting funds would entail too much loss of autonomy. The commitment of CMBC to keep its tuition rates well within the range of those charged by the provincial universities in western Canada meant that it had to rely on funds from congregations to balance its budget.

To give some guidance to this rapid growth, in 1976 the Board appointed an outside Evaluation Team to identify weaknesses in the

The new CMBC chapel provided a more intimate setting than the former auditorium for daily worship as well as music recitals. Photo: MHC Archives

current program and set new priorities.[69] The following summer a four-day joint meeting of Board and faculty processed the Team's recommendations. With Henry Poettcker announcing his resignation as president for the summer of 1978 to become president of Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, and the death of J.J. Thiessen during the board-faculty meetings, an important era in the life of CMBC was coming to an end.[70] Poettcker had been president since 1959 and Thiessen lifetime member of the Board and its chair from the founding of the College in 1947 until he retired in 1966.

Progress in implementing a number of the specific goals set by the evaluation process took place during the presidency of George K. Epp (1978–1983).

Students. Board and faculty decided to work toward increasing the full-time student numbers to between 180 and 200, despite some student objections to becoming "a large impersonal institution." Higher enrolment would maximize the efficient use of current classroom space and faculty resources but would require additional residence accommodation, greater attention to campus life, and more focused attention on student recruitment. The appointment of a full-time admissions counsellor in 1977 and the opening of the new apartment block in 1980 combined to achieve a new record enrolment

From the very beginning of CMBC, music was an integral part of the academic program alongside theology. Choirs tours were an important part of maintaining connections between the College and the congregations. Photo: MHC Archives

of 192 full-time students in 1983. A campus minister/student life coordinator was appointed to give more faculty involvement with students outside of the academic area. This action was a recognition that much of the learning and character formation at College occurred outside of the classroom. However, both the title and some of the functions of this office evolved into the hiring of a female and male residence co-director team.

A large majority of the students continued to come from CMC congregations. However, by the late 1970s students from the Swiss Ontario conferences began to graduate from CMBC. During the 1980s this number increased significantly, leading to lasting contacts between CMC and Swiss Ontario congregations. More students from German-speaking Mennonite congregations in Latin America, especially Paraguay, also began to come.

Funding. A specific recommendation from the evaluation process suggested that Conference funding and self-generated income from tuition, board and room be supplemented by creating endowed chairs. The high interest rates and good investment returns of the 1970s made endowments look attractive. A $150,000 fund to support studies in Canadian Mennonite History and Life had been approved in 1973,

with hopes of raising the full amount in a year. By 1975 barely one-tenth of the target had been reached. Given that experience, the Chair of Indian Studies proposed by MPM in 1974 was not pursued. But by 1983 the Conference was prepared to try again, approving a $350,000 endowment to fund the D.P. Neufeld Chair in Practical Theology. This effort was somewhat more successful, but petered out long before it achieved its objective. Endowment earnings from both funds remained nominal.

The initial exploration of government funding had been terminated in the mid-1970s because it was seen to entail too much loss of autonomy. By 1980 a new initiative, undertaken together with other church colleges in Manitoba, held out the promise of better terms. The Conference accordingly approved the incorporation of CMBC under the Corporations Act of Manitoba, a necessary condition for receiving provincial funding.[71] Ambivalence remained in the constituency about actually applying for government grants, but negotiations continued. An acceptable formula for receiving such funds was not worked out until 1991.

Program. A strong priority identified by the Evaluation Team and repeatedly urged by voices from the congregations was more focused attention to practical courses in the area which seminaries often called pastoral theology. President George Epp enthusiastically promoted this thrust. For a time he explored the ambitious idea of creating an Institute of Practical Theology attached to CMBC. In 1979 a five-year trial period of an expanded emphasis of this area within the regular degree program of the College was approved, thanks to assured above-budget funding.[72] Two years later Glen Horst, approved as a training supervisor by the Canadian Association for Pastoral Education, was hired as the first faculty member with full-time responsibilities in practical theology. He was also the first faculty member to come from the Swiss Mennonites of Ontario.

Horst provided a new focus for this program area that had been handled somewhat haphazardly since the 1960s. Consequently, congregations expected even more effective preparation of candidates for pastoral ministry. Financial restraints delayed the appointing of a second faculty member in practical theology and stymied the planned development of the program's offerings. Horst's resignation in 1985, partly to avoid burnout and partly as a protest at the delays in staffing, was a blow to the program as well as a negative factor for some Ontario Swiss Mennonites in their thinking about CMBC.

College leaders recognized a deeper ambiguity about ministry in

the Conference. Gradually congregations had come to see that, while College graduates barely three or four years out of high school lacked the maturity to become leading ministers, their enthusiasm, idealism and high energy suited them well for service as a junior minister with an experienced pastor providing leadership. A number of years of this kind of apprenticeship experience in turn provided the student with a good orientation to ministry as she or he continued studies at seminary. Smaller congregations, on the other hand, could not afford two pastors and wanted CMBC graduates to have more training in practical areas of ministry. Still other groups in the constituency looked for an emphasis on a wider range of service than pastoral ministry.

Two related task forces were set in motion in 1985, one on practical theology more generally, and another on service education. The first took into account the range of requests coming from the constituency about further practical training. The Board and faculty had the benefit of a new College president, John H. Neufeld, in formulating a revision of its program. Neufeld came with extensive experience in Bible school teaching, pastoral ministry and previous membership on the Board. His post-seminary graduate work was in practical, rather than "academic" studies, in a relatively new program leading to a Doctor of Ministry degree. Recognizing the importance of learning by doing, the Board in 1986 adopted a four-year Bachelor of Church Ministries program, in which one full year would be spent in a supervised internship.

The task force on service preparation worked together with Mennonite Central Committee and other Mennonite colleges in Canada. After a lengthy process, a less formal Service Education Program was ready to begin in 1988. It too emphasized practical experience under supervision, but preferably in settings involving a cross-cultural context.

Women in the CMC

In 1970 the Canadian government's "Royal Commission on the Status of Women" presented its findings from three years of research and its 167 recommendations for greater equality of women. The report gave a kind of official endorsement of many of the causes advocated by a growing volume of literature coming from the women's movement in recent years. Events celebrating International Women's Year in 1975 ensured that the topic remained in the public eye.

The Mennonite press in Canada reflected the importance of women's issues in church and society. During the decade 1968 through 1977 an average of more than ten items per year on this topic appeared in the pages of *The Canadian Mennonite* and its successor *Mennonite Reporter*.[73] Based on a study of these papers, Adelia Neufeld observed in these articles a growing affirmation of broader involvement of women in the life of the church and of greater equality with men. Terms like "equality" and "liberation" began to appear in 1969 but, instead of the more strident tones that characterized some branches of the women's movement, Neufeld noted an emerging language of "mutual subordination."[74]

Mrs. Katharina Siemens, whose husband Abram had died in 1948, and Mrs. Justina Letkemann, whose husband died that same year, asked why they should not attend the [annual] meetings. Mrs. Siemens was especially vocal about the fact that she had to get her information about what went on in the congregational meetings from her young son Ambros. She began to appear at the meetings even though she did not have a vote. Thus one woman, and she was no young radical, broke the male dominance of the Eigenheim congregational meetings. Walter Klaassen, *The Days of Our Years*

In Mennonite church tradition, congregational decisions were made in brotherhood (*Bruderschaft*) meetings from which women were excluded. That tradition began to give way in the 1960s, or even earlier in a few cases, but not without a struggle. In 1946 the Eigenheim congregation in Saskatchewan admitted women to congregational meetings dealing with relief and refugees, but did not acknowledge their right to full participation until a decade later.[75] In 1947 the Eden congregation in Chilliwack proposed allowing women to vote in congregational meetings, but tabled the motion for ten years before passing it.[76] In 1969 the Bergthaler Gemeinde in Manitoba decided that women could vote, but they could not be elected at meetings of the central Gemeinde; however, this did not necessarily apply to local congregations. Thus, in the Winkler Bergthaler Church women had to wait until 1980 to gain this right even though its leading minister had championed their cause for five years.[77] Even in First Mennonite, Saskatoon, Pastor J.J. Thiessen had to push for

granting the vote to women for several years before the congregation approved it in 1964.[78]

Gaining the right to vote and to be elected did not assure immediate changes in the elected bodies of the congregations. For example, in pioneering Eigenheim only 28 of 71 elected positions were held by women in 1989, thirty-three years after they became eligible to hold office.[79] In Winkler Bergthaler women held 11 of 71 positions a decade after they had received the vote.[80] Steinbach Mennonite reached par on its church council in 1992: seven men and seven women.[81]

A survey in 1982 by Veronica Dyck on "Women in Conference Mennonite Churches" confirmed the above anecdotal evidence. A five-page questionnaire sent to the pastor, congregational chair, and Women in Mission chair of half the CMC congregations produced at least one return from all but one congregation. It revealed that all congregations had women serving as Sunday school teachers (100 percent) and most also had women as committee chairs (75 percent), on church council (68 percent), and as music director (58 percent). Fewer than half the congregations had a woman as youth president (48 percent), education director (41 percent), or member of the deaconate (40 percent). Only 3 percent had a woman as church council chair. Many congregations that allowed women in various positions did not, in fact, have any currently holding such office. The most striking feature of her study, wrote Dyck, was the "gap between attitudes and actual situations."[82]

A similar pattern could be observed at the Conference level. The CMC first agreed to accept women as delegates for the 1955 sessions, after Kaethe Hooge from Saskatoon and another woman from Langham "crashed" the 1954 sessions and were not recognized.[83] In congregations that allowed women to be elected to local positions, they could now also serve as delegates to the annual Conference sessions. After the 1972 gathering in Kitchener, the *Mennonite Reporter* headline read: "Nearly half of delegates were women." The writer, Rudy A. Regehr, concluded his report with this optimistic observation: "The Conference is still being dominated by men over 20, but indications are that it may not happen again. With women present already and some exciting programming for youth, next year's session may truly be an event without the barriers of sex, age and race."[84] Actually, the 192 women present were part of 484 delegates *and guests*, just under 40 percent of the total. Many of them will have been "guests" since the actual delegate number was only 331.

Communion service at the sessions in St. Catharines in 1982. Even a decade earlier it would have been very unusual for women to participate in serving communion. Photo: MHC Archives

The highest recorded attendance of actual women delegates was 36 percent in 1979. After that a gender breakdown was not tabulated.

The first elected female board member was Kay Martens to the Board of Education in 1964. More than 20 years later women were still a small minority in virtually all elected leadership positions at conference level. In 1988 only six of 30 positions on provincial conference executives (20 percent) were held by women. Saskatchewan had three women on an executive of six; Manitoba had none. On CMC-elected boards and committees, women were even less represented: only eight of 57 positions (14 percent) were held by women. An exception was the Committee on Ministerial Leadership where women formed a majority of the elected membership, but the four ex-officio provincial conference ministers were all male. Interestingly, in electing CMC representatives to MCC boards, GC commissions, and other outside organizations, the portion of women was 31 percent.

The Conference did not set targets or specific goals for gender equality in any of these positions. However, the influential Nominating Committee was appointed by the General Board, and in 1987 four of its five members, including the chair, were women. Its final slate of nominees included 10 women (among 30 candidates), five of whom were elected for the 12 vacant positions. The following

year the ratio declined to eight women among 31 nominees, of whom three were chosen for 16 vacant position. Clearly, the number of elected women remained well below the ratio of women among delegates at the annual sessions.

Ordination of Women. In 1982 Gerhard I. Peters published a volume of brief biographies of the 261 deceased ministers who had served in CMC congregations in the first 75 years of Conference history. While the book was dedicated to these men, Peters added: "We would like to express our indebtedness to, and appreciation for, the wives and children of these brethren. With deeds of unselfish love, time, effort and money, they enabled the brethren to work effectively for the Lord."[85] It seems that many ministers' wives of that era gladly received such recognition, accepting as part of the ordained order the idea that men worked for the Lord and women played supportive roles but remained in the background. Only a few spoke out publicly for more visible and leading roles.

Women ministers were not part of the experience of CMC congregations until recently. Many had been ordained as missionaries since 1947,[86] but the status of that ordination was not equivalent to that of a pastor and might apply only to ministry on the "field." J.J. Thiessen, CMC chair and member of the GC Mission Board, held that "if it was valid for service abroad, it was valid for Canada also."[87] But CMC congregations were not bound by his interpretation as the 1988

Mary Mae Schwartzentruber was ordained at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, in 1982, a year after Stirling joined the CMC. From Conservative Mennonite Fellowship background, she was co-pastor at Stirling Avenue 1980–1990 and ministered in several other congregations before joining the MCEC staff, first as interim executive secretary and then as minister of missions. From 1986 to 1992 she served on the Committee on Ministerial Leadership. Photo: Mary A. Schiedel, *Pioneers in Ministry*

press report below indicates. When the GC Committee on the Ministry approved the ordination of women in 1972,[88] the way was opened for Emma Richards to become the first female pastor among North American Mennonites.[89] At least two women had been ordained as deacons in the CMC before this: Annie Janzen at Charleswood, Winnipeg, in 1964 and Annie Harder at First Mennonite, Edmonton, in 1971. As congregations discontinued lifetime ordinations for deacons and elected them for a specified term in the 1970s and 1980s, more women were elected to this position.

With a great deal of admiration, the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan recognized the contribution of three returning missionaries whose years of ministry overseas totalled 103 years [Anna Dyck, Japan – 35 years; Mary Epp, Zaire – 30 years; Helen Kornelsen, India – 37 years]. Ironically, the same day the conference debated whether it would be acceptable to hire a husband and wife team to replace the retiring conference pastor, Henry Funk. Fears were expressed that churches would still not be able to accept a woman in leadership position. Asked for her reaction to the comments from the floor, one of the missionaries just shrugged her shoulders. Over the years, she said, she had learned to accept the fact that a congregation has different expectations of women at home than abroad. Wilma Derksen, *Mennonite Reporter*, 14 March 1988

Ordination of women for pastoral ministry was a bigger hurdle. When Doreen Neufeld was ordained at Welcome Inn, Hamilton, in 1980, she was "surprised at the courage of the Conference Minister" for officiating at the event "when it had not been done before in our conference." She was also surprised "that there was no overt opposition."[90] By 1988 twenty women ministers were serving in the CMC context. However, three of them were listed as chaplains with primary responsibility outside of the congregation. An additional three were identified as "pastoral care coordinator" or "coordinator of ministries." Five of the 20 were part of a husband-wife team ministry. Of the 14 pastors, four were associate ministers, one assistant minister and one lay minister. There was movement, but it was slow.[91]

Attitudes, however, were changing. Veronica Dyck's 1982 survey showed that two-thirds of CMC congregations were open to the

ordination of women as pastors (22 percent "strongly agree" and a further 43 percent "agree"). Almost three-quarters agreed that women could be allowed to preach.[92] Incremental changes were also taking place at annual Conference sessions. In 1975 Anita Janzen responded to Peter Janzen's paper on "Women in the Bible" by asking ten very pointed questions on the implications of sexism for the CMC. Two years later Sharon Sawatzky was one of four official respondents to a paper on "The Future Shape of Mennonite Church Leadership" at the ministers and deacons conference. In her sermon at the 1982 Canadian Women in Mission session, Anna Ens used the main Conference theme, "Leadership: Christ Our Model," to challenge women to go beyond being fund raisers. Quoting Gladys Goering, she went on to suggest "that the time has come for women to concentrate on the personal healing needed by many and to which women have great gifts to offer, the problems of broken homes, divorce, loneliness and the issues involving employed women and the church."[93] The following year one of the workshops at the delegate Conference was on "Women and Leadership in the Church."

The solemn memorial service held near the beginning of every Conference gathering was conducted by a bishop at the earliest delegate sessions and remained for many years the domain of ordained men. In 1983 it was led by Winona Rempel, a lay minister in Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg. That year 14 women were involved in leadership or input in Conference workshops.[94] Five years later, Nettie Neufeld, a lay woman, although a pastor's wife, led the memorial service. Delegates repeatedly urged CMBC to work toward greater gender balance in its faculty and staff appointments. The Committee on Ministerial Leadership became more proactive, appointing two women to its Committee in 1985 and sponsoring a workshop on "Women in Ministry" three years later. A resolution from the floor in 1988 was even more direct:

Whereas the need for pastoral leadership in CMC continues to grow; and whereas more and more women are being trained for ministry in our Anabaptist schools and have much-needed gifts in this area; and whereas all the new pastors presented to the Conference this year were men,

Be it resolved: (a) that CML focus some attention, time and effort in helping congregations move in the direction of including women in leadership; and (b) that the conference ministers work with individual congregations to help them work with the issue, recognizing that each congregation is at a different place in the process of dealing with this

issue; and (c) that CML provide supportive ministry to those women who struggle as pioneers in this area.[95]

No opposing comments were registered in the discussion before this resolution was passed.

Canadian Women in Mission. "Women's conference more than peripheral," read a headline among the reports of the 1977 CMC sessions. "They call the annual women's conference an 'auxiliary session'," wrote Menno Wiebe. "Their session is usually scheduled to fill the marginal corners of the conference programming." Indeed, 25 years after the women's conference was founded, program planners ran a major decision-making session of the delegate conference concurrently with the Canadian Women in Mission (CWM) meeting. "That the women didn't like," wrote Wiebe. Many of them were delegates! The newly elected CWM president, Margaret Ewert, declared as one of the first items on her agenda to make sure that "the overlapping of the women's sessions with that of regular delegates" be corrected.[96]

The ability of the women's conference to thrive and grow despite its marginalization was impressive. By comparison, an attempt to run a somewhat parallel men's conference ground to a halt after a mere six years. But even in its brief existence, its annual minutes in the Conference *Yearbook* bumped those of the much older women's conference to last place.[97]

In 1971 the 4,368 members of the hundreds of local women's groups who made up the Women's Missionary Conference raised some $245,000 for a wide range of mission, MCC and other charity projects. Mennonite Men, struggling to become a Company of 200, had to dip into their reserves to meet their budgeted $5,000 for the Ministers Study Reserve Fund. At their annual meeting they wondered: "Is the organization, Canadian Mennonite Men, still necessary?"[98] Was the CMC so much a male body that any "men's agenda" was taken care of there so that men didn't need a separate organization? Did men lack the imagination needed to discover their own unique agenda? Was it still the case that women and "women's agenda" were so marginalized at annual delegate sessions that they needed an organization of their own?

No doubt that continued to be one reason for the viability of the women's conference. However, from its inception its focus clearly had been on mission, a goal in which it never wavered through successive name changes. At first the most tangible way of participating in mission activity was through financial and material contributions. Women across the country met monthly in hundreds of

congregationally-based "sewing circles" or "mission associations" to produce clothes, quilts and other articles to sell in local auctions or to send to mission projects abroad. They were very good at this. By 1977 total income came to over $400,000, more than $85 per member. Motivation for all this fund-raising activity remained high because the funds were disbursed by the local groups themselves, allowing the membership to make decisions directly. Much of the aid was nevertheless given to and through Mennonite agencies: provincial, Canadian or General Conference, and Mennonite Central Committee, but local non-Mennonite charities were not overlooked. Indeed, at the 1982 session concern was expressed over the large amount ($59,000) spent on non-Mennonite causes. Table 6.2 is a fairly typical example of what was produced. Missionaries, almost from the beginning, had given advice as to what kind of material aid made sense in each location, and the women's groups had adjusted accordingly.

Table 6.2
Canadian Women in Mission Contributions 1988[99]

Item	Number/Amount
Layettes	2,737
Kits (health, school, sewing)	927 kits + 176 bags
Quilts (tied, quilted)	4,302
Bandages (rolled)	984 lbs + 5,712 rolls
Soap	21,548 lbs + 2,089 bars
Knitting, clothing, towels, sheets, blankets	Several thousand
Noodles	Hundreds of pounds
Financial aid	$932,227

In 1978 one of the CWM projects was to help sponsor a women's choir from Taiwan to sing at the Mennonite World Conference sessions in Wichita, Kansas, and to arrange an itinerary for the choir to visit Canadian congregations. Communities that had the opportunity to host the choir found this an even more inspiring and encouraging experience than the annual scheduling of missionary visits.

In spite of the vitality of CWM, membership peaked in the late 1970s (4,777 in 1976). By 1985 the numbers (4,256) were down to approximately the levels of 20 years earlier (4,293 in 1964). The energy of the older women waned and younger women increasingly showed greater interest "in having a leadership role in church work rather than in meeting in sewing circles."[100] Observing this trend, Anna Schroeder addressed the issue head on.

> For a long time the business of the church was carried on exclusively by the men, the brotherhood. On the sideline, doing things that were essential but a little below the dignity of the males, were the Ladies Auxiliaries. This has changed. Now we talk of fellowships where all are equal. . . .
>
> Women are very busy in the mainstream of church life, at least on local levels. They teach all levels of Sunday School, serve as superintendents, lead and sing in choirs, work on committees and councils, act as delegates to conferences. They no longer confine their activities to serving meals and stitching quilts.[101]

Did this mean an end to women's groups locally, and to CWM nationally? No, argued Schroeder. "We talk a good deal about 'sisterhood' these days, and it is a concept we should not throw away in our search for equality." Local chapters that decided to dissolve discovered that new groups sprang up spontaneously. The experience of "sisterhood" was too good to lose. Besides, by the 1980s new agenda emerged to which women made unique contributions: a resolution urging Mennonite colleges and Bible schools to become equal opportunity employers, given the "serious lack of female role models" in those institutions (1983); a formal letter commending Minister John Crosby for his legislation on pornography; advocacy against child abuse and family violence; a workshop on "parenting for peace and justice." Concern about those issues spilled over into congregational and regular delegate session agendas. The whole church was benefiting from the leadership of the women's groups.

Archives Program

As the tall building crane gently lowered the concrete slab with the clock-tower spire into the centre of the rising A-frame building, the skyline of the CMBC-CMC campus changed dramatically. Only the rectangular "box" attached to the A-frame blended in with the rest of the campus architecture. In a number of other ways, too, this building symbolized a crossing of thresholds for the Conference.

First, with the completion of the Mennonite Heritage Centre building in the fall of 1978, the CMC archives became properly accessible to the public for the first time. The Conference had officially begun collecting archival material in 1933 when it elected Winnipeg teacher Bernhard J. Schellenberg as its first archivist. After four years of gathering historical sources Schellenberg noted the need for a place to shelve the documents, now stacked in boxes in his
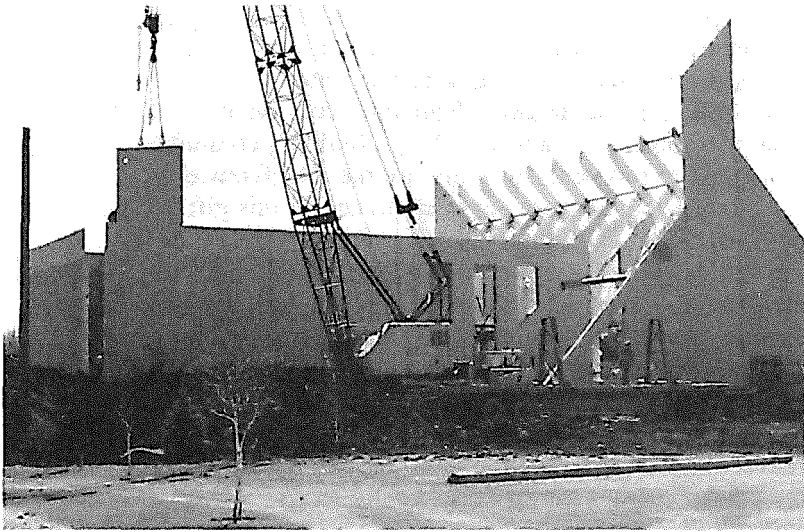
Mennonite Heritage Centre, housing the CMC archives and CMBC library, under construction in 1978. "A people who have not the pride to record their history will not long have the virtues to make their history worth recording; and no people who are indifferent to their past need hope to make their future great"–Jan Gleysteen. Photo: MHC Archives

home, so that they could be accessible when a historian or researcher requested some information.[102] Bishop Benjamin Ewert, who had long served as Conference statistician, succeeded Schellenberg as archivist in 1941, at the same honorarium of $25 per year that Schellenberg had received since 1937.[103] However, the problem of a suitable location to house the growing collection remained.[104] After CMBC acquired its own building on the banks of the Assiniboine River, the ad hoc Archives Committee recommended in 1952 to establish a historical library and archive at the College.[105] Progressively enlarged storage areas became available as the College developed its campus in Tuxedo, but it was only with the building of the Heritage Centre that work areas for staff and researchers became available.

Secondly, the Conference had its first serious debate about the acceptance of large gifts. The idea of an archives facility was sparked at the 1972 sessions. As the delegates approved a $2,600 budget line for the archives program, one brother said, "We need much more and we should get it."[106] The "brother" was pastor and historian Gerhard Lohrenz, who had served as archivist after Benjamin Ewert. One

delegate heard this exhortation as a personal challenge. Five years later Peter W. Enns, a businessman of the Winkler Bergthaler congregation, offered to fund a heritage building which could house an archive for the larger Mennonite community. At the annual Council of Boards in January 1977, a building committee was struck to prepare a proposal to bring to the Conference in summer.[107] Delegates, however, were not ready to accept this gift without serious questions. "Does wealth control the church?" asked one, wondering how boards and delegates could address priorities for the Conference when the money was designated. Others raised ethical questions. "Can we accept money from big donors, where we don't know how it has been acquired?" Some were concerned about centralization of even more institutions in Winnipeg. The discussion was serious but people listened to each other and, in the end, strongly approved the proposal.[108] The fact that the building was to be designed so that it could accommodate the CMBC Library as well helped gain approval for the project.

The discussion in connection with this acceptance of large gifts spilled over into a debate about approving endowments. High interest rates made this appear as an attractive way of financing particular projects without significantly impinging on the annual budget request from congregations.[109]

A third issue raised by the Heritage Centre was the way it symbolized a backward look. Should we not look to the future instead of studying the past? Are we packrats or pilgrims? How much evangelism and outreach could we do with the funds and energies needed to operate the archives program and building? What did an expensive facility like this say about the Anabaptist-Mennonite emphasis on simple living? These issues also were taken seriously, but the value of an archive had been soundly established by that time. When the Heritage Centre was dedicated in January 1979, the mood was celebrative. No one was even visibly upset by the pranksters who had braved –25C weather the night before to amend the sign above the entrance to read "Heretic Centre."

Inter-Conference Relations

The growing interest in having programs closer to congregations and in fostering inter-Mennonite cooperation in the 1970s was noted at the beginning of this chapter. These two impulses came together in a number of areas.

Mennonite Foundation. In 1966 the Finance Board was

authorized to create a foundation to manage bequests and other large donations received by various organizations within the CMC.[110] Comeca, as it was initially called, very quickly developed into a service arm of the Conference, helping individuals and families in preparing wills, working toward greater funding stability for church institutions, and leading in stewardship education.[111] By 1972 other Mennonite bodies expressed an interest in a more broadly based Mennonite Foundation, and the Conference authorized the creation of such a body jointly with the Mennonite Conference of Ontario, the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference, and other interested Canadian Mennonite groups. As the Foundation became established and financially independent, Comeca phased out. In 1982 Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) disbursed $125,000 from $2.5 million in funds under its management. When the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference became the sixth conference to join MFC in 1988, the Foundation's assets were over $6 million.

Periodicals. Der Bote, begun in 1924 as a paper for the new immigrants from the USSR, was adopted as an organ of the CMC in 1935 after the earlier *Der Mitarbeiter* ceased publication on the death of its founding editor. As congregations in the United States shifted more and more to English, the General Conference in 1947 merged its German-language paper, *Christlicher Bundesbote*, with the Canadian *Der Bote*. In 1955 the GC purchased this merged paper and continued to publish it as *Der Bote*. By 1972 the majority (5,800) of its readers were in Canada, and the CMC was asked to take over its publication, placing management closer to the reading constituency.[112] The General Conference continued financial support and some U.S. readers remained subscribers. In 1977 editorial offices of *Der Bote* moved from Rosthern to Winnipeg when Gerhard Ens succeeded Peter B. Wiens as editor

The other General Conference paper, *The Mennonite*, served Canadian members who preferred English. However, the paper's Canadian and CMC content was quite inadequate. A bilingual Canadian youth quarterly, the *Y.P. Messenger*, had partially filled this void during its brief period of publication from 1947 until it was deemed financially unviable in 1951. Its "second choice" replacement, a weekly one page in *Der Bote*, rarely had as much as 40 percent of its content in English. In 1953, in part to fill the need for an English-language paper, D.W. Friesen & Sons, a printing firm in Altona, Manitoba, founded *The Canadian Mennonite*. Although privately produced and deliberately designed as an inter-Mennonite

paper, its publishers were Bergthaler Mennonites and its first editor, Frank Epp, was a graduate of CMBC. This gained it a wide readership in the CMC constituency, but it folded in 1971.

That same year Larry Kehler was appointed as the first Canadian editor of *The Mennonite*. His office was located in the CMC complex in Winnipeg as part of an effort to serve Canadians with an English-language conference paper. These changes did give the General Conference tangible visibility in Canada, and the editorial perspective helped U.S. readers have a better understanding of Canadian issues. When Kehler resigned after a five-year term, another Canadian, Bernie Wiebe, served as editor from the Winnipeg office for a decade. Wiebe came to the task from the presidency of Freeman Junior College in South Dakota. However, *The Mennonite* continued to lag behind the other two papers in CMC subscriptions.

When *The Canadian Mennonite* ceased publication in 1971, an ad hoc group of concerned individuals immediately took steps to create a replacement and invited the support of Mennonite conferences. Thus, just as the CMC gained publication control of *Der Bote* in 1972 and a Canadian as editor of *The Mennonite*, it also adopted this new, Waterloo-based *Mennonite Reporter* as its English-language paper.

To strengthen the inter-Mennonite character of the new paper, the CMC did not insist on representation on the *Mennonite Reporter* board of directors, relying instead on "the intimate working relationships of Mennonite groups in Ontario" to provide a "balance between individual-congregational-Conference interests."[113] The two other bodies with a strong commitment to the *Reporter* were the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference who were co-founders with the CMC of the Mennonite Foundation. The Congregational Resources Board immediately began to promote an every-home plan to generate as broad a subscriber base as possible. By 1978 circulation numbers indicated that the *Mennonite Reporter* (with 5,000 CMC subscribers) and *Der Bote* (6,000) provided the vehicles for Conference contact with the constituency, while 2,500 subscribers to *The Mennonite* suggested that GC and U.S. coverage in the two Canadian papers was insufficient for them.

In 1974 the Conference increased its coverage in the *Mennonite Reporter* by including a special section prepared by a CMC staff person, at first occasionally, then more regularly. A communications task force in 1982 recommended against establishing a Conference-owned periodical but favoured a closer partnership arrangement with

the *Reporter*. The Congregational Resources Board intensified its efforts to increase circulation of the paper through a genuine Every Home Plan, which it reported in 1986 as being in place.

Hymnal Projects. In 1984 three North American church bodies appointed a joint committee to work toward publishing a new hymnal: the Mennonite Church, the Church of the Brethren, and the General Conference. With the participation of representatives of the Churches of God and the Mennonite Brethren Church, this project involved a broader spectrum of groups than had worked at any previous Mennonite hymn book. Several CMC members served as GC appointees on the key sub-committees focusing on worship, text and music respectively. This project culminated eight years later in the publishing of *Hymnal: A Worship Book.*

Throughout its history the CMC had always worked with the General Conference on hymnal publishing projects. The *Gesangbuch mit Noten* (Hymnal with Notes) (1890) went through 15 editions (50,000 copies) and was widely used by CMC congregations. Many of the 1920s immigrants from the USSR, however, continued to use the hymnal without notes which they had brought with them from the old country. The CMC, convinced that singing, without which it could not imagine a worship service, united people. It was therefore concerned to have a common hymn book used in all of its congregations.[114] A hymnal commission was accordingly appointed by the Conference in 1938 to develop a new German collection in which both the older congregations and the new immigrant congregations would find the core hymns of their traditions. The resulting 1942 *Gesangbuch der Mennoniten* (Hymnal of the Mennonites) was published by the General Conference, even though the commission was a CMC body and U.S. congregations were, for the most part, no longer using German in their worship service.

Canadian congregations making the transition to English could use *The Mennonite Hymnary*, published in 1940 by the General Conference. When the GC appointed a committee to begin revising this hymnal in 1953, George Wiebe represented the CMC. After the music committee of the (Old) Mennonite Church began to revise its hymnal in 1957, the two bodies worked closely together until a joint committee was struck in 1961. *The Mennonite Hymnal* (1969) thus had members of the two Mennonite denominations "singing from the same page" long before formal integration talks would begin.

Within the CMC the post-World War II immigration prolonged the period of transition from German to English in congregational

From 1954 until his retirement in 1992 George Wiebe symbolized the choral music program of CMBC. Even as he honed his conducting skills and the choral production of countless choirs, he continued to promote congregational singing and hymnody throughout the Conference and beyond. Photo: MHC Archives.

worship. As indicated in chapter 5, this led to a new revision of the *Gesangbuch der Mennoniten* (1965) produced by a committee of the CMC but published by the General Conference.

The 1984 decision to participate in another hymnal project was thus consistent with the CMC emphasis on fostering congregational singing by keeping hymnals current. It also reflected the ongoing conviction of the Conference on both the importance of singing in worship and also the role of singing in fostering and maintaining unity. And it illustrated its willingness to broaden the circle of inter-church cooperation.

General Conference. At the end of the previous chapter the burst of Canadian participation in the overseas mission program of the General Conference was noted. That participation included not only a large number of missionaries, but also a commensurate flow of funds to Newton. Canadian Women in Mission gathered large amounts of "above budget" funds for this purpose, but a growing portion of CMC Mission Board budget funds were also transferred to the GC. This left proportionately less money for "home missions" at a time when the Congregational Resources Board was responding to an ever-growing range of programs requested by the constituency. Increased projects in turn created overlap with programs of GC boards.

In 1974 the Conference executive reported "important discussions" with GC representatives regarding program coordination, duplication of service, money solicitation approaches, and inter-conference communication avenues. A resolution from the floor reaffirmed "the

global nature of the church and our desire to work together in continental and international matters with our sister congregations from the United States" while at the same time endorsing the executive's "ongoing consultation."[115] There was goodwill in both conferences to work together, as illustrated in the appointment of a Canadian editor for *The Mennonite* referred to above.

Structural issues were more difficult to surmount. "Canadians on the Commission on Home Ministries are asked to spend several days of work on . . . mostly U.S. issues, issues that are handled in Canada by provincial and Canadian boards," wrote H.J. Gerbrandt in his 1980 General Board report. When this problem, resulting from the fact that there was no national Conference in the U.S. parallel to the CMC, was raised at the 1977 sessions, one delegate remarked: "We've come a long way. Years ago I was asked *not* to ask that question."[116] More problematic was the issue of "double funding." The Canadian congregations, Gerbrandt pointed out, exclusively funded Native Ministries in Canada but also paid their share for similar GC work in the United States. The same applied to congregational ministries and church planting.[117] On the other hand, the CMC funded *Umsiedler* ministries in Germany by itself while sharing in the costs of GC overseas work. These issues were not yet fully resolved by 1988 when discussions of a possible integration of the General Conference and Mennonite Church had already begun.

Other Groups. In 1984 the General Board received approval to explore relations with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). MCC and other agencies related to aspects of both in the course of their ministries. The following year representatives from these bodies—Donald Anderson, general secretary of the CCC and Brian Stiller, executive director of the EFC—addressed the annual sessions. The floor discussion later reflected interest in relating to both groups rather than to one or the other.[118]After several years of informal relations the Conference executive in 1987 recommended a three-year term of "observer" status and an annual contribution of $1,000. Some delegates expressed reservations about membership in the CCC, others about the EFC. There was a sense that relating to both had merit and that joining either would not add significant benefits to those already resulting from observer status.

At the 1984 sessions the executive raised the question of some joint conference sessions with the Mennonite Brethren Conference. At Regina the following year, the Sunday afternoon session was

Henry J. Gerbrandt, left, CMC general secretary 1971–1981, led the negotiations with the General Conference to gain recognition for the CMC as a parallel body to the U.S. General Conference, rather than a region of it. Vernon Leis (1933–1994) was a strong voice for inter-Mennonite cooperation and the conference integration movement in Ontario, and became the first moderator of the merged Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada. These two movements, which Gerbrandt and Leis both symbolize and actively promoted, gave significant impetus to the developments which led to integrated national church bodies in Canada and the United States. Photos: Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith* and Sam Steiner, Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Conrad Grebel College

planned and attended by delegates of both groups in a "Celebration of Praise." A follow-up resolution saw this event as "a tangible expression of the desire for greater unity among Mennonites" and urged member congregations to emphasize "inter-congregational and inter-Mennonite unity."[119] In 1986 both Conferences held their annual sessions at the same time in Waterloo. A Mennonite Brethren delegation came to the Saturday morning session of the CMC on a "biblical pilgrimage" to ask forgiveness for having in the past excommunicated members of their church for marrying a member of a General Conference congregation. Although there was no recorded decision to do this, "some congregations and leaders" had understood this to be Conference policy and had practised it. The apology was accepted and forgiveness extended in an emotional exchange. A later resolution committed the CMC "to working for growth in the

relationship between our churches and conferences."[120] The merging of CMC's quarterly *Mennonite Historian* with the *Mennonite Brethren Historical Society Newsletter* in 1987, while not exactly a result of these events, was in keeping with the growth in openness to cooperation.

Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada. The most intense inter-conference cooperation during this period took place at the provincial level in Ontario. While initially regional, it would have a major impact on developments within the CMC and later in the General Conference and the (Old) Mennonite Church Conference of North America.

The usual "fraternal" greetings from "sister" conferences in 1985 included an unusual one brought by Edwin Epp from the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec (MCOQ), the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference (WOMC), and the United Mennonite Conference of Ontario. Epp, pastor of Faith Mennonite Church of Leamington, could represent all three groups because they were working together on an inter-conference basis and were beginning to address issues relating to integration. At the sessions in Waterloo the following year, Glenn Zehr of the "Inter-Mennonite Conference" shared the vision and dream of the three Ontario conferences to become one. The planned merger was announced to Conference delegates in 1987 who responded by inviting the new conference and all of its congregations to relate to the CMC.

To accommodate the new reality of the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada, the CMC amended its By-laws at the 1988 sessions, creating an "associate membership" category. It then welcomed the congregations of the former MCOQ and WOMC, and followed this up with a motion to accept the 62 congregations into this status.[121] The potential impact of this development was even greater in several respects than that which the immigration from the USSR in the 1920s had brought. The *Russländer*, as these immigrants were called, shared a common Dutch-Prussian-Russian church tradition with the earlier CMC congregations and found it relatively easy to fit in. Hymn traditions, catechism, church practices, as well as an agricultural way of life and similar educational aspirations, were largely compatible.

To enter a partnership with the Ontario congregations with Swiss-South German cultural and religious traditions, a much longer history of living in Canada, and different congregational and conference polities and leadership styles would require not only restructuring but also significant readjusting.

7

Cooperation and Integration
1988–1999

The decision of the Ontario "Swiss" Mennonite conferences to accept CMC's invitation to associate member status generated considerable excitement and anticipation in the Conference. That enthusiasm was soon tempered as congregations realized the extent of adjustment and reorganization that full consummation of the union would entail. Two tangible areas were addressed in the next decade: a new joint confession of faith and a major revision of goals, priorities and structures of the Conference. Congregations were most directly involved in developing the confession and in those aspects of Conference restructuring that impacted church polity. They were most strongly affected by the amount of time and energy required of Conference staff and elected boards and officers for these tasks, some of it at the expense of the "normal" work of the church.

Two other concurrent developments complicated the restructuring process of the Conference. On the North American level an Integration Exploration Committee began in the early 1990s to look at possible amalgamation of CMC's "parent" General Conference with the Mennonite Church (MC), to which both of the Ontario "Swiss" conferences belonged. In Manitoba the provincial Mennonite Brethren Conference and the CMC were in the process of federating or integrating CMBC and Concord College (formerly Mennonite Brethren Bible College). As a result, the Conference was simultaneously engaged in inter-Mennonite activity at unprecedented levels of intensity and depth.

Confession of Faith
Confessions of faith have an ambivalent place for churches in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. On the one hand, the emphasis on the Bible as central authority by early Anabaptists made it virtually impossible for a creed to gain the kind of status that it had in

Protestant churches of the Reformation. A strongly congregational polity in most groups added to the difficulty. On the other hand, the Mennonite church did not fit into the local state church in any of the countries of western Europe and consequently felt the need to articulate at least its distinctive teachings, including its understanding of the nature of the church. As a result, a large number of Anabaptist-Mennonite confessions of faith developed over the centuries.[1]

In its initial (1904) constitution, the Conference adopted a Confession widely used by the congregations in Canada since their time in Russia or Prussia.[2] A 1929 meeting of Saskatchewan ministers at Rosthern stimulated Bishop Johann J. Klassen of Dundurn, Saskatchewan, to revise this Confession for future use. His updated version, based on a comparison of the confession in use among the churches in Russia and the Prussian confession used by congregations in Canada, was discussed by the CMC ministers conference in 1930 and included as an attachment to its minutes.[3] After hearing a formal response (*Referat*) to the revised articles in 1931 and discussing them once more, the ministers conference voted to recommend the revised Confession to the congregations.[4] In 1935 the Conference approved a reprint of the Catechism with the notation that the revised articles be included, even though there is no record that the delegate session at any point approved the revisions.[5]

In 1965 the CMC adopted what the minutes called "The Souderton Confession of Faith of the General Conference Church" and in 1975 incorporated it into the Constitution in place of reference to the earlier Confession.[6] These confessions, particularly the earlier ones, were used as a general resource in teaching the faith—as their inclusion with the catechism implies—but not as a test of orthodoxy. Indeed, the stimulus for revising the Confession in 1930 arose from CMC ministers' uneasiness in accepting several articles in the membership qualifications of the General Conference Constitution, including specifically the exclusion of any congregation that permitted membership in lodges (secret societies).[7]

In contrast to the almost casual way in which one trusted leader was asked by a regional gathering of ministers to revise the Confession in 1930, the process of developing a new confession in the latter part of the 20th century was deliberate, representative, protracted and meticulous. A GC-MC jointly appointed Exploration Committee recommended in 1984 that the two conferences cooperate in formulating a new confession of faith to build church unity and promote Christian faithfulness.[8] The actual Inter-Mennonite

Confession of Faith Committee held its first meeting in February of 1987. The CMC had two representatives, including the co-chair Helmut Harder, then theology professor at CMBC but soon to be general secretary of the Conference. At the 1989 General Assembly in Normal, Illinois, the Committee presented a number of draft articles and announced regional consultations on them in the various area conferences.

CMC congregations received copies of the first batch of 13 draft articles for study and feedback in the spring of 1992. Eventually congregations had opportunity to study all 24 articles and offer suggestions to the Committee prior to the final ratification of the Confession in 1995. Never before in CMC history had such church-wide involvement been invited in preparing a confession. It is still too early to assess the impact of this participation, but there appears to be a wider awareness that the Conference has a "theological position," and there seem to be more frequent queries about what that position is on specific issues. On the North American level, finding agreement on basic aspects of the faith smoothed the process toward organizational union of the Mennonite Church and the General Conference.

Uniting with the Ontario Swiss Mennonites

Mennonites in Ontario did not wait for a new confession in order to unite. In 1988 the United Mennonite Conference of Ontario (UM), whose congregations were part of the CMC, merged with the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec (MCOQ) and the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference (WOMC) to form the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada (MCEC).[9] Many congregations of the latter two Conferences immediately accepted the CMC invitation to participate in it as associate members. This provided opportunities for them to become familiar with the CMC organization and manner of operating. At the same time it allowed congregations west of Ontario to learn something about the histories, styles of operation and significant issues of these older Mennonite bodies in Ontario. Gradually the level of working together grew.

Nevertheless, when these associate member congregations joined the CMC as full members in 1995, the character of the Conference changed significantly. Over 30 of them were substantially of Swiss Mennonite background and another 15 came from the former Amish-Mennonite conference. Together with four Quebec congregations their members were descendants of pre-Confederation immigrant
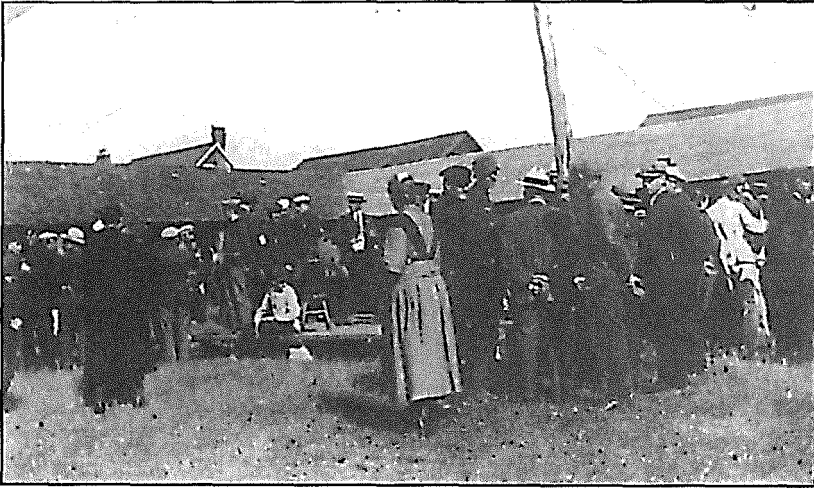
After nearly four weeks of travel, immigrant Mennonites from the USSR (Ukraine) gather within the driving shed enclosure of Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ontario, to await billeting in the homes of Swiss Mennonites in Ontario. Few, if any delegates at the 1988 CMC sessions will have remembered this scene from July 19, 1924. Photo: Karl Kessler, *Path of a People*

groups. Their experience of living in Canadian society was much longer than that of the congregations that made up the CMC. Three Asian congregations—Cambodian, Chinese and Hmong—included the most recent immigrants.

In addition to the cultural and linguistic variety they brought into the mix, different models of polity and leadership styles were introduced as part of the legacy of the MCOQ and WOMC. Ontario members of the CMC had lived with these groups as neighbours for several generations. Many of the leaders knew each other personally and had worked together for a number of decades. But for the most part, congregations on the Prairies and in British Columbia had not had this opportunity.[10] For them the adjustments were much greater. A brief review of the background of these newly joining groups may help to see similarities with and differences from the Prussian-Russian Mennonite experience.

Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec (MCOQ). Mennonites under restrictions or persecution in German and Swiss lands in the late 17th century found refuge in British North America. In 1681 William Penn, a prominent English Quaker, secured a large

As Rosenorter and Bergthaler representatives planned the founding of the CMC in Saskatchewan in 1902, First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario was moving into this stately brick building, the third since the congregation was founded in 1813. Photo: *Frontier Community to Urban Congregation*
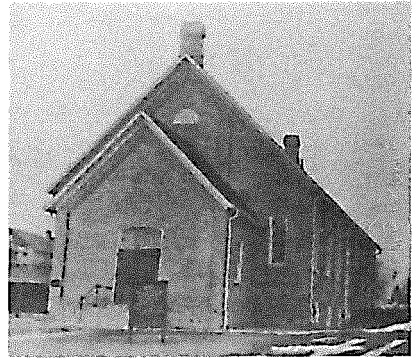
tract of land on which he decided to establish a colony with liberty of conscience and freedom from oppression. Two years later a group of Mennonites from Krefeld, Germany, founded the settlement of Germantown in Penn's "Sylvania." From 1683 to 1750 some five thousand Mennonites from Switzerland and the Palatinate immigrated to Pennsylvania. There they established communities and churches and flourished economically and spiritually in the context of a tolerant, pacifist, Quaker-led commonwealth.

As resistance to colonial rule built up in the British colonies and Quakers gradually lost their majority in the Pennsylvania legislature, tolerance for neutral pacifists diminished. This climaxed after the declaration of independence in 1776 and in the war with Britain that followed. Mennonites who had already earlier experienced difficulty in purchasing ever more expensive farms for their children found in the new climate of suspicion another reason to move. After the conclusion of a treaty recognizing the independence of the United States, Britain extended generous terms to "loyalists" who wished to relocate to its remaining North American colonies in what is now Canada.

Mennonites did not qualify for the benefits enjoyed by United Empire Loyalists, but they did receive assurance of freedom of religion. Together with the availability of relatively cheap land this motivated close to a thousand Mennonites from Pennsylvania to join the migration to Canada beginning in 1786. During the next 30 years they founded settlements in what is now Ontario. Three larger clusters soon organized congregations, each led by a bishop, in the Niagara, Waterloo and Markham areas. By about 1810 annual meetings of the bishops and many of the ministers were regular enough to consider this as the beginning of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario.[11] Since at least the 1830s a day of "ministers conference" was followed by

another day open to the general membership.

Over time some churches introduced new approaches to meet the needs of the faith community. Sunday schools, begun in the 1840s in the Waterloo and Niagara areas to help retain the German language, shifted after the 1870s to a primary emphasis on nurturing children in the faith. Some leaders felt that nurturing was not enough and emphasized experiential faith, true repentance, and the spiritual life of the individual. Daniel Hoch of the Vineland area used the Conference approval of prayer meetings in 1847 to promote other innovations. His group separated from the Conference the following year and linked up for a while with another innovator, John H. Oberholtzer of Pennsylvania, who ordained Hoch as bishop in 1851.[12] Another revivalist group separated from the main body during the 1870s, eventually uniting with the earlier Hoch followers and several similar U.S. groups to form the Mennonite Brethren in Christ in 1883. These groups came to be identified as "New" Mennonites.[13]

At the other end of the spectrum were leaders who did not even agree with the innovations adopted by the Conference. Controversy over Sunday schools and revivalist features led to the 1889 separation of a more traditionalist group to become part of the "Old Order" Mennonites.[14] Situated between these extremes on many issues, the Conference group came to be known informally as "Old" Mennonites. Jacob Y. Shantz, a very important figure in the settlement of Mennonite immigrants from Russia in Manitoba during the 1870s, came from this "Old" Mennonite group and, in 1875, joined a group that later became part of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. He helped to arrange a Canadian government loan of $100,000 for the immigrant Russian Mennonite settlers by recruiting a group of Ontario Mennonites to guarantee it. He was also clerk and treasurer of the Russian Mennonite Aid Committee through which Ontario Mennonites advanced an additional $40,000 in loans to the immigrants.[15]

After the Old Order group left, there was less resistance in the Conference to adopting new programs and institutions. Sunday school conferences were held at least once a year.[16] Bible conferences began in 1898 and the Ontario Mennonite Bible School in 1907. A Board of Finance, founded in 1911 with broad responsibilities including education and publication, was absorbed by the new Mennonite Mission Board of Ontario in 1926.

By 1857 the Conference listed 14 congregations with 30 places of worship. During the 50-year gap after 1857, some of the latter de-

"The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly from the Lord (Proverbs 16:31). With this God has called you, Noah Hunsberger, as a preacher of the Gospel." Choosing ministers by lot from a short list of candidates was widely used in the Swiss Mennonite tradition. Photo: Karl Kessler, *Path of a People*

veloped into independent congregations. Three were added prior to World War II and at least three more per decade after the War. Many of these congregations were the result of church planting efforts; some were mergers of older congregations. A deliberately planned mission in Quebec, begun in the 1950s, resulted in the first French-speaking congregation joining the Conference in 1973. In 1982 the Hmong Christian Church and the Spanish Shalom congregation broadened the cultural and ethnic spectrum even further. That year the Conference also changed its name to recognize its congregations in Quebec.

Western Ontario Mennonite Conference (WOMC). Shortly after the first Mennonites settled in Pennsylvania, a controversy in Switzerland led to a long-lasting division. A young bishop, Jakob Ammann, tried to persuade his colleagues to join him in enforcing a strict avoidance of excommunicated persons. Related issues in church discipline and lifestyle, and possibly also in the frequency of communion services and the practice of footwashing, entered the dispute. The mutual excommunication of the disagreeing parties in 1693 set such hard lines that attempts by Mennonites from other regions to effect reconciliation failed. Ammann's followers came to

Table 7.1

Congregations of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec Joining the CMC as Full Members in 1995

Name*	Location*	Founded	Members
Rainham	Selkirk	1794	42
First Mennonite	Vineland	1801	50
Preston	Cambridge	1804	150
Bloomingdale	Bloomingdale	1806	118
Wideman	Markham	1811	94
First Mennonite	Kitchener	1813	417
Mannheim	Petersburg	1832	107
Breslau	Breslau	1834	175
Wanner	Cambridge	1837	120
Shantz	Baden	1840	151
Pioneer Park Chr Fellowship	Kitchener	1842	60
St. Jacobs	St. Jacobs	1844	343
Erb Street	Waterloo	1851	311
Floradale	Floradale	1857	220
Danforth	Toronto	1907	98[17]
Zurich	Zurich	1908	270
Elmira	Elmira	1924	316
Hagerman	Markham	1934	70
Glen Allan	Wallenstein	1944	69
Bethel	Elora	1947	175
Hawkesville	Hawkesville	1950	163
Calvary	Monetville	1951	54
Warden Woods	Scarborough	1952	135
McArthurs Mills Chr Fellowship	McArthurs Mills	1961	20
Calvary	Ayr	1962	50
Hanover Menn Fellowship	Hanover	1963	60
Listowel	Listowel	1963	174
Chesley	Chesley	1965	13
Hunta	Frederickhouse	1970	30
Eglise Evangélique de Joliette	Joliette QC	1973	34
Nith Valley	New Hamburg	1975	119
Wilmot	Baden	1977	118
K-W House Churches	Kitchener	1970s	50
Brussels Menn Fellowship	Brussels	1980	80
Eglise Evangélique de Rawdon	Rawdon QC	1980	12
Hmong Christian Church	Kitchener	1982	108
Shalom	Montreal QC	1982	
Rouge Valley	Markham	1986	100
Eglise Evang de Rouyn-Noranda	Rouyn-Noranda QC	1986	16
Waterloo North	Waterloo	1986	104
Zion Mennonite Fellowship	Elmira	1987	64
Community Menn Fellowship	Drayton	1989	77

*Unless otherwise indicated the congregation's complete name includes "Mennonite Church". The locations are in Ontario, unless indicated.

> *Ontario Swiss Mennonites generously assisted the refugee immigrants from the USSR in the 1920s. Some, like the Bishop Jacob Wiens family from Tiegerweide, Molotschna, spent the winter in Ontario. Wiens preached regularly in congregations of both Ontario Conferences as well as in congregations in process of being formed by new immigrants in Waterloo and Vineland. He became the founding bishop of the Ebenfeld Gemeinde at Herschel, Saskatchewan.*
>
> Bishop Jacob Wiens Preaching Schedule 1924–1925
>
> *Farewell sermons in Russia: July 13 – Neukirch; July 20 morning – Ohrloff; evening – Tiegerweide. July 23 – depart from Lichtenau train station. August 10, 12, 13 – sermons on board the S.S. Minnedosa. August 17 – Geiger congregation, Ontario; August 24 – Mannheim; August 31 – evening at St. Agatha; September 7 – Mannheim; September 21 – Mannheim; October 5 – afternoon at Waterloo; October 12 – Wanner at Hespeler; October 19 – Mannheim; October 26 – Bean; November 2 – communion at Waterloo with 200–300; November 9 – communion at Vineland with 30; November 16 – Tavistock at Cassel; evening at Zoar at Tavistock; December 7 – St. Jacobs; December 21 – New Dundee.*
>
> *1925: February 1 – St. Jacobs; February 22 – morning and evening Vineland; March 1 – St. Jacobs; March 22 – Herschel, Saskatchewan.* Jacob Wiens "Tagebuch", MHC Archives

be known as Amish Mennonites, later simply as Amish. Although the initial clash happened in the Emmental region of the Canton of Bern, the division spread into South German regions as well. Strict dress codes and application of discipline soon distinguished them from other Mennonites.

Amish Mennonites joined the move to Pennsylvania in the 18th century, establishing a sizable community in Lancaster County by 1740 and spreading westward to Ohio by 1812. The social and political changes in Europe in the aftermath of the French Revolution (1789) and the militarization during the Napoleonic Wars to 1815 led to a second wave of migration to America after peace was established. A peasant farmer from Bavaria, Christian Nafziger, opened the way for Amish Mennonite settlement in Canada.

In 1822 Nafziger made his way to Amsterdam to find passage across the Atlantic to look for affordable settlement sites in America.

From New Orleans he travelled overland to the Mennonite settlements in Pennsylvania. Land prices there were too high for poor European peasants, but Nafziger's Pennsylvania hosts provided him with a horse and funds to examine the reportedly cheap lands in Canada. Mennonites in the Waterloo area helped him select a tract adjacent to their communities and to negotiate terms of settlement with Governor Maitland of Upper Canada. In 1823 Amish Mennonites from Pennsylvania and directly from Europe began to settle in Canada, trickling in over the next 50 years.[18]

Like the Mennonites forty years earlier, the immigrants organized a church soon after their arrival. Historian Orland Gingerich characterizes the Amish Mennonites as having developed "a very congregation-centred type of church government" modified by an emphasis on "the importance and authority of the bishop." An Amish community "was never complete without the ordained spiritual leaders," the "defenders of Amish orthodoxy" and the "anchormen" of the group.[19] Less than Hutterites but more than most other Mennonite groups, the Amish Mennonites cultivated humility and communal identity as virtues. In some respects they were more acculturated than the Ontario Mennonites, having remained in mixed western European communities while the latter lived in relatively closed settlements in America. Thus Peter Zehr arrived from Lorraine as a licensed doctor and surgeon and an ordained minister. He was among the founders of the East Zorra congregation.

Five bishop-centred congregations were founded by 1874 in the five townships where the settlers were concentrated. The third (Hay Township in Huron County, 1848) suffered from lack of resident leadership when their bishop died shortly after the church was founded (see Table 7.2 below). That left the congregation dependent on outside leaders, some of them from Mennonite churches. As a result it suffered several divisions before merging with the Zurich congregation of the MCOQ.[20] As in the Mennonite Conference of Ontario, many innovations in congregational emphasis or practice and accepted changes in lifestyle tended to produce a reaction by more traditional members. The shift from house-church style to erecting separate church buildings in the 1880s led the more conservative members to separate. They, like their counterparts in the United States, came to be known as Old Order Amish.[21]

With the departure of the more conservative elements, changes came in more quickly, although Bible conferences and Sunday schools were introduced somewhat later than in the Mennonite
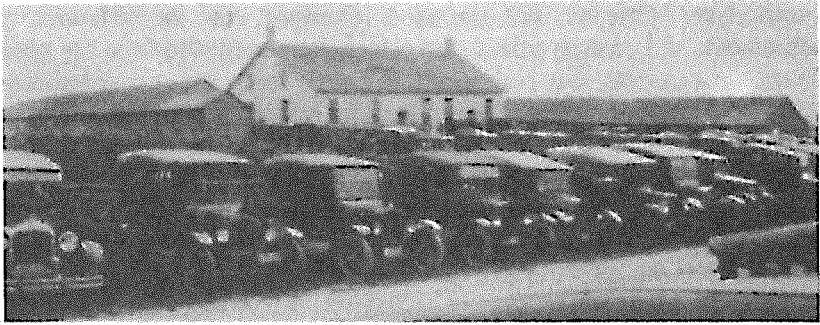
St. Agatha Amish Mennonite meetinghouse at conference time, 1920s. Note the long horse barns, known as driving sheds, on both sides of the church building. Photo: *History of the Wilmot Amish Mennonite Congregation*

Table 7.2
Congregations of the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference Joining the CMC as Full Members in 1995

Name	Location	Founded	Members
Steinmann	Baden	1824	427
East Zorra	Tavistock	1837	330
Maple View	Wellesley	1859	309
Poole	Milverton	1874	296
St. Agatha	Baden	1885	96
Cassel	Tavistock	1935	166
Tavistock	Tavistock	1942	270
Riverdale	Millbank	1946	235
Nairn	Ailsa Craig	1948	61
Crosshill	Millbank	1949	132
Avon	Stratford	1952	64
Valleyview[22]	London	1962	117
Hillcrest	New Hamburg	1964	249
Wellesley	Wellesley	1975	159
Living Water Community Christian Fellowship	New Hamburg	1981	91
Milverton Mennonite Fellowship	Milverton	1982	117

* Unless otherwise indicated, the congregation's complete name includes "Mennonite Church."

Conference. The Amish settlements remained more compact than those of the Swiss Mennonites, so growth of their congregations was accommodated by enlarging their meetinghouses rather than by

beginning daughter congregations. That, and some ongoing loss to more conservative groups, accounts for a 50-year period after 1885 before a second round of new congregations emerged.

For almost a century after their arrival, these Amish Mennonite bishop-centred congregations functioned with only an informal relationship among their leaders. Occasional ministerial meetings kept no official records to suggest an actual organization. A number of congregations and leaders also related to various groups in the U.S. During World War I the importance of closer consultation and cooperation with Ontario Mennonites and the increased difficulties in sharing Amish leadership from the U.S. suggested the need to form a Conference. The springboard was a church-wide Sunday school conference in 1922. Bishop Eli Frey of the Eastern Amish Mennonite Conference came from Ohio to help organize the Conference and served as its moderator for the first year. Then Bishop Daniel Jutzi of East Zorra was elected and continued as moderator of the Amish Mennonite Conference of Ontario until 1937.

While the Amish Mennonites generally tended to lag behind the Mennonite Conference in introducing innovations, they were the first to send out missionaries. Amos Swartzentruber attended Bible school in Chicago in 1918 to prepare for mission service. There he met and married Edna Litwiller from his home community. They served in a mission in Ohio for a year before returning home. After some negotiations Bishop Daniel Steinmann consented to have Amos ordained for mission service in Argentina under the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (Elkhart, Indiana). Bishop Frey of Ohio officiated at the ordination in St. Agatha Mennonite Church in 1924 and the couple was sent on its way.[23] Just a year later Nelson and Ada Litwiller joined them. Nelson was one of the first Amish Mennonites to finish high school; he then went on to complete college and seminary studies, the latter at Bethany Biblical Seminary of the Church of the Brethren in Chicago.

Organizing as a Conference seems to have speeded up the process of cooperating with various other Mennonite bodies. During World War II the Amish Conference participated in joint actions of the historic peace churches, and many of its members experienced fellowship with a range of other Mennonites in CO camps. In 1956 the Conference began participation in Rockway Mennonite High School, founded by the Mennonite Conference of Ontario in 1945. Three years later it applied for membership in the (Old) Mennonite General Conference. By 1963 many in the Amish Mennonite

Conference were ready to distance themselves from the "Amish" image, so the name was changed to Western Ontario Mennonite Conference.

Other MCEC Congregations. Before the amalgamation of the three conferences in 1988, a number of congregations held dual or triple area conference membership. Some new congregations, begun after or just prior to the formation of MCEC, did not join one of the former area conferences. Table 7.3 lists congregations from this group which joined the CMC as full members in 1995.

Table 7.3
Other Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada
Congregations Joining the CMC as Full Members in 1995

Name	Location	Founded	Members
Agape Fellowship	Dorchester	1976	32
Welcome Inn Church (UM)	Hamilton	1978	41
Toronto Chinese Mennonite	Toronto	1980	127
Windsor Menn Fellowship	Windsor	1983	36
Olive Branch Church	Waterloo	1984	41
Kingston Menn Fellowship	Kingston	1988	20
West Hills Menn Fellowship	New Hamburg	1991	12
Abundant Life Fellowship	Waterloo	1993	28
Black Creek Faith Community	Downsview	–	–
Cambodian Christian Centre	Downsville	–	–
New Life Faith Community	Toronto	–	–

Adjusting the Structures

Immediately upon accepting the former MCOQ and WOMC congregations as associate members in 1988, the CMC introduced a re-envisioning process. Like these two Ontario conferences, the CMC had until then functioned with a limited mandate, accepting in several regions the status of "area" conference of North American entities whose headquarters were in the United States. This arrangement took for granted that major programs of the church —overseas mission, seminary education, denominational publishing, church period-ical—were administered by the North American bodies from U.S. offices. Now, with those "parent" conferences (GC and MC) also involved in integration talks, a window of opportunity was open for the enlarged CMC to reconsider its subsidiary role in these areas. Ironically, as the CMC worked at its new character as a "national church" dealing with a "national agenda" during the next decade, four of its annual sessions were held in the United States, something that

Aboriginal representatives at the annual sessions in Normal, Illinois in 1989 led in opening worship attended by delegates of the CMC, General Conference and Mennonite Church. Photo: CMC Collection, MHC Archives

had never happened prior to 1989.[24]

Of course, there was adequate rationale in each case. The 1989 meeting in Normal, Illinois, for example, allowed Canadian delegates and visitors to attend the sessions of both the CMC and the North American assembly of their (GC or MC) denomination on one trip. Delegates and congregations were concerned about the rising costs of attending conferences, especially in years when both the CMC and the North American conference met. A common theme: "Many People Becoming God's People," facilitated joint worship by the three groups. And "GC-MC integration" was already talked about even though discussions were still in their infancy.[25]

Nevertheless, holding annual sessions abroad had its price. At the 1988 through 1999 meetings the average number of delegates at Canadian locations was 480, compared with 340 in U.S. sites. When sessions were held in Canada, on average 70 percent of the congregations were represented; at meetings in the U.S. that dropped to 59 percent.

Congregations and area conferences were drawn into the process of re-examining the CMC's priorities and structures. The Structures Committee guiding this process circulated a new Mission Statement

to the congregations prior to the 1990 annual sessions. It identified the CMC as "a united and uniting body of Mennonite congregations" working in partnership with regional conferences in promoting "biblical faithfulness in worship, in evangelism, in service, in peacemaking and in the stewardship of God's creation."[26] The Statement was adopted after some discussion but no substantial modification.

The gender-balanced six-member Structures Committee included two representatives from the MCEC. Helmut Harder remained on it after his appointment as CMC general secretary in 1990. The North-West Conference had an observer. This Committee developed goals for the 1990s in four areas: uniting as God's people, mission, education, and conference-congregation relations. For each set of goals it presented a corresponding set of strategies. Circulating this document to the congregations in the *CMC Report* prior to the annual sessions made it possible for delegates to give it approval in principle in 1991, with the understanding that suggestions by delegates would be taken into account in preparing the final document for 1992.[27] The points that seemed to generate most concern were the balance between "autonomy" of the congregation and authority of the Conference, and the nature of future relations with the General Conference.

The polity issue was of considerable concern to CMC constituents, judging by the fact that it surfaced repeatedly at various stages along the path of integration.[28] In CMC circles the congregation still took the primary role in calling, ordaining and installing ministers. A congregation might call on the conference minister of the CMC or of the provincial conferences when it was in the process of hiring a new minister or in a congregation-pastor conflict, but the conferences had very little authority to intervene on their own initiative. In the MCOQ tradition, district overseers replaced bishops for a while. Then it and the WOMC jointly hired a conference minister who symbolized a return to more centralized authority. This authority included specifically a role in pastoral transitions and in conflict situations. In the CMC, congregations paid the employer portion of their pastors' pension plan; in the MCEC "brotherhood-sisterhood plan," pension costs were equalized among all members of the Conference.

At the bi-national conference level, both MCs and GCs initiated systematic reviews of ordination in particular and polity more generally. The 1986 MC "Consultation on Ordination" and the GC consultation on a document called "Ordinal: Ministry and Ordination in the General Conference Mennonite Church" showed a strong sense

of convergence in understanding between the two groups.[29] The process to develop a common polity position in this area on the North American level and the adjustments already made in the merged MCEC made it possible for the Structures Committee to assure delegates that a blending of polities was plausible.

The emphasis on congregational autonomy in the CMC-GC group was also reflected in the manner of joining conference. A congregation applied for membership at the provincial, Canadian and General Conference level separately. Membership at the provincial level was not a prerequisite for belonging to the CMC, nor did it automatically result in CMC membership. Congregations selected delegates to the annual sessions of each level of Conference. In the MC church family, congregations joined an area conference. This action automatically made them a member of the Mennonite Church bi-national body. Area conferences, not individual congregations, sent delegates to the assemblies of the North American body.

The "blended polity" adopted in 1999 at the St. Louis sessions provided for the possibility of having delegates from both congregations (one per every 50 members, minimum of two per congregation) and area conferences (one per thousand members, with a minimum of six and a maximum of 12). The minimum figure in each case reflected the desire to show "respect" for small congregations and area conferences. By joining an area conference a congregation was now automatically part of the CMC.[30]

The data in Table 7.4 below show the membership distribution in the CMC on the eve of its transition to becoming Mennonite Church Canada. This is the body of congregations that would continue to work at the emerging new model of being a national church, and on its pattern of relating to the area conferences in Canada and to its soon-to-be partner conference in the United States.

Table 7.4
CMC Membership by Area Conference in 1999

Conference	# of Con-gregations	# of Members	Members/ Cong.	# of Ministers	Members/ Minister
Eastern Canada	94	13,507	144	209	65
Manitoba	51	10,557	207	183	58
Saskatchewan	40	4,646	116	87	53
Br. Columbia	35	4,371	125	93	47
Alberta	18	2,165	120	62	35
Total/Average	238	35,246	148	634	56

Source: *Mennonite Directory,* 1999.

"Let there be peace on earth,... and let it begin with me" was the message carried by the winning non-commercial float in the Tavistock Santa Claus Parade. The first float displayed a nativity scene with a soldier and a question: "Which one doesn't belong?" The second float (above) displayed a dove surrounded by junior Sunday school children of East Zorra Mennonite Church, each carrying a non-violent item of their choice. The children handed out pamphlets suggesting that war toys don't belong in a child's Christmas. Photo: *Mennonite Reporter,* 24 Dec. 1990

Peace and Justice Issues

Major preoccupations of many Conference leaders during this decade were rethinking the historic Anabaptist faith and theology (Confession of Faith), uniting Dutch-Prussian-Russian and Swiss-South German Mennonite groups, and revising structures to become a national church body. However, for the people in the pews and for the congregations, practical issues that affected them and Canadians generally were of more immediate concern. These resulted in "faith and farming" seminars, "disabled people" awareness work, advocacy for refugees and other similar causes. Resolutions from the floor at annual Conference sessions were frequently triggered by specific events, such as the Canadian government's increasingly restrictive approach to refugees (1991), the bombing of Baghdad (1993), the GC's termination of its peace and justice office (1994), low-level

The 1984 Peace and Social Aware-ness Committee at CMBC pro-moted an alternative to paying taxes for military purposes almost a decade before Ray Funk's private member's bill. Photo: CMC Collection, MHC Archives
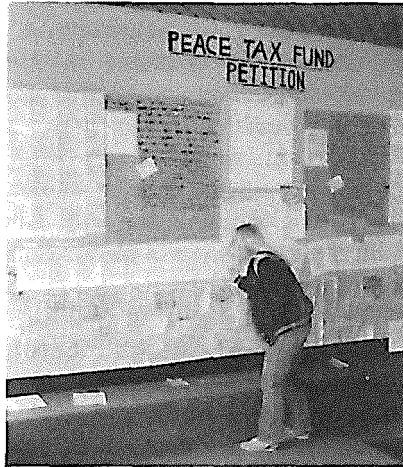
military training flights over Innu territory in Labrador (1995), new restrictive religious legislation passed by the Russian *Duma* (1997), or the UN-sanctioned boycott of Iraq (1998). In most cases congregations did not tackle these issues on their own, seeking instead a Conference or inter-Mennonite forum.

Because the Congregational Resources Board (since 1994 Resources Commission) did not have a staff person assigned to peace, justice, and social concerns, it was less proactive than the former Board of Christian Service had been in bringing issues of this kind to the Conference. Delegates clearly felt that concerns in these areas should continue to be on the agenda and sometimes overtly lamented that the Conference seemed to be leaving peace and social issues largely to MCC Canada.[31] The CRB did continue to promote peace. In 1993 it used the occasion of the end of the Cold War and a private member's bill before Parliament to urge support for initiatives such as the Peace Trust Fund. Ray Funk, Member of Parliament for Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, had introduced legislation to allow tax payers to "divert the approximately 8 percent of an individual's federal tax now going to the military to support constructive efforts."[32] Unfortunately, Parliament was dissolved for an election before the bill made it through the necessary stages for passage. Occasionally the CRB also reported on Christian Peacemaker Teams, an activist group based in Chicago, whose Steering Committee had representatives from the General Conference, Mennonite Church, Church of the Brethren and MCC.[33]

Promotion of peace and social concerns also came from other parts of the CMC. The Committee on Faith and Life promoted the MCC booklet, *A Commitment to Christ's Way of Peace.* Canadian Mennonite University continued CMBC's annual peace conference (Peace-it-Together) for high school students. The Ministries Commission worked with MCC on Native unemployment and lobbied the government to implement the 1996 recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The Resources Commission also provided resources on issues relating to poverty more generally.[34]

Evangelism and Church Planting

With the relatively rapid growth of urban Chinese congregations after the first two had joined the Conference in 1979 and the springing up of other Asian congregations as a spin-off from the refugee sponsorship program, the Congregational Resources Board turned its focus to this area of evangelism. Because the respective linguistic groups had a good supply of available leadership, a lot of visible results could be achieved by providing some financial support and a relatively minimal amount of additional personnel. In addition to providing orientation to locally available Mennonite church resources, the CRB facilitated the translation and publication of key theological and historical books and pamphlets. The anticipated influx of people from Hong Kong as Britain's role there neared its end in 1997 made this a strategic ministry.

In 1991 the Conference began to promote Living in Faithful Evangelism (LiFE), a three-year program developed jointly by the Commission on Home Missions of the GC and the MC-related Mennonite Board of Missions. Congregations enrolling in this process agreed to send several representatives to an annual evangelism event in spring. While some of the participating congregations reported that the material needed to be adapted to the Canadian context, many participated in the process and found it helpful. The results of this kind of program are difficult to quantify, but Resources Commission staff person, Tym Elias, reported four

G IN FAITHFUL EVANGELISM

years later that "evangelism pervades all our programs" and that the CMC gained about a thousand new members annually. Although a portion of this gain could be attributed to natural growth, overall there were grounds for optimism. Elias called for continued congregational outreach in a document describing the mandate of the Outreach and Church Planting section of the newly created Ministries Commission: "Congregational Evangelism: Building on Our Strengths till 1999."[35]

Table 7.5
Congregations Joining the CMC 1988–1999[36]

Name*	Location	Adm	Membership Adm. 1999	
Chinese	Calgary AB	1989	85	70
Hope	Winnipeg MB	1990	49	42
Jubilee[37]	Winnipeg MB	1995	81	96
Grace Chinese	Vancouver BC	1996	–	48
Grace Chinese	St. Jacobs ON	1996	–	0
River of Life Fellowship	Waterloo ON	1996	21	36
Toronto Taiwan Revival	North York ON	1996	–	0
Vietnamese Menn Fell	Winnipeg MB	1996	–	53
Camrose Menn Fell	Camrose AB	1996	–	33
South Calgary Inter-Menn	Calgary AB	1996	94	96
Calgary Faith	Calgary AB	1996	–	0**
Living Hope Christian Fell	Surrey BC	1997	30	30**
West Hills Mennonite Fell	New Hamburg ON	1998	12	12
Abundant Life Fellowship	Waterloo ON	1998	28	21
Abbotsford Mennonite Fell	Abbotsford BC	1998	–	21
Calgary Vietnamese	Calgary AB	1998	–	0*

*Unless otherwise indicated, the congregation's complete name includes "Mennonite Church."
**Indicates area conference membership only.

Congregations Leaving

Despite the growth in membership, there were also discouraging and disappointing setbacks. It was discouraging to experience a steady loss of congregations despite renewed programs of evangelism and church planting (see Table 7.6 below). It was disappointing to see a congregation dissolve, whether this was an older, rural group dying out (Dunnville, Taber) or a relatively new urban church plant that failed to achieve critical mass (Covenant, Saskatoon; Jubilee, Swift Current; Faith, Edmonton). Some Dunnville, Ontario, members wondered whether their congregation need have closed; some

assistance from Conference might have revitalized it. The death knell for Jubilee in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, came when five families moved away for work-related reasons, leaving the congregation with 15 members, seven of them non-resident. In Faith Church, Edmonton, Alberta, concern about a lack of adequate programming for young people and children led a number of families to transfer out and others to consider the same route.[38] It was sad to see a viable congregation lose its internal unity to the point where dissolution seemed the best option (Burrows Bethel, Winnipeg, Manitoba).

For the CMC and its leadership it was especially painful to have congregations withdraw from or suspend their relationship with the Conference over deep disagreement on basic policy or direction. Generally this happened over a period of years, a process some described as becoming an "independent" congregation. When articulated, the concerns were usually about doctrine (wanting to be all things to all people, a "liberal" doctrine) or ethical issues (the Conference's stance on divorce and remarriage, abortion, capital punishment, non-resistance, medical ethics, the homosexuality issue). Some congregations had no quarrel with the Confession of Faith but with the perceived failure of Conference leaders to challenge congregations that disregarded it. The Gladstone congregation spent several years exploring alternate conferences to join, including two other Mennonite ones, before voting almost unanimously to apply for membership in the Associated Gospel Churches.[39]

One theological-ethical issue that generated much discussion in Canadian society and in the church was homosexuality. In 1985 the North American conferences (General Conference and Mennonite Church) jointly initiated a study process on "Human Sexuality in the Christian Life." One element in this wide-ranging "Working Document for Study and Dialogue" was a section on homosexuality. Congregations were invited to use this document as a guide for their own study prior to the General Conferences sessions in 1986 and the Mennonite Church Assembly in 1987. This led to the adoption of a "Resolution on Human Sexuality" which included a two-fold statement on homosexuality: "We confess our fear and repent of our rejection of those of us with a different sexual orientation and our lack of compassion for their struggle to find a place in society and in the church." Secondly, "We understand that the Bible teaches that sexual intercourse is reserved for a man and a woman united in marriage and . . . that this teaching also precludes premarital, extramarital, and homosexual sexual activity. We further understand

Table 7.6
Congregations Leaving the CMC 1987–1999
C=Closed, W=Withdrew, S=Suspended

Name	Action	Year	Members	Joined
Covenant, Saskatoon SK	C	1987	11	–
Oliver, Oliver BC	C	1989	–	1940
Rivers, Rivers MB	C	1989	–	1971
Lichtenauer, St. Elizabeth MB	C	1989	48	–
Martensville, SK	W	1990	123	–
Toronto Chinese Menn, ON[40]	W	1991	95	1981,
Jubilee, Swift Current SK	C	1991	18	–
Grace Mission, Meadow Lake SK	W	1991	102	1972
Compass Immanuel, Rapid View	W	1993	57	1934
Gladstone, Gladstone MB	W	1994	119	1969
Grunthal Bergthaler, Spencer MB	W	1995	–	1969
Mountainview, Vancouver BC	C	1996	90	1957
Halbstadt, Halbstadt MB	W	1996	71	1969
Herbert, Herbert SK	W	1996	–	1906
Faith, Edmonton AB	C	1997	74	1981
Burrows Bethel, Winnipeg MB	C	1997	149	1962
Taber, Taber AB	C	1998	53	–
Dunnville, ON	C	1999	23	–
Homewood, MB	C	1999	36	1969
Bethel Bergthaler, Winkler MB	W	1999	274	–
Grace Mennonite, Winkler MB	S[41]	1999	381	–

* Unless otherwise indicated, the congregation's complete name includes "Mennonite Church."

the Bible to teach the sanctity of the marriage covenant and that any violation of this covenant . . . is sin."[42]

Families and congregations who knew that their stance on this issue would affect one of their own tended to wrestle with the question with greater compassion and thoroughness, and to look at both ethical and pastoral dimensions. For some others the issue seemed fairly quickly clear-cut, the verdict merely needing to be implemented. Where the process went beyond the local congregation, it was generally dealt with at the area conference level. Nevertheless, at the 1998 CMC sessions in Stratford, Ontario, the General Board presented a "Resolution on the Issue of Homosexuality" for delegate discussion and action. It affirmed the 1986 GC resolution and invited congregations to become "communities of grace, joy and peace, so

that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world" (quoted from the CMC "Vision: Healing and Hope" statement) and added, "not excluding those whose sexual orientation is homosexual."

Some members did not want the 1986 resolution to be affirmed as the CMC's "current understanding of God's will regarding human sexuality," and wanted the issue re-opened. Others did not want to "continue to dialogue on those matters wherein we disagree."[43] Thus, although the resolution was accepted by a 92 percent majority, the discussion continued and was probably a factor in the decision of a number of congregations that withdrew from Conference membership.

Pastoral Leadership

The transition from a congregation having unpaid lay ministerial leadership to each congregation hiring a pastor, frequently from outside of its own membership, was virtually complete by 1988. On the one hand, this contributed to a greater unity in the teaching ministry of the church. Data gathered in 1993 showed that in a sample of 153 ministers, almost three-quarters had studied at a Conference-related institution. CMBC led the way: 34 percent of the ministers serving had its degree only and a further 21 percent had supplemented their training at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart. An additional 14 percent had done all their theological studies at AMBS; 5 percent had studied at other GC-related schools, and another 7 percent at other Mennonite schools. Thus, fewer than one in five pastors received their pastoral training in non-Mennonite institutions.[44]

On the other hand, congregations seemed to expect more from trained ministers than they had from elected lay ministers in an earlier era, and directly or indirectly put more pressure on them. The stress of the position made other vocational options appear desirable, while the exposure of successful pastors on the church-wide scene often provided such options. In the 18 months ending in December 1991, the CML (since 1994 Leadership Commission) reported that 37 pastors had left or were leaving pastoral ministry within the CMC, nine of them because of retirement. Others returned to study, entered service with MCC or COM, or found other employment. But for ten of them the termination of their pastoral work was "involuntary." The CMC "is not equipped to cover such a vacancy rate," said Conference Minister Bill Block. "A side result of such a huge exodus is that children and youth conclude that they should enter other vocations."[45]

The high number of involuntary terminations was a stark indication that attempts to implement effective mechanisms for mediating pastor-congregation tensions had not yet fully succeeded. The CML was working at this problem. The staff combination of Bill Block with a wide range of pastoral experience and Ralph Lebold with clinical pastoral training gave focused attention to the issue. A study paper on "Pastoral Ethics" was widely used in 1990 and followed up a year later with a corresponding one on "Congregational Ethics."[46] A few cases where pastors were suspended or dismissed under allegations of sexual misconduct produced much pain and revealed how ill equipped congregations were to deal with such issues. This led to a presentation in the plenary session of the Conference in 1993 on "Crossing Sexual Boundaries" and two workshops on "Clergy Sexual Misconduct." Discussion of these three topics provided the background for a 1994 resolution, "On restoration and forgiveness, and on maintaining and improving pastor-congregational relationships." It called on the CMC executive to give greater *theological* attention to these problem areas, contending that the models borrowed from the "secular social sciences" had in some cases increased the pain and violence they sought to alleviate.

One aspect of the "salaried pastor model" that was repeatedly raised in delegate discussions was the inherent tension between the congregation's expectation that a pastor should be a leader while at the same time knowing that he or she was its employee. In 1998 the Leadership Commission addressed the issue of "inadequate discernment in calling pastors and inappropriate behaviour on the part of pastors in leaving congregations and on the part of congregations in dismissing pastors." It presented a resolution, for discussion purposes only, to invite feedback and allow it to develop and refine "principles and policies" for action the following year. The preamble of this resolution argued persuasively that, even where congregations and pastors have "the skills and experience relevant to the spiritual discernment of pastoral call and recall," they "are too closely involved in their own situations to have an objective perspective." The resolution called on CMC congregations, pastors and pastoral candidates to use the resources of the area conference minister's office whenever a pastoral call or review was undertaken. It called on area conferences to have adequate resources available for this purpose and "to participate in calling and review processes."[47] At the 1999 sessions the Leadership Commission announced that a Pastor-Congregation Relations packet had been developed. Time would tell

whether congregations would yield some of their autonomy in dealing with "their" pastors, and whether area conferences would exercise broader powers of intervention when "their" congregations and pastors were effecting transitions.

When Block (after 12 years of service) and Lebold (after five years) retired in 1997, they could look back on significant progress. The recruitment of new pastors was going better than anticipated, so that the number of vacancies began to match the number of pastors looking for positions. In fact, 1995 had the fewest openings in ten years.[48] The number of painful involuntary terminations seemed to be declining. Work had begun on a "pastor-peer" model of training leaders. The restructured Leadership Commission had direct representation from each area conference and a full-time national staff member. When they reflected on unfinished business, Block identified women in ministry and Lebold pointed to cross-cultural ministry. Floor discussion added lay ministry to the list.

Women in Leadership

In response to a resolution from the floor in 1988, urging the CML to focus attention on fostering the calling of more women to leadership roles, the Committee made this the main thrust of its presentation to Conference two years later. A packet on "Women in Leadership Ministries" was available to delegates at the registration desk. Both the extensive floor discussion and the concluding resolution gave the strongest affirmation yet for steps taken by congregations, conferences and institutions "to include women at all levels."[49] Equally significant was the composition of the very important Structures Committee that would, in large measure, determine the shape of the developing Mennonite Church Canada. Half of its members were women.[50] Also in 1990 the Conference adopted a new nomination and election procedure under which the General Board-appointed Nominating Committee gained new power and responsibility. Its mandate was to "present only one name per office through a careful gift discernment process."[51]

Although nominations from the floor were still possible in the new process, the slate presented by the Committee now provided virtual assurance that the candidates named would be affirmed by the election. Including CMC representatives on MCC and GC boards, some 15 to 20 positions were open each year. On average about 37 percent of the persons elected to these positions were women after the new process began. While this was an increase over the earlier era,

there was no discernable progression toward gender "parity." On the executive, Helen Rempel was the first woman member, serving as secretary 1979–1981. Since 1985 a woman always held that position, but the chair and vice-chair occupants remained exclusively male through 1999.[52] The General Board, consisting of the three-member executive and one representative from each of the five commissions/boards and each of the five area conferences, continued to have the lowest ratio of women at less than one-quarter.[53] The General Board-appointed 1989 Task Force on Seminary Education in Canada was all male.[54]

Cross-Cultural Ministry

When Ralph Lebold pointed to cross-cultural ministry as an area of unfinished business in 1997, he was certainly not identifying a new frontier. The Native Ministries program had kept this item on the Conference agenda for at least 40 years. In the previous couple of decades the breadth of issues kept growing, and the Board responded by recruiting more Indian and Métis staff and Board members. That enabled it to respond with greater sensitivity to conflict, injustice and racism issues; to intensify efforts to engage Native pastoral leadership in the various communities in which it was working; and to work openly yet carefully at the interaction of Native spirituality and Christian faith and worship. Board members like Norman Meade and staff persons like Terry Widrick and Martin Cross strengthened the Native voice in discussions at Conference sessions and at annual Council of Boards meetings. Increasingly the annual report of the Native Ministries Board (since 1994 Ministries Commission) included a significant element of cross-cultural education.

A second, growing dimension of cross-cultural ministry had presented itself in 1979 when the first two Chinese congregations joined the CMC. The following year the Congregational Resources Board co-opted Jolly Leung of the Vancouver Chinese Mennonite

Native Ministries board member Jim Chism of Montreal and staff member Martin Cross, Saskatoon, discussing Native concerns. Photo: *Intotemak,* January–February 1993
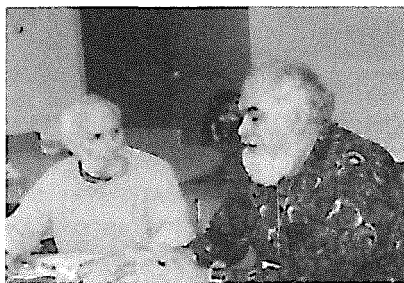
Home

My home, where the aurora borealis
Pulses with vitality,
Where the bright stars shine
Against a midnight-blue sky,
Where the full moon illuminates
The broad expanse of pine trees
On which shrouds of sparkling snow hang,
Where the snowbirds rest peacefully,
Where the wild animals pad softly
Looking around curiously or searching for prey,
This is my home.

Home, where the frost bites cruelly, despite
The sun's shining vigorously.
Where the dog teams race,
Where the ski-doos glide across the ice
And narrow snow tracks,
Where the airplanes take off
And fly against the force of the rising wind.
This is my home.

I cherish even more
That land of freedom,
Where I found that peace of mind
That carefree feeling
That intense life and beauty
And that sweet contentment,
With the knowledge
That it was won so dearly
And reserved for me.
For this, I am thankful to the Great Manitou.
May we learn through His great love, strength and wisdom
To cherish our liberty and to live for peace.

Iona Weenusk, *Intotemok*, October 1972

Church as a Board member. Through 1996 the growing number of Chinese Mennonites was always represented on the Board by one of their leaders as Leung was succeeded by David Chiu in 1986, followed by Ezekiel Wong of Calgary in 1991. By 1990 this growing area of service led to the appointment of Paul Boschman as
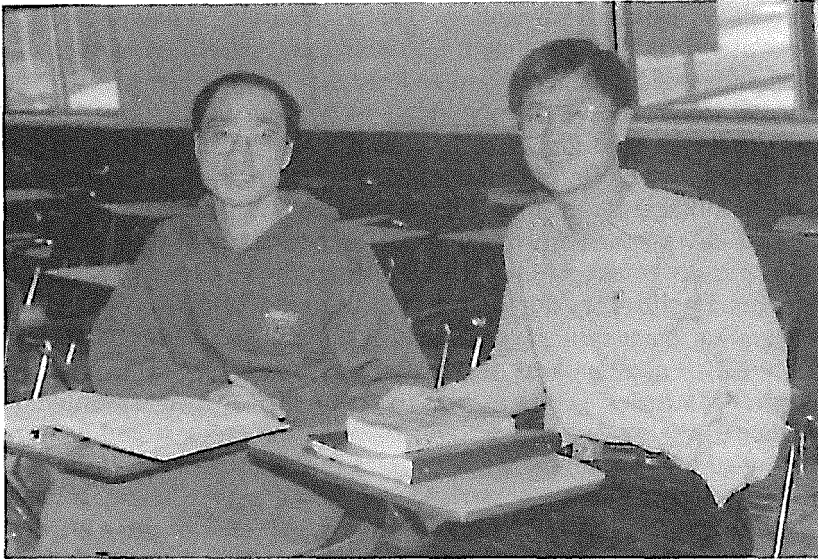
The arrival of Korean pastors, Yoon Sik Lee and Kun Kim, to study at CMBC in 1993, became the beginning of a steady stream of theology students to the college. A Korean-language worship service was soon begun at the Charleswood Mennonite Church. The emerging congregation of Korean families sought to develop a relationship with the English-speaking part of the church that would facilitate both cultural maintenance and Canadianization. Photo: MHC Archives

coordinator of Chinese ministries. Boschman had extensive experience in cross-cultural ministry from his years as a missionary in Japan with the GC's Commission on Overseas Mission. Even as this appointment was made, the CRB was already involved with several Vietnamese and Lao congregations. Boschman was succeeded after two years by Hugh and Janet Sprunger, who had years of experience in the Chinese contexts of Taiwan and Hong Kong. In 1995 their position was renamed Asian Ministries Coordinator, reflecting the broadened scope of this cross-cultural ministry.

The Congregational Resources and Native Ministries Boards promoted networking among culturally similar groups, usually across the Canada-U.S. border. CMC-related congregations were thus active in the North American Chinese Mennonite Council and the Mennonite Indian Leadership Council. Translating and publishing materials for Christian education likewise were supported through the

respective Boards. Missionary Henry Neufeld was involved in translating the New Testament into Saulteaux, published in 1988. Pat Houmphan of Saskatoon translated the new *Confession of Faith* into Lao in 1994. The CRB cooperated with a press in Hong Kong in publishing Chinese translations of four books in the Mennonite Faith series. In a way, efforts of this kind strengthened ministry *within* the various cultural groups more than it facilitated *cross*-cultural ministry.

Did an approach which fostered forming ethnically or culturally homogenous congregations, whether Vietnamese, Chinese, Saulteaux or even English-speaking Métis, actually slow down the process of integrating them into the traditionally Mennonite, now acculturated CMC? The question was asked, but not answered.[55] The policy of Native Ministries certainly was consistently against assimilation. Rather it was for building bridges between the cultures and growing in mutual understanding. Many congregations, even in the 1990s, still remembered their own experience of being somewhat tenaciously Germanic in language and culture even while feeling their minority status in "English" Canada. Was Harold W. Turner right in suggesting that Mennonites had "a special vocation, already exhibited," for working with groups such as Native Ministries was involved with? Turner was the leading expert in religious movements in primal societies, based at Selley Oak College in England. He said this, fully aware that the GC Mennonite work among the Hopi in Arizona experienced two secessions (in 1946 and 1970) by independent

Prior to the formation of the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada, annual sessions were not only translated simultaneously into French, but hymn booklets were bilingual as well. This is no longer the case.

The consequence of the gradual erosion of French services in the conference has been a decrease in the number of French delegates coming to business sessions. Is this what we want? Will the church ignore over 30 years of mission work in Quebec and the history of this country? Jean-Jaques Goulet, French-Canadian and native Quebecer, pastor, Wilmot Mennonite Church, Baden, Ontario

leaders "in order to work more effectively" among their own people.[56] Perhaps Lebold, like Turner, felt that CMC should exercise this special vocation more intentionally.

On the other hand, Lebold's observation raised the issue of whether the CMC, as a large church body, provided a suitable cross-cultural forum. At the 1998 annual sessions in Stratford, Ontario, for example, none of the NM-related groups was represented, even though the Conference had already in 1991 taken steps to encourage this by giving "delegate status" to their representatives.[57] Not one of the dozen Asian member congregations nor any of the four Quebec ones had a registered delegate.[58] In addition, there were at least another half dozen Spanish, Lao, Vietnamese, Japanese or Chinese-speaking congregations related to the provincial conferences in Alberta and British Columbia who had not taken membership in the CMC. The minutes of the 1999 sessions in St. Louis noted "that the minorities and especially their leaders are not represented here at our sessions. We need to get their influence into our faith communities and get them involved at the leadership level."[59]

Post-Secondary Education

In 1988 Elim Bible School in Altona closed its doors due to declining enrolment. Since 1936 it had served congregations in Manitoba and beyond with the Manitoba Conference as the principal partner in its operation. Because most of its students already entered as high school graduates, and were eligible for admission at CMBC, its enrolment was declining. Explorations of cooperation with Swift Current Bible Institute in Saskatchewan and with Winkler Bible Institute of the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren did not lead to a viable arrangement.

Bethel Bible Institute had served congregations of the B.C. Conference since 1939. During the 1960s a declining student body due to anti-establishment feelings among young people, theological dissension among faculty, inadequacy of buildings and equipment, and financial shortages prompted exploration of possible partnerships. At its 1970 sessions the B.C. Conference accepted a proposal to amalgamate the school with the Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute to form Columbia Bible Institute in Clearbrook.[60] Difficulties as a "junior partner" strained relations between the two Conferences during the 1970s until a new governance structure was agreed to in 1982. Three years later the school acquired candidate status in its quest for full accreditation by the American Association of Bible
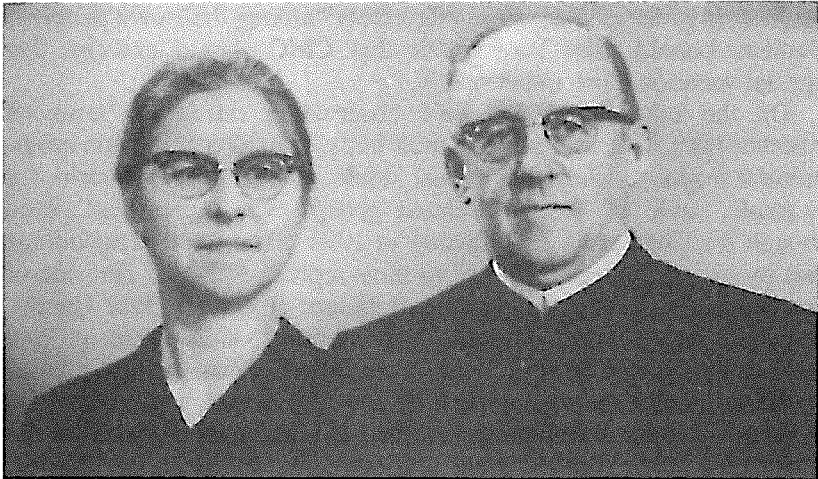
Jesse "J.B." (1897–1974) and Naomi (Collier) Martin. Out of Old Order background, J.B. became a prominent leader in the Mennonite Conference of Ontario: pastor at Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo (1929–1964, bishop since 1947); on the faculty of Ontario Mennonite Bible School (1932–1965, principal since 1957); moderator of the conference (1946–1960). CMC leaders got to know him through his extensive inter-Mennonite work in the Conference of Historic Peace Churches on its Military Problems Committee (1941–1958) and various committees of MCC (1944–1968). Photo: Listowel Mennonite Church

Colleges and changed its name to reflect this reality. Accreditation proved to be one key for Columbia Bible College to grow and continue to serve its constituencies well.

The Alberta Conference adopted the local Bible school of the Rosemary congregation in 1935 and moved it to a more central location in Didsbury as Menno Bible Institute. With a much smaller population base than the other provinces, it struggled to keep the school viable after its enrolment peak when "the boys" returned from CO camps after World War II. As general educational levels rose and young people went elsewhere to study, the Alberta Conference "merged" its school with Swift Current Bible Institute (SCBI) in a sharing agreement with the Saskatchewan Conference in 1967.[61] SCBI, founded in 1936, had survived in part by absorbing the constituencies of other congregationally-based and Conference-related Bible schools in Saskatchewan as they closed.[62] Its stronger conference base and ever new creativity in curriculum adaptation enabled the school to serve its constituency until 1996.
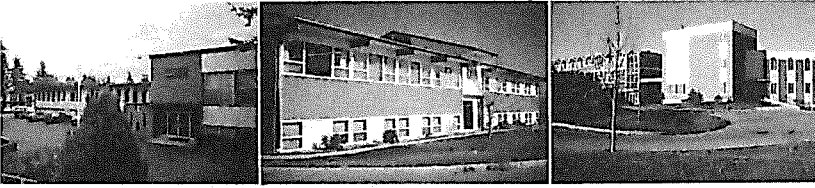
Columbia Bible Institute, Swift Current Bible Institute, Conrad Grebel College. Photos: MHC Archives

The (Old) Mennonite Conference of Ontario supported the Ontario Mennonite Bible School in Kitchener from 1907 to 1969. The Western Ontario (Amish) Mennonite Conference began short- term winter Bible schools in 1932 but they were never centralized. The 1920s immigrants from the USSR began local congregationally-based Bible schools in 1936. After closing for a few years because of World War II, the Ontario ministers' conference opened three regional schools in 1944 and amalgamated them the following year in Leamington. A reduced Bible school curriculum survived as part of the mandate of United Mennonite Educational Institute. In 1959 the Kitchener-Waterloo Mennonite Ministerial Fellowship began to discuss the possibility of co-operation in post-secondary education. This led to the founding of Conrad Grebel College in 1963 by the three conferences that later merged to form MCEC.[63]

These developments meant that in 1988, as the Conference provisionally received congregations of the MCEC, its enlarged constituency and area conferences had the following post-secondary institutions. Swift Current Bible Institute, the sole remaining Bible institute, was owned by the Saskatchewan and Alberta conferences. The B.C. Conference was a minority shareholder in Columbia Bible College. The Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada owned Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo. And the Canadian Conference itself owned and operated Canadian Mennonite Bible College. Thus, congregations in all regions except Manitoba supported a regional school in addition to Canadian Mennonite Bible College.

The need had long been felt for a board or council through which the CMC could connect these "related" schools. In the absence of such a body, those institutions were invited to file an annual report to the Conference, have their addresses listed in the annual *Yearbook*, and be invited to an occasional forum such as the one held in Edmonton in connection with the 1990 annual delegate sessions.[64] When the new structures were adopted in 1993 it was decided to "put higher education into the picture as well."

"Doc" Schroeder and Gordon Zerbe in conversation with Mary Shertz of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary at the David Schroeder Symposium held at CMBC on the occasion of Schroeder's retirement, 1989. Photo: MHC Archives
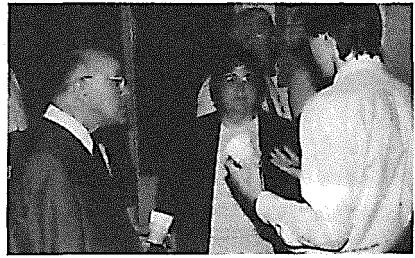
Adelia Neufeld Wiens and Sheila Klassen-Wiebe enjoying the theological colloquium held in conjunction with the retirement of Peter Fast, 1993. Photos: MHC Archives.
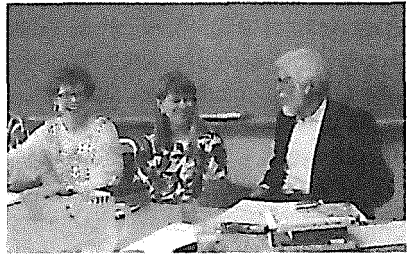
The Canadian Mennonite Council on Education proposed in 1994 offered full membership to Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Conrad Grebel College, Columbia Bible College and Swift Current Bible Institute, and looked forward to "including and serving the interests" of Mennonite elementary and high schools as well.[65] The Council's initial mandate was spelled out in considerable detail. This specificity made some school representatives quite uneasy. In response to their input, a revised recommendation presented to the delegate session in effect made the participating colleges, institutes and committees as the "constituting" agents, who would be given two years to identify the Council's agenda and work out its mandate. In the discussion of the proposal it was explained that the intention was "to create a place for dialogue and cooperative process, not for control." The motion to adopt this weakened proposal was defeated and the General Board was instructed to continue the discussion.[66] When an attempt to revive the issue was made from the floor at the 1996 sessions, the executive pointed out that its earlier firm attempt to initiate the Council had been voted down.[67] The matter was left unresolved for the new Mennonite Church Canada to deal with.

Mennonite College Federation: Canadian Mennonite University

As it neared its fiftieth anniversary, Canadian Mennonite Bible College experienced a period of stability. Full-time student numbers
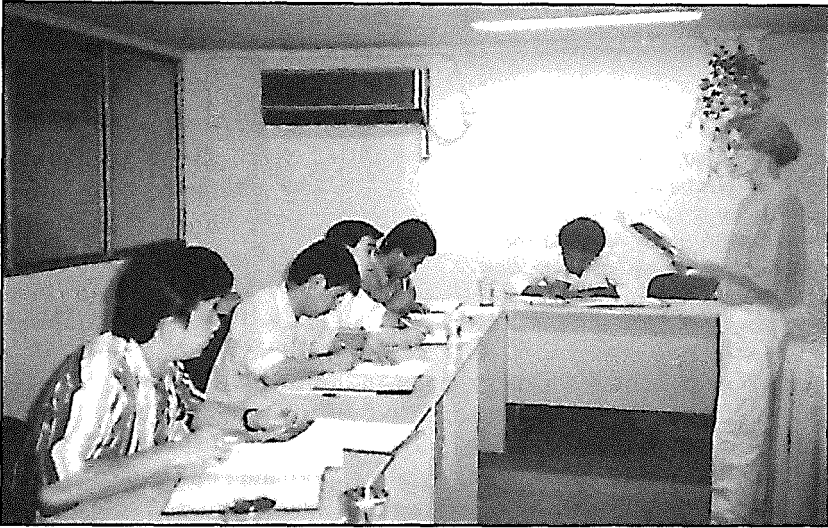
CMBC student, Gina Loewen, teaching an English class in Yogyakarta during her internship year (1995) in Indonesia. Photo: Gina Loewen

had not dropped below 180 since the 1979–1980 academic year and climbed to near the 200-mark in the 1990s. Government grants beginning in 1991, although amounting to less than 10 percent of its total budget, somewhat eased the burden of congregational support (about 45 percent of the College budget). Some of the faculty members who had contributed to this stability were beginning to retire: David Schroeder in 1989, George Wiebe in 1992, and Peter Fast in 1993, while Helmut Harder resigned in 1990 to become general secretary of the Conference. However, their replacements—Gordon Zerbe in 1990, Rudy Schellenberg in 1993, Sheila Klassen-Wiebe in 1993—fit in quickly and added new vision and balance. Faculty members were publishing in their academic disciplines but with the church in mind.[68]

The constituency appreciated the school's enlarged program of practical studies. The Service Education Program broadened the scope of internship opportunities for students. The Youth Ministry Program enabled graduates to be better prepared for employment in pastoral work as associate or youth minister. The trial period of CMBC's participation in an interdenominational seminary studies consortium received student and constituency support. Fundraising for the final phase of facilities expansion was proceeding well.

In that context of stability and growth, Academic Dean Gerald

John Neufeld, seen here in 1991 with Manitoba premier Gary Fil-mon, was president of CMBC when the funding formula for receiving government operating grants was negotiated. Photo: Margaret Franz, MHC Archives

Gerbrandt presented a paper on the future of CMBC to faculty and Board and an adapted version of it to the larger Council of Boards in 1994. In looking at ways in which the College could appeal to a larger portion of Mennonite young people, broaden inter-disciplinary dialogue among faculty members, and facilitate increased cooperation among the Mennonite colleges in Winnipeg, Gerbrandt proposed a "university college model." It was especially this greater cooperation that constituents, Conference delegates, Board members and faculty had repeatedly urged.

That spring a day-long workshop, involving faculty members from Steinbach Bible College (Evangelical Mennonite Conference, Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, Chortitzer Mennonite Conference), Concord College (Mennonite Brethren), Menno Simons College at the University of Winnipeg, and CMBC, explored ways in which cooperation among them could increase. In fall Art DeFehr, vice-chair of the Concord College Board, proposed a cooperative venture to the CMBC faculty. By the end of the year representatives of the three Winnipeg colleges and their constituencies were conducting a feasibility study on the possibility of a Mennonite university/college in Winnipeg.

When early in 1995 the Manitoba government informed the feasibility study group of the availability of the Manitoba School for the Deaf campus at 500 Shaftesbury Boulevard, situated across the street from the CMBC campus, Concord College was immediately interested in acquiring it and relocating there. This development and the generally encouraging results of the feasibility study allowed CMBC to request delegates at the annual sessions of the Conference to affirm continued exploration of increased cooperation with other Mennonite colleges. Delegates gave this mandate but expressed strongly that they wanted to retain a Bible college model.[69]

*Main building on the north campus
(500 Shaftesbury Boulevard) of
Canadian Mennonite University*
Photo: CMU Communications
Department

Commitment to even this degree of cooperation meant that the participating colleges should not proceed with developing major facilities, hiring new staff, or making changes to programs without consulting the partner colleges. For CMBC this meant that plans for building a gymnasium, part of the final phase of its campus development plan, were put on hold. Nevertheless, delegates at the 1996 sessions affirmed the College's full participation in the emerging Mennonite College Federation.

The celebration of CMBC's fiftieth anniversary in 1997 evoked mixed emotions not only among alumni, students and staff but also among delegates at the Conference sessions. Amid grateful recognition of the contribution that the College and its graduates had made to the church over half a century was also a realization that CMBC would soon be no more. This mood was underscored by the retirement of three faculty members—Esther Wiebe, music; Waldemar Janzen, Old Testament; President John Neufeld, Practical Theology—whose combined years of service was well over 90 years. In that context of historical celebration of the past while engaged in the development of something new, delegate discussion focused on the continuing need for a Bible college, the importance of an undergraduate theology program, and the preparation of workers for church ministry. To ensure that these comments would be taken seriously, a resolution was passed, calling for a requirement of at least

30 credit hours in biblical-theological studies in all four-year degree programs and the active promotion of "the traditional degree programs of CMBC."[70]

"College federation" language continued to be used, but as specific aspects of cooperation were worked out—academic programs, student residences, chapel services—it became clear that many things would need to be done jointly and that preserving a significant identity for the individual federating colleges would be difficult. Nevertheless, delegates at the 1998 sessions voted by a 92 percent majority for CMBC to become a full member of Mennonite College Federation. They also authorized the CMC to become a partner with the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Conference in the purchase of the School for the Deaf campus. These decisions raised some concerns that CMBC might lose its national character by federating with more regional partners.

Later that year the Manitoba government proclaimed the charter for the creation of a university-level, degree-granting federation of Mennonite colleges, and the three partner colleges signed a Memorandum of Understanding, formalizing the creation of the federation. The 500 Shaftesbury campus was purchased in spring of 1999 and Mennonite College Federation began offering its new, jointly sponsored academic programs that fall.[71] In April 2000 the Federation became Canadian Mennonite University.

Pastoral and Seminary Education

The Conference promoted Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, as its seminary. However, Conrad Grebel University College introduced a graduate theological studies program in 1987. The following year CMBC entered a seminary consortium, enabling students to enter a Master of Divinity program in Winnipeg with either AMBS or the University of Winnipeg granting the degree. In the absence of any board or committee in the CMC with a mandate in post-secondary education, the General Board appointed a task force in 1989 to review current programs in seminary education for Mennonites in Canada and to make recommendations for improving the situation. It recommended in 1991 that the Conference continue to consider AMBS as its seminary, but also advocated continuing support for already existing regional programs and the development of new ones in other areas of the constituency.[72]

Periodicals

All efforts to get either *Der Bote* or *Mennonite Reporter* into every Conference member's home failed to reach their objective. A Communications Task Force reported in 1993 that the CMC "insert" as a special section of the *Mennonite Reporter* reached only 40 percent of CMC households. While the Conference still resisted publishing its own paper, delegates in 1994 approved the creation of a newsletter for distribution to every home. This evolved into the production of a monthly newsletter-magazine, *Nexus*, edited from 1994–1997 by Roma Quapp, as an interim solution. In 1996 a Publications Steering Committee made a case for recreating the *Mennonite Reporter* as a Conference paper. With delegate encouragement this proposal was refined and presented to the five area conferences and to the board of Mennonite Publishing Service (MPS), publisher of the *Mennonite Reporter*. At the 1997 Conference sessions, delegates gave approval to replace both *Nexus* and the *Reporter* with a new *Canadian Mennonite*, published by MPS with the support of the CMC and the five area conferences.[73]

This decision did more than fulfill a long quest for a Canadian-based, Conference paper. It marked a significant step in cooperation between the CMC and the area conferences. It also signalled a willingness by the church to "own" a periodical in which no one of the six publishing partners had direct control. And it came at a time when the "parent" North American conferences were merging *Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite*. For CMC members, who until then had subscribed to one of those papers, it was at least symbolically important that they could subscribe to a Mennonite Church Canada periodical just as that body was defining its new identity.

8
Toward Mennonite Church Canada

As the Conference of Mennonites in Canada met for its final annual sessions in 1999, the setting was not a garden bench in Canada's Northwest Territories where Saskatchewan Rosenorter and Manitoba Bergthaler had hatched the idea of a Conference in 1902. It was not the small church building in the farming community of Hochstadt where the first annual session was held. Nor was it in Canada's heartland of Ontario, since 1995 home of the CMC's largest area conference. It was not in Canada at all, but rather in St. Louis, Missouri. The reason for choosing this city was its central location for the three conferences planning to meet together and separately and to leave as two significantly reconfigured parts of a new denomination to be known simply as "Mennonite Church."

The delegate body was not made up primarily of male ministerial leaders as at the first session in 1903. Almost a third of the four hundred assembled delegates were women. Well over half of the congregations represented sent at least as many women delegates as men. Saskatchewan and Manitoba did not dominate numerically as they had for many of the previous 96 annual sessions. In fact, their combined number equalled that of delegates from MCEC.

Regehrs and Epps, Hoeppners and Friesens were still on the delegate list, some of them descendants of the "founding fathers." But names like Bender, Brubacher, Snider and Steinman testified to the strength of the "Swiss" side of the 16th-century Anabaptist family in the CMC. Double surnames like Diller Harder, Hildebrandt Schlegel, and Schroeder Kipfer showed that the "marriage" was not only of conferences! And the presence of names like Hobson, Yamasaki, Olson, Van Chau and Yang in the delegate roster reflected the increasing diversity within and among CMC congregations, including those of ethnic backgrounds other than Swiss, Dutch or German.

Before conducting any significant items of their own business, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada delegates joined their General Conference and Mennonite Church counterparts in tri-conference joint sessions. There they voted on Saturday, July 24 "to affirm the

formation of separate and cooperating church bodies in Canada and the United States." For Mennonites south of the border that meant "letting go" of their Canadian area conferences and founding a distinctly U.S. conference for the first time. Both GC (88 percent) and MC delegates (83 percent) supported this step by majorities well above the required two-thirds. For the CMC this meant an opportunity to become "independent," a genuine partner with a sister church in overseas mission work, publishing and seminary education, and to end a century of having a minority voice in U.S.-dominated North American entities. Canadian delegates approved this resolution by a 95 percent majority.

After worshipping together on Sunday in the large bi-national assembly, Canadian delegates met separately on Monday to implement the goals and strategies first proposed to the 1991 Conference sessions. Interim organizational charts had been presented for discussion in 1994 and again in 1997.[1] Even so, when another revised proposal was presented in 1999, its framers were quite aware that further modifications would be required once relationships with the yet-to-be formed Mennonite Church USA could be clarified. By virtually unanimous decisions, delegates approved these proposed interim structures and affirmed that the new name be Mennonite Church Canada.

These actions reflected more continuity, especially of the Conference since 1995, than discontinuity. No new incorporation was anticipated. The 1947 CMC corporation was to be modified once more, including its name, and continue to serve its member congregations. It would have an enlarged General Board of 17 persons, with representatives from each of the program boards and area conferences, in addition to the Conference executive and finance representative.

Three program entities (Resources Commission, Leadership Commission and CMBC Board) essentially continued their earlier mandates. However, changes were anticipated in the role of the CMBC Board as Canadian Mennonite University refined its governance structures and as Mennonite Church Canada developed a council on education or board of education.

The greatest changes were anticipated in the Ministries Commission. It would have to venture into the complex field of post-colonial overseas mission and inherit many threads of a network of international relations. It would have to find ways of balancing its investment of financial and human resources in Native Ministries

with these new international ministries. At the same time it would have to work out harmonious and efficient ways of working together with its counterpart agency in Mennonite Church USA, which was itself just beginning to integrate the former MC and GC mission agencies and offices. Other Commissions would also have to make adjustments, but the Resources Commission could anticipate that the troublesome overlapping with a counterpart GC agency would end, relieving an area of frequent tension.

Closing worship on the final day of the last CMC annual conference was led by Dan Nighswander, the incoming general secretary. The first in this position from the "Swiss" Mennonite tradition, Nighswander preached on the Dutch Menno Simons' most-used text: "No one can lay any other foundation than that which has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). The congregation sang the hymn, "Now Thank We All Our God," the spontaneous choice of Mennonites from the "Dutch-Russian" tradition at high points in their pilgrimage. It was a fitting transition to an exciting new future.

Appendix 1

Constitution of the Conference of Mennonites in Central Canada[*]
Adopted at the Conference sessions at Eigenheim, Saskatchewan
July 11 and 12, 1904

Name
Since it is the Lord's will that his followers be one, and since we believe that it pleases God when such unity is expressed visibly, we as congregations *(Gemeinden)*[**] join together in a union that shall be named Conference of Mennonites in Central Canada.

Purpose
The purpose of the Conference shall be to nurture fellowship in the Spirit among our various Mennonite congregations and to encourage and strengthen each other in the work of God's kingdom.

Membership
Any congregation that subscribes to the principles articulated in the articles of faith in use in our congregations, entitled Confession of Faith of the Mennonites in Prussia and Russia, and does not permit membership in secret societies, may become a member of this Conference.

Congregational Representation
Every congregation that has joined the Conference shall consider it a duty to send one or more delegates to all Conference sessions. Since this is not a ministers conference but a conference of congregations, delegates should be selected at a duly called congregational meeting. The number of votes to which each congregation is entitled is determined not by the number of delegates but by the size of the

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[*] Translated by the author. The German text is found in *Jahrbuch 29*, 3–4. Another translation is found in Peters, *Organizational Change*, 387–388. Translated from the German, *Bericht Über die 29. Konferenz der Mennoniten im mittleren Canada abgehalten in der Zoar- und Bethesda-Gemeinde zu Langham, Sask., am 6.– 8. Juli 1931*.

[**] *Gemeinde* is translated as "congregation" throughout this document.

congregation. This number shall be calculated at one vote per thirty members and an additional one for a fraction over one half of thirty.

Relationship of the Conference to the Congregations
The Conference shall not interfere in the internal affairs of a congregation unless requested by the congregation to do so. The Conference shall not be a legislative but rather only an advisory body. The unity aspired to shall not consist so much in uniformity of external forms and practices as in unity of love, faith and hope and in the joining together for common tasks in the kingdom of God.

Meetings
The Conference meets once annually. It determines the meeting location, but the officers who are charged with convening the sessions set the time of meeting. When urgent matters arise, the officers may also summon the congregations to a special session.

Officers
Annually, either at the beginning or at the end of the sessions, the Conference body elects a chair and a secretary by majority vote. The responsibilities of the chair are to conduct the meetings in accordance with generally accepted rules of order and to ensure that all things proceed in a respectful and orderly manner. The responsibilities of the secretary shall be to record all Conference decisions and to preserve them for the Conference.

Committees
The Conference has the right to establish committees to oversee and direct the various tasks that it may undertake.

Reports
All committees and appointees of the Conference are to submit written reports about their work at the regular sessions.

Additions and Changes
The paragraphs of this constitution may be changed or supplemented by a vote of two-thirds of all delegates. However, the vote on such a change may not be held at the same Conference session at which the motion is presented.

Appendix 2

Central Office Executive Level Staff 1957–2000

Position	Person	Tenure
1.Treasurer	Victor J. Schroeder	1957–1964
	Frank J. Dyck	1965–1978
	Eldon Krause	1979–1981
	Edgar Rempel	1982–1989
	Gordon Epp-Fransen	1990–2000
2. Executive Secretary (to 1974)	David P. Neufeld	1961–1966
	Jacob Letkemann	1967–1970
General Secretary	Henry J. Gerbrandt	1971–1980
	Larry Kehler	1981–1989
	Helmut Harder	1990–1999
	Dan Nighswander	1999–
3. Executive Secretary of	David P. Neufeld	1961–1963
Mission Board (to 1970)	Menno Wiebe	1964–1973
Mennonite Pioneer Mission	Isaac Froese	1974–1978
Native Ministries (1974)	Malcolm Wenger	1979–1981
Ministries Commission (1994)	John & Vera Funk	1982–1989
	Walter Franz	1990–1999
	Robert J. Suderman	1999–
4. Executive Secretary of	Henry T. Klassen	1962–1965
Education & Publications Board	Henry H. Epp	1966–1974
Congregational Resources Bd. (1971)	Edward Enns	1975–1982
	Eleanor Loewen	Interim
	Rudy A. Regehr	1984–1992
Resources Commission (1994)	Tym Elias	1993–1995
	Robert J.Suderman	1996–1999
	Justina Heese	1999–
5. Executive Secretary of	Peter G. Sawatzky	1964
Board of Christian Service	Frank H. Epp	1965
	Nick W. Dick	1966
	Jacob Letkemann	1967–1970
6. Historian-Archivist	Lawrence Klippenstein	1974-1997
Interim	Dennis Stoesz	1984-1986
Acting	Peter Rempel	1992-1993
Director of Heritage Centre (1997)	Ken Reddig	1997-1999
	Alf Redekopp	interim

Position	Person	Tenure
7. Ministerial Leadership	William Block[2]	1985-1997
Pastoral & Seminary Educ. (1992)	Ralph Lebold[3]	1992-1997
Leadership Commission (1994)	Dan Nighswander[4]	1997-1999
	Larry Kehler	Interim
8. President of	Arnold J. Regier	1947-1951
Canadian Mennonite Bible College	Isaac I. Friesen	1951-1959
	Henry Poettcker	1959-1978
	George K. Epp	1978–1983
	Helmut Harder	Interim
	John H. Neufeld	1984–1997
	Gerald Gerbrandt	1997–

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[2] Director of Ministerial Leadership 1987-1994, Executive Secretary, Ministerial Services 1994-1997.

[3] Director of Pastoral & Seminary Education 1992-1994, Executive Secretary, Ministerial Education 1994-1997.

[4] Executive Secretary, Leadership Commission 1997-1999.

Appendix 3
Annual CMC Meeting Dates 1903-1999

	Date	Place	Chair	Vice-Chair	Secretary
1	1903	Hochstadt, MB	Jacob Hoeppner		Benjamin Ewert
2	1904	Eigenheim, SK	Jacob Hoeppner		David Toews
3	1905	Winkler, MB	Jacob Hoeppner		Benjamin Ewert
4	1906	Eigenheim, SK	H.H. Ewert		David Toews
5	1907	Herbert, SK	H.H. Ewert		David Toews
6	1908	Drake, SK	Joh. Gerbrandt		David Toews
7	1909	Edenburg, MB	Joh. Gerbrandt		David Toews
8	1910	Eigenheim, SK	Joh. Gerbrandt		David Toews
9	1911	Herbert, SK	Joh. Gerbrandt		David Toews
10	1912	Winkler, MB	H.H. Ewert		Benjamin Ewert
11	1913	Drake, SK	H.H. Ewert		Benjamin Ewert
12	1914	Rosthern, SK	David Toews	N.F. Toews	Benjamin Ewert
13	1915	Herbert, SK	David Toews	Joh. Gerbrandt	Benjamin Ewert
14	1916	Altona, MB	David Toews	Joh. Gerbrandt	N.W. Bahnmann
15	1917	Langham, SK	David Toews	Joh. Gerbrandt	N.W. Bahnmann
16	1918	Drake, SK	David Toews	Joh. Gerbrandt	N.W. Bahnmann
17	1919	Gretna, MB	David Toews	Benjamin Ewert	H.H. Hamm
18	1920	Laird, SK	David Toews	Joh. Gerbrandt	J. Regier
19	1921	Herbert, SK	David Toews	Joh. Gerbrandt	J. Regier
20	1922	Winkler, MB	David Toews	Joh. Gerbrandt	Jacob Gerbrandt
21	1923	Langham, SK	David Toews	H.H. Ewert	Jacob Gerbrandt
22	1924	Drake, SK	David Toews	G. Buhler	Jacob Gerbrandt

	Date	Place	Chair	Vice-Chair	Secretary
23	1925	Eigenheim, SK	David Toews	Benjamin Ewert	Jacob Gerbrandt
24	1926	Drake, SK	David Toews	Benjamin Ewert	Jacob Gerbrandt
25	1927	Herbert, SK	David Toews	Benjamin Ewert	Jacob Gerbrandt
26	1928	Rosthern, SK	David Toews	G. Buhler	Jacob Gerbrandt
27	1929	Drake, SK	David Toews	J.J. Klassen	Jacob Gerbrandt
28	1930	Winkler, MB	David Toews	Benjamin Ewert	J.G. Rempel
29	1931	Langham, SK	David Toews	Jacob H. Janzen	J.G. Rempel
30	1932	Laird, SK	David Toews	Jacob H. Janzen	J.G. Rempel
31	1933	Gnadenthal, MB	David Toews	Jacob H. Janzen	J.G. Rempel
32	1934	Hague, SK	David Toews	Jacob H. Janzen	J.G. Rempel
33	1935	Altona, MB	David Toews	Jacob H. Janzen	J.G. Rempel
34	1936	Drake, SK	Jacob H. Janzen	Benjamin Ewert	J.G. Rempel
35	1937	Rosemary, AB	David Toews	Benjamin Ewert	J.G. Rempel
36	1938	Eigenheim, SK	David Toews	J.J. Klassen	J.G. Rempel
37	1939	Morden, MB	David Toews	Benjamin Ewert	J.G. Rempel
38	1940	Waldheim, SK	David Toews	Benjamin Ewert	J.G. Rempel
39	1941	Laird, SK	Benjamin Ewert	J.J. Thiessen	J.G. Rempel
40	1942	Winkler, MB	Benjamin Ewert	J.J. Thiessen	J.G. Rempel
41	1943	Langham, SK	J.J. Thiessen	Benjamin Ewert	J.G. Rempel
42	1944	Winnipeg, MB	J.J. Thiessen	Benjamin Ewert	J.G. Rempel
43	1945	Eigenheim, SK	J.J. Thiessen	Jacob Gerbrandt	J.G. Rempel
44	1946	Beamsville, ON	J.J. Thiessen	Jacob Gerbrandt	J.G. Rempel
45	1947	Coaldale, AB	J.J. Thiessen	Jacob Gerbrandt	J.G. Rempel
46	1948	Gnadenthal, MB	J.J. Thiessen	Jacob Gerbrandt	H.T. Klaassen
47	1949	Greendale, BC	J.J. Thiessen	Jacob Gerbrandt	H.T. Klaassen
48	1950	Rosthern, SK	J.J. Thiessen	Jacob Gerbrandt	H.T. Klaassen
49	1951	Leamington, ON	J.J. Thiessen	Jacob Gerbrandt	H.T. Klaassen

	Date	Place	Chair	Vice-Chair	Secretary
50	1952	Gretna, MB	J.J. Thiessen	J.M. Pauls	H.T. Klaassen
51	1953	Drake, SK	J.J. Thiessen	David Schulz	H.T. Klaassen
52	1954	Abbotsford, BC	J.J. Thiessen	David Schulz	H.T. Klaassen
53	1955	Didsbury, AB	J.J. Thiessen	David Schulz	P.R. Harder
54	1956	Niagara-on-the-Lake	J.J. Thiessen	David Schulz	P.R. Harder
55	1957	Winkler, MB	J.J. Thiessen	David Schulz	P.R. Harder
56	1958	Saskatoon, SK	J.J. Thiessen	Henry Poettcker	P.R. Harder
57	1959	Clearbrook, BC	J.J. Thiessen	Henry Poettcker	Henry H. Epp
58	1960	Steinbach, MB	J.M. Pauls	Henry Poettcker	Henry H. Epp
59	1961	Calgary, AB	J.M. Pauls/G.G. Neufeld	G.G. Neufeld/D.P. Neufeld	Henry H. Epp
60	1962	St. Catharines, ON	Paul Schroeder	J.J. Wichert	P.R. Harder
61	1963	Altona, MB	Paul Schroeder	H.P. Epp	P.R. Harder
62	1964	Rosthern, SK	Paul Schroeder	H.P. Epp	P.R. Harder
63	1965	Clearbrook, BC	H.P. Epp	H.T. Klaassen	R.H. Vogt
64	1966	Winnipeg, MB	H.P. Epp	H.T. Klaassen	R.H. Vogt
65	1967	Leamington, ON	H.P. Epp	P.G. Sawatzky	Herman Enns
66	1968	Calgary, AB	P.G. Sawatzky	Henry Poettcker	Herman Enns
67	1969	Saskatoon, SK	Edward Enns	Jacob F. Pauls	Herman Enns
68	1970	Winkler, MB	Edward Enns	Abe Neufeld	William Block
69	1971	Vancouver, BC	Edward Enns	Jacob Tilitzky	William Block
70	1972	Waterloo, ON	Jacob Tilitzky	Peter Retzlaff	Menno Epp
71	1973	Edmonton, AB	Jacob Tilitzky	Peter Retzlaff	Menno Epp
72	1974	Steinbach, MB	Jacob Tilitzky	Peter Retzlaff	Menno Epp
73	1975	Swift Current, SK	Jake Harms	Herman Enns	Menno Epp
74	1976	Clearbrook, BC	Jake Harms	Herman Enns	Lorne Buhr
75	1977	Toronto, ON	Jake Harms	Herman Enns/H.P. Epp	Lorne Buhr
76	1978	Gretna, MB	D.P. Neufeld	Jake Fransen	Lorne Buhr

	Date	Place	Chair	Vice-Chair	Secretary
77	1979	Calgary, AB	D.P. Neufeld	Jake Fransen	Helen Rempel
78	1980	Rosthern, SK	D.P. Neufeld	Jake Fransen	Helen Rempel
79	1981	Vancouver, BC	Jake Fransen	Henry Funk	Helen Rempel
80	1982	St. Catharines, ON	Jake Fransen	Henry Funk	Jacob Wiebe
81	1983	Winnipeg, MB	Jake Fransen	Fred Enns	Jacob Wiebe
82	1984	Three Hills, AB	Jake Fransen	Fred Enns	Jacob Wiebe
83	1985	Regina, SK	Jake Fransen	Fred Enns	Kay Martens
84	1986	Waterloo, ON	Jake Fransen	Fred Enns	Kay Martens
85	1987	Clearbrook, BC	Walter Franz	George Richert	Ruth Enns
86	1988	Winkler, MB	Walter Franz	George Richert	Ruth Enns
87	1989	Normal, IL	Walter Franz	George Richert	Ruth Enns
88	1990	Edmonton, AB	Walter Franz	George Richert	Ruth Enns
89	1991	Saskatoon, SK	Menno Epp	George Richert	Ruth Enns
90	1992	Sioux Falls, ND	Menno Epp	George Richert	Ruth Enns
91	1993	Waterloo, ON	Menno Epp	Gerd Bartel	Ruth Enns
92	1994	Clearbrook, BC	Menno Epp	Gerd Bartel	Mary Anne Loeppky
93	1995	Newton, KS	Menno Epp	Gerd Bartel	Mary Anne Loeppky
94	1996	Calgary, AB	Menno Epp	Gerd Bartel	Mary Anne Loeppky
95	1997	Winnipeg, MB	Ron Sawatzky	Gerd Bartel	Mary Anne Loeppky
96	1998	Stratford, ON	Ron Sawatzky	Gerd Bartel	Pam Peters Pries
97	1999	St. Louis, MO	Ron Sawatzky	Jake F. Pauls	Joy Kroeger

Notes

Chapter 1. Beginnings

[1] For a more complete account of this settlement and its church, see William Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony*. Revised edition. (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1986).

[2] The Mennonite church in most of Russia and North America at that time was organized into units small enough to be presided over by one bishop. Such a *Gemeinde* usually had a number of elected lay ministers and several meeting places for worship.

[3] For the most comprehensive biography, see Lawrence Klippenstein, "Johann Funk (1836–1917)," in Adolf Ens, Jacob E. Peters and Otto Hamm, eds., *Church, Family and Village: Essays on Mennonite Life on the West Reserve* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2001), 213–228.

[4] See Henry J. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith: The Background in Europe and the Development in Canada of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba* (Altona: D.W. Friesen, 1970), for a comprehensive history.

[5] For a detailed account of this reform movement see John Dyck, "Hoffnungsfeld: Community and Phenomenon," in Ens, *Church, Family and Village*, 191–212.

[6] A third Hoffnungsfeld minister, Wilhelm Harms (1842–1896), associated briefly with Funk's Bergthaler.

[7] J.G. Rempel, *Die Rosenorter Gemeinde in Saskatchewan in Wort und Bild* (Rosthern: Rosenorter Gemeinde, 1950), 10. Walter Klaassen, *"The Days of Our Years:" A History of the Eigenheim Mennonite Church Community: 1892–1992* (Rosthern: Eigenheim Mennonite Church, 1992), 21–22, disagrees with Rempel's interpretation of the controversy and with the priority Rempel gives to economic reasons for Regier's emigration. Ernst Regehr, *Geschichts- und Predigertabelle der Mennonitengemeinde Rosenort* (n.p.), 10, cites only "economic difficulties" as the reason for Regier's emigration.

[8] For a biographical sketch, see Lawrence Klippensein, "Peter Regier: Churchman-farmer (1851–1925)," *Mennonite Historian* II (September 1976): 1–2; II (December 1976): 2–3. Brief biographical notes on the other leaders are found in J.G. Rempel, *Fünfzig Jahre Konferenzbestrebungen 1902–1952* (Rosthern: Konferenz der Mennoniten in Canada, 1952).

[9] Rempel, *Die Rosenorter Gemeinde*, 25, uses the expression "eine zusammengewürfelte Gemeinde."

[10] Peter Regier, "Kurze Geschichte unserer Rosenorter Mennoniten Gemeinde bei Rosthern, Saskatchewan," *Der Mitarbeiter* I (October 1906), 7.

[11] Klaassen, *Eigenheim*, 22.

[12] Minutes of the Bergthaler Mennonite Ministerial, 28 February 1896, #1; 21 May 1898, #3. MHCA, Vol. 727:1.

[13] Ibid., 8 October 1896, #3; 31 December 1897, #2; 5 May 1899, #7–9; 12 June 1899.

[14] Ibid., 20 December 1901, #2. The expression used is "dass eine Verbindung mit der Rosenorter Gemeinde eingebahnt werde."

[15] Ibid., 20 June 1902, #1; 4 August 1902, #1.

[16] Benjamin Ewert, "Geschichtliches von unserer Konferenz," *Jahrbuch 1932*, 37–38.

[17] Klaassen, *Eigenheim*, 22.

[18] Samuel Floyd Pannabecker, *Open Doors: A History of the General Conference Mennonite Church* (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1975), 117.

[19] Ibid., 47. This concern had already been promoted in the *Volksblatt* as early as 1856 (ibid., 37) and was endorsed by groups from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Canada West (Ontario).

[20] Ibid., 45.

[21] Ibid., 114.

[22] Klaassen, *Eigenheim*, 24.

[23] *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 26 June 1902, 5.

[24] Rempel, *Fünfzig Jahre Konferenzbestrebungen*, 15.

[25] Klaassen, *Eigenheim*, 21.

Chapter 2. A Conference is Born 1903-1924

[1] *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 13 August 1903, 5.

[2] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 18.

[3] Ibid., 15. In 1932 Benjamin Ewert recalled approximately 25 persons being present. *Jahrbuch 1932*, 38.

[4] Report by Benjamin Ewert, secretary, and Jacob Hoeppner, chair, in *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 6 August 1903, 4.

[5] Such "separation" did not exclude Mennonite lobbying. When the victorious Conservatives shortly afterward fired H.H. Ewert from his position as inspector of Mennonite public schools, the Bergthaler ministerial delegated Hoeppner, together with the bishop of the Mennonite Brethren, to make representations to the government over this action. Ministerial Minutes, 14 September 1903, #1. MHCA, Vol. 727:1.

[6] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 19; Pannabecker, *Open Doors*, 47–50.

[7] See Appendix 1 for the full text of the 1904 Constitution.

[8] Pannabecker, *Open Doors*, 52, 387. For a more comprehensive analysis see Jacob Peters, "Organizational Change within a Religious Denomination: A Case Study of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Waterloo, 1986), 137–146.

[9] The *Glaubensbekentniß der Mennoniten in Preußen und Russland* was usually bound in booklet form together with the Catechism. See *Katechismus, oder kurze und einfältige Unterweisung aus der Heiligen Schrift, in Frage und Antwort* (Berdjansk: Die christliche taufgesinnte Gemeine in Rußland, 1879).

[10] *Glaubensbekenntnis der Mennoniten in Manitoba, Nordamerika*, first published in 1881 with a foreword by Ältester Johannes Wiebe of the Reinländer Mennonite Church, and found in *Katechismus, oder kurze und einfältige Unterweisung aus der Heiligen Schrift, in Fragen und Antworten* (Elkhart: Mennonitische Verlagshandlung, 1900) and many other editions of the Catechism. The Bergthaler were using the 18-article version in 1900. Ministerial Minutes, 15 May 1900, #3. MHCA, Vol. 727:1.

[11] Pannabecker, *Open* Doors, 52, thinks its addition to the General Conference Constitution in 1861 reflected a controversy in Pennsylvania. However, the Mennonite Book Concern of Berne, Indiana, ran a large ad for *Modern Secret Societies*, a 300-page book by Wheaton College president, Charles A. Blanchard (leather bound $1.00) in almost every issue of *Christilicher Bundesbote* in 1903. The ad claimed that the book "answers the question, what Jesus would have one do."

Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, 77, 95. Bergthaler Ministerial Minutes, 6 August 1896, #2, instruct that a Winkler member be called to give account for belonging to a secret society.

[12] For more detail on the immigration work of Ens and Peters, see Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens: The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870–1925* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994), 97–98, and Leonard Doell, "Klaas Peters (1855–1932): A Biography," in Klaas Peters, *The Bergthaler Mennonites* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1988).

[13] Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786–1920: The History of a Separate People* (Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1974): 310, 317.

[14] (Old) Mennonite was the popular designation of the main body of Swiss-South German Mennonites in America; the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite was founded by John Holdeman in Ohio about 1859 and entered Canada about 1882; the Mennonite Brethren began in Russia in 1860; Krimmer Mennonite Brethren originated in Crimea, Russia, in 1869.

[15] *Bittersweet Years: The Herbert Story* (Herbert: Town Council, 1995), 26; Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 29, 39.

[16] Franz Sawatzky is listed in the 1906 minutes as representing the Manitoba Bergthaler. In the minutes of the 1907 session Herbert is listed as the third member congregation of the Conference with three delegate votes. "Protokoll-Buch der Konferenz der Mennoniten im mittleren Kanada: Von 1903 bis 1913." MHCA, Vol. 525, 60–61, 79, 82.

[17] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 49.

[18] The entire Hutterite community of 1,200 immigrated from Russia to the United States in the 1870s. The 800 who did not settle in colony (*Bruderhof*) style, were known as "Prarieleut." Numbers of them came to Canada beginning in 1890, the majority settling in the Langham and Guernsey areas. See Edna Wurtz and Catherine Masuk, *Rooted and Grounded in Love: The History and Family Records of the Langham Prairie People* (Saskatoon: by the authors, 2000), 8–10; Samuel Hofer, *The Hutterites: Lives and Images of a Communal People* (Saskatoon: Hofer Publishers, 1998), 142–153; Doreen Snider, *Called to a Place: The Story of Guernsey and Surrounding School Districts* (Guernsey, Saskatchewan: by the author, n.d.), 35–38. About one-third of active members participating in one of the last Bethesda *Bruderschaft* meetings in about 1948 had typical Hutterite names, like Waldner, Wurtz and Hofer. MHCA, Vol. 4240:3.

[19] The following analytical summary is based on minutes of the sessions from 1903 to 1914, or on the summaries given in Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 13–97. In spite of numerous recommendations to have particular papers published in *Christlicher Bundesbote*, this rarely happened, nor were copies of the papers systematically preserved.

[20] The Rosenorter and Herbert congregations joined the General Conference in 1908; the U.S. immigrant congregations in Drake (Nordstern) and Langham (Zoar) followed three years later. Pannabecker, *Open Doors*, 149, is wrong in claiming that the latter two were the first Canadian congregations to join, as his list, 156, shows. In 1902 the Bergthaler ministerial suggested joining the General Conference to its membership but did not get approval. Ministerial Minutes, 24 November 1902. MHCA, Vol. 727:1.

[21] Ens, *Subjects or Citizens*, 98.

22 The Swedish Lutheran pastor Emmanuel Swedenborg, founder of the Church of the New Jerusalem, exercised widespread influence through his 30 volumes of religious writings beginning in 1743. See Adolf Ens and Leonard Doell, "Mennonite Swedenborgians," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 10 (1992): 101–111 for the impact of this movement on Mennonites in the United States and Canada beginning in the 1880s.

23 Gerhard Epp (1910) and Benjamin Ewert (1914) endorsed the positive aims of the movement; the support of Epp and some others stopped short of coercive means such as prohibition. Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 68, 95. A Bergthaler ministerial decision (26 April 1906) and a David Toews article in *Der Mitarbeiter* 5 (July 1911): 73–74, confirmed drinking as a church problem.

24 Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 69.

25 Bergthaler Ministerial Minutes, 27 December 1893, #4; 16 April 1895, #7. MHCA, Vol. 727:1.

26 Klaassen, *Eigenheim*, 42–43.

27 B. Ewert, "Edenburg, Manitoba," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 26 June 1902, 4; Wm. Abrams, "Rosthern, Sask.," ibid., 17 July 1902, 4.

28 Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 32–33.

29 Ibid., 48.

30 Esther Patkau, *Canadian Women in Mission: 1895–1952–2002* (Saskatoon: n.p., 2002), 1, 37–39.

31 Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 109.

32 For a more comprehensive overview of Canadian Mennonite involvements during the War, see chapter 8 in William Janzen, *Limits on Liberty: The Experience of Mennonite, Hutterite and Doukhobor Communities in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

33 H.H. Ewert, "Wer hat gesiegt?" *Der Mitarbeiter* 8 (August 1914): 84.

34 *Der Mitarbeiter* 11 (January 1917):1–7.

35 Ibid., (February 1917): 2; (March 1917): 7; (May 1917): *Beilage.*

36 Ibid., 12 (October 1917): 1; (February 1918): 4–5.

37 Ibid., (November 1917): 1. See also ibid., 11 (December 1916): 3; (April 1917): 3; and ibid., 12 (October 1917): 1; (December 1917): 1.

38 Benjamin Ewert, comp. *Wichtige Dokumente betreffs der Wehrfreiheit der Mennoniten in Canada* (Gretna: by the author, 1917). The first print run was 5,800 copies.

39 Ens, *Subjects or Citizens*, 177–178. A more comprehensive discussion of the issues surrounding Mennonite response to World War I is given in chapter 5 of this book. For more detail on the many extra duties of Toews stemming from the war, see Helmut Harder, *David Toews Was Here, 1870–1947* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 2002).

40 Rempel, *Rosenorter Gemeinde*, 38.

41 Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 102, 109.

42 Ibid., 114.

43 Ibid., 132. The ban on immigration was aimed primarily at Hutterites; 18 of their colonies were then in the process of relocating to Manitoba and Alberta. Mennonites, however, were also explicitly mentioned, and while "individuals and small groups of American Mennonites" were allowed to move to Duchess, Alberta, during the time the Order-in-Council was in effect, it barred any anticipated large-scale immigration

from the USSR. T.D. Regehr, *Faith, Life and Witness in the Northwest, 1903–2002: Centennial History of the Northwest Mennonite Conference* (Kitchener: Pandora Press and Herald Press, 2003), 98–99.

Chapter 3. Immigration and the Depression 1924–1939

[1] A copy of the Order-in-Council, PC 1181, is found in MHCA, Vol. 1269:602. In his letter of thanks to King, Toews wrote: "Fairer climes there may be, but we know of no other country under the sun that in liberal and fair treatment of her citizens is equal to our own country."

[2] For a comprehensive account of the work of the Board of Colonization, see Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites since the Communist Revolution* (Altona: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., 1962). For Toews' role as its chair, see Helmut Harder, *David Toews Was Here*, especially chapters 9 and 10.

[3] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 164.

[4] *Der Mitarbeiter* 20 (March 1927): 6.

[5] *Der Mitarbeiter* 20 (July 1927): 1. Although the 1927 minutes do not record an action to accept the three new applicants, they are listed as member congregations in 1928.

[6] *Der Mitarbeiter* 27 (December 1934): 4.

[7] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 286.

[8] See representation at the 1931 sessions. Ibid., 246–247.

[9] *Jahrbuch 1954*, 18–19.

[10] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 238, 253; *Jahrbuch 1932*, 17–18. "General" was dropped from the name in 1941. *Jahrbuch 1941*. 20.

[11] E.K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona: D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1955), 209, 218. Small-scale help for the most needy was provided through the *Armenkasse* (welfare fund) of the Conference, but the annual reports of the Immigration and Relief Committee focused on relief needs in Russia.

[12] Cornelia Lehn, *Frontier Challenge: A Story of the Conference of Mennonites in British Columbia* (Clearbrook: Conference of Mennonites in British Columbia, 1939), 28.

[13] *Jahrbuch 1937*, 12.

[14] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 84.

[15] Ibid., 175.

[16] *Der Mitarbeiter* 18 (December 1925): 92.

[17] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 234.

[18] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 208.

[19] Patkau, *Canadian Women in Mission*, 41–42.

[20] A 1920s immigrant was first appointed to this three-person committee in 1924; as of 1934 two of its members were *Russländer*.

[21] J.H. Janzen, "Gebt acht auf die Zeichen der Zeit!" *Jahrbuch 1933*, 59–68; J.G. Rempel, "Endzeit der Welt," *Jahrbuch 1935*, 46–65.

[22] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 193–194. Minutes of subsequent ministers conferences are in MHCA, Vol. 525, and in *Jahrbuch* beginning in 1928.

[23] Discussed in greater detail in chapter 7.

[24] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 275.

[25] *Jahrbuch 1929*, 7.

[26] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 232.

[27] C.L. Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta: A History of Its Churches and Institutions* (Edmonton: Mennonite Conference of Alberta, 1981), 127–128. Initially the school was known as "Neue Bergthaler Bibel Schule."

[28] Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1920–1940: A People's Struggle for Survival* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada), 1982), 468; Rudy Regehr, "A Century of Private Schools," in Henry Poettcker and Rudy A. Regehr, eds., *Call to Faithfulness: Essays in Canadian Mennonite Studies* (Winnipeg: Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1972), 103–115.

[29] Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 34, 48–49.

[30] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1920–1940*, 468.

[31] Anna Ens, *In Search of Unity: Story of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1996), 66–67; Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 294.

[32] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1920–1940*, 468.

[33] *Jahrbuch 1938*, 23.

[34] Janzen's *Biblische Geschichten* went through a number of editions, none of them dated. For an account of Janzen's broad-ranging work, see *Mennonite Life* VI (July 1951): 31–43.

Chapter 4. The Work Expands 1939-1953

[1] *Der Bote*, 4 October 1939, 3; 1 November 1939, 5.

[2] The program for the sessions, as published in *Der Bote*, 22 May 1940, 5, anticipated three days. The 1938 Conference in Eigenheim also had been only one day, but that had been planned to accommodate the week-long General Conference sessions which met for the first time in Canada that year. The Manitoba Conference sessions planned for St. Elizabeth for 1940 were postponed indefinitely because in a wartime context the local German-speaking Mennonite community "did not want to risk drawing attention to a three-day celebration with a tent and many cars." Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 71.

[3] *Jahrbuch 1940*, 25.

[4] T.D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939–1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 41–42; Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 323–235; Anne Harder, *The Vauxhall Mennonite Church*, ed. Judith Rempel (Calgary: Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta, 2001), 14–15. Conversation with Jake Wiens, Winnipeg, 28 November 2003.

[5] For a fuller discussion of youth work in the CMC, see David Schroeder, "Development of Youth Ministries" (paper presented at a CMC History Symposium, 2–3 July 1997). MHCA, Acc. # 2003–107.

[6] A draft Constitution for a provincial youth organization was included in the reports in *Jahrbuch 1940*, 60–61. Minutes of the 1941 meeting of the Saskatchewan YPO were included in *Jahrbuch 1941*, 68–71.

[7] P.A. Rempel, *Bilder aus der Kirchen- und Mennonitengeschichte* (Rosthern: D.H. Epp, 1934); Paul J. Schaefer and D.P. Esau, *Woher? Wohin? Mennoniten!* (Altona:

Rhineland Agricultural Society, 1942). Schaefer later produced three more volumes in this series.

[8] David P. Reimer, *Erfahrungen der Mennoniten in Canada während des zweiten Weltkrieges 1939–1945* (Steinbach: Manitoba Ältestenkomitee, [1945]), 6; David P. Reimer, *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War, 1939–1945* (Altona: D.W. Friesen, n.d.). Reimer's account details the work of the 1870s group. The combined membership of the Sommerfelder, Chortitzer, Old Colony, Kleine Gemeinde, Holdeman, and Evangelical Mennonite Brethren in Manitoba was around seven thousand in 1939. T.D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939–1970,* 16–17.

[9] A tentative move to reorganize the Manitoba Conference without Bergthaler participation was discouraged by David Toews because it might make the division permanent. Ens, *In Search of Unity,* 79.

[10] *Jahrbuch 1946,* 26. This position was reaffirmed in 1949.

[11] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939–1970,* 92.

[12] Epp, *Mennonite Exodus,* 408, 421. J.J. Thiessen's Board report in *Jahrbuch 1954,* 177, gives a total of 8,772 between 1947–1954.

[13] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939–1970,* 94.

[14] Ibid., 173.

[15] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen,* 299; Toews' paper is in *Jahrbuch 1937,* 36–40.

[16] *Jahrbuch 1938,* 23.

[17] *Jahrbuch 1941,* 22.

[18] *Jahrbuch 1942,* 16, 60.

[19] A more detailed account of the founding of Canadian Mennonite Bible College is found in Esther Epp-Tiessen, *J.J. Thiessen: A Leader for His Time* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 2001), 208–222.

[20] *Jahrbuch 1943,* 14–15.

[21] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939–1970,* 36.

[22] Few would have had access to C.H. Wedel's *Abriss der Geschichte der Mennoniten* (Newton: Bethel College, 1900) or P.M. Friesen's *Die alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Russland* (Halbstadt: Raduga, 1911). The first of four volumes of Paul Schaefer's *Woher? Wohin? Mennoniten!* only appeared in 1942.

[23] J.B. Toews, the second president of Mennonite Brethren Bible College, recounts in his "Theological Autobiography" that the board "indicate a desire to be sharply separate from other Mennonite groups." Paul Toews, ed. *Bridging Troubled Waters: The Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Twentieth Century* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1995), 186.

[24] *Jahrbuch 1945,* 19–20.

[25] *Jahrbuch 1946,* 27. Thiessen was convinced that a Bachelor of Divinity (equivalent to the current Master of Divinity) was a minimal requirement.

[26] *Jahrbuch 1947,* 26–27.

[27] Epp-Tiessen, *J.J. Thiessen,* 209. For a longer discussion of the German language issue, see chapter 5 below.

[28] The most comprehensive essay on CMBC is Bruno Dyck, "Half a Century of Canadian Mennonite Bible College: A Brief Organizational History," in *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 11 (1993): 194–223.

[29] Ens, *In Search of Unity,* 80. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada,* 1939–1970,179, places the event at a May 1945 meeting of the Manitoba ministers conference.

[30] Johann H. Enns papers. MHCA, Vol. 4103:20.

[31] Reported by J.P. Bueckert at a *Predigerberatung* in Altona, 13 August 1945. *Protokoll*, 2. MHCA, Vol. 4474:15. See also letter of J.P. Bueckert to J.J. Thiessen, 25 June 1945. MHCA, Vol. 888:211.

[32] Because of this view, among other things, Denk was considered a "marginal Anabaptist" in the so-called "Goshen school" of Anabaptist thought. However, the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* (1956) article on him (III: 35) only says that "he stood somewhat apart from the main theological stream of Anabaptism, and that he cannot be regarded as the spokesman for the group in those areas where he held to his peculiar emphases."

[33] For the issue at the Manitoba Conference level, see Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 80–85, 132–136; and Henry J. Gerbrandt, *En Route: The Memoirs of Henry J. Gerbrandt* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1994), 220–224.

[34] For Schoenwieser (First Mennonite) perspectives, see Isaac Klassen, *Dem Herrn die Ehre* (Winnipeg: von der Gemeinde herausgesetzten Komitee, 1969), 80–84; Ernst Enns, *Jubilate: 60 Years First Mennonite Church* (Winnipeg:: First Mennonite Church, 1991), 63–64. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939–1970*, 178–183, discusses the controversy in the context of the larger Mennonite scene in Canada.

[35] Rudnerweider ministers attended fairly regularly and were sometimes also on the program.

[36] J.P. Bueckert to J.J. Thiessen, 25 June 1945. MHCA, Vol. 888:211. It is not clear whom Bueckert represented when he wrote on behalf of "our ministers conference."

[37] "Protokoll der Sitzung der Konferenzleitung und des Programmkomitees mit den Ältesten aus unserer Konferenz in Eigenheim am 4. Juli 1945," *Jahrbuch 1945*, 112–114. For a more detailed discussion of this controversy from a CMC perspective, see Esther Epp-Tiessen, *J.J. Thiessen*, 223–229.

[38] Resolution of 21 July 1945 meeting at Springstein of ministers of the Schoenwieser, Schoenfelder, Springstein, Bethel, Lichtenauer, Arnaud, Niverville, Glenlea and Elim congregations. MHCA, Vol. 888:211.

[39] *Protokoll* of a *Predigerberatung* in Altona, 13 August 1945, of ministers from Bergthaler, Blumenorter, Rudnerweider, Elim, Whitewater, Steinbach, Springstein, Glenlea and Niverville churches. MHCA, Vol. 4474:15.

[40] J. G. Rempel, "Sollte Gott gesagt haben?" *Der Bote*, 19 September 1945, 3.

[41] Jacob H. Janzen to J.J. Thiessen, 12 February 1946. MHCA, Vol. 888:213.

[42] *Jahrbuch 1946*, 20.

[43] Enns was replaced on the Program Committee and the Board of Colonization, on which his term would have expired only in 1947. Klassen, *Dem Herrn die Ehre*, 83, concluded: "We came under the ban."

[44] *Jahrbuch 1949*, 126–129.

[45] Ibid., 129–136.

[46] Ibid., 12, 22.

[47] Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 135. For an inside view of the final Manitoba Conference negotiations, see Gerbrandt, *En Route*, 220–221.

[48] Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 399, 408.

[49] A modest travel subsidy for delegates from farther away was given for a few years ($50 to Ontario and $25 each to B.C. and the Peace River district). *Jahrbuch 1940*, 14; *Jahrbuch 1942*, 14.

[50] Peters, "Organizational Change," 136, 144.

[51] Peters, "Organizational Change," 145. See also Epp-Tiessen, *J.J. Thiessen,* 106.

Chapter 5. Internal Shifts and External Witness 1954–1971

[1] *Jahrbuch 1954,* 38. This was presumably done to ensure adequate representation from areas that might be overlooked by the Nominating Committee.

[2] The 2,089 Manitoba Bergthaler and 1,477 Schoenwieser members, without a breakdown among their local "congregations," distorted the membership average for Manitoba. Elsewhere Essex County, Ontario (930) and the Rosenorter of Saskatchewan (719) were the only *Gemeinden* with over 500 members.

[3] *Jahrbuch 1953,* 65–66.

[4] Page numbers in parentheses refer to *Jahrbuch 1954.* In addition to these financial reports of Conference committees, boards and auxiliaries, delegates also received financial reports on organizations in which their members participated significantly: General Conference Board of Christian Service (154), CMC portion of GC Foreign Mission (162), Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization (177), Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee (180) and Mennonite Central Relief Committee (183).

[5] Ibid., 33, 51.

[6] *Jahrbuch 1950,* 11, 30.

[7] *Jahrbuch 1951,* 26, 96–100.

[8] *Jahrbuch 1954,* 43, 143–150.

[9] *Jahrbuch 1955,* 42, 166–170. Along with Klaassen, four Manitoba leaders were appointed to the Revision Committee: David Schulz (Bergthaler bishop and Conference vice-chair), J.M. Pauls (Bergthaler assistant bishop and member of the Conference Program Committee), Gerhard Lohrenz (instructor at CMBC) and P.R. Harder (Conference secretary).

[10] Peters, "Organizational Change," 162.

[11] *Jahrbuch 1956,* 30, 53. The ballot vote was 421 to 66.

[12] Ibid., 63.

[13] Ibid., 57.

[14] Ibid., 53.

[15] *Jahrbuch 1957,* 43, 64–65, 158–159.

[16] *Jahrbuch 1961,* 16–17. Prior to and during this time the boards of Education and Christian Service employed part-time executive secretaries, but they worked from their home base.

[17] *Jahrbuch 1964,* 35.

[18] See Appendix 2 for a more complete listing of executive office holders.

[19] Leo Driedger, "Post-War Canadian Mennonites: From Rural to Urban Dominance," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 6 (1988), 75. Manitoba Mennonite Brethren membership, by comparison, was only 42 percent rural by 1970. Mary Friesen, "The Impact of Urbanization on Mennonite Brethren in Manitoba," unpublished paper, 1979. MHCA, Vertical File.

[20] Driedger, "Post-War Canadian Mennonites," 77.

[21] Census of Canada data as cited in ibid., 77.

[22] Compiled from data in *Jahrbuch 1952* and *Yearbook 1972.*

[23] The Winnipeg Schoenwieser Gemeinde total included Oak Lake and possibly some other rural congregations.

[24] H.T. Klaassen, "Gemeindeanschluss solcher Glieder, die nicht in ihrer Heimatgemeinde wohnen." *Jahrbuch 1960*, 77–78. Reginald Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1987), 50–51, noted a similar phenomenon among members of Protestant churches in general. In Canadian GC congregations 11 percent were non-resident in Canada in 1969; 12 percent in 1980. Leland Harder, *Fact Book of Congregational Membership 1980/81* (Newton: General Conference Mennonite Church, 1982), 4a.

[25] John Siemens, "The Rural Church in the Twentieth Century." *Jahrbuch 1964*, 38–39.

[26] *Yearbook 1971*, 43–44.

[27] *Yearbook 1966*, 6. In Mennonite Brethren Sunday schools for children, over two-thirds used English by 1950. Gerald C. Ediger, *Crossing the Divide: Language Transition among Canadian Mennonite Brethren 1940–1970* (Winnipeg: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 2001), 48.

[28] *Jahrbuch der Vereinigten Mennoniten Gemeinden in Ontario 1955*, Appendix, XIII; ibid., *1956*, 145; ibid., *1957*, Appendix, VII. See also CMC *Jahrbuch 1956*, 92; *Jahrbuch 1957*, 98. While the primary initiative for this congregation came from St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, founding members also came from Niagara-on-the-Lake and Vineland.

[29] Klaassen, *Eigenheim*, 160.

[30] Peter D. Zacharias, *Footprints of a Pilgrim People: Story of the Blumenort Mennonite Church* (Gretna: Blumenort Mennonite Church, 1985), 167, 183. The Whitewater Church, Boissevain, followed a similar route, beginning some English in 1968. Henry Albrecht, et al, *History of the Whitewater Mennonite Church, Boissevain, Manitoba, 1927–1987* (Boissevain: Whitewater Mennonite Church, 1987), 49.

[31] Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 125, 120. Within two decades Clearbrook Mennonite membership consisted almost entirely of seniors.

[32] Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 127.

[33] Loewen, *Living Stones*, 23–33.

[34] N.N. Driedger, *The Leamington United Mennonite Church: Establishment and Development 1925–1972* (Leamington: 1972), 146.

[35] Ibid., 171. The membership of Leamington United decreased from 1061 (*Jahrbuch 1960*) to 1035 (*Jahrbuch 1961*).

[36] Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, 166; Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 198–199; Friesen, *Altona Mennonite Church*, 5–8.

[37] Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, 177.

[38] Friesen, *Journey of Faith: Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church 1895–1995* (Winkler: Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1995), 140–141.

[39] Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 196–197; David Friesen, *Journey of Faith*, 198.

[40] Ibid., 208; Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 197.

[41] Undated clippings from *Carillon News*, *Canadian Mennonite* and *Der Bote*. MHCA, Vol. 853–2. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 202; Harder, *Steinbach and Its Churches*, 68–70.

[42] Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 118.

[43] See, for example, lengthy reports in *Der Bote*, 13 June 1961, 7; 3 July 1962, 7.

[44] Lehn, *Frontier Challenge,* 126; Betty Mae Dyck, "Three Mennonite church leaders reflect on the Mennonite presence in Kelowna," *Mennonite Reporter,* 19 January 1987, 12.

[45] Correspondence in response to a circular letter in MHCA, Vol. 3448–4. German language preservation was also an expectation of Mennonite Brethren Bible College in a significant part of its constituency. Ediger, *Crossing the Divide,* 31–32.

[46] *Jahrbuch 1953,* 151–154; *Jahrbuch 1956,* 56.

[47] *Catechism or Brief Lessons from the Holy Scriptures in Question and Answer as Taught by Mennonites* (Winnipeg: Board of Education and Publication of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, 1959).

[48] Paul R. Shelly, ed., *My Christian Faith: A Catechism* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1965).

[49] *Gesangbuch der Mennoniten* (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1965). While the General Conference took responsibility for publishing and marketing the book, it was produced by a commission appointed by and responsible to the CMC Board of Education and Publication.

[50] *Jahrbuch 1965,* 25.

[51] Ibid., 103.

[52] Henry J. Gerbrandt of the fluently bilingual generation was executive secretary during this period.

[53] *Yearbook 1967,* 14.

[54] *Jahrbuch 1960,* 15–16, 53–54.

[55] *Jahrbuch 1962,* 16–17. H.T. Klaassen, "Das Problem der Ordination und Funktionen des Ältestenamtes in unserer Konferenz. MHCA, Vol. 1674–11.

[56] Letter, D.P. Neufeld, executive secretary, to "Glieder der Komission Aeltestenamt," 3 December 1962. MHCA, Vol. 167–11.

[57] The commission report, as first given at the ministers conference and signed by bishops J.D. Nickel, J.C. Neufeld, and J.J. Thiessen, read "with a bishop at its peak." Since the ministers conference recognized that it was not empowered to make a decision on this issue, action on it was deferred to the delegate session. There, in both German and English versions, the hierarchical "peak" was replaced with the more functional term "leader." *Jahrbuch 1963,* 9–10; 22–23; 37.

[58] Henry Poettcker, "Policy Changes and Developments in CMC Leadership Patterns, 1952–1997" (paper presented at CMC History Symposium, 1997).

[59] From data compiled by Poettcker, "CMC Leadership Patterns."

[60] *Yearbook 1969,* 6.

[61] From data compiled by Poettcker, "CMC Leadership Patterns."

[62] Ens, *In Search of Unity,* 184–188.

[63] Klaassen, *Eigenheim,* 77–82.

[64] Johann G. Rempel, report to the Rosenorter 1953 annual meeting. MHCA, Vol. 835–7, 333–334.

[65] Brotherhood meeting minutes, 26 June and 11 August 1954. MHCA, Vol. 835–7. Jacob G. Guenter, *Hague-Osler Mennonite Reserve,* 609; John D. Rempel, *History of the Hague Mennonite Church, 1900–1975* (Rosthern: Hague Mennonite Church, 1975), 36–37.

[66] Minutes of brotherhood meetings, 17 June 1961, and 16 June 1962; minutes of Prediger und Diakonen Beratung, 7 June 1962. MHCA, Vol. 835.

[67] *Jahrbuch 1962*, 146–147, lists the Rosenort Mennonite Church with 526 members in five branches, and the United Mennonite Church with 790 members in five branches. In *Jahrbuch 1963* all the branches appear as independent congregations.

[68] For an insider's account of "the ruthless winds of reform" in the Bergthaler Gemeinde, see Gerbrandt, *En Route*, 178–182.

[69] H.J. Gerbrandt, *Postscript to Adventure in Faith* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1986), 2.

[70] J.M. Pauls, "Gehilfsältesten," a paper apparently written prior to accepting ordination to clarify his own thinking. MHCA, Vol. 3784–2.

[71] Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, 189.

[72] Ibid., 365; Gerbrandt, *En Route*, 179.

[73] The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Winnipeg changed its name to Home Street Mennonite Church in 1973.

[74] Never fully comfortable in the Bergthaler Gemeinde, this group withdrew from the CMC in 1976 and changed its name to Steinbach Christian Fellowship. *Yearbook 1976*, 38.

[75] TheSpencer Bergthaler Mennonite Church at Grunthal is last listed as a Conference member in 1971 with 102 members. In *Yearbook 1975* it re-appears under "Conference –Related Congregations" as Grunthal Bergthaler Mennonite.

[76] Zacharias, *Footprints*, 143–149.

[77] Bishop David Schulz referred to a long meeting to work out a constitution for a decentralized Bergthaler church as "the darkest day of my life." Gerbrandt, *Postscript*, 3. Bishop A.A. Harder of the Eben-Ezer church in Abbotsford referred to the "storm" of the bishop issue. Bishop W.H. Enns of Springstein, Manitoba, already in the late 1950s sensed a concerted campaign against "us bishops" by a younger group, who in turn considered the Manitoba bishops "a small but noisy group" in the Conference. W.H. Enns to J.J. Thiessen, 6 February 1958; Aaron Klassen to CMBC Board, 25 January 1957. MHCA, Vol. 920–376.

[78] Herman Enns, "Forms of Ministry," in Poettcker and Regehr, eds., *Call to Faithfulness*, 99.

[79] *Jahrbuch 1957*, 63; *GCMC Reports and Minutes 1956*, 201.

[80] *Jahrbuch 1959*, 249–255. Eighty-nine were with MCC; 21 with GC Voluntary Service and PAX; 51 in summer service; 59 in long-term service.

[81] *Jahrbuch 1961*, 19.

[82] *Yearbook 1967*, 5.

[83] *Yearbook 1966*, 46, reports that the Board of Christian Service sent letters to MPs regarding the death penalty prior to the free vote in Parliament. The House of Commons voted 143–112 for retention.

[84] *Jahrbuch 1963*, 27.

[85] *Yearbook 1967*, 27, 12. Committee members were Henry Poettcker, J.B. Wiens and H.J. Gerbrandt.

[86] *Yearbook 1968*, 7, 9, 18.

[87] *Yearbook 1969*, 45–52.

[88] Ibid., 12–13; #38.e reports two unacceptable motions, eventually tabled, 44.d.

[89] Statistics Canada data as reported in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* 2: 1093.

[90] *Jahrbuch 1941*, 75–76.

[91] *Jahrbuch 1953*, 159–160; Patkau, *Canadian Women in Mission*, 94–115.

[92] Gerbrandt, *En Route*, chapter 9.

[93] Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, 332–343; Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939–1970*, 332–335; Jake Unrau with Johann D. Funk, *Living in the Way: The Pilgrimage of Jake & Trudie Unrau* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1996), chapter 5; Gerbrandt, *En Route*, chapter 14.

[94] Henry Neufeld and Elna Neufeld, *By God's Grace: Ministry with Native People in Pauingassi* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1991).

[95] *Minutes St. Louis 99*, 31.

[96] *Jahrbuch 1957*, 53–54; 56.

[97] *Yearbook 1970*, 51–53.

[98] *Yearbook 1970*, 80. At the North American level the General Conference co-operated with its Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Church counterparts in attempting to co-ordinate campus ministry on an inter-Mennonite basis.

[99] Until 1960 the "Church Building Fund" was administered as part of the Mission Board treasury. Its amounts have been subtracted from the totals in Table 5.8 through 1959.

[100] Since one large portion of CMBC funds were self-generated and another was for the building fund, the significant figure for purposes of comparison with other boards is the (levy) income from the congregations for the operating budget.

[101] Reporting shifted to the calendar year. In earlier years the reports covered from approximately June 15 to June 14 of the following year.

[102] By 1960 the MPM budget had been fully absorbed by the Conference.

[103] *Bulletin* 4 (July 1968): 7.

[104] *Bulletin* 2 (December 1966): 8.

[105] *Yearbook 1971*, 57.

[106] *Bulletin* 2 (March 1966): 6.

[107] *Bulletin* 1 (February 1967): 3

[108] *Yearbook 1970*, 19.

[109] Ibid., 17–18.

Chapter 6. Joy and Strain of Increased Diversity 1971-1988

[1] Larry Kehler, "Diversity of opinion recognized at Saskatoon conference sessions," *The Canadian Mennonite*, 18 July 1969, 1.

[2] Gerbrandt, *En Route*, 236.

[3] Larry Kehler, "Upsurge in confidence in Canadian body," *The Mennonite*, 7 September 1971, 523.

[4] H.J. Gerbrandt, "The Conference of Mennonites in Canada," in Poettcker and Regehr, eds., *Call to Faithfulness*, 89–90.

[5] Kehler, "Upsurge in confidence," 523.

[6] The Review Committee appointed by the Conference executive in the fall of 1970 consisted of two ministers: Bill Block, leading minister of Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, as chair; Frank Isaak, minister at Steinbach Mennonite Church; and two CMC staff members: Jake Letkemann, executive secretary of the Conference and of the Board of Christian Service, and Henry H. Epp, executive secretary of the Board of Education and Publication.

[7] Responding to the Committee's questionnaire were 48 percent of the 131 congregations, representing 58 percent of the CMC members.

[8] See Walter Klaassen, "Christianity demands a positive response," in Frank H. Epp, ed., *I would like to dodge the draft-dodgers but . . .* (Waterloo: Conrad Press, 1970), 61–67, for a careful analysis of this dilemma with respect to the specific issue: "Why should a Christian care about the draft-resister?"

[9] *Yearbook 1971*, 55–59.

[10] *Yearbook 1975*, 48–49. For a detailed analysis of the changes that inaugurated what Jacob Peters calls the "partnership era," see his "Organizational Change," 175–186.

[11] Gerbrandt, "The Conference of Mennonites in Canada," 89–90.

[12] Leo Driedger, "From Nonresistance to Peacemaking: CMC Peace Forgotten or Transformed?" (paper [revised] presented at CMC History Symposium, 1997). Driedger had served as vice-chair and chair of the Board of Christian Service and also as an executive secretary of the GC Board of Christian Service in Newton.

[13] Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 194–195.

[14] Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 122, 131.

[15] CMBC acting president's report in *Yearbook 1973*, 57. General chair of Probe 72, Myron Augsburger, "was led to predict that the golden age for Mennonites could just be beginning." *Mennonite Reporter*, 17 April 1972, 1. See also *Mennonite Reporter*, 3 April 1972, 1; and 15 May 1972, 4, 7.

[16] *Yearbook 1973*, 57, 48; *Mennonite Reporter*, 11 December 1972, 14.

[17] *Yearbook 1973*, 51.

[18] *Yearbook 1975*, 51.

[19] *Bulletin* 12 (May 1976): 20.

[20] *Yearbook 1979*, 76. Former Conference chair, H.P. Epp, spearheaded the resolution.

[21] *Yearbook 1980*, 76; *Bulletin* 16 (May 1980): 7.

[22] *Bulletin* 20 (May 1984): 23, 25; *Yearbook 1984*, 91–92.

[23] *Bulletin* 22 (May 1986): 26; *Bulletin* 23 (May 1987): 20.

[24] Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 132.

[25] Paul Berg Dick, *Ottawa Mennonite Church 35th Anniversary* (Ottawa: Ottawa Mennonite Church, 1994), 21.

[26] *Yearbook 1982*, 71; *1985*, 116; *1981*, 63; *Bulletin* 14 (May 1978):19.

[27] The *Bote* appears not to have published the first list; the second, released by Hans Niessen, is in *Der Bote*, 6 March 1973, 6. See also "Interview mit Hans Niessen über die Umsiedlerfrage," *Der Bote*, 9 November 1977, 1–3.

[28] *Bulletin* 16 (July 1980): 9, provides a compact summary of the early stages of this work.

[29] *Yearbook 1975*, 89.

[30] Herman Enns, "Forms of Ministry," in Poettcker and Regehr, eds., *Call to Faithfulness*, 97.

[31] *Yearbook 1984*, 96–97; *1986*, 80; *1988*, 78.

[32] Rodney Sawatsky, "Autonomy and Accountability: Church Polity within the Conference of Mennonites in Canada," in Helmut Harder, ed., *Accountability in the Church: A Study Guide for Congregations* (Winnipeg: Committee on Ministerial Leadership, 1985), 63.

[33] Menno H. Epp, *The Pastor's Exit: The Dynamics of Involuntary Termination* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1984), 1.

[34] Sawatsky, "Autonomy and Accountability," 62–63.

[35] Held at CMBC in January 1984.

[36] See note 32 above.

[37] "Ordinal," developed under the leadership of John Esau of the General Conference. A number of these topics had been addressed before the issue of ordination "clamoured for attention," as Bill Block put it in his first report as director of CML. *Bulletin* 22 (May 1986): 11. Already in 1966 the ministers conference had discussed three papers related to the topic: Waldemar Janzen on "The Role of the Pastor in the Present Church;" Herman Walde on "The Ordination of the Pastor;" and H.P. Epp on "The Role of the Conference in Determining the Pattern of the Ministry."

[38] *Bulletin* 10 (May 1974): 26.

[39] *Yearbook 1972*, 14. When the extension had still not been passed in 1973, a further resolution urged delegates to contact their Member of Parliament. *Yearbook 1973*, 17.

[40] *Yearbook 1975*, 55.

[41] *Yearbook 1979*, 64–65; *Yearbook 1980*, 72.

[42] *Yearbook 1987*, 93.

[43] *Yearbook 1971*, 7; *Yearbook 1972*, 12; *Bulletin* 8 (May 1972): 26.

[44] *Yearbook 1974*, 57.

[45] *Yearbook 1980*, 74, 79. Allan J. Siebert, "Warman nuclear debate: Hearings open in January," *Mennonite Reporter*, 12 November 1979, 1.

[46] *Yearbook 1983*, 97–98.

[47] *Yearbook 1975*, 93; *Yearbook 1979*, 72.

[48] *Yearbook 1978*, 69; *Bulletin* 15 (May 1979): 18.

[49] Jon Bonk, *The World at War, The Church at Peace: A Biblical Perspective* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1988).

[50] *Yearbook 1981*, 75.

[51] *Bulletin* 17 (July 1981): 19. Responding to the survey were 106 pastors and 89 chairpersons.

[52] *Yearbook 1986*, 99; *Yearbook1987*, 86–87. Neil Funk-Unrau, *The Poor Among Us: Study and Action Guide on Poverty in Canada* (Winnipeg: Conference of Mennonites in Canada, 1988).

[53] *Yearbook 1986*, 101–102; 103–104. A resolution asked the general secretary to urge the Canadian government to intervene with the South African government on Mandela's behalf. A companion resolution approved "an official letter of Christian support to Desmond Tutu for his non-violent and graceful support for peace and reconciliation within South Africa."

[54] Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig, 1969).

[55] Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

[56] In 1969 Beaulieu had specifically suggested that the Conference discontinue using terms like "missions." *Yearbook 1972*, 17; and *1973*, 9.

[57] *Totemak* 1 (May 1972): 2.

[58] *Yearbook 1972*, 71–74.

[59] Funk was funded by the General Conference through its Poverty Fund.

[60] The above summary is based on the 1972 issues of *Yearbook, Bulletin* and *Totemak*.

[61] *Yearbook 1972*, 20.

[62] *Yearbook 1974*, 94.

[63] *Yearbook 1976*, 50–51.

[64] Ibid., 101.

[65] *Yearbook 1979*, 56, 58.

[66] See Ibid., 55–62 for the report by commission members Peter Letkemann, Adolf Ens, David Schroeder, Walter Franz and Peter Falk.

[67] Rudy A. Regehr and Margaret Wiens ·Franz, eds. *Twenty-five Years: A Time to Grow* (Winnipeg: Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1972).

[68] *Yearbook 1975*, 49.

[69] The Evaluation Team—Florence Driedger, Frank Isaac and Robert Kreider—presented a report to the Board in time for its annual meeting in January 1977. *Bulletin* 13 (May 1977): 10. See *Yearbook 1977*, 58–59 for a summary of one phase of the Evaluation Study report.

[70] *Bulletin* 14 (May 1978): 11.

[71] *Yearbook 1980*, 69.

[72] In 1979 the David Friesen Family Foundation committed $50,000 annually for five years for this purpose.

[73] Adelia Neufeld, "Women's Liberation in the Mennonite Church: A Survey," unpublished paper, 1978. MHCA, Vertical File. Neufeld scanned seven Mennonite periodicals, compiling a list of articles relevant to this theme. *Mennonite Brethren Herald, Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* ran at least as many articles on the subject as *The Canadian Mennonite/ Mennonite Reporter*.

[74] Ibid., 5.

[75] Klaassen, *Eigenheim*, 134.

[76] Henry Wiehler, et al, eds., *Eden Mennonnite Church 1945–1995* (Chilliwack: Eden Mennonite Church, 1995), 15.

[77] Friesen, *Journey of Faith,* 153.

[78] Epp-Tiessen, *J.J. Thiessen*, 248–249.

[79] Klaassen, *Eigenheim*, 191.

[80] Friesen, *Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church,* 153.

[81] Elizabeth Abrahams, et al, eds., *"Great Is Thy Faithfulness:" Steinbach Mennonite Church 1942–1992* (Steinbach: Steinbach Mennonite Church, 1992), 25.

[82] Veronica Dyck, "Women in Conference Mennonite Churches," unpublished paper, 1982, 19; also Table V. MHCA, Vertical File. See Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 232 for a comparison of 1993 attitudes of Manitoba Conference congregations.

[83] Esther Patkau, *Canadian Women in Mission*, 151.

[84] *Mennonite Reporter*, 24 July 1972, B–3.

[85] "Dedication," in Gerhard I. Peters, *Remember Our Leaders: Conference of Mennonites in Canada* (Abbotsford: Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia, 1982).

[86] See Table 5.7 for a list through 1959.

[87] Patkau, *Canadian Women in Mission*, 153.

[88] *Mennonite Reporter*, 30 October 1972, 4.

[89] Adelia Neufeld, "Women's Liberation in the Mennonite Church," 3. While not ordained, Vinora Weaver Salzman preached frequently as long as her pastor husband Earl was an active minister from 1927 to 1961.

[90] Mary A. Schiedel, *Pioneers in Ministry: Women Pastors in Ontario Mennonite Churches, 1973–2003* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2003), 39. Doris Weber was

ordained in 1979 at the Avon Mennonite Church, Stratford, a congregation of the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference which joined the CMC in 1995.

[91] In 1987 the North American General Conference had 44 women in licenced or ordained positions as pastors or chaplains, while the Mennonite Church had 34. *Mennonite Encyclopedia* V: 661.

[92] Dyck, "Women in Conference Mennonite Churches," 14–15. By province, 94 percent in Alberta and 50 percent in British Columbia allowed women to preach, with the other provinces somewhere in between.

[93] *Yearbook 1982*, 93.

[94] Patkau, *Canadian Women in Mission*, 191–193.

[95] *Yearbook 1988*, 109.

[96] *Mennonite Reporter*, 24 July 1972, B–4. Ironically, Wiebe refers to the head of the CWM as "chairman" when the organization's own, less overtly gender-biased term was "president."

[97] For Mennonite Men reports see *Yearbook 1967–1972*.

[98] *Yearbook 1972*, 38.

[99] Patkau, *Canadian Women in Mission*, 210.

[100] Ibid., 175. For a historical overview of women's organization, including Canadian Women in Mission, see Gloria Neufeld Redekop, *The Work of Their Hands: Women's Societies in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1966).

[101] Quoted in Patkau, *Canadian Women in Mission*, 175.

[102] *Jahrbuch 1937*, 20–21. David Toews was instructed to look for archival space at the Winnipeg offices of the Canadian Colonization Association.

[103] *Jahrbuch 1941*, 23.

[104] *Jahrbuch 1943*, 85. Ewert admitted that the material collected by Schellenberg was still in the latter's custody. Schellenberg noted that it was still in the Colonization offices. *Der Bote*, 24 May 1944, 3

[105] *Jahrbuch 1952*, 70; Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 489. In 1956 Gerhard. Lohrenz of the CMBC faculty was appointed to create a historical archive. *Jahrbuch 1956*, 40–41.

[106] *Jahrbuch 1972*, 19.

[107] *Menonite Reporter*, 18 May 1977, 12.

[108] *Yearbook 1977*, 51, 58.

[109] Ibid., 60.

[110] *Yearbook 1966*, 9, 53.

[111] David P. Neufeld, "Mennonite Foundation of Canada," in *Yearbook 1973*, 64–65.

[112] *Yearbook 1972*, 48.

[113] Ibid., 51.

[114] Nowadays we cannot imagine a worship service without song. "Singing enhances life." But its significance runs deeper: singing unites people. Therefore we have a deep respect for the hymnal. Foreword in *Gesangbuch der Mennoniten* (Newton, Kansas: General Conference Mennonite Church, 1942)

[115] *Yearbook 1974*, 56, 97. A more strongly worded resolution, referring explicitly to problems arising from this overlap in jurisdictions, was postponed "indefinitely." Ibid., 52.

[116] *Yearbook 1977*, 63

[117] *Bulletin* 16 (May 1980): 8.

[118] *Yearbook 1985*, 94–95, 113–114.

[119] Ibid., 96, 114–115.

[120] *Yearbook 1983*, 96–97; *1984*, 93; *1986*, 81, 83.

[121] *Yearbook 1988*, 79–80; 83.

Chapter 7. Cooperation and Integration 1988-1999

[1] Howard John Loewen, *One Lord, One Church, One Hope and One God: Mennonite Confessions of Faith* (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985), has compiled over 25 confessions in four groups.

[2] *Glaubensbekenntnis der Mennoniten in Preussen und Russland.*

[3] *Jahrbuch 1930*, 3, 8–18.

[4] *Jahrbuch 1931*, 7, 15–17, 29.

[5] *Jahrbuch 1935*, 21. *Katechismus oder kurze und einfache Unterweisung . . . . Neue revidierte Ausgabe . . . 1914. Ausgabe für Kanada mit Anhang des Glaubensbekenntnis der Mennoniten in Canada* (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1935). The Confession is reprinted in later bilingual editions of the Catechism: *Catechism or Brief Lessons from the Holy Scriptures* (Winnipeg: CMC Board of Education and Publication, 1959), 133–166; *My Christian Faith: A Catechism* (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1965), 110–133; as well as in Loewen, *One Lord*, 305–308.

[6] *Yearbook 1965*: 14, 27; *Yearbook 1975*: 48–49; *Bulletin* 11 (May 1975): 26. S. F. Pannabecker, *Open Doors*, 387, 189–190, argues that the General Conference never adopted a confession of faith other than the one-paragraph "Our Common Confession" as found in the 1896 constitution. He describes the "Souderton Statement" approved in 1941 as "a guide in the reorganization of the theological seminary."

[7] *Jahrbuch 1930*, 3; Rempel, *Konferenzbestrebungen*, 229–230; Johann Rempel, "Langham, Sask." in *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 17 March 1931, 5. Only the North Star congregation of Drake, Saskatchewan, wanted a reference to lodges included. *Jahrbuch 1931*, 7.

[8] "A Report from the Confession on Faith Study Committee: Proposal to Formulate a New Confession of Faith," December 1984. MCHA, Vol. 4981–16.

[9] For a clear and concise account of this process, see Sam Steiner, "The City and the Formation of 'Mennonite Church Eastern Canada'," in *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 21 (2003): 155–173.

[10] A few CMC congregations in Alberta and Saskatchewan were neighbours to Swiss Mennonite congregations of the Northwest Conference. In Alberta cooperation at the provincial conference level had begun in several areas.

[11] E. Reginald Good, *Mennogespräch* (March 1985). L.J. Burkholder, *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario* (Markham: Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1935), 40. Burkholder's book is the first attempt at a comprehensive account of Mennonites in Ontario. For a more recent account, see Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786–1920*.

[12] Hoch sought alliances with other "progressive" Mennonite groups. He served as chair of the second General Conference sessions in Wadsworth, Ohio, in 1862 but

left the General Conference in 1869. Burkholder, *Mennonites in Ontario*, 179–187; Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786–1920*, 144–146, 149, 154.

[13] Burkholder, ibid., 188–196; Epp, ibid., 149–152.

[14] Burkholder, ibid., 197–216; Epp, ibid., chapter 11, esp. 265–270. Similar Old Order divisions occurred in Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

[15] For a more comprehensive account of Shantz's work with the Mennonite immigrants to Russia, see Samuel J. Steiner, *Vicarious Pioneer: The Life of Jacob Y. Shantz* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1988).

[16] Burkholder, *Mennonites in Ontario*, 157–161.

[17] Danforth did not join the CMC in 1995; membership as of 2000 when it became part of Mennonite Church Canada.

[18] Orland Gingerich, *The Amish of Canada* (Waterloo: Conrad Press, 1972), is the most comprehensive account of this church group. See also Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786–1920*: 80–88.

[19] Gingerich, *The Amish of Canada*, 22, 29–30; 43–57.

[20] Ibid., 39, 80–83; Table 7.1 above.

[21] East Zorra, in 1883, was the first congregation to build a church.

[22] Valleyview held membership in all three Ontario conferences prior to the formation of MCEC.

[23] Note that this is a couple of decades earlier than the first missionaries from the CMC.

[24] The expressions, "national church" and "national agenda," were used by Ron Sawatsky, moderator of MCEC. *Yearbook 1992*, 57–58. The U.S. meeting places were: Normal, Illinois in 1989; Sioux Falls, South Dakota in 1992; Newton, Kansas in 1995; and St. Louis, Missouri in 1999.

[25] *Yearbook 1988*, 99; *Yearbook 1989*, 68; *CMC Report 1989*, 1.

[26] *Yearbook 1990*, 67; *CMC Report 1991*, 3.

[27] *CMC Report 1991*, 4–5; *Yearbook 1991*, 61–62.

[28] *Yearbook 1989*, 75; *1990*, 67; *1991*, 61; *1992*, 56, 70; *1993*, 53; *1996*, 24; *1999*, 8–10.

[29] John A. Esau, "Ordination," in *Mennonite Encyclopedia* V: 661.

[30] *Workbook, St. Louis 1999*, 32–41, esp. 36; *Minutes, St. Louis 1999*, 8–13.

[31] *Yearbook 1989*, 79; *1992*, 67; *1993*, 58; *1994*, 81–82; *CMC Report 1993*, 26.

[32] *CMC Report 1993*, 27.

[33] *Yearbook 1990*, 58; *1995*, 85; *1997*, 20.

[34] *Yearbook 1994*, 68; *1995*, 87–88; *1997*, 22, 25.

[35] *Yearbook 1995*, 80, 84–85; *CMC Report 1995*, 12–13.

[36] In addition to the 68 MCEC congregations listed in Tables 7.1 to 7.3 above.

[37] Resulting from the integration of Northdale Mennonite Fellowship— founded by members of the Springfield Heights and North Kildonan congregations—with Valley Garden Community Church (Mennonite Brethren), Jubilee already held membership in the Mennonite Brethren Conference. Ens, *In Search of Unity*, 201–202.

[38] Correspondence in executive secretary files. MHCA, Acc. #2003–051.

[39] Correspondence in executive secretary files. MHCA, Acc. #2003–051.

[40] Joined 1981; re-joined 1995.

[41] Grace congregation requested that its membership in all three levels of Conference be suspended for a period of three years.

[42] *GCMC Minutes 1986*, 10–11.

[43] *CMC Report 1998*, 8; *CMC Minutebook 1998*, 17–19.

[44] *CMC Report 1993*, 9.

[45] *Yearbook 1991*, 65.

[46] *CMC Report 1990*, 5.

[47] *CMC Minute Book 1998*, 22–24.

[48] *Yearbook 1992*, 63; *Yearbook 1995*, 77.

[49] *Yearbook 1990*, 59–60, 72; *CMC Report 1990, 5*.

[50] *Yearbook 1991*, 61.

[51] *Yearbook 1990*, 73.

[52] In 2000 Joy Kroeger was elected vice-chair at the first assembly of Mennonite Church Canada.

[53] A suggestion was made in 1999 to implement equal male-female representation on the General Board in Mennonite Church Canada. *CMC Minute Book 1999*, 9; cf. *Yearbook 1995*, 70–71.

[54] *CMC Report 1990*, 3; *CMC Report 1991*, 5; *Yearbook 1991*, 68.

[55] *Yearbook 1989*, 79.

[56] Harold W. Turner, "Religious Movements in Primal (or Tribal) Societies," *Mission Focus* 9 (September 1981): 54.

[57] *Yearbook 1991*, 57–58; *Yearbook 1992*, 53.

[58] *CMC Minute Book 1998*, 31–35.

[59] *Minutes, St. Louis 1999*, 11, #33.

[60] Lehn, *Frontier Challenge*, 48–49, 75–76, 168–174.

[61] Dick, *Mennonite Conference of Alberta*, 127–134; Robert Janzen, "A History of Menno Bible Institute," unpublished paper, 1979. MHCA, Vertical File.

[62] Rudy A. Regehr, "A Century of Private Schools," chapter 10 in Poettcker and Regehr, eds., *Call to Faithfulness*.

[63] The Mennonite Brethren and Brethren in Christ participated in the initial discussions but withdrew at the point of actually founding the College.

[64] *CMC Yearbook 1990*, 90–92.

[65] *CMC Report 1994*, 4.

[66] *CMC Yearbook 1994*, 67, 76, 81.

[67] *CMC Minute Book 1996*, 25.

[68] Gerald Gerbrandt, *Kingship according to the Deuteronomistic History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); Esther Wiebe, *Songs of Faith and Life: Arrangements for Male* Choir (Winnipeg, CMBC Publications, 1987); John Friesen, ed., *Mennonites in Russia 1789*–1988 (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989); Harry Huebner and David Schroeder, *Church as Parable: Whatever Happended to Ethics?* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1993); Gordon Zerbe, *Non-Retaliation in Early Jewish and New Testament Texts: Ethical Themes in Social Contexts* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1993); Waldemar Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach* (Louisville: Westminster/Knox, 1994); Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens? The Mennonite Experience in Canada 1870*–1925 (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994); Titus Guenther, *Rahner and Metz: Transcendental Theology as Political Theology* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994); Abe Bergen, *Living the*

Beatitudes (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1994); John H. Neufeld, *The Story That Shapes Us* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1997); Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); Bernie Neufeld, ed., *Music in Worship: A Mennonite Perspective* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1998).

[69] *CMC Report 1995*, 15; *CMC Yearbook 1995*, 73–74.

[70] *CMC Minute Book 1997*, 24; 14–15.

[71] For details of the MCF arrangement, see *CMC Report 1998*, 16–21. A concise chronology of important steps in the process are found in the current *Calendar* of Canadian Mennonite University.

[72] *Yearbook 1991*, 68–69.

[73] *Mennonite Reporter*, 28 July 1997, 1; *Canadian Mennonite*, 15 September 1997, 2.

Chapter 8. Toward Mennonite Church Canada

[1] *CMC Report 1991*, 4-6; *CMC Report 1994*, 4; *CMC Report 1997*, 9.

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Note: A more exhaustive listing of published and unpublished writing on the history of the CMC and its congregations and leaders, institutions and programs, and related area conferences is posted on the Mennonite Heritage Centre website at www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/archives and in hard copy on the reference shelf of the Heritage Centre.

GENERAL INDEX

INDEX OF CONGREGATIONS

(Unless otherwise indicated, congregational names include "Mennonite Church")

List of Abbreviations

CHM	Commission on Home Ministries (GC)
CMBC	Canadian Mennonite Bible College
CMC	Conference of Mennonites in Canada
CML	Committee on Ministerial Leadership
CO	conscientious objector
CRB	Congregational Resources Board
CWM	Canadian Women in Mission
GC	General Conference Mennonite Church
MC	Mennonite Church (see OM)
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
MCEC	Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada
MCOQ	Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec
MFC	Mennonite Foundation of Canada
MPM	Mennonite Pioneer Mission
MWC	Mennonite World Conference
NM	Native Ministries
OM	(Old) Mennonite Church (see MC)
UM	United Mennonite (in congregational names in British Columbia and Ontario)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WOMC	Western Ontario Mennonite Conference

Glossary of German Terms

Ältester (plural: *Ältesten*)—bishop; leading minister of a multi-local *Gemeinde*

Gemeinde (plural: *Gemeinden*)—multi-local congregation, usually led by one bishop

Jugendverein—young people's association, sometimes equated with Christian Endeavour

Referat (plural: *Referate*)—position paper presented to a conference or symposium

Umsiedler—term designating ethnic Germans from USSR (or its former republics) relocating to Germany; later replaced by the term *Aussiedler*
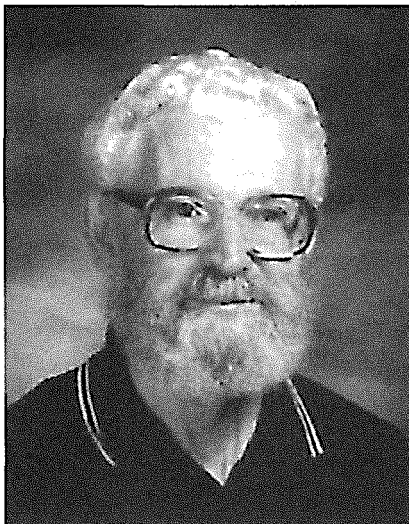
Adolf Ens was born to 1923 immigrants from the USSR and grew up in the Blumenorter Mennonite Church near Gretna, Manitoba. A graduate of Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana, he was pastoral intern at Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kansas, and has served brief terms as minister in the Ottawa Mennonite Church and in Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, his home congregation.

Adolf earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Manitoba and a PhD in Religion from the University of Ottawa. He is the author of *Subjects and Citizens: The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870–1925.* Service at the General Conference offices in Newton, Kansas, and with Mennonite Central Committee in Indonesia and Uganda helped to shape his teaching of history and theology from 1974 to 2001 at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. During this time he was deeply involved with both the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and CMBC Publications (now CMU Press).

Adolf and Anna are the parents of three grown children and have four grandchildren.

FORMATION